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EMOTION AND *IMPEGNO* IN ITALIAN MIGRATION CINEMA

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates how emotion functions in Italian migration cinema to reinforce political and ideological narratives. That is, it considers how an analysis of emotional engagement can aid our understanding of a film's level of *impegno* (socio-political commitment). Since the 1990s, immigration to Italy has increasingly become a topic of public and political discourse, which has led to numerous filmmakers interpreting the phenomenon. This thesis explores this growing corpus by analysing films from the period 2005-2018 which engage with the theme of immigration to Italy, whether by depicting the recent arrival of migrants in Italy (films such as *Once You Are Born You Can No Longer Hide* and *Mediterranea*), or the experiences of first-generation Italians who are the children of immigrants (such as *Good morning Aman* and *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*).

The thesis provides an in-depth analysis of seven films to question how emotional engagement with a film can lead to ethical reflection of socio-political issues, and conversely how it can also reinforce problematic and exclusionary discourses surrounding immigration. Within this thesis, films are analysed for the ways in which they engage with the topics of migration, national identity and belonging. Therefore, *impegno* is understood as the ability to challenge hegemonic powers and discourses which both impact the experiences of migrants and reinforce limited conceptions of Italian national identity.

The theoretical framework draws on cognitive and phenomenological film theories to interrogate how films encourage emotional and empathic responses from audiences which function in relation to political and ideological narratives surrounding immigration and national identity, taking into consideration intersecting notions such as gender, sexuality, and

race. In doing so, this thesis demonstrates how emotional and empathic engagement can contribute to a film's ability to challenge or reinforce dominant and exclusionary conceptions of national identity and belonging. It contributes to discussions of *cinema d'impegno* by reconsidering how socio-political narratives and emotion work together in the cinematic experience in ethically significant ways.

To my dad, Mark Jones, for always believing in me.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Thesis Overview

In recent years immigration to Italy has increasingly become a topic of public discourse, as well as the focus of a growing corpus of Italian films. The variety of films that depict migrant characters living in Italy highlights the complexities of the current Italian socio-political landscape. Some filmmakers portray the dangerous journeys and hostile laws that migrants face, such as Emanuele Crialese's *Terraferma* (2011) and Jonas Carpignano's *Mediterranea* (2015). Others, like Claudio Giovannesi in his film *Alì ha gli occhi Azzurri* (2012), explore identity conflicts felt by children of immigrants. Vetri Nathan has defined such films as belonging to a "New Migrant Cinema"; films which respond to the contemporary social and cultural phenomenon of immigration into Italy.[1] Although these films now display a variety of approaches and genres, many have employed realist techniques and presented a type of social critique that recalls the tradition of *cinema d'impegno,* that is*,* socio-politically "engaged" cinema that emerged in the post-war period. As I discuss in the following literature review, there have been important developments regarding how we conceive of contemporary expressions of *impegno.*[2] There has, however*,* been little investigation into how such films *emotionally* engage their spectators and how this is integrated within the films' political and ideological narratives. Continuing from the premise that emotional engagement does not necessarily deter from a film's political commitment*,* I will consider ways in which it can

[1] Vetri Nathan, *Marvelous Bodies: Italy's New Migrant Cinema* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2017).
[2] See for example Jennifer Burns*, Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative, 1980-2000* (Leeds, UK: Northern Universities Press, 2001); Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug, *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012).

actually be an integral part of that commitment; not only does it create interest, but it can also lead to empathy as well as to an ethical reflection on conceptions of national identity and belonging. Conversely, I will interrogate how films which could be described as *impegnati*, such as *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* ('Once You Are Born You Can No Longer Hide,' Marco Tullio Giordana, 2005) and *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialese, 2011), become problematic and contradictory when we consider filmic emotion and empathy. Therefore, by considering the role of emotion in filmmakers' engagement with socio-political issues relating to immigration, I demonstrate its importance in understanding contemporary Italian migration cinema, and its role in contributing to, or deterring from, the ethical potential of the cinematic experience.

In recent years, immigration has increasingly become a topic of public discourse and Europe has seen a rise in conservative anti-immigration politics. European populations are diverse and exhibit multiple identities tied to region, language, religion, ethnicity and so on. Yet homogenizing official narratives deny this reality of hybridity, instead creating an "Us" versus "Them" dichotomy that fosters a false notion of racial purity within Europe.[3] As Isolina Ballesteros notes, this can be seen to reveal an "anxiety over the instability of national identities within Europe and over the instability of European identity itself."[4] In Italy, this anxiety can be seen in public discourses that often reduce migrants to negative stereotypes that present a threat to national security and Italian identity. As Sara Ahmed discusses, such discourses often create a cultural politics of emotion. They use words that "create impressions of others as those who have invaded the space of the nation, threatening its existence" and

[3] Isolina Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), p. 8.
[4] Ibid., p. 10.

the normative subject is the one who becomes "hurt" by the opening up of the nation to others.[5]

Subjects are often generalised as "clandestini" (illegal immigrants), "extracomunitari" (non-Europeans) or referred to as a singular group defined by their country of origin, for example "albanesi" (Albanians) or "romeni" (Romanians). Nationalities have become intrinsically linked with negative characteristics, for example Albanians and Romanians are often reported as criminals and Nigerian women as sex-workers.[6] This kind of language creates a narrative that foreigners are morally inferior to the "Italiani brava gente" (the good Italian people) and suggests that they are a threat to social order. The threat and fear associated with immigrants is highlighted in the below tweet from Matteo Salvini in praise of the Salvini Decree:

> A step forward in making Italy safer. To fight the mafia and smugglers with more force, to reduce the costs of excessive immigration, to expel criminals and fake refugees faster, to remove citizenship from terrorists, to give more powers to law enforcement (*Rai News*, 24 September 2018).[7]

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[5] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 41, p. 56.

[6] Anna Triandafyllidou, 'Nation and Immigration: A Study of the Italian Press Discourse,' *Social Identities*, 5 (1999), 65–88 (p. 79) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13504639951626>

[7] All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated. Original quote: "Un passo in avanti per rendere l'Italia più sicura. Per combattere con più forza mafiosi e scafisti, per ridurre i costi di un'immigrazione esagerata, per espellere più velocemente delinquenti e finti profughi, per togliere la cittadinanza ai terroristi, per dare più poteri alle Forze dell'Ordine." 'Approvato Il Decreto Sicurezza. Salvini: Un Passo in Avanti per Rendere L'Italia Piu' Sicura,' *Rai News*, 24 September 2018 <http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/approvato-il-decreto-sicurezza-salvini-un-passo-in-avanti-per-rendere-italia-piu-sicura-2d7700b2-db43-4ef1-ba9e-e7546ffb660b.html?refresh_ce> [accessed 20 March 2020]
Matteo Salvini is leader of the *Lega* (the League), a right-wing anti-immigration political party. In 2018, when the Salvini Decree was passed, he was Deputy Prime Minister of Italy. The Salvini Decree abolished humanitarian protection status for migrants and made it easier to strip migrants of Italian citizenship.

Narratives such as this are not uncommon in Italy; they demonstrate a politics based on fear and securitization that defines national identity through its difference from, and superiority to, migrant (or racial) "Others." Ahmed has explored such politics of emotions, describing an "economy of fear" which functions to contain and exclude certain bodies from social space, such as the asylum seeker, whilst securing the freedoms and movements of the normative subject.[8] It is within this socio-political climate that a growing number of Italian filmmakers have engaged with the topic of immigration, reflecting the increasing visibility of and preoccupation with immigration within the public sphere. Italian cinema has long been seen to engage with questions of national identity, as echoed in Gian Piero Brunetta's words "the screen becomes a mirror of national life," in reference to post-war Italian cinema.[9] More recently, filmmakers' increased engagement with the topic of immigration to Italy, since the 1990s but more evidently post-2000s, can be seen to reveal a renewed interrogation of national identity brought about by the encounter with the "Other," that is, the immigrant.

The increased cinematic represenation of immigration is reflected in the research literature and a number of scholars have explored Italian migration cinema over the last decade or so. Amongst this research there are several notable works; for example, *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (Bullaro ed., 2010), is a collection of essays that explore the evolution of manifestations of racism in Italy, through an analysis of how cinema has documented fears and hostilities towards both Italian migrants from the South of Italy and foreign immigrants.[10] As will be

[8] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, pp. 62-81.

[9] Original quote: "lo schermo si fa specchio della vita nazionale." On the jacket blurb of Gian Piero Brunetta, *Centanni Di Cinema Italiano* (Rome: GLF editori Laterza, 2003).

[10] *From Terrone to Extracomunitario New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema: Shifting Demographics and Changing Images in a Multi-Cultural Globalized Society,* ed. by Grace Russo Bullaro (Leicester:

expanded on below, representations of both Southern Italians and foreign immigrants have postcolonial implications. In this regard, the volume *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (Lombardi-Diop & Romeo eds., 2012) provides an exploration into Italy's postcolonial condition.[11] The book examines the relationships of power created by colonialism which pervade contemporary politics, literature, music, and cinema. As discussed below, such a postcolonial framework is essential to understanding ideas of national identity that permeate public discourses today as well as themes and anxieties that emerge within this corpus of films.

Regarding the latter, Áine O'Healy discusses how transnational anxieties relating to immigration reveal themselves in Italian cinema in her book *Migrant Anxieties: Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame* (2019).[12] She provides an in-depth, comprehensive analysis of the growing number of Italian films on immigration since the 1990s.[13] Her work has a transnational methodological lens as she interrogates how Italian cinema resonates with transnational concerns and influences. It is also transnational in the sense that she questions how these films remap the national territory and evoke anxieties about mass migration and national belonging. She incorporates postcolonial, gender, race, and genre studies as she traces this shift in the symbolic reconstruction of the national landscape. She demonstrates the variety of themes that emerge in this cinema, such as the ethics of welcoming the Other and journeys of masculinity, shared economic precariousness between Italian and migrant characters,

Troubadour Pub., 2010). See also *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative,* ed. by Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver and Federico Faloppa (New York: Peter Lang, 2015).

[11] *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

[12] Áine O'Healy*, Migrant Anxieties. Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019).

[13] As O'Healy notes, there was a notable increase in these films after 2000, and the 2011 Venice Film Festival alone showed ten Italian films which involved stories featuring immigrants. O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties,* p. 2.

anxieties over Italians' whiteness, and the relationship between representations of immigration and Italy's colonial legacy, all of which are also explored to varying degrees in the following chapters.

O'Healy's work is invaluable for my own research as I will explore similar themes around questions of national identity and migrant anxieties. However, my methodological approach differs from O'Healy's and other previous works on Italian migration cinema by interrogating how emotional engagement and empathy function in relation to political and ideological narratives surrounding immigration and national identity, whilst also taking into consideration intersecting notions such as postcolonialism, gender, sexuality, and race. In doing so, I will address the following questions: how does emotional engagement and empathy contribute to challenging or reinforcing dominant narratives surrounding immigration and national identity, and subsequently, what is the ethical potential of emotional engagement? In representing perceived "Other" identities, what does Italian cinema reveal about national identity itself and how is this a reflection of the current social and political climate? And finally, how can the analysis of filmic emotion aid our evaluation of a film's level of *impegno* (social and political engagement)? The following chapter outlines the key literature on *cinema d'impegno* and the theoretical framework of emotion that underpins these questions.

This thesis, therefore, brings together and applies established theories of emotion and embodiment in the cinematic experience to allow for new understandings of how political and ideological narratives function in film. In doing so, it contributes to discussions of *cinema d'impegno* by reconsidering how socio-political narratives and emotion work together in the cinematic experience in ethically significant ways. As well as furthering discussions of *impegno,*

it also contributes to the research of cinematic emotion by applying such theories to the specific socio-political and historical context of immigration in Italy, so as to be able to concretely demonstrate the relationship between emotion and political and ideological discourses. This thesis also enriches understandings of how representations of identities, whether national or "Other," are constructed and reinforced in Italian cinema via emotional engagement, thus allowing for an ethical interrogation of depictions of immigration, national identity, and belonging.

The corpus of films analysed in this thesis, described in more detail below, were released between 2005-2018, a period in which Berlusconi's governments and subsequent centre-right coalitions had a significant impact on the policies relating to immigration and its public perception. I will now provide an outline of this socio-political and historical context of immigration to Italy within which this corpus of films is situated, and against which conceptions of national identity and belonging are (re)emerging.

1.2 Immigration to Italy

Historically, Italy has been a country of emigration rather than immigration, with approximately 26 million Italians emigrating between 1876-1976.[14] However, there was an increase in migration to Italy following the Schengen agreement in 1985 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and by the end of the 1990s Italy had one of the most diverse immigrant populations in Europe.[15] Immigration to Italy has occurred in a relatively short

[14] Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy*, p. 3.
[15] Ibid., p. 9. There have also been other more recent factors that have propelled migrations, such as the 2015 Syrian refugee crisis. It is also worth noting Schrader and Winkler's observation that a multi-ethnic society was

period of time, with the immigrant population increasing from approximately 1.5 million in 2003 to over 5 million in 2023 (figures which do not include immigrants without a legal residence permit), making Italy home to the third-largest migrant population in Europe.[16] In response to this phenomenon, the Italian government has responded with various laws aimed at regulating immigration (Legge Martelli, 1990; Turco-Napolitano, 1998; Bossi-Fini, 2002; Legge Pacchetto Sicurezza, 2009; the Salvini decree, 2018), many of which have been criticised for their inadequacy and also for contributing to a rhetoric of crisis, further fuelled by the media.

The Bossi-Fini law introduced the most restrictive measures and was brought into legislation in 2002 under Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing coalition *Casa della libertà* which included *Lega nord*, a right-wing populist party well-known for their anti-immigration sentiments. The law has been criticised for its strict measures to detain and deport migrants and its restrictive criteria for receiving a "permesso di soggiorno" (temporary residence visa). In particular, migrants now had to have a work contract to become documented and vice versa, making their legal status particularly vulnerable.[17] By criminalising illegal immigration, the law contributed to "fostering the semantic chain connecting 'immigrato,' 'clandestino,' and

already well in the making prior to this, despite being largely ignored by politicians. *The Cinemas of Italian Migration: European and Transatlantic Narratives,* ed. by Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 3.

[16] First figure taken from Bjørn Thomassen, ''Second Generation Immigrants' or 'Italians with Immigrant Parents'? Italian and European Perspectives on Immigrants and Their Children,' *Bulletin of Italian Politics*, 2 (2010), 21-44 (p. 25). Second figure taken from the Caritas-Migrantes "Immigration Report" published in *Ansa*, "Italy has third-largest migrant population in Europe: report," 30 September 2019 https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/19852/italy-has-thirdlargest-migrant-population-in-europe-report [Accessed 28 April 2023] This report also lists the foreign resident nationalities with the highest numbers as Romanian (1,206,938 people, or 23 percent of all migrants), Albanian (441,027, or 8.4 percent) and Moroccan (422,980, or 8 percent).

[17] For a more detailed overview of the restrictions imposed by the Bossi-Fini law and its contradictions, see Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 149-160.

'illegale' and reinforcing the powerful frames of 'security', 'emergency' and 'illegality'."[18] The later "Pachetto Sicurezza" (Security Package, 2009) continued such restrictive measures by criminalising irregular entry into Italy. However, as Angelo Caputo highlights, this ignores the reality that many migrants must experience a period of irregularity before they can obtain legality.[19]

Alongside such juridical practices that shape the perceived identities of migrants (as *clandestino* for example), political and public discourses surrounding immigration became increasingly alarmist from the 1990s onwards, also contributing to the public perception of migrants and their impact on Italian national security and identity. An example of this is the article published in *La Repubblica* on the then proposed Bossi-Fini law entitled "Più difficile espellere i clandestine" ("It Is Growing Harder to Expel Illegal Immigrants"). The article contained an image of two black men guarded by three policemen, alongside words such as "urgency" and "expulsion."[20] Studies into the representation of immigrants in the Italian media from the 1990s-2000s show that an alarmist rhetoric of emergency, illegality, and security emerged, in which there is also an insistence on identifying immigrants' country of origin in relation to stories of crime, and often relating them to negative and stereotypical traits.[21] For example, a 2004 study by the project Etnequal Social Communication showed media coverage

[18] Bond, Bonsaver & Faloppa, *Destination Italy*, p. 7.
[19] Angelo Caputo, 'Immigrazione e politiche del diritto dal testo unico del 1998 ai recenti interventi sulla sicurezza' in *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia,* ed. by Grazia Naletto (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2009), p. 99 <https://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rapportosulrazzismo.pdf> [Accessed 3 February 2022]
[20] Giovanna Casadio, 'Più difficile espellere i clandestini: dopo l'ordine del questore, due giorni per il sì del magistrato,' *La Repubblica*, 29 March 2002 cited in Parati, *Migration Italy*, p. 149.
[21] See for example *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia,* ed. by Grazia Naletto (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2009) <https://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rapportosulrazzismo.pdf>
See also Triandafyllidou, *Nation and Immigration* (1999). Several reports are also cited in Bond, Bonsaver & Faloppa, *Destination Italy,* pp. 5-9.

to be biased and partial as migrants were mostly shown in crime news, thus contributing to them being perceived as a threat to public order.[22] As former spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Laura Boldrini, states:

> This reluctance of the press to break away from stereotypes and to improve the quality of the narration on immigration, breaking away from the framework of landings-invasion-fear, has not helped Italians to understand what has been happening. Nor to frame the presence of migrants within the context of social evolution of the present day.[23]

Such media representations are not unique to Italy, but rather, a crisis narrative is common in European depictions of immigration in general, particularly in relation to those migrations from the Global South. In Isolina Ballesteros' book *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (2015), she highlights the racial and postcolonial implications of Europe's response to immigration, stating that the latter "provides a post-postmodern and postcolonial substitution for the concept of race" in which migrants become racialized Others who are perceived as a danger to the racial purity of Europe.[24] In fact, the political and public discourse in Italy can be shown to reveal an anxiety not only over the nation's security, but also its identity. It reinforces exclusionary conceptions of national identity in which an "Us" versus "Them" dichotomy is established which places the migrant outside of conceptions of national belonging. For

[22] Cited in Bond, Bonsaver & Faloppa, *Destination Italy*, p. 7.
[23] Original quote: "Questa riluttanza della stampa di uscire dagli stereotipi e di fare un salto di qualità nella narrazione dell'immigrazione uscendo dallo schema sbarchi-invasione-paura non ha aiutato gli italiani a comprendere quanto stava avvenendo. Né ad inquadrare la presenza dei migranti in un contesto di evoluzione sociale legato alla contemporaneità." Laura Boldrini, *Immigrazione e media, un rapporto difficile*, 26 September 2012 <https://boldrini.blogautore.repubblica.it/2012/09/immigrazione-e-media-un-rapporto-difficile/> [Accessed 3 May 2023] cited in Bond, Bonsaver & Faloppa, *Destination Italy*, p. 8.
[24] Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema*, p. 4.

example, during the 2010 election campaigns, Silvio Berlusconi said that a left-wing coalition would "open the gates to foreigners; they [the Left-Wing] don't want immigration, they want an invasion of foreigners."[25]

In general, over the last few decades the right-wing has promoted the need to protect Italians from a supposed invasion of dangerous immigrants. Such rhetoric is reinforced by policies that criminalise migrants and reduce their rights. International organisations have criticised Italy's immigration policies which are seen to break international law, such as the Salvini decree's abolishment of humanitarian protection status for migrants, inhumane treatment of migrants held in reception centres, and Italy's harsh policies on patrolling migrant boats, including returning migrants intercepted at sea to Libya, and preventing NGO boats carrying migrants from docking.[26] Italy's stance on blocking migrant vessels has become stronger over recent years, with Salvini even closing Italy's ports to NGO rescue boats. In 2019, Sea Watch captain Carola Rackete was arrested for breaking an Italian naval blockade to dock

[25] Original quote "La sinistra vuole spalancare le porte agli stranieri. Non vuole l'immigrazione ma l'invasione degli stranieri," Silvio Berlusconi in "Berlusconi: "La sinistra vuole spalancare le porte agli stranieri," *Il Tempo*, 28 February 2010 <https://www.iltempo.it/politica/2010/02/25/news/berlusconi-la-sinistra-vuole-br-spalancare-le-porte-agli-stranieri-733917/> [Accessed 3 May 2023] cited and translated in Thomassen, *Second-Generation Immigrants*, p. 23.

[26] For example, *Amnesty International* criticised Italy for its lack of reforms to improve human rights for migrants following Salvini's time in government. Emma Bonino, 'Le politiche di Salvini su immigrazione continuano anche con Conte 2, Bellanova unica novità nella direzione giusta,' *Il Riformista*, 6 June 2020 <https://www.ilriformista.it/le-politiche-di-salvini-su-immigrazione-continuano-anche-con-conte-2-bellanova-unica-novita-nella-direzione-giusta-111369/?refresh_ce> [Accessed 28 April 2023]

Following the death of 30 migrants at sea, the NGO *Alarm Phone* criticised Italian authorities for not responding to their calls for assistance. Alessandra Zitti, "un'altra strage, Italia sotto accusa: "Ventisette ore prima dei soccorsi"," *La Repubblica*, 12 March 2023 <https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2023/03/12/news/alarm_phone_persi_contatti_con_barcone_alla_deriva_dalla_libia-391701902/> [Accessed 28 April 2023]

Some reception centres for asylum seekers have been linked to organised crime and corruption, leading to centres themselves receiving little funding for food and amenities. For example, the reception centre *Cara di Mineo* has been investigated for forced prostitution and for deplorable conditions which lead to 10 asylum seekers a year dying, according to aid groups such as Amnesty International. See Barbie Latza Nadeau, ''Migrants are more profitable than drugs': how the mafia infiltrated Italy's asylum system,' *The Guardian*, 1 February 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/01/migrants-more-profitable-than-drugs-how-mafia-infiltrated-italy-asylum-system> [Accessed 2 May 2023]

a vessel carrying migrants who had been stranded at sea for 17 days.[27] A video published on *Il fatto quotidiano* shows a group of people, described in the article as *Lega* supporters, shouting insults at Rackete and the migrants as they arrive in Lampedusa. One person can be heard shouting "spero che ti violentino 'sti negri" ("I hope that these negroes rape you"), a phrase which is not only explicitly racist (as well as misogynistic), but which in particular evokes colonial discourses of racial discrimination that depict African men as sexual aggressors.[28]

Both gendered and racialised connotations permeate the public discourse on immigrants. Whilst migrant men are often viewed as a social and economic threat, women are viewed paradoxically as either submissive, victims of sexual exploitation, or threats to the traditional Italian family.[29] These ideas are particularly pervasive due to the type of labour that migrant women are typically associated with; the "badante" (domestic carer) and the sex worker.[30] As Isabella Crowhurst documents, when women primarily worked as *badanti* they were hidden from view and generally perceived as docile, however by the late 1980s migrant

[27] Given the lack of safe migration routes, search and rescue operations are vital in assisting migrants in danger when crossing the Mediterranean Sea. According to the United Nations 'Missing Migrants Project,' there have been more than 17,000 deaths and disappearances in the central Mediterranean since 2014. 'Factbox: Migrant arrivals in Italy on the rise, despite high danger,' *Reuters*, 23 February 2023 <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/migrant-arrivals-italy-rise-despite-high-danger-2023-02-26/#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20105%2C129%20migrants%20reached,The%20U.N> [Accessed 28 April 2023]

[28] 'Sea Watch, la nave entra nel porto di Lampedusa. Insulti a Carola e ai migranti: "Spero che ti violentano sti negri",' *Il fatto quotidiano*, 29 June 2019 <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/06/29/sea-watch-la-nave-entra-nel-porto-di-lampedusa-insulti-a-carola-e-ai-migranti-spero-che-ti-violentano-sti-negri/5290118/> [Accessed 2 May 2023]

[29] Regarding migrant men, for example, the politician Piergiorgio Stiffoni, at the time member of the *Lega nord*, described Romanian men as "ubriaconi, violenti, assassini, sfruttatori di minorenni e di bambini, pirati della strada" ["drunks, brutes, murderers, exploiters of minors and children, and thieves"]. *La Repubblica,* 30 April 2007 cited in Giulia Cortellesi, 'L'Uccissione Di Vanessa Russo,' in Naletto (ed.), *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia*, p. 61.

[30] For an analysis of the victim/criminal paradigm applied to migrant sex workers see Isabella Crowhurst, 'Caught in the victim/criminal paradigm: Female migrant prostitution in contemporary Italy,' *Modern Italy*, 17:4 (2012), 493-506 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2012.707000> Furthermore, for a discussion of the criminalisation of sex work and undocumented migrants, see Irene Peano, 'Excesses and double standards: Migrant prostitutes, sovereignty and exceptions in contemporary Italy,' *Modern Italy*, 17:4 (2012), 419-432 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2012.706994>

sex workers became visible figures on the streets of Italy, and they came to be perceived as a threat to the reproductive role of the Italian family by providing a sexual "alternative" to the Italian wife.[31]

Despite such hostility to immigrants, their contribution to the Italian economy is significant, especially considering the aging population, declining birth rate, and increasing emigration of young Italians.[32] Although mostly confined to certain sectors such as agriculture and construction, the immigrant workforce contributes to over 9% of Italy's GDP.[33] The Italian economy's reliance on immigrant labour became evident during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the crisis in the agricultural sector was worsened due to the reduction in the number of seasonal workers coming to Italy. As the result of a strained economy, the government passed a policy in 2021 to regularise migrants working in the agricultural and domestic work sectors, although not without much opposition from centre-right politicians.[34]

Reform in the agricultural sector is much needed due to the well documented labour exploitation of undocumented migrant workers, which led in 2010 to African workers protesting in Rosarno, Calabria (as will be explored in chapter five on Carpignano's film

[31] Crowhurst, *Caught in the victim/criminal paradigm*, pp. 496-98.

[32] According to *Politico*, 800,000 citizens left Italy following the 2009 financial crash. This number mostly comprises young, educated citizens who move abroad in the hope of finding better working opportunities, and this phenomenon has become known as the "brain drain." Stefania D'Ignoti, 'Italians See Chance to Reverse Brain Drain amid Pandemic,' *Politico*, 29 March 2021 <https://www.politico.eu/article/italy-reverse-brain-drain-coronavirus-pandemic/> [Accessed 8 September 2023]

[33] Based on data from the 2019 annual report by the Leone Moressa Foundation cited in 'Migrants in Italy Paid €18 Billion in Taxes and Social Security Dues Last Year,' *Ansa*, 15 October 2020 <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/27937/migrants-in-italy-paid-%E2%82%AC18-billion-in-taxes-and-social-security-dues-last-year> [accessed 11 September 2023]

[34] The 'Relaunch Decree,' championed by Teresa Bellanova, Minister of Agriculture and member of liberal party *Italia viva*. *La Sicilia* documents the Lega's opposition to the policy in 'Coronavirus: Lega, 'Bellanova chiami disoccupati invece di regolarizzare migranti',' *La Sicilia*, 14 April 2020 <https://www.lasicilia.it/take/ultima-ora/334973/coronavirus-lega-bellanova-chiami-disoccupati-invece-di-regolarizzare-migranti.html> [Accessed 3 May 2023]

Mediterranea). However, the move to only regularise agricultural and domestic workers, now deemed essential for the economy and Italian families respectively, supports how "the issues of immigration confronted by political institutions are disconnected from the issues facing the immigrants themselves. Institutions focus on the needs of the majority and the usefulness of a mass of migrants deprived of their individuality."[35] Taking into consideration the paradoxical reliance on immigrant labour and the laws introduced in the 2000s that increasingly restricted migrants' rights and subjectivities, Parati concludes that "the migrant exists to produce in a cultural and legal context that restricts his/her right to integrate outside the workspace. Consequently, his or her duty to produce is accompanied by a duty not to reproduce, have a family, and occupy a cultural space."[36] Thus, part of this thesis' analytical scope will be to interrogate how these dominant ideas of the migrant's non-belonging within Italian national space reveal themselves in Italian cinema, and conversely how films may expand such conceptions of belonging.

As I develop in the second part of the thesis, such exclusionary practices are not only applied to immigrants but also to their children born in Italy who, deprived of citizenship until they are eighteen, continue to be Othered, as is demonstrated by the media's insistence on describing them not as Italians, but rather by their parents' country of origin. One of the most well-known examples of this is the public treatment of footballer Mario Balotelli; born in Italy to Ghanaian parents, he was adopted by Italian parents when he was two and has lived his

[35] Parati, *Migration Italy,* p. 160. The Bossi-Fini law already made extra allowances in regard to domestic workers, allowing Italian families to hire one non-native domestic worker because immigrant domestic labour was now perceived as a necessity. Ibid., p. 156.

[36] Ibid., p.144. Such observations have also been made in relation to depictions of immigrants in Italian cinema. Derek Duncan relates the cinematic trope of the elimination of the migrant from the Italian social sphere to the valorisation of the migrant body solely as a working body. Derek Duncan, '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy', *New Cinemas* 6:3 (2008) 167–182 <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.6.3.167/1>

entire life in Italy. Despite this, he is often not considered as a real Italian but as a foreigner. He has frequently been the target of racial abuse, revealing a pervasive view that blackness is incompatible with Italianness. This is demonstrated by the several reported cases of fans chanting racist remarks aimed at Balotelli, including "there is no such thing as a black Italian."[37] Such racism is not only confined to football crowds, as attested by the publication of a cartoon portraying Balotelli as King Kong in the Italian newspaper *La Gazzetta*.[38] The rhetoric surrounding both immigrants and children of immigrants finds at its core exclusionary conceptions of national identity which reveal the entanglements of Italianness, race, gender, and sexuality established during colonialism and fascism. In order to examine the ways in which Italian cinema interrogates ideas of Italianness, it is therefore necessary to provide a brief overview of the socio-political history of the construction of the Italian national identity.

1.3 Italian National Identity

National identity here is understood in terms of a socially constructed and imagined community in which dominant images, discourses, and ideologies circulate, as posited by

[37] See for example: John Foot, 'Mario Balotelli as a black Italian national hero? Long may it last,' *La Stampa*, 29 June 2012 <https://www.lastampa.it/sport/calcio/2012/06/29/news/mario-balotelli-as-a-black-italian-national-hero-long-may-it-last-john-foot-1.37124200/> [Accessed 1 May 2023]; 'Juventus fined for insulting Balotelli chant,' *Reuters,* 24 November 2009, <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-soccer-italy-juventus-idUKTRE5AN3A720091124> [Accessed 1 May 2023]; 'Cori contro Balotelli, il capo ultrà del Verona: "Lui non sarà mai del tutto italiano. Non siamo razzisti, abbiamo un negro in squadra,' *La Repubblica*, 4 November 2019 <https://www.repubblica.it/sport/calcio/serie-a/brescia/2019/11/04/news/calcio_cori_razzisti_il_capo_ultra_del_verona_balotelli_non_potra_mai_essere_del_tutto_italiano-240201824/> [Accessed 1 May 2023]

[38] 'Euro 2012: Gazzetta sorry for cartoon of Mario Balotelli as King Kong,' *The Guardian*, 27 June 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2012/jun/27/gazzetta-cartoon-mario-balotelli-king-kong> [Accessed 1 May 2023]

Benedict Anderson[39] In particular, this thesis views the historical, symbolic, and discursive construction of national identity as intersecting with other categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion and so forth. Italian nation building became a prerogative of the leading elite during the Unification of Italy in 1861 and continued through Italy's colonial enterprise and Fascism.[40] A key factor in the development of discourses and practices surrounding Italian identity was the historical racial ambiguity of Italians themselves. Postcolonial scholars such as Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop have explored the construction of whiteness in attempts to establish a homogenised Italian identity to reinforce Italy as a unified political and economic power in Europe and to justify its colonial domination of Africans, perceived as racially inferior.[41]

A significant obstacle during the period of Unification was the lack of a collective Italian identity, since Italy had previously been comprised of several kingdoms and states with diverse cultures, histories, and languages.[42] "La questione meridionale" (the Southern question) developed due to the perceived difference and "backwardness" of the South and Southern Italians which problematised the creation of a homogenous nation.[43] The attempt to incorporate Southern Italy into a unified state has been described as a process of internal

[39] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[40] During its colonial enterprise between 1936-1943 Italy invaded Ethiopia, Libya, Somalia, Eritrea, and Albania.
[41] See Giaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero: Storia Dell'identità Razziale Degli Italiani* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2013).
[42] Angelica Pesarini, 'When the Mediterranean 'Became' Black: Diasporic Hopes and (Post)Colonial Traumas,' in *Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* ed. by Gabriele Proglio, Camilla Hawthorne, et al. (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021), p. 36.
[43] Antonio Gramsci discussed the Northern hegemony over Southern Italy in his essay 'Alcuni temi della questione meridionale,' *Stato operaio*, 4:1, January 1930
<http://www.nuovopci.it/classic/gramsci/questmer.htm> [Accessed 20 May 2023]

colonisation in which the South became regarded as a subaltern space.[44] The internal racialisation of Southern Italy was based on supposed physical and moral differences between Northern and Southern Italians, and the latter's proximity to Africa.[45] However, Italy's own Southern Mediterranean location placed it in a subaltern position within Europe itself and stirred questions of racial ambiguity, thus provoking attempts during Italy's colonial and fascist period to assert itself as a "white" nation in a constructed hierarchy of racial superiority and inferiority.[46]

Italian colonialism in the Horn of Africa revealed the impossibility of sustaining such a problematic narrative of Italian racial superiority. As Hawthorn states, "both the "racial proximity" of certain Southern Italians to their colonized African subjects and the frequency of miscegenation in the colonies were increasingly viewed as threats to the dominant racial order."[47] Therefore, the Fascist regime enacted a "whitening project" with the aim of discursively homogenising Italians within the Nation and producing the racialised "Other" outside of Italy's borders in its colonies.[48] Attempts to establish and protect the racial identity of Italians can be seen by the publication of the *Manifesto della Razza* (1938) and anti-

[44] Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, 'Paradigms of Postcoloniality in Contemporary Italy,' in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Caterina Romeo (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.1-30 (p. 4).

[45] See Pesarini, 'When the Mediterranean 'Became' Black,' for a brief overview of the internal racialisation of Southern Italians. For a comprehensive overview of the construction of the Italian racial identity, see Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero* (2013).

[46] Lombardi-Diop and Romeo have discussed Italy's (and the Mediterranean's) peripheral position in Europe, in relation to migration and new concepts of *mediterraneità*, in 'Italy's Postcolonial 'Question': Views from the Southern Frontier of Europe,' *Postcolonial Studies*, 18 (2015), 367–83 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2015.1191983>

[47] Camilla Hawthorne, 'L'Italia Meticcia? The Black Mediterranean and the Racial Cartographies of Citizenship,' in *Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship,* ed. by Gabriele Proglio, Camilla Hawthorne, et al. (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021), pp. 169-198 (p. 175).

[48] See Gaia & Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero,* for an overview of the political and ideological strategies employed to "whiten" the Italian identity.

miscegenation racial laws, as well as the circulation of colonial discourses and images.[49] In 1938 Fascist rhetoric took a more explicit stance in defining the race of Italians, identifying them as Aryans (albeit of Mediterranean origin) and enacting racial segregation laws in the colonies to ensure their supposed purity and homogeneity.[50]

It has been demonstrated, therefore, that the construction of Italian identity developed from an opposition to the racialized Other; firstly, the internal Other (the Southerner) and then the external Other (the colonised). That is, once there became an ideological and political imperative to distinguish the Southern Italian from the colonised Other, attempts were made to incorporate the former into the national body through Fascism's "whitening project" which was implemented both politically and symbolically for the purpose of delineating the "superiority" of Italians. However, as Lombardi-Diop and Romeo note, Italy is still a divided country (historically, culturally, and economically), and Southerners still pose a threat to a homogenous Italianness.[51] In fact, they continue to be racialised in similar ways to Africans and are "symbolically abjected from the European body," thus, in O'Healy's words, "Italy's new

[49] The first Fascist racial law (1937) prohibited conjugal relations between an Italian citizen and a colonial subject. However, as Pesarini highlights, these laws did not prevent the birth of black mixed-raced Italians, called *meticci*, in the colonies. In 1940, mixed-race Italians were stripped of their right to gain Italian citizenship by the introduction of specific norms. However, some mixed-race subjects from East Africa did migrate to Italy "under the special status of *profughi*, namely refugees, protected by specific laws, such as the one enacted in 1952 that helped Italians coming from the former colonies after WWII". See Pesarini, 'When the Mediterranean 'Became' Black,' pp. 35-46. Likewise, Vivian Gerrand reminds us that it was common to send Italian Somali children to Italy in the 1960s, since Somali *jus sanguinis* laws introduced in 1963 left them stateless. See Vivian Gerrand, 'Reimagining Citizenship in the Black Mediterranean: From Jus Sanguinis to Jus Soli in Contemporary Italy?' in *Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship,* ed. by Gabriele Proglio, Camilla Hawthorne, et al. (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021), pp. 199-232 (p.217). Furthermore, Sandra Ponzanesi has demonstrated how colonial representations of the Other continue to permeate contemporary Italian cultural representations in 'Edges of Empire: Italy's Postcolonial Entanglements and the Gender Legacy,' *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 16 (2016), 373–86 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1532708616638692>

[50] Gaia & Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero,* p. 60.

[51] Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, 'Italy's Postcolonial "Question",' p. 371.

migrants from Africa and other parts of the global south are destined, by implication, to share a similar abjection."[52]

During these periods, the juridical and discursive construction of the racial identity of Italians also intersected with categories of gender and sexuality. In *Bianco e Nero: storia dell'identita' razziale degli italiani* (2013), Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop provide an overview of the ideals of masculinity and femininity that were also promoted during Fascism and which became inseparable from notions of whiteness.[53] Laws and practices were enacted regarding sexuality, marriage, and reproduction; for example, the practice of *madamato* (interracial relations and cohabitation) was banned in 1937 and Italian women were brought to the colonies to avoid miscegenation.[54] The Italian woman therefore became tasked with preserving the whiteness of Italians and associated with notions of purity which were opposed to the impurity associated with black women in the colonies. Furthermore, she was to abide by the rules of patriarchy, matrimony, catholic morality and traditional models of sexuality and reproduction.

The Fascist man, on the other hand, was patriarchal and loyal to family, nation, and the Regime, and a virile, heterosexual male ideal was reinforced as part of a new national consciousness.[55] Such ideals formed part of colonial discursive practices that related masculinity to virility and conquest as local women "were often perceived as bait for the exploration of colonial fantasies and sexuality."[56] Whilst to begin with such sexual domination

[52] Áine O'Healy, 'Mediterranean Passages: Abjection and Belonging in Contemporary Italian Cinema', *California Italian Studies*, 1 (2010), 1-19 (p. 3) <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/c311008876>
[53] Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, *Bianco e Nero*, pp. 38-55.
[54] Ibid., p.48.
[55] For an exploration of Italian masculinity see also Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 10.
[56] Sandra Ponzanesi, 'Edges of Empire,' p. 376.

of local women was seen to consolidate the virility and whiteness of Italians in the colonies, it came to be seen as a dangerous racial proximity between coloniser and colonised, and was thus banned, resulting in a contradictory tension of desire and repulsion portrayed in literary and visual representations of the time which find "uncanny resemblances in contemporary culture."[57]

The continuation of Fascist notions of national identity in post-war Italian culture has been explored by Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop who, through an analysis of consumerism and advertising campaigns relating to the body, the household, and female beauty from the 1930s-1970s, show how a presumed homogenous whiteness of Italians became consolidated and interiorized.[58] They argue that the nexus between nation, race, and gender is evident in the historical and social transformations of the Italian family, which became the nucleus of white heterosexuality, and how such ideals of masculinity and femininity still pervade in contemporary society.[59]

An example of this is the 2006-2007 advertising campaign by Italian company Guaber for the washing detergent *Coloreria Italiana* for dark coloured clothes. The advert shows a white Italian woman loading a washing machine when her white male partner enters and tries to seduce her. The man, who is only wearing Y fronts and socks and is physically slight in stature, is shown to be unappealing to the woman, who throws him inside the washing machine. We are then shown the box of detergent for *Coloreria Italiana*, before a well-built

[57] Sandra Ponzanesi, 'Edges of Empire,' p. 376.
[58] For example, the advertisement *Yomo* by G. Boccasile in 1952 for a sun lotion that preserved the purity of skin-tone ("la purezza della carnagione") echoes the racial purity ("purezza della razza") promoted during fascism. Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, *Bianco e nero*, p. 111.
[59] Ibid., p. 122.

black man emerges from the washing machine as the camera zooms in on his naked torso. The man then flexes his arm muscles and the words "coloured is better" appear on the screen. This visualised sexual fantasy has clear resonances with colonial interracial desire, although the traditional gender dynamics are inverted (white woman/black man). Here, such interracial desire is not threatening to the national because it functions within the consumerist sphere. That is, the hyper-sexualised and hyper-racialised black man "activates an interracial fantasy that neither threatens nor disturbs since it is portrayed from the dominant perspective of female consumerism and white sexuality."[60]

Not only do colonial racist and stereotypical representations of the Other still permeate contemporary cultural representations,[61] but these historical dominant conceptions of Italian identity also continue to be upheld through exclusivist narratives.[62] A factor that underwrites problematic visual and discursive representations of immigrants and their children, as well as hostile anti-immigration politics, is Italy's failure to acknowledge its fascist and colonial past. As a result, there is a failure to recognise postcolonial issues such as purity, racism, and xenophobia that are related to immigration.[63] Therefore, despite Italy's diverse demographic, as referenced above, dominant media, political discourse, citizenship laws, and increased

[60] Original quote: "attiva una fantasia interrazziale che non minaccia e né disturba poiché è ritratta a partire dall'ottica dominante del consumismo femminile e della sessualità bianca." Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, *Bianco e nero*, p. 127. The advert is available on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoH7WjdQTP8> [Accessed 17 June 2023]

[61] As well as Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, Ponzanesi has also analysed how colonial representations of the Other continue to permeate contemporary Italian cultural representations in *Edges of Empire* (2016).

[62] For example, Gerrand's chapter explores three viral images which uphold dominant conceptions of Italian-ness and suggest that blackness is incompatible with Italian identity. For example, posters that were part of a 2016 campaign launched by Italian Minister of Health Beatrice Lorenzin - aimed at promoting fertility amongst Italians - juxtaposes a white family promoting "good habits" for fertility with black "bad companions." Gerrand, 'Reimagining Citizenship,' p. 204.

[63] As Ballesteros highlights, this is a common phenomenon in Europe in general. See *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (2015).

securitisation of the nation against immigrants uphold a narrow concept of Italianness and belonging within the public and official domain.

Within the realm of politics we see, for example, Matteo Salvini basing his electoral campaign on ideas of "invasion" and "ethnic substitution,"[64] and in the media we see the continued use of blackface on the major public TV network RAI aimed at Ghali, an Italian rapper of Tunisian descent.[65] The most violent consequences of such discourses and representations surrounding national belonging and immigration are the hate crimes and murders of immigrants and those deemed unwelcome "foreigners." As Lombardi-Diop and Romeo document, "hate crimes against immigrants, Muslim citizens, and Roma in Italy (the last two groups being the most vulnerable) have grown exponentially, from a total of 156 in 2011 to 998 in 2014."[66] During the period of the corpus of films here discussed, there have been numerous accounts of violence towards immigrants, at times fatal. For example, the brutal murders of six immigrants from Ghana, Liberia and Togo in Castel Volturno in 2008.[67]

At times, such violent racism is explored in films, such as *Pummarò* (Michele Placido, 1990) and *Mediterranea* (Jonas Carpignano, 2015) which, as will be discussed in chapter five, explores the protests that erupted in Rosarno after African immigrants were shot and beaten.[68] It is also the focus of documentaries such as *Va' pensiero storie ambulanti* (Dagmawi Yimer,

[64] Pesarini, 'When the Mediterranean "Became" Black,' p. 33.
[65] Actor Sergio Muniz performed blackface to impersonate rapper Ghali on the Italian TV programme *Tale e quale*, aired on *Rai* on 18 November 2020. The show has featured blackface several times since its launch in 2012. Michela Ardizzoni, 'IMAG(in)Ing Blackness in Italy: Redactions, Presence, and Media in Antonio Dikele Distefano's Work', *Italian Culture*, 39 (2021), 223–39 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01614622.2021.2014663>
[66] Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 'Italy's Postcolonial 'Question',' p. 374.
[67] Cited in Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, *Bianco e nero*, p. 130.
[68] John Hooper, 'Racial violence continues in Italy as four migrant workers wounded in shootings,' *The Guardian*, 9 January 2010 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/08/standoff-italy-four-africans-wounded> [Accessed 17/06/2023]

2013), which recounts the 2011 racial attacks in Florence when a right-wing extremist opened fire on African street sellers, killing two and injuring others.[69]

As the above suggests, it is pertinent to bring attention to how current discussions of immigration and Italian citizenship are shaped by the legacies of colonialism and fascism. Hawthorne, for example, describes the current Italian citizenship law, Law no. 91, which was enacted in 1992, a time when Italy was transitioning into a country of immigration, as a reinforcement of the principle of *jus sanguinis* from the 1912 Italian citizenship law, making it harder for immigrants and their Italian-born children to naturalize.[70] In fact, the current law denies citizenship to Italian born children of immigrants, since citizenship can only be acquired through *jus sanguinis*, that is, Italian bloodline. For the purpose of this thesis, I will refer to children of immigrants, either born or raised in Italy, as first-generation Italians. This is because, as the activist network *Rete G2* notes, these subjects are neither immigrants themselves nor did they voluntarily migrate and are therefore the second generation of a process of migration, not second-generation *immigrants* per se.[71] Furthermore, as Thomassen has highlighted, such terminology perpetuates difference and is also at odds with how subjects actually refer to themselves.[72] Lastly, "first-generation Italians" defies the dominant exclusionary discourses and practices that do not recognise their *Italianità*.

[69]As reported, for example, in the following news article: Silvia Ognibene, 'Italian Kills Two Africans in Apparent Racist Attack', *Reuters*, 13 December 2011 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-florence-shooting-idUKTRE7BC1OR20111213> [Accessed 11 September 2023]

[70] Hawthorne, 'L'Italia Meticcia?,' p. 176.

[71] *Rete G2* is a national organisation established by children of immigrants born and/or raised in Italy, and it campaigns for citizenship rights for such subjects. <https://www.secondegenerazioni.it/> [Accessed 11 May 2022]

[72] Thomassen, 'Second Generation Immigrants' (2010).

First-generation Italians can apply for citizenship when they are eighteen years old, but there are several impediments, such as only having a year within which to apply and proving uninterrupted residence in Italy. Therefore, children of immigrants are deprived of opportunities afforded to Italian citizens, and their legal status is precarious since certain predicaments, such as their parents' employment status, could jeopardize their "permesso di soggiorno" (residence permit).[73] Such citizenship laws exclude a significant proportion of the population: in 2022, the Italian Ministry of Education published a report that documented 865,388 students with no Italian citizenship enrolled in schools (10.3% of the total student population), and that 2 out of 3 were Italian born.[74] Furthermore, Italy is home to over 1 million immigrants aged 18-30 - some of whom arrived in Italy during school age - and a further 4 million immigrants who had been present for over 5 years.[75] Activist groups which have campaigned for inclusive citizenship, such as that based on the principle *of jus soli*, have gained traction over the last two decades, with the establishment of *Rete G2* in 2005. In 2013, the topic of citizenship rights for first-generation Italians became notable in the public sphere.[76] The campaign for reform gained strong media and political support and the laws were

[73] These experiences are evidenced in civil rights activist Fred Kudjo Kuwornu's documentary *18 Ius Soli: il diritto di essere Italiani* (2011). In the documentary, we hear first-hand stories from young people who were born or grew up in Italy with immigrant parents and who identify as Italian, despite not being legally recognised as such. Amongst other things, they explain the detrimental effect that this has on their lives, for example they cannot go on school trips or compete in sports for Italy. Furthermore, they could even face deportation if they do not have and maintain a job when they turn eighteen, since their residence permit depends on employment. The documentary also includes anecdotes about the long waiting times when applying for citizenship, as well as application rejections. Crucially, Kuwornu intercuts conversations with these young people with scenes that describe the stories of boxer John Jacovacci and partisan Giorgio Marincola, born in Belgian Congo and Italian Somalia respectively, to Italian men and local women. Such footage explicitly binds contemporary immigration and citizenship struggles to the legacies of colonialism.

[74] 'Italy: Minors with immigrant background at school,' *European Commission*, 17 September 2022 <https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/library-document/italy-minors-immigrant-background-school_en> [Accessed 20 December 2023]

[75] Figures from 2017. Leonardo De Franceschi, *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta: le seconde generazioni in Italia fra cinema e serialità* (Canterano , RM: Aracne editrice, 2018), p. 13.

[76] Ibid., p. 165.

approved in the lower house, however they never made it to legislation and were set aside in 2017.[77]

Such exclusionary practices that place immigrants (and their children) outside of the nation can be seen as a continuation of the above discussed attempts to produce a homogenized, white, heteronormative Italian identity which was reinforced during the colonial and fascist period. For example, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo describe postcolonial societies as reproducing racialisation of and racism toward the migrant subject in order to defend a white, Christian European identity and how - in relation to Italy specifically - the flows of migration toward the country have again evidenced its peripheral position within Europe.[78] In other words, Italian immigration and citizenship laws (and hostility towards immigrants in general) can be understood as a continuation of the discursive and symbolic construction of the Italian identity as white. Or, as has been discussed extensively in *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship* (2021), as the result of considering blackness and Italian citizenship as mutually exclusive. As Hawthorne persuasively argues, the framework of the Black Mediterranean allows us to consider the entanglements of race, migration, and citizenship.[79] That is to say, not only have migratory flows to Italy been produced and shaped by economic and social factors produced by Italy's (and more generally Europe's) colonial past, but Italy's response to immigration and the current citizenship struggles of first-generation Italians are

[77] Gerrand, 'Reimagining Citizenship,' p. 201.
[78] Lombardi-Diop & Romeo*, '*Italy's Postcolonial 'Question'' p. 367. Ballesteros has also noted similarly in relation to Europe in general, stating that the anti-foreigner rhetoric of populist campaigns and "opposition to immigrants and the EU denote a Eurocentric anxiety over the instability of national identities within Europe and over the instability of European identity itself." Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema,* p. 10.
[79] Rather than considering the ways in which race has defined whiteness, the Mediterranean and Italian-ness, the framework of *The Black Mediterranean* (2021) instead explores the place of blackness within Italy in the hopes of offering a Black politics that reclaims Mediterranean space.

also tied to anxieties over the precarious whiteness of the Italian nation that emerged during this period.[80]

1.4 Identity and Cinematic Representation

The relationship between Italian masculinity and national identity is particularly relevant in a corpus of films in which migration is often framed in narratives that centre around Italian men. As the above overview outlines, conceptions of Italian national identity intersect with notions of gender, race, and sexuality, which themselves are taken to be socially and historically contingent and discursively produced. The following film analyses base themselves in such understandings of identity, exploring the cinematic construction of identity in relation to theories that define identity as being produced by and gaining signification through cultural, social, political, and discursive structures of power.

Judith Butler's work is key in such discussions of identity; in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) she argues that gender is constituted by the repetition of acts.[81] That is, identity is not some interior origin but is *produced* through signifying practices which render subjects culturally intelligible and, compelled by social sanction and taboo, maintain gender within a binary frame. However, that heterosexuality is compelled to repeat itself reveals the instability of identity and allows for agency, or the possibility of variation, to emerge. Butler also posits that identity is constructed in relation to its others and operates through exclusion, for example, heterosexual identities are dependent on the

[80] Migrants travelling to Italy also come from ex-colonies of other European countries.
[81] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002 [1999]).

production of abjected homosexual identities. As Butler writes, "the "unthinkable" is thus fully within culture, but fully excluded from *dominant* culture."[82] As will be examined in more detail in chapter seven, Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theorisation of the nation functions through a performative process of narration and re-narration of the past in the present to ensure a repetition of the same, but in doing so runs the risk of being ungrounded, and therefore demonstrates a similar fragility to that of Butler's gender identity.[83] In this case, rather than allowing for the subversion of a compulsory heterosexual identity, such a repetition creates a time-lag through which postcolonial and diasporic populations may emerge to unground the dominant view of the nation.

These theories inform the conceptions of identity explored in this thesis, in which intersecting identity categories relating to national identity are understood as being constructed in relation to their Others, as being produced within discourse and power relations, and as being subject to repetition as well as renegotiation and resignification. In this regard, Stuart Hall argues that identification is a discursive process that is constructed in "relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside*[...]"[84] It is a production that is always in process and never complete, which involves discursive work to mark symbolic boundaries and therefore operates through difference and exclusion. Significantly, Hall argues that identity is constituted not without but *within* representation, and cinema should thus be conceived of "as that form of

[82] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 99.
[83] Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291–322; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, [1994] 2004).
[84] Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?,' in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall (Los Angeles, California: Sage, 2011), pp. 1-17 (p. 4).

representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects."[85] This thesis therefore aims to explore how depictions of immigration and of characters from outside of Italy's borders function in relation to defining the boundaries of hegemonic conceptions of national identity. In doing so, films are analysed for the discursive work they carry out in marking the unstable boundaries of national identity, as well as for the ways in which they reveal the potential for redefining dominant cultural representations of identity.

Under particular scrutiny throughout this thesis is the figure of the white heterosexual Italian man which historically has been a staple figure of Italian cinema, and how he is taken to be universal and synonymous with nation. As Rehling has observed, this reflects the tendency in Western societies to correlate white, heterosexual masculinity with nation.[86] Despite his ubiquitousness in Italian cinema, his figure has remained relatively unscrutinised, with the exception of some notable works (Reich 2004; Gunsberg 2005; O'Rawe 2014).[87] As Catherine O'Rawe has highlighted, it is because these "males' bodies are (seemingly naturally) raced, gendered, and sexualized" that whiteness, heterosexuality, and masculinity as a construct become invisible and presumed universal.[88]

Often identified as the *Italiano medio,* or the "everyday man," this figure has been particularly associated with Italian comedy (as will be explored in chapter eight) but is predominant throughout Italian cinema. In Sergio Rigoletto's analysis of the *Italiano medio* in

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[85] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation,' *Framework*, 1989, 68–82 (p. 80) <http://dx.doi.org/https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/cultural-identity-cinematic-representation/docview/1311784516/se-2?accountid=8630>

[86] Nicola Rehling, *Extra-Ordinary Men: White Heterosexual Masculinity and Contemporary Popular Cinema* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), p. 10.

[87] Maggie Günsberg, *Italian Cinema: Gender and Genre* (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2005); Catherine O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004).

[88] O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities*, p. 10.

the films *La Dolce Vita* (Fellini, 1960) and *Il Sorpasso* (Risi, 1962), he concludes that although the figure was presented as an "inclusive" character, meant to reflect the socially shared values of "normal" Italian people, he was actually an exclusionary character that defended the interests of heterosexual masculinity by excluding women and marginalising homosexuality.[89] In addition to this, whiteness (intended as a construct) should be added as a defining characteristic of the *Italiano medio* which still pervades Italian cinema and upholds hegemonic conceptions of masculinity and *Italianità*, and in doing so marginalises non-white populations. Thus, the dominant cinematic depiction of Italianness will be treated as a construct that often naturalises and universalises particular gendered, raced, and sexual categories. The thesis will draw out the ways in which these categories intersect with each other and with ideas of national identity, and in particular how they are constructed in relation to their others through the figure of the immigrant.

The thesis will therefore also interrogate how films represent the immigrant from a postcolonial perspective that sees contemporary representations of Otherness as being situated within the broader historical, political, and cultural context of Italy's and Europe's colonial legacies. Following Edward Said's notable demonstration of Europe's construction of a stereotypical image of "the Orient" through a discourse that produced a racialized knowledge of the Other, this thesis will interrogate the discursive construction of the racialized Other and how films reveal the enduring legacies of colonial discourses whilst also seemingly attempting to encourage compassion and solidarity with immigrants.[90]

[89] Sergio Rigoletto, "The Italian Comedy of the Economic Miracle: L'Italiano Medio and Strategies of Gender Exclusion", *Italy on Screen: National Identity and Italian Imaginary,* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 33-48.
[90] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, [1978] 2014).

Within this thesis, race is intended as a historically contingent social construct which intersects with different categories such as nationality, sexuality, gender, class, religion and so forth. Étienne Balibar identified a form of neo-racism, based on cultural rather than biological differences, which developed with the rise of immigration in postcolonial Europe.[91] Ballesteros references this concept to describe how the racialized immigrant is perceived as a threat to the racial purity of Europe, revealing a Eurocentric anxiety over the instability of national identities.[92] With regard specifically to films made by socially conscious white European nationals, she writes that their "ethical commitment is in many cases less about the nonwhite Other than it is about crises in national identities and how they are articulated both publicly and privately."[93] In a corpus of films made predominantly by white Italian filmmakers, such observations are particularly relevant to this thesis and also recall O'Healy's work which interrogates transnational anxieties triggered by immigration.[94]

Despite its history, scholars have noted Italy's suppression of its colonial heritage, referring to it as a kind of postcolonial amnesia. As Angelo Del Boca writes, "the lack of debate on colonialism and the failure to condemn its most brutal aspects have promoted Italy's denial of its colonial faults."[95] Consequently, few studies actually interrogate the postcolonial implications of racial construction in films about migration.[96] Derek Duncan brings attention

[91] Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein*, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities,* trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 20-27.
[92] Ballesteros, *Immigration cinema*, pp. 10-11.
[93] Ibid.*,* p. 17.
[94] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties* (2019).
[95] Angelo Del Boca, 'The Myths, Suppressions, Denials and Defaults of Italian Colonialism,' in *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture From Post-Unification to Present* ed. by Patrizia Palumbo (London: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 17-36 (p.19).
[96] Áine O'Healy, 'Screening Intimacy and Racial Difference in Postcolonial Italy,' in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity,* ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 205-220 (p. 205).

to this in his article 'Italy's Postcolonial Cinema and its Histories of Representation,' in which he argues for the need to critically examine films about immigration in terms of how they racialize the non-Italian subject.[97] Through an analysis of the film *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004) he discusses the racialization of the Albanian subject and the cinematic modes of constructing whiteness. In this film, the Albanian protagonist Saimir ultimately rejects his Albanian identity, leading Duncan to question if within Italian cinema "representations of the migrant subject rework and expand narratives of national belonging" or whether they actually reaffirm an exclusive Italian identity.[98] Indeed, representations of non-Italian characters often do have an underlying ambivalence, as discussed in the works of O'Healy. For example, in her analysis of films that depict interracial relationships between African women and Italian men, she notes how they "simultaneously resist and reinforce racial, ethnic and national boundaries."[99] In this regard, representations of African women expose the sexual implications of racial difference that colonial discourse set forth, for example through iconography of the sexually available Black Venus.

These works support the need for further investigation into the ways in which (post)colonial discourses and ideologies inform the representations of migrant and Italian characters in Italian cinema. Even in socially conscious films which attempt to oppose exclusionary or harmful narratives surrounding immigration, there is often an ambivalence in their representation of Otherness that reveals tensions between the persisting legacies of colonialism and attempts to resist such discourses, as well as enduring dominant conceptions

[97] Derek Duncan, 'Italy's Postcolonial Cinema and Its Histories of Representation,' *Italian Studies,* 63 (2008), 195–211 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/007516308x344351>
[98] Ibid., p. 196.
[99] O'Healy, 'Screening Intimacy,' p. 206.

of Italianness. However, as will be argued in this thesis, some films do ethically problematise limited conceptions of national identity and expand narratives of national belonging through their representation of the migrant.

1.5 Thesis Structure: Italian Migration Cinema

I have defined the fiction films within this thesis as belonging to a corpus that I will refer to as "Italian Migration Cinema."[100] This terminology for such films is not intended to denote a body of cinema with similar narrative or stylistic attributes, since these films display heterogenous characteristics in terms of genre, aesthetics, filming convention, narrative, and even language. Rather, it is applied thematically to incorporate the wide-ranging category of films that in some way address the experiences of migrants and their children in phases of immigration and postmigration, including both films made by migrant and diasporic filmmakers and white Italian filmmakers.[101] This allows for an approach that considers the diverse ways in which films may emotionally engage spectators, as well as being able to comparatively observe the narrative and aesthetic techniques and thematic threads that run through these stories that involve migration.

In fact, despite the heterogenous nature of this body of work, there are some themes that present themselves frequently, such as transnationalism, border-crossing, irregular immigration, marginalisation, precarity, crime, and multi-ethnic cohabitation. There are also films within this corpus that share narrative and/or stylistic conventions, such as those that

[100] Bullaro also refers to this corpus as "migration cinema." See Bullaro, *From Terrone to Extracomunitario* (2010).
[101] Although outside of the remit of this thesis, there are also several documentaries that explore immigration, such as Gianfranco Rosi's critically acclaimed *Fuoco a mare* (2016).

rely on techniques that reinforce a sense of social realism. In general, there is often a hybridization of genres, with many incorporating aspects of the melodramatic, as O'Healy has highlighted.[102]

As referenced above, Nathan has termed these films as belonging to a "New Migrant Cinema," however, migrant cinema suggests that migrants themselves are central to these narratives. As will be discussed, in many films migrant characters remain ancillary and the narrative focuses predominantly on the actions and development of the Italian characters. Such films still provide fruitful analyses of the ways in which immigration is used to speak (knowingly or not) to conceptions of the national and how cinema constructs identities in relation to hegemonic discourses. Thus, I opt to use the word migration, to underscore that the migrant *per se* is not always central to such narratives, but rather the effects that transnational migrations have on understandings and representations of the Self in relation to the Other. It must be noted in this regard, that the majority of films in this corpus are directed by white Italian filmmakers (most often men), with the presence of migrant and diasporic filmmakers in Italy being rather small.[103] Some notable exceptions within this corpus are *Io, l'altro* (Mohsen Melliti, 2007), *Sta per piovere* (Haider Rashid, 2013), *Io Rom, romantica* (Laura Halilovic, 2014), *Per un figlio* (Suranga Deshapriya Katugampala, 2016), *Bangla* (Phaim Bhuiyan, 2019), and *Autumn Beat* (Antonio Dikele Distefano, 2022). In addition, chapter five analyses the work of Jonas Carpignano, the critically acclaimed filmmaker whose own background transcends national borders; born in America, he is the son of an Italian father

[102] See in particular 'Chapter 6: Living with Difference: From Noir to Melodrama' in O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, pp. 178-212.
[103] Migrant and diasporic filmmakers and the barriers they face will be discussed in more detail in the second part of the thesis.

and an American mother of Barbadian origins, and he grew up spending extensive periods in Rome. This is reflected in a film that stands out within this corpus for the innovative manner in which it represents the migrant experience; a film which, as O'Healy describes, "might best be described as a transnational film."[104]

Nonetheless, the predominance of films made by white Italian filmmakers that choose to explore the topic of migration and the experiences of immigrants and their children within Italy reflects certain tendencies that suggest that many of these films are intended for a white Italian (or European) audience. As Sandra Ponzanesi argues, films such as *Pummarò* (Michele Placido, 1990) and *Un'anima divisa in due* (Silvio Soldini, 1993) "are intentionally made for a white Italian audience intrigued by the "other" but not yet well equipped for its understanding."[105] In this regard, this thesis will explore the ways in which emotion may support a didactic function by promoting certain ethics, beliefs, and ideologies in relation to wider social and political issues. For example, chapter three explores how an ethic of welcoming the Other is promoted through compassion, and chapter eight considers how comedy may be used to educate about diversity.

The growing interest in depictions of migration in Italian cinema has been documented by the *Italian Cinema and Immigration Database* which notes an increase from twenty-one films on migration in the decade 1990-1999 to fifty-nine between 2000 and 2010.[106] On a

[104] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 218.
[105] Sandra Ponzanesi, 'Outlandish Cinema: Screening the Other in Italy', in *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe* ed. by Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005), pp. 248-260 (p. 251).
[106] These figures were taken in February 2012. For a list of films released between 1980-2010 see the *Italian Cinema and Immigration Database* (Italian Studies at Oxford), available here: https://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/mml_apps/italian_movies/ [Accessed 13 July 2021]. Under the website's general information, it is noted that "the basic criteria in the choice of the corpus is related to the status of the protagonists. If at least one of the protagonists is a post-1980 immigrant the film has been included in the Database."

rudimentary level, this growth can be attributed to the increase in immigration to Italy which has increasingly become a topic of public debate and media coverage over the past few decades. These films, however, offer more than a simplistic documentation of this phenomenon as they work to symbolically construct, challenge, or reinforce conceptions of national identity and belongingness, often revealing underlying anxieties related to immigration, as O'Healy has explored in a transnational context.[107]

As noted above, migration is a long-established phenomenon within Italian history, with emigration increasing around the turn of the 20th Century and many Italians migrating from South to North in the post-war period. Such migrations of Italians were interpreted in Italian post-war cinema with neorealist films such as *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (Luchino Visconti, 1960) and have continued to inspire narratives over the years in a variety of films such as *Nuovomondo* (Emanuele Crialese, 2006), *Benvenuti al nord* (Luca Miniero, 2012) and *Qua vado?* (Gennaro Nunziante, 2016). The 1990s saw a development from films exploring topics of Italian migration to those of immigration, with many re-calling neorealistic aesthetics and traits and demonstrating a socio-political imperative typical of *cinema d'impegno* (discussed in more detail in the following literature review). For example, Placido's *Pummarò* (1990) resonates with the real story of Jerry Masslo, a South African refugee living in Italy who was murdered in 1989, sparking anti-racist protests and leading to the recognition of refugee status for non-Europeans implemented by the Martelli Law (Law 39/1990). Reminiscent of Jerry Masslo's life story, the protagonist of *Pummarò*, Kwaku, is also a tomato-picker working in

[107] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties* (2019).

harsh conditions and the victim of discrimination and racially motivated attacks.[108] However, despite its sympathetic portrayal of irregular immigration, the film also incorporates exclusionary tropes that persist throughout this corpus of films, such as the eroticization of African characters, the doomed nature of interracial relationships, and the eventual expulsion of the immigrant from Italy. O'Healy has discussed the ambivalence inherent in such cinematic representations, relating the disavowal of the inclusion of African characters in Italian society to "broader cultural concerns about the displacement of Italian whiteness as the authentic core of national identity."[109]

Indeed, the self-conscious socio-political engagement (or *impegno*) of many of the films on migration is evident through their seemingly sympathetic portrayals of immigrants and critique of discriminatory anti-immigration rhetoric and policies. Nonetheless, many simultaneously remain ambivalent in their portrayal of the immigrant's belonging in national borders and reproduce stereotypical discourses and exclusionary conceptions of national identity. Chapter three explores this ambivalence in relation to two of the more internationally successful films within this corpus; *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* and *Terraferma*. Both of these films can be seen as contemporary expressions of *cinema d'impegno*, or a form of neo-neorealism, in that they address societal issues, the experiences of marginalized people and political critique.[110] *Terraferma* in particular harks back to post-war neorealism in its focus

[108] Following this, Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* (1994) relates immigration to Italy's own history of emigration (and its colonial past) in ways that question the self-other distinction, bringing into focus conceptions of national identity and alterity.
[109] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 102.
[110] This definition of neo-neorealism is supported in Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler, 'Introduction', in *The Cinemas of Italian Migration: European and Transatlantic Narratives*, ed. by Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), p. 12.

on regionalism, local dialects, the Italian working-class and its use of non-professional actors, as well as its self-conscious parallels with Luchino Visconti's *La terra trema* (1948).[111]

These films question harsh anti-immigration policies, promote an ethic of care toward the Other, and support humanitarianism through empathy and compassion.[112] This chapter therefore explores how emotional engagement contributes to the ethical and didactic dimensions of their *impegno* (socio-political commitment), which has typically been overlooked by scholarship. However, as is common in films on migration made by white Italian directors, the films focus on the journey of the Italian protagonists. In particular, they depict the coming-of-age of young male Italians, reflecting the predominance of male, patriarchal cinematic reflections of national identity inherent in this corpus.[113] Through depictions of compassion and guilt, the migrant predominantly becomes a tool for the formation of a hospitable, responsible national subject. This chapter therefore also analyses filmic emotion to demonstrate the paradoxes inherent in these films and the limitations of their *impegno*, since the different ways in which the spectator is encouraged to emotionally engage and empathise with the Italian and migrant characters limits the subjectivities of the latter and perpetuates postcolonial stereotypes and power dynamics.

These films demonstrate themes that are often associated with representations of immigration, for example in *Terraferma*, the marginalization and precarity of migrants is related to that of Southern Italians themselves. The depiction of migrant characters alongside

[111] The title of Crialese's film is a near homonym of that of Visconti, which knowingly nods to the similarities between the films; like *La terra trema*, Crialese's film also focuses on the lives of precarious working-class fishermen and their daily struggles with hegemonic power structures.
[112] Several other films take policies that affect immigrants as their subject matter, such as *L'articolo 2* (Maurizio Zaccaro, 1993), *Sta per piovere* (Haider Rashid, 2013), and *Le ordine delle cose* (Andrea Segre, 2017).
[113] O'Healy highlights "the predominantly male, patriarchal, and homosocial thrust of these narratives of migration" in *Mediterranean Passages*, p. 18.

Italian characters to reinforce a sense of shared precarity or marginalization is evident in several other films, such as *Fame chimica* (Antonio Bocola & Paolo Vari, 2003), *La nostra vita* (Daniele Luchetti, 2010), *Gli ultimi saranno ultimi* (Massimiliano Bruno, 2015), and *La vita davanti a sé* (Edoardo Ponti, 2020). Quite often, as with *Terraferma*, it is the social marginalization and precarity of *Southern* Italians in particular that is emphasised.[114] This is also the case in the two films analysed in chapter four; *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* ('Cover Boy: the Last Revolution,' Carmine Amoroso, 2006) and *Fiore gemello* ('Twin Flower,' Laura Luchetti, 2018). In other films such as *Nessuno mi può giudicare* (Massimiliano Bruno, 2011) and *Il vizio della speranza* (Edoardo de Angelis, 2018) the experiences of migrants remain a subtext within a narrative that focuses predominantly on the plight of Italian characters. However, the films discussed in chapter four put the relationship between a migrant and an Italian character at the centre of their narratives to explore shared experiences of precarity, marginalization, and solidarity.

Both films demonstrate a hybridization of genres which is reflective of the wide variety of narrative and aesthetic techniques that are employed in Italian migration cinema in general. *Cover boy*, for example, incorporates both documentary aesthetics and the melodramatic in a narrative that frames the personal lives of the protagonists within a larger context of socio-political critique, reflective of a *cinema d'impegno*. *Fiore gemello*, on the other hand, demonstrates aspects of the road-movie, romance, and melodrama whilst also echoing the tradition of neorealism through its use of non-professional actors, plurilingual dialogue, and on-location shooting. These films are analysed here for their depiction of empathy between

[114] Other films that also show this theme are *Tornando a casa* (Vincenzo Marra, 2001), *Into paradiso* (Paola Randi, 2010), and *Il vizio della Speranza* (Edoardo De Angelis, 2018).

precarious, vulnerable subjects as a means of forming solidarity and how the cinematic ethical experience is shaped by emotional engagement. In particular, it is argued that through the foregrounding of alternative emotional and affective relationships, these films allow the spectator to imagine queer identities and forms of belonging within the national space.

Queerness is a theme that presents itself in several of the Italian films on migration. Within this thesis, queerness is not defined by rigid terms of same-sex desire (although this does present itself in some films like *Cover boy*), but rather intends the more capacious understanding that situates queerness outside of the normative limits of national identity. As Derek Duncan has identified, even seemingly heterosexual migrant men are queered in Italian cinema by the unreproductive nature of their relationships with Italian women and their divergence from the heteronormative family.[115] If we take Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin's argument that "queer can be used to describe any sexuality not defined as heterosexual procreative monogamy," then often it is not only migrant men, but also migrant women who embody a queerness in relation to heteronormative conceptions of Italianness, for example through being situated outside of the heteronormative monogamous relationship through their representation as sex-workers or their "doomed" relationships with Italians.[116] Furthermore, they not only exhibit alterity in relation to normativities of sexuality but also of

[115] Derek Duncan, '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy', *New Cinemas* 6:3 (2008), 167–182 (p. 170) <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.6.3.167/1>

[116] Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin, *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004), p. 1. Regarding migrant women, for example, films such as *Vesna va veloce* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996) and *La sconosciuta* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 2006) depict the migrant woman outside of heteronormative familial belonging through their depiction of the migrant woman as predominantly performing sexual and reproductive labour outside of the monogamous relationship and their doomed relationships with Italian men. Films such as *Teste rasate* (Claudio Fragrasso, 1993), *Un anima divisa in due* (Silvio Soldini, 1993), and *Sud side stori* (Roberta Torre, 2000) also depict failed relationships between migrant women and Italian men. O'Healy has discussed such doomed relationships which ensure no "risk" of miscegenation. See 'Chapter 3: African Immigration in the 1990s' in *Migrant Anxieties*, pp. 78-107.

race, since they conflict with the hegemonic conceptions of a white Italian identity, as discussed above.[117]

The cinematic queering of characters through the nexus of sexuality and race is evident, for example, in *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004) and *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Claudio Giovannesi, 2012). Furthermore, many films depict immigrants as socially abject; confined to borders and peripheral spaces, they are mobile subjects who are often symbolically or literally placed outside of spaces of national belonging.[118] Therefore, in cinematic representation the migrant's queerness "insists on an enduring alterity that cannot be assimilated into the national body."[119]

Within this thesis, the term queer is applied not only as a means of analysing the depiction of the migrant's embodiment of Otherness, but also as a means of understanding how the migrant's presence challenges dominant notions of identity and nation. Chapter five, for example, explores how Italy is queered by migrants in Carpignano's *Mediterranea* (2015), intended "in the more general theoretical and political sense of queering and subverting fixed notions of identity such as the family and nation."[120] The queer potentialities of the migrant figure in cinema have been explored in works such as *Queering the Migrant in Contemporary European Cinema* (Williams ed., 2020), in which the term queer is returned to "its earlier

[117] For example, through an analysis of *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004), Duncan considers how the representation of Albanians "in Italian cinema depends on racialized notions of identity and of ways of looking that position them as non-white." Derek Ducan, 'Italy's Postcolonial Cinema and Its Histories of Representation', *Italian Studies*, 63 (2008), 195–211 (p. 201) http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/007516308x344351

[118] The socially abject, as theorised by Imogen Tyler, are the "waste populations" created by the state that become marginalised and excluded from societies, but which function to legitimize power structures. Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain*, (London: Zed Books, 2013).

[119] Duncan, 'Loving Geographies,' p. 170.

[120] J.S. Williams, 'Queering the migrant Being beyond borders,' in *Queering the Migrant in Contemporary European Cinema* ed. by J.S. Williams (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 3-30 (p. 12).

oppositional force with the capacity to challenge normalising mechanisms of power, including that of the state" so as to question if "European films about migration (whether gay or straight), which undermine ideologically fixed and objectifying notions (e.g. the migrant as Europe's negative other), serve also to queer the very notion of Europe?"[121]

Similarly, *Mediterranea* serves as an example of how fixed notions of the nation, national belonging, and *Italianità* are brought into question through the intimate portrayal of a migrant community living in Rosarno, Southern Italy. The film interprets the 2010 protests led by predominantly African crop-pickers in response to the shooting of two African workers, as well as poor living and working conditions. Carpignano offers a counter-narrative to the media response that focused on the danger that the protests posed to locals by instead centring the perspective of the immigrant community. It follows films such as *Gomorrah* (Matteo Garrone, 2008), *Io sono Li* (Andrea Segre, 2011), and *Là-Bas: educazione criminale* (Guido Lombardi, 2012), which likewise frame immigration within the context of exploitation and organized crime. The chapter demonstrates how the film allows the spectator to empathise with migrant characters in a way that reveals the oppressive racialized and gendered structures that shape their lived experiences. However, it opposes the trope of victimhood through its portrayal of the immigrant community's anger and resistance to such structures in a way that subverts exclusionary ideas of national belonging. Therefore, emotional engagement is shown to contribute to our critical awareness of the film's socio-political engagement.

[121] Williams, 'Queering the migrant,' pp. 12-13.

Chapter six introduces the second part of the thesis which focuses on the representations of diasporic subjects in Italy who are either children of immigrant parents, or migrants themselves who arrived in Italy at a young age. The reasons for approaching this area of analysis are twofold: firstly, the growing population of first-generation Italians is a reality that increasingly complicates limited conceptions of Italian national identity and demands political and juridical recognition in Italian society. Over the last two decades, Italian cinema has slowly begun to reflect the growing presence of first-generation Italians and their experiences, and therefore this marks an important area of analysis, in particular in relation to representations of national identity. Secondly, both cinematic representations and real socio-political factors that shape the experiences of first-generation Italians are intimately bound to the historical, political, and social conditions underpinning contemporary migration to Italy and circulating public discourses on the matter, as discussed above.

Chapter seven analyses Claudio Noce's *Good morning Aman* (2009), which depicts the experiences of Aman, a young Somalian man who moved to Italy as a child, and his ambiguous relationship with Teodoro, an older white Italian man. The film finds thematic similarities with others that likewise explore the experiences of young diasporic men, such as *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004), *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Claudio Giovannesi, 2012) and *Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui* (Vittorio Moroni, 2013). *Good morning Aman* shares several similar themes with these films, such as queerness, identity conflicts, homosocial bonding, homoerotic desire, and social marginalisation. Within these films (and others on migration), Italy's postcolonial condition emerges to varying degrees, however *Good morning Aman* offers a unique example of how a fragmented temporal structure and deferred meaning of images contribute to its ability to engage with postcolonial questions of identity and how this impacts the empathic

relationship between spectator and film.[122] In particular, the chapter demonstrates how the film conveys a sense of postcolonial ambivalence by ungrounding one dominant national narrative, allowing for an ethical encounter with immigrant and diasporic populations who are marginalised from hegemonic discourses of Italian national identity and belonging.

The final analytical chapter of this thesis continues its enquiry of films that depict children of immigrants living in Italy by analysing the romantic comedy *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* ('Chocolate Kisses,' Alessio Maria Federici, 2011). As will be further outlined in the chapter, the comedy genre has often been overlooked within Italian cinema studies despite its enduring popularity with Italian audiences. This chapter addresses this gap by asking how comedy functions in engaging audiences with themes of immigration, integration, and multiculturalism. As with several other comedies such as *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (Luca Miniero & Paolo Genovese, 2008), *Bianco e nero* (Cristina Comencini, 2008), and *Bangla* (Phaim Bhuiyan, 2019), Federici's film explores intercultural encounters and multi-ethnic cohabitation in a narrative that focuses on an interethnic relationship, in this case between a white Italian man and a first-generation Italian woman of Egyptian descent.[123] The chapter explores how humour becomes a didactic tool to engage audiences with larger social issues, to educate about diversity, and to promote multiculturalism and an ethic of welcoming the Other. However, the chapter also demonstrates the manner in which it paradoxically sustains the dominant figure of Italian masculinity in a way that limits conceptions of national identity. Through an analysis of the film's humour and techniques of emotional engagement, I

[122] For example, the resurfacing of Italy's colonial past is embodied by the drowned Somali woman in *Io, l'altro* (Mohsen Melliti, 2007).
[123] Among these titles, *Bangla* is notable for being directed by an Italian of Bangladeshi descent, as all the other films are directed by white Italian filmmakers.

demonstrate how the film reinforces certain social norms and sustains the centrality of the *Italiano medio*, that is, the white heterosexual Italian man.

In sum, a film's *impegno* will be viewed in relation to the way in which it engages with the topic of immigration and presents hegemonic structures of power that impact the experiences of migrants. This will entail considering the ethical dimensions of films and their ability to challenge hegemonic powers and discourses. As discussed below, this thesis' unique theoretical dimension in this regard is considering how emotional engagement and empathy can either contribute to or deter from a film's socio-political commitment and ethics. The subsequent literature review establishes the key debates surrounding *cinema d'impegno* that will inform this thesis, as well as the theoretical framework that informs the analysis of emotional engagement with film. Thus, this thesis demonstrates the importance of considering emotion in understanding cinematic constructions of national identity and belonging and the ethical potential of film.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Cinema d'impegno

Socially conscious, realist films that depict migration are often said to belong to the movement of *cinema d'impegno*. The etymology of the term is complex and has evolved over time, leading to contemporary discussions of what constitutes *impegno* and how we may rethink it in its contemporary form. *Cinema d'impegno* emerged in the post-war period as a form of politically "committed" or "engaged" cinema. *Impegno* is traditionally associated with the 1940s to 1960s period and in particular with neorealist films which depicted working-class struggles and promoted left-wing ideals in the wake of fascism. Barbara De Vivo notes three key junctures in Italian political history which are deeply linked to *impegno*: "national unification and the construction of a shared national identity, resistance to fascism and Nazism, and political commitment in the Italian Communist Party."[1]

Cultural articulations of *impegno* were woven into the fabric of Italian post-war politics and the battle between the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats for political hegemony. There was a particularly ideological embrace of the notion of *impegno* tied to "emancipatory and potentially revolutionary action" as writers and filmmakers joined political actors in trying to shape the collective consciousness and the future path of the First Republic.[2] Consequently, the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party in 1991 and the political

[1] Barbara De Vivo, 'Remapping Impegno in Postcolonial Italy: Gender, Race, Class and the Questions of Commitment,' in *Gendering Commitment: Re-Thinking Social and Ethical Engagement in Modern Italian Culture,* ed. by Alex Standen (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2015), pp. 119-138 (p. 121).
[2] Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug, 'Introduction,' in *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture* ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Bern: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), p. 9.

difficulties of the period that followed led to a so-called crisis of the First Republic and *impegno* itself has often been deemed in crisis thereafter.

In her *Fragments of Impegno* (2001), Jennifer Burns challenges this monolithic definition of *impegno* as commitment to a usually communist agenda by revisiting tensions in writings of authors of the post-war period. In doing so, she demonstrates the "break-up of the commitment to a single, overarching social agenda into a fragmentary attention to specific issues."[3] In her analysis of the debates surrounding *impegno* in the post-war period, she makes some important observations that assist our understanding of the development of the term. For example, when Pasolini turned his attention to cinema as the cultural mode of *impegno*, he remarked: "'to suspend meaning': here is a stupendous epigraph for what could be a new definition of the commitment, of the mandate of the writer."[4] Burns interprets this as a significant step away from the fundamental concept of *impegno* as a strategy of instruction, since art should "suspend" sense rather than convey a clear message. This requires the reader to interpret the reasons behind that suspension, shifting *impegno* from an author-centric towards a reader-centric paradigm. The author's "mandate," or responsibility, also suggests an ethical rather than ideological aspect of *impegno*. Burns notes that this shift is visible in late 20th century literature, as relationships of reciprocity and responsibility between author and reader are established.[5]

[3] Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative*, *1980-2000* (Leeds, UK: Northern Universities Press, 2001), p. 1.
[4]Original quote: "'sospendere il senso': ecco una stupenda epigrafe per quella che potrebbe essere una nuova descrizione dell'impegno, del mandato dello scrittore." Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Empirismo Eretico* (Milano: Garzanti, 1972), p. 1417, pp. 1422-23 cited in Burns, *Fragments of Impegno*, p. 34.
[5] Burns, *Fragments of Impegno*, p. 35, p. 184.

Fragments of impegno is a constructive reappraisal of a term that continues to be embedded in Italian culture. Since the 1980s the visibility of *impegno* within culture has been questioned, leading to a presumed crisis or complacency of political engagement. Critics often conserve the traditional concept of the term, attributing it to those works of art which have a certain aesthetic that recalls neorealism. As Burns has demonstrated, however, we should reassess the definition of *impegno* and the different ways that authors or filmmakers engage with a variety of social and political issues.

Following Burns' seminal work, other scholars have continued the debate and highlighted aspects of contemporary *impegno* that are particularly relevant for this thesis. For example, Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug develop Burns' observations within a wider cultural postmodern context and support a multifaceted approach to describing *impegno.*[6] In line with Burns, they define *impegno* as "an ethical or political position channelled through specific cultural and artistic activities, against any restrictive ideological brace."[7] This involves a shift from an engagement with macro-politics to micro-politics which can be understood as "impegno civile*",* that is, *impegno* which engages with audiences in a manner that encourages individual responsibility and self-awareness in all social strata.[8] Antonello and Mussgnug also make the observation that recent *impegno* attempts to engage with mass audiences*,* which is a move away from the characteristic elitist stance which refuses mass culture.[9]

[6] Antonello and Mussgnug, *Postmodern Impegno*, p. 3.
[7] Ibid., p. 11.
[8] Ibid., p. 11, p. 15.
[9] Ibid., p. 13.

Within the context of Italian cinema specifically, scholars continue to echo the fragmentation of *impegno* into specific micropolitical agendas, which reflects the political context at large. It is necessary to reconsider 21st century *cinema d'impegno* in relation to the altered Italian political landscape which is no longer characterised by the dominant political hegemonies of the post-war period. In particular, ideologies like communism are no longer represented in parliament, but rather "a fragmentation of the centre-left progressive politics" which, along with other factors such as the effects of Berlusconism, has led to a "widespread disillusionment regarding dominant politics."[10]

Nonetheless, William Hope and other scholars recognise a growing political engagement within Italian cinema from the 2000s onwards, which has led to a revival of discussions about what constitutes *cinema d'impegno*. According to Hope, political *impegno* is evident in a range of films, from mainstream to marginal cinema, however for a film to be defined as political it must challenge hegemonic powers within Italy.[11] In particular, he notes that a focus on the personal has become an efficient cinematic tool to do this, provided that it examines "how and why the realisation of individuals' potential, on the micro-level, is compromised by political and economic determinants on the macro-level."[12] Many films on migration are political in this sense, as they can be seen to depict macro-politics through a personal lens, showing either implicitly or explicitly how hegemonic structures of power impact migrants' experiences.

[10] William Hope, 'Introduzione: un nuovo cinema politico?' in *Un Nuovo Cinema Politico Italiano?* ed. by William Hope, Luciana D'Arcangeli, Silvana Serra (Leics, UK: Troubador Publishing, 2013), pp. ix-xx (p. ix, p. xii). Original quotes: "una frammentazione della politica progressista di centrosinistra"; "diffusa disillusione nei confronti della politica dominante." Berlusconism refers to the effects of the politics of Silvio Berlusconi such as populism and conservatism, as well as his entrepreneurial TV personality.
[11] Ibid., p. xv.
[12] Ibid., p. x. Original quote: "come e perché la realizzazione del potenziale degli individui, a livello micro, è compromessa da determinanti politici ed economici a livello macro."

A recent volume edited by Dom Holdaway and Dalila Missero (2020) continues to question the forms that *cinema d'impegno* takes in the postmodern period, and many of their observations still resonate with those made by previous scholars such as Burns, Antonello and Hope. Notably, that we cannot describe *impegno* in the same terms as the past, given that we live in vastly altered societies marked by globalisation, transnational communities, and the end of macro-ideologies.[13] Furthermore, the micropolitics of the postmodern era are reflected in the fragmentation of *impegno*, which has become "more connected to a personal ethical mission than to a precise idea of a political objective."[14]

It is evident that "impegno" and "political cinema" are slippery terms, and that one single definition is not possible.[15] Rather, we should analyse the multiple ways in which a film may be politically and socially *impegnato*, in terms of form, content and reception. As Holdaway and Missero highlight, "there are multiple public spheres, and consequently there are numerous spaces in which hegemonic and counter-hegemonic practices emerge"[16] This thesis supports these wider interpretations of contemporary *impegno* and will demonstrate how the theme of migration is being represented across genres. In particular, it will question how films from a diverse corpus utilise emotion in order to *impegnarsi*; to engage with socio-political themes in a way that relates the personal to the macro-level and encourages ethical reflection

[13] *Il sistema dell'impegno nel cinema italiano contemporaneo* ed. by Dom Holdaway and Dalila Missero (Milano: Mimesis, 2020), Kindle Ebook, location 239-279.
[14] Ibid., location 196. Original quote: "più connessa a una missione etica personale che a una precisa idea di obiettivo politico." "
[15] Ibid., location 178. This refers to Lombardi and Uva's previous argument that there is no stable definition of political cinema. Giancarlo Lombardi and Christian Uva, 'Italian political cinema: definition and goals,' in *Italian Political Cinema: Public Life, Imaginary and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film* ed. by Giancarlo Lombardi and Christian Uva (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2016), p. 10.
[16] Holdaway and Missero, *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 296. Original quote: "le sfere pubbliche siano molteplici, e che di conseguenza vi siano numerosi ambiti in cui emergono pratiche egemoniche e contro-egemoniche."

by questioning hegemonic discourses of identity and belonging. Conversely, it will question the apparent socio-political commitment of films by demonstrating how hegemonic and exclusionary discourses surrounding immigration can be reinforced by means of the spectator's emotional engagement with the film.

This thesis will also challenge some of the persisting issues regarding the application of the term *cinema d'impegno,* which have been observed by Anglophone scholars in particular. These relate to the limitations imposed on *impegno* by ideological film criticism, for example, through the privileging of neorealism and contemporary films that recall this tradition of Italian cinema. The dichotomous relationship in Italian film criticism which establishes the ethical and aesthetic value of realism in opposition to popular "escapist" cinema was called into question by Alan O'Leary and Catherine O'Rawe in 2011.[17] Austin Fisher similarly notes that the term "'political cinema"' is often used to bolster the cultural capital of a film, thus underlining the ideological implications of film criticism.[18]

More recently, Holdaway and Missero argue that definitions of *impegno* in particular have been pigeonholed by a nostalgia for the past. They observe that critics still compare contemporary cinema to the post-war period, and thus ignore both the variety of political cinema today and the historical, political, and cultural changes that have occurred since then.[19] This nostalgia is evident for example by the comparison made between Matteo Garrone and Paolo Sorrentino at the Cannes Festival in 2018 and Francesco Rosi and Elio Petri in 1972.[20]

[17] Alan O'Leary and Catherine O'rawe, 'Against Realism: on a 'Certain Tendency' in Italian Film Criticism,' *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16 (2011), 107–28 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1354571x.2011.530767>
[18] Austin Fisher, 'Impegno, Cultural Capital, and the Politics of Confusion,' *The Italianist,* 33 (2013), 240–320 (p. 300) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/0261434013Z.00000000048>
[19] Holdaway and Missero, *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 161.
[20] P. D'Agostino, 'Matteo e Paolo mi ricordano l'abbraccio fra me e Petri,' *La Repubblica*, 27 May 2008, p. 39 cited in Holdaway and Missero (eds.), *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 143.

Focusing exclusively on important figures of the past runs the risk of restricting definitions of *impegno* by excluding anything that is not compatible with traditional notions of committed filmmakers as "intellectual, implicitly male, white and leftist (a nostalgic and bourgeois Italian left)"[21]

O'Leary has also questioned the continued elitist, left-wing and masculine connotations of *impegno* which correlate to the post-war period.[22] In particular, he makes an important observation pertaining to criticisms of Giordana's *La meglio gioventù* (2003). Many accused the series of a sentimentality which compromised its political meaning; however, O'Leary questions the assumption that the two are mutually exclusive. To challenge this, he argues that not only is popular filmmaking an effective way of communicating to the masses, but also that the return of the personal in contemporary *impegno* can be considered "not as a retreat from the political as such but as an attempt to integrate the feminist concern with the personal-as-political."[23] By making this argument, O'Leary suggests we rethink traditional assumptions of what makes a film political.

Continuing from the premise that emotional engagement does not necessarily deter from a film's political commitment, I will consider ways in which it can actually be an integral part of that commitment; not only does it create interest, but it can also lead to empathy as well as to critical reflection on the film's subject-matter. Furthermore, this research considers the ways in which films thematically explore the personal in relation to larger political

[21] Holdaway and Missero, *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 178. Original quote: "intellettuale, implicitamente uomo, bianco e di sinistra (una sinistra italiana nostalgica e imborghesita)."
[22] Alan O'Leary, 'Marco Tullio Giordana, or The Persistence of Impegno,' in *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian* ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Bern: Peter Lang AG, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), pp. 213-232.
[23] Ibid., p. 228.

discourses on migration. Crucially, however, the personal here is also intended as emotional experience; that is, how do films encourage the emotional responses of spectators in ways that contribute to or deter from their ethical engagement with the topic of migration? Therefore, this research will contribute to moving *impegno* beyond its restrictive connotations by considering it in relation to emotion; an unexplored facet of *cinema d'impegno*.

A final observation that must be made in relation to *cinema d'impegno* is the neglect of popular genres. O'Leary and O'Rawe have written incisive works on Italian film criticism's neglect of the popular, such as in their above-mentioned article 'Against Realism,' in which they state that "il popolare" is often inflected in a Gramscian sense and dismissed as not being an appropriate representation of the nation.[24] O'Leary also considers popular cinema in relation to the political character of film criticism which validates or illegitimates certain forms of filmmaking and their audiences.[25] The politics of popular cinema therefore refers both to the process by which a cinema is constructed as "Other," and also to the cinema itself which "articulates the concerns of people in their ordinariness."[26]

In the corpus of films analysed here, political engagement is more evident in some films than others, in that they present a significant critique of governmental and public issues. For example, *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialese, 2011) clearly questions the ethics of discriminatory laws such as the 2002 Bossi-Fini law which allowed for the immediate deportation of undocumented immigrants as well as harsh punishments for anyone assisting migrants to

[24] O'Leary and O'Rawe, 'Against Realism,' p. 111. Gramsci stated that bourgeois values were tied to popular culture, which was a form of hegemonic culture.
[25] Alan O'Leary, 'Political/Popular Culture' in *Italian Political Cinema: Public Life, Imaginary and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film,* ed. by Giancarlo Lombardi and Christian Uva (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2016), pp.107-118 (p. 110).
[26] Ibid., p. 117.

reach Italy. The politics of some films, however, can be understood in the wider sense argued by Terry Eagleton, as "the way we organise our social life together, and the power-relations which this involves."[27]

The films analysed in this thesis incorporate a range of genres and demonstrate the diversity of films that engage with the topic of migration in one way or another. Consequently, this research contributes to developing postmodern conceptions of *impegno,* in line with the works of scholars such as Burns, Antonello, Hope and most recently, Holdaway and Missero. In the latter's edited volume, one essay in particular asks some of the questions that are also at the core of this research. In his essay 'Commuoversi con impegno,' Louis Bayman poses the question: "quali possibilità ci sono per il cinema di arrivare alla ragione critica attraverso l'esperienza emozionale?" [What possibilities are there for cinema to reach critical thought by means of emotional experience?][28] That is, how might emotive and dramatic strategies contribute to *impegno,* rather than deter from it?

Emotional experience has often been placed in a dichotomous relationship to critical reasoning, most notably since Brecht.[29] Although the two may no longer be so distinctly separated, the neglect or denigration of genres that are perceived to have a greater emotional impact, such as Italian comedies, melodrama, and teen movies, shows that this dichotomy still lurks beneath the surface of Italian film criticism which continues to privilege that which is considered masculine. O'Rawe, for example, has addressed the neglect of *generi "al*

[27] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008 [1983]), p. 169.
[28] Louis Bayman, 'Commuoversi con impegno: Emozione e pensiero politico nel cinema italiano,' in Holdaway and Missero (eds.), *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 4658.
[29] Brecht's theories on the theatre have often been used to support the relationship between emotional and uncritical responses to the arts. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. by John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964).

femminile" and the mainstream in her article 'Ora o mai più,' arguing that *impegno* studies favour "masculine" genres like the poliziesco and noir.[30] In fact, even those works that acknowledge the need to reconceptualise the practice of *impegno* either do not explicitly question the role of emotions or retain the view that they impede critical reasoning.[31] For example, Hope writes that a criticism of films on migration "concerns their immersion in the emotional immediacy of the events that affect the characters, without framing their stories in the larger historical-geographical contexts and thus inducing in the spectators a degree of intellectual reflection on post-migration issues."[32] This implicitly suggests that the emotional experience of the characters does not induce intellectual reflection, which instead arises from the historical-geographical context of the stories.

Although I do not disagree that context is important to understand the relationship between the personal and the macro-political level, I argue that we should not underestimate emotion in film and the role it plays in contributing to conveying social and political meaning. It is often precisely the emotional experience of the personal that gives meaning to the socio-political conditions in the film, as the impact that they have on the characters' lives becomes tangible and felt by the spectator by means of their emotional and empathic engagement.

Bayman's essay represents an initial step in bringing the emotions into direct conversation with *impegno*, not only in relation to contemporary cinema but also to past cinema such as neorealism which, he argues, used emotion to achieve its narrative

[30] Catherine O'Rawe, 'Ora o mai più: L'impegno e il teen film' in Holdaway and Missero (eds.), *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 4226-4535.
[31] For example, see O'Leary's critique of Forgacs comment that the sentimentalism in *La Meglio Gioventú* "blunts the political edge of the chronicle." In O'Leary, 'The Persistence of Impegno,' p. 217.
[32] Hope*, '*un nuovo cinema politico,' p. 139. Original quote: "riguarda il loro essere immerse nell'immediatezza emozionale degli eventi che colpiscono i personaggi, senza inquadrare le storie in contesti storico-geografici più ampi ed indurre così negli spettatori un grado di riflessione intellettuale sulle questioni post-migrazione."

objectives.[33] Bayman primarily discusses films in which political positions are depicted in relation to intense character emotions, such as the hatred of the *brigatisti* in *Buongiorno notte* (Marco Bellocchio, 2003), or the protagonists' passion for politics which is portrayed as immaturity in *La meglio gioventù* (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2003). My research expands on Bayman's questions about the relationship between emotion and *impegno* by providing an in-depth analysis of how emotion may be elicited in relation to the socio-political narratives of Italian migration cinema. In doing so, this thesis brings together the key characteristics underpinning postmodern conceptions of *impegno* and develops them in relation to filmic emotion.

Firstly, as Burns has stated, *impegno* or "commitment," presupposes a relationship of reciprocity and responsibility between author and recipient.[34] I argue that emotions are fundamental to this relationship in the cinematic experience, and therefore an exploration of emotion can aid our understanding of a film's ability to ethically and politically engage the audience. Furthermore, as scholars such as Hope have noted, this commitment is often portrayed through the personal filter, which can be an effective means of incisively critiquing the hegemonic powers that condition people's lives.[35] This thesis conceives of emotional experience as being part of the personal, since spectators are encouraged to empathise with others' personal experiences. As will be argued in the following chapters, emotional engagement can be seen to be a means of promoting *impegno civile,* that is, individual responsibility and critical awareness.[36] Therefore, the following film analyses explore how

[33] Bayman, 'Commuoversi con impegno,' location 4629.
[34] Burns, *Fragments of impegno*, p. 5.
[35] Hope*,* 'Un nuovo cinema politico,' p. xiii.
[36] Antonello and Mussgnug, *Postmodern impegno*, p. 11.

emotional engagement may actually support critical reasoning and function in relation to the cinematic ethical experience.

Rather than definitively categorizing films as part of a canon of *cinema d'impegno,* this research aims instead to interrogate the nuanced ways in which films can be seen to be *impegnati* by means of the type of emotional engagement that they encourage. Conversely, an examination of emotion also reveals seemingly sympathetic portrayals of immigration to reinforce problematic and exclusionary discourses, thus limiting their ability to challenge hegemonic powers. The benefits of this methodological approach for *impegno* studies are twofold: firstly, it does not limit itself to a particular form of aesthetic and can be applied to neglected genres such as comedies; secondly, it is a descriptive re-evaluation of how realist films demonstrate *impegno civile* that avoids ideological arguments of moral and political superiority.[37] On this note, it seems appropriate to draw attention to the words of screenwriter Fabio Bonifacci, which highlight the need to identify the different mechanisms of *impegno* that each film utilises, regardless of genre or pre-existing assumptions: "*Impegno* cannot be a canon, it must be a horizon to be continually recreated. Its language and its themes are not to be followed, but invented. Imagining one's own form of *impegno* is an essential part of creative work."[38] Thus, considering emotion and empathy as potential mechanisms of *impegno* can provide new insights into how films engage with the topic of migration and surrounding

[37] O'Leary and O'Rawe argue that neorealism has been the focus of Italian film criticism which often maintains the ideological position that it reflects the nation, and therefore it has been constructed as the aesthetic and ethical centre of Italian cinema. O'Leary and O'Rawe, 'Against Realism,' p. 107-128.

[38] Fabio Bonifacci, 'Galateo dell'impegno e del disimpegno' in Holdaway and Missero (eds.), *Il sistema dell'impegno*, location 2900. Bonifacci is an established Italian screenwriter who has worked on films such as *Lezioni di cioccolato* (Capellini, 2007), *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (Federici, 2011) and *Benvenuti al nord* (Miniero, 2012). Original quote: "L'impegno non può essere un canone, deve essere un orizzonte da ricreare di continuo. Il suo linguaggio e le sue tematiche non vanno seguiti, vanno inventati. Immaginare la propria forma di impegno è parte essenziale del lavoro creativo."

discourses of national identity and belonging. The following section therefore provides a theoretical framework that outlines how theories of emotion and empathy will be applied to the subsequent film analyses.

2.2 Emotion: Theoretical Framework

This thesis follows theories that establish emotions as intentional states since they are directed towards an object (real or imagined), involving cognition as well as physiological responses.[39] As Plantinga argues, within the cinematic experience, "spectator emotions have a powerful rhetorical force because they involve thinking, belief, and evaluation."[40] Our engagement with films can involve a variety of emotions based on antipathies, sympathies, and empathy. Empathy is a contested phenomenon that requires defining within the context of this paper and the cinematic experience. By bringing together theories from cognitive and phenomenological studies I aim to demonstrate how the two strains of thought in fact complement one another and together form a more holistic approach to cinematic empathy.

There is debate surrounding the distinction between empathy and sympathy, as well as between empathy and identification. Regarding the latter distinction, cognitivists such as Noël Carroll and Carl Plantinga argue against a centrally imagined "merging" of minds between

[39] See for example Noël Carroll, *Engaging the Moving Image* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 63; Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 54.
[40] Carl Plantinga, 'Notes on Spectator Emotion and Ideological Film Criticism' in *Film Theory and Philosophy,* ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 389.

spectator and character.[41] Carroll argues against emotional identification since it suggests that we feel the same-type identical emotion as the character because we believe the character to be in that state, something which he argues is not often the case.[42] Plantinga, on the other hand, prefers to use the term "character engagement" than identification, which better describes the complex manner in which a film elicits sympathies, antipathies, allegiances, and other responses to fictional characters.[43] Both argue that it is misleading to talk of "identification" as we rarely centrally imagine *being* the character, rather we largely comprehend the character and their situation acentrally, or "from the outside." It is more accurate and productive, therefore, to explore the range of emotive relationships between character and spectator, in what Carroll dubs the "realm of affect."[44] In agreement with Plantinga, I will use the term "engagement" to describe the relationship between film and spectator in order to consider the various ways that a spectator may interact with a text and to avoid confounding the spectator's perspective with that of the character.

Problematic terminology continues into discussions of empathy. Empathy is sometimes likened to identification since, broadly speaking, it is defined as a shared feeling between two subjects. However, the exact relationship between the two subjects, the type of feeling and how it is felt are disputed matters. Berys Gaut, for example, discusses empathy in terms of identification, distinguishing "empathic identification" from other forms of identification such

[41] See for example Plantinga, *Moving Viewers,* pp. 103-106; Noël Carroll, 'On Ties That Bind: Characters, the Emotions, and Popular Fictions,' in *Philosophy and the Interpretation of Pop Culture*, ed. by William Irwin and Jorge J. E. Gracia (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), pp. 77-97 (pp. 79-82).
[42] Noël Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations between Audiences and the Characters in Popular Fictions,' in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.167.
[43] Carl Plantinga, 'The Affective Power of Movies,' in *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies,* ed. by Arthur P. Shimamura (New York: online edn, 2013) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199862139.001.0001> pp. 94-112 (pp. 14-17).
[44] Noël Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations,' p. 164.

as epistemic, affective, and perceptual. He describes affective identification as the ability to *imagine* feeling what another feels, whereas empathic identification is to actually *feel* what the other person is feeling.[45] Contrarily, Peter Goldie understands empathy as imagining from another person's perspective without necessarily requiring one to actually feel what the other person is imagined as feeling.[46]

Issues arise from a lack of consensus and clarity surrounding the terminology. The use of the term "identification" to describe empathy is problematic, particularly in regard to Gaut's usage for both imagined feelings and actual feelings. Relating empathy to identification becomes ambiguous since the latter, as has been critiqued by Plantinga, suggests a "losing of the self in the other, whereby our identity as a separate individual momentarily becomes lost or weakened as we identify with a character on the screen."[47] As Gaut states, Carroll and Plantinga argue that empathy never or hardly ever occurs "insofar as it is closely related to the notion of identification."[48] However, their works do support a different notion of empathy, one which finds similarities with some phenomenological understandings. Both accounts consider the complex nature of empathy and underline its cognitive and intentional aspect. Bringing these two strains of thought together can enrich our understanding of emotional engagement and, in particular, of cinematic empathy.

Phenomenological descriptions of empathy which base themselves on the work of Edith Stein share several aspects in common with empathy as conceived by cognitivist scholars

[45] Berys Gaut, 'Empathy and Identification in Cinema,' *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 34 (2010), 136–57 (pp/137-138) <http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.2010.00211.x>
[46] Peter Goldie, *The Emotions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), pp. 195-199.
[47] Carl Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film,' in *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion,* ed. by Greg M. Smith and Carl R. Plantinga (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 239-255 (p. 244).
[48] Gaut, 'Empathy and Identification,' p. 136.

such as Plantinga. Analogies can be drawn between the structure of empathy in phenomenological accounts and cinematic modes of engagement which lead to empathetic responses. This interdisciplinary approach allows us to explore the complex process of cinematic empathy and how such emotional engagement relates to the ethical evaluation of a film. Both Carroll and Plantinga address the multiple and differing definitions of empathy, however they do not reject the notion per se. Rather, they critique the concept of empathy that is related to identification, which asserts that the spectator imagines *being* the character and feels the same type-identical emotional state *because* they believe the character to be in that state.[49] Carroll argues against this, stating that congruent feelings felt by the audience are often not the result of identification with the character, but are caused by a variety of film features that are geared towards eliciting a certain emotional response.[50] That is, in order to incite fear in the audience, for example, a film will make salient those features that represent harm. The feelings shared between spectator and character, therefore, are coincidental rather than causal.

Although I disagree with Carroll that the character's emotional state has little bearing on the spectator's emotional response, I agree that emotional states need not be identical in order to empathise. In fact, Carroll does state that on the occasions when our emotional state *is* caused by the emotional state of the characters, for example we are happy when the romantic couple finally get together, our emotional state is not identical to that of the couple. Although the couple are likewise happy, their feelings are distinct from ours. We do not, for example, experience the same feelings of love as the couple, but rather congruent feelings of

[49] Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations,' p. 167.
[50] Carroll calls this "criterial prefocussing." Ibid., p. 169.

happiness brought about by their emotional state. According to Carroll, the term "empathy" should be used to denote these "vectorially converging emotional states," since "it captures the idea that the audience is resonating emotionally or "communing" with the pertinent characters, while not requiring that the audience and the protagonists be precisely in emotional synch."[51]

Plantinga explains empathy in similar terms, however he more clearly highlights the ambiguous distinction between sympathy and empathy. Carroll describes sympathy as "a nonfleeting care and concern, or, more broadly, as a nonpassing proattitude, toward another person" which "constitutes the major emotive cement between audiences and popular fictions."[52] Similarly, Plantinga describes sympathy as "a capacity or disposition to respond with concern to another's situation" and likewise views it as an important component of character engagement.[53] Although sympathy is his preferred term, he argues that sharp distinctions between sympathy and empathy are counterproductive as these phenomena overlap and merge. He states that our concern toward another person is often accompanied by congruent emotions, or emotions of a similar valence. Some have defined sympathy as "feeling for" which only requires concern for another, whilst empathy is "feeling with" which requires shared identical emotions.[54] Regarding this distinction he notes that we often experience both concern, or "feeling for," and shared emotions, that is, the act of sympathizing and empathizing are intimately linked. Furthermore, like Carroll, Plantinga rejects the theory of identification

[51] Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations,' pp. 171-172.
[52] Carroll, 'On Ties that Bind,' p. 86.
[53] Plantinga, *Moving Viewers*, p. 98.
[54] Ibid., p. 99.

and argues that sympathetic and empathetic responses consist of emotions which are "affectively congruent but different in both strength and kind."[55]

Plantinga does not deny that in some cases the viewer may share the character's emotions, particularly through "scenes of empathy" which consist of close-ups of the face to create affective mimicry and emotional contagion in order to elicit a more empathetic response in the viewer.[56] However, even in these cases we rarely imagine *being* the character, rather we imagine what they must be feeling and respond with congruent emotions. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the audience is always perceiving the situation from their own perspective and is never therefore one with the character.[57] The processes of affective mimicry, facial feedback, and emotional contagion are not modes of empathy per se but can contribute to eliciting an empathetic response. Carroll argues that these processes are affective rather than full emotional states, since emotions have intentionality and take objects.[58] Similarly, empathy requires a cognitive appraisal which differentiates it from mere emotional contagion. Nonetheless, a film's ability to elicit affective responses can influence our emotional experience and contribute to creating empathy. As Plantinga states, "emotional contagion is an involuntary phenomenon. Yet empathy itself is not involuntary, or at least not wholly so. Facial mimicry and emotional contagion are merely parts of a more complex process."[59]

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[55] Plantinga, *Moving Viewers,* p. 100.
[56] Plantinga uses the term "scene of empathy" to describe the use of the human face to communicate and elicit emotion. These scenes usually consist of a close-up of the face for a single shot of long duration, or as part of a point of view structure which alternates between the character's face and what they see. Plantinga*, '*The Scene of Empathy,' p. 239.
[57] Plantinga*, Moving Viewers*, p. 72.
[58] Carroll, 'On Ties that Bind,' p. 91.
[59] Plantinga*, '*The Scene of Empathy,' p. 255.

These cognitivist accounts of empathy resonate with some phenomenological readings. The former can benefit from the latter to add "thickness" to the analysis of the cinematic empathic process and to account for its more sensuous, corporeal, and affective dimensions. As we have seen, there are key characteristics of empathy which can be concluded from the works of Plantinga and Carroll. Firstly, empathy does not require the empathiser to feel identical emotions as the empathised. Rather, empathy is a disposition to respond towards another person's situation with concern which can cause congruent emotions in the empathiser. These emotions involve intentionality towards an object and a cognitive appraisal of the other person's situation. Secondly, it is difficult to separate empathy from other processes such as sympathy and it should instead be viewed as part of a complex process of emotional engagement with another. It would be productive therefore to view cinematic empathy within a larger context of emotional engagement which explores the range of emotive relationships which may occur. And lastly, as Plantinga highlights when discussing the "scene of empathy," the perception of bodily schema such as facial expressions can contribute towards promoting spectator empathy. In conclusion, these accounts of cinematic empathy can be said to have a perceptive, emotive, and cognitive dimension, and it is this structure which is echoed in phenomenological accounts of empathy.

Accounts of empathy based on Edith Stein's *On the Problem of Empathy* discuss the phenomenon as a three step process which is perceptive, emotive, and cognitive.[60] As Frederik Svenaeus summarises, in this process the experiences of the other person:

[60] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. by Waltraut Stein (Washington, D.C.: ICS Publications, 1989).

(1.) emerge to me as meaningful in my perception of the target, I then (2.) fulfil an explication of these experiences by following them through in an imaginative account guided by the target, in order to (3.) return to a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of the other.[61]

This account shows empathy to be an intentional act similar to both perception and imagination, in that we perceive the other person in a direct, unmediated way, yet the experience of the other person is not given directly to us and therefore requires imagination. Empathy is thus a perception of the other person's experiences, an imagination of these experiences, and finally also an understanding of these experiences.

Svenaeus outlines some key characteristics of empathy which he bases on Stein's work; firstly, that the first step of the empathic process involves a bodily, affective dimension as we perceive and respond to bodily patterns in others. Here it is worth recalling Plantinga's analysis of the scene of empathy in which affective, facial expressions are often preconditions for eliciting empathy. Secondly, that empathy is an emotional experience which develops into a cognitive understanding of the empathised subject's experience. This resonates with the above discussed accounts of cinematic empathy, which require intentionality towards an object and a cognitive appraisal of the character's situation. And finally, that empathy is situated in a broader context in which sympathy, or personal concern for the other, is an important precondition. Again, Plantinga and Carroll also emphasise the need to consider the broader context of emotional engagement. In addition to this, it is also important to note that for Stein empathy, or *Einfühlung*, means feeling *alongside* another person, not *at one with*

[61] Frederik Svenaeus 'The Phenomenology of Empathy: a Steinian Emotional Account,' *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 15 (2015), 227–45 (p. 228) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11097-014-9411>

them and does not demand the same-type identical feeling.[62] As we have seen, cognitivists such as Plantinga and Carroll also support the theory that empathy requires only congruent, not identical, emotions to be felt by the empathiser.

Thus, the above key characteristics of empathy find similarities with Plantinga and Carroll's definitions of cinematic empathy. Furthermore, as has been shown by Adriano D'Aloia in his work on kinaesthetic empathy, Stein's three-step process of empathy can also be applied to film in order to analyse cinematic empathic engagement.[63] Although D'Aloia focuses on the ability of film to create *kinaesthetic* empathy between the viewer and the "quasi-bodies" of the characters and the film itself, he observes that this gives rise to emotional empathy. He draws an analogy between the "structure" of empathy and the "structure" of film experience, arguing that the latter is structurally empathic. In the phenomenological framework empathy functions on a perceptual, emotional, and cognitive level. Similarly, D'Aloia describes the filmic experience of relating to a character as being comprised of parallel levels:

> (1) a *perceptual* act: I perceptually face a filmic body that expresses an external and internal state and attracts my attention and my senses; (2) this act is lived as an *emotional* act: I move closer and place myself 'at' the character, 'on his side', in front of the origin of his emotion; (3) this experience is objectified by a *cognitive* act: I exit, I move back and detach myself to face the object again, to cognitively perform a new objectification.[64]

[62] Svenaeus, 'The Phenomenology of Empathy,' p. 243.
[63] Adriano D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience,' in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 91-108.
[64] Ibid., p. 101.

As Stein outlined, the perception of bodily schema leads to an emotional act of intentionality towards an object, followed by a cognitive understanding of their experience. In the filmic experience, the bodies that we perceive are the *quasi*-bodies of the characters and the film. The filmic body can be conceived as a *quasi*-body capable of eliciting sensory responses due to "both the meta-movements of the camera and the depicted movements of objects and subjects."[65] Whereas the bodies on screen are phenomenologically similar to the spectators' in their movements, gestures and postures. The *quasi*-intersubjective relationship between bodies is structurally empathic, with the *quasi* denoting that the empathising subject is side-by-side, not "one with", the empathised subjects. As D'Aloia explains, "empathy is a factor that "fills the gap" between bodily presence of the spectator and bodily absence of the character thanks to the film's *mediation* (in the double sense of keeping separate and putting in contact) between the two lived-bodies, although that of the character is only a *quasi*-body."[66] This kinaesthetic empathy bridges the gap between visual perception and bodily perception and ultimately "supports the rise of emotional empathy."[67]

Thus, such phenomenological understandings locate the development of empathy in the lived-body; as D'Aloia summarises, "empathy is not a purely physiological reaction, nor a purely cognitive act. Rather, it is a *feeling* composed of different levels, namely perceptual, emotional and cognitive, grounded in the lived-body."[68] D'Aloia's work on the internal kinesis felt *within* the body which contributes to empathy emphasises the latter as an embodied phenomenon. This relates to Vivian Sobchack's earlier seminal works that develop an

[65] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 98.
[66] Ibid., p. 98.
[67] Ibid., p. 106.
[68] Ibid., p. 101.

embodied conception of the filmic experience itself: *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992), and her later work *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004).[69] Sobchack addresses the "thickness" of human experience by providing a descriptive account of how film is encountered by the lived-body grounded in existential phenomenology. Sobchack describes the cinematic experience from two perspectives - that of the spectator and that of the film - which both exist as a situated, embodied subject of vision as well as object for vision. She follows Maurice Merleau-Ponty's conception of existential phenomenology which focuses on the interrelationship between the lived-body and the world which "is lived in its *subjective* modality as *perception* and in its *objective* modality as *expression*, both modes constituting the *unity* of meaningful experience."[70] Within this intersubjective relationship the "act of seeing is entwined intimately with the act of being," that is, vision is *embodied* since perception uses all of our senses which are co-operative and commutable.[71]

In the cinematic experience, therefore, the lived-body should be conceived as a perceptive body which is *sensible*, since our vision (and hearing) speaks to our other senses and in this way accounts for the manner in which we are said to be "moved" and "touched" by film.[72] As Sobchack explains, "the film experience is meaningful *not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies*."[73] In other words, we do not experience a film solely through our

[69] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).
[70] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 40. Sobchack references Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).
[71] Ibid., p. 51.
[72] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 50.
[73] Ibid., p. 51.

eyes, rather we make meaning out of bodily sense as embodied beings. As mentioned above, Sobchack also describes film itself as embodied, “as an animate, conscious "other" who visually, audibly, and kinetically intends toward the world.”[74] It is an object of vision for the spectator, as well as presenting its own representation of the objective world, and it does this by using the language of embodied existence which is recognised by the viewer. It is in this sense that we can talk of the film’s *body* since, according to Sobchack, film “uses *modes of embodied existence* (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement) as the vehicle, the “stuff,” the substance of its language.”[75] It is in the convergence, therefore, of cinematic representation and the spectator’s body that meaning occurs, and Sobchack defines this conception as the *cinesthetic subject*; a body which mediates experience, language, subjective vision and objective image and which functions both figuratively and literally in conjunction with cinematic representation.[76] In Sobchack’s words, the cinesthetic subject denotes “the viewer[...]who, through an embodied vision in-formed by the knowledge of the other senses, “makes sense” of what it is to “see” a movie.”[77]

Sobchack’s phenomenological account of how cinematic meaning originates from the embodied encounter between spectator and film underpins the following film analyses and can be drawn together with the above accounts of empathy in order to further elucidate my argument that our engagement with film, specifically our emotional and empathic engagement, is an embodied and sensuous experience that informs our conscious analysis. As discussed above, empathy is both a physiological reaction and a cognitive act; it is composed

[74] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 285.
[75] Ibid., p. 102.
[76] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 54-55.
[77] Ibid., p. 57.

of a perceptual, emotional, and cognitive dimension and it is grounded in the lived-body. This grounding can be understood from the existential phenomenological account of perception as an embodied act that involves all our senses which inform meaning and experience.

Sobchack's distinction between the spectator (the subject) and the film (the "other") reflects Stein's own distinction of the subject feeling *alongside*, not at one with, the other. As Sobchack states, "my lived-body experience in-forms how and what I see, and I do not merely "receive" the film's vision *as* my own, but I "take" it up *in* my own, and as an *addition* to my own."[78] Furthermore, like the intersubjective empathic relationship between two human beings, when the spectator faces the "other" filmic body, it uses its own lived-body experience to make sense of the language of embodied existence in which the latter is grounded. Thus, the perception of bodily schema structures not only the face-to-face encounter, but also the filmic experience (for which I intend any of the cinematic modes of embodied existence, from the gestures and movements of characters to the meta-movements of the camera), which can develop into affective and emotive experience as well as rational deliberation.

This thesis seeks therefore to explore the sensuous and corporeal conceptions of empathy based on the understanding that we derive cinematic meaning from embodied experience. Furthermore, I intend to relate empathy and emotional engagement with film to the wider socio-political context that is shaped by symbolic and discursive structures. Such an approach finds some similarities with that undertaken by Katharina Lindner in *Film Bodies* which, using a queer feminist phenomenology, explores "the cinematic modes of

[78] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 272.

embodiment" of the female body in cinema "and the embodied encounters it invites."[79] In doing so, Lindner focuses on the "the tactile, muscular and kinaesthetic dimensions of the cinematic experience via conceptions of corporeal, sensuous empathy and embodied simulation"[80] and ties such cinematic modes of embodiment to wider "normative cultural practices and structures of meaning" and their "broader socio-cultural reverberations and resonances."[81] In a similar but distinct manner, this thesis is interested in exploring the cinematic experience in terms of diverse forms of emotional engagement, including embodied conceptions of empathy, in ways that relate our spectatorship to the larger socio-political context of immigration within which discourses and normative structures of gender, race, and sexuality circulate and underpin conceptions of national identity and belonging.

The analytical perspective of this thesis, therefore, draws on cognitive accounts of emotional engagement by scholars such as Plantinga in order to provide an explanatory account of how cinematic form and content are able to elicit emotional responses such as empathy from spectators, and the ways in which this is related to our evaluative capacities involving beliefs and values. This is grounded in a phenomenological approach which provides a more subjective, descriptive account of how such emotional elicitation is situated within an embodied experience that also takes meaning from the sensuous and affective dimensions of cinematic engagement which can also inform our conscious thinking.[82] Plantinga focuses on the ways in which emotions involve thinking, belief, and evaluation and should therefore be

[79] Katharina Lindner, *Film Bodies: Queer Feminist Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), p. 40.
[80] Ibid., p. 44.
[81] Ibid., p. 40.
[82] Sinnerbrink also discusses the advantages of taking an interdisciplinary approach, see Robert Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 86.

considered within their narrative context to ascertain the ethical and ideological implications of spectator engagement.[83] However, as embodied conceptions of the cinematic experience remind us, it is important to consider not only the narrative context, but also the embodied experience of the viewer that participates in an intersubjective relationship with the film and characters.

In this sense, Jane Stadler's work on the ethics of narrative film is informative in its description of how both narration and perception (as embodied) are fundamental dimensions of ethical agency and film spectatorship.[84] Since intersubjective forms of understanding, which are central to ethical practice, arise through embodied perceptual experiences, Stadler asserts that, "one way in which film narratives are of particular value to ethical understanding[...]is the capacity of film to elicit an embodied response from spectators."[85] Furthermore, she argues that emotions are embodied experiences that involve perception and interpretation of value, and thus can contribute to rational ethical deliberation and therefore, "the ways in which cinematic narratives focus and direct attention can cultivate emotional responses of spectators in ethically significant ways."[86]

Therefore, following Stadler, I do not locate ethics in a set of predefined universal duties or principles but within "the actual, concrete perceptions and sensations that inform deliberation and reflection."[87] In other words, the ethical value of perception (of a film) develops from an embodied experience that demands evaluation and gives rise to

[83] See for example Carl Plantinga, *Screen Stories: Emotion and the Ethics of Engagement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).
[84] Jane Stadler, *Pulling Focus: Intersubjective Experience, Narrative Film, and Ethics* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008).
[85] Ibid., p. 11.
[86] Ibid., p. 143.
[87] Ibid., p. 11.

understanding. Emotions are an integral part of this embodied experience which are also based on evaluations and contribute to cognitive understanding. Therefore, as Stadler argues, emotions have value in ethical evaluation as they are indicative of our values and beliefs about what is important.[88] If we are to understand ethics as the relationship between the self and other, cinema provides a context in which this relationship is established and continuously negotiated as the narrative develops. In engaging with others, therefore, we are asked to interrogate, evaluate, and reflect ethically on what we view.

Robert Sinnerbrink also explores the conception of cinema as a medium of ethical experience which stems from "its power of perceptual fascination, emotional engagement, and cognitive understanding."[89] He defines cinematic ethics as being composed of three important aspects: ethical content in narrative cinema; the ethics of cinematic representation; and the ethics of cinema as symptomatic of broader cultural, social, and ideological concerns.[90] A range of factors can contribute to cinematic ethical experience, such as the act of engaging with the perspectives and experiences of others (fictional characters), emotionally engaging and critically reflecting on what is being viewed, and having our ideological prejudices challenged. Significantly, Sinnerbrink argues that ethical experience in the cinema unfolds "through a situated, emotionally engaged, aesthetically receptive response to images that work on us in a multimodal manner, engaging our senses, emotions, and powers of reasoning."[91] Here, the relationship between aesthetics, emotional engagement and critical thinking forms the foundation for ethical experience.

[88] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 165.
[89] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, p. 6.
[90] Ibid., p. 16.
[91] Ibid., p. 20.

In line with the theories discussed at the beginning of this section, Sinnerbrink also considers the many interrelated factors that contribute to emotional engagement. He does not, for example, view empathy as independent from sympathy, since cinema enables "dynamic movement between poles of empathy and sympathy in an experientially rich manner" which enables spectators to "emotionally engage with and ethically evaluate, the fictional characters with whom we align ourselves within a cinematic world."[92] He describes this dynamic movement as *cinempathy*, that is "a cinematic/kinetic expression of the synergy between affective attunement, emotional engagement, and moral evaluation that captures more fully the ethical potential of the cinematic experience."[93]

Thus, by focusing on films that explore the topic of immigration to Italy, this thesis places spectatorial emotional engagement within a specific socio-political context so as to explore the ethics that such cinematic experiences can entail. Like Sobchack, this thesis recognises the unique situatedness of the spectator which allows for interpretative freedom, and thus the potential refusal as well as sharing of the film's vision.[94] However, it also takes into account the historical and cultural context which influences meaning and interpretation, as well as film's ability to engender common responses amongst audiences. Therefore, it supports Plantinga's observation that "audience response lies at the intersections of individual and general spectator characteristics, specific context, and textual cues."[95] The following analysis therefore does not intend to be an exhaustive account of how spectators could respond to these films, but an ethical interrogation of the cinematic techniques that attempt

[92] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, p. 94.
[93] Ibid., p. 95.
[94] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 289.
[95] Carl Plantinga, 'Notes on Spectator Emotion and Ideological Film Criticism' in *Film Theory and Philosophy,* ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 382.

to encourage a certain emotional response and what implications this has for the representation of immigration in relation to questions of identity and belonging.

Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis, I theorise how films may elicit responses from an audience (they/them) which is intended as an abstract entity, and which is distinguished from the readership (we/us). Although abstract, at times I posit the type of response that may be engendered amongst a white Italian (or European) audience in particular, even though it is recognized that the audiences may not be such. This is relevant for those films made by white Italian filmmakers themselves, which seemingly attempt to promote compassion and sympathy for immigrants in national audiences, and which explore immigration predominantly from the perspective of white Italian characters. For example, chapter three explores films that demonstrate a moral obligation of white Italians for the racial Other, whilst chapter eight can be seen to attempt to speak to white Italians about diversity through the protagonist's intercultural encounters with immigrants and their children. In European cinema in general, Ballesteros has highlighted that many white European immigration filmmakers take a social liberal view in which immigration is viewed positively, yet in doing so, they comment more on crises in national identities than the nonwhite Other.[96] Therefore, it is relevant to consider how some films may be attempting to engage a white Italian audience as part of their socio-political commitment to welcoming the Other, and how in doing so they reveal discourses of normative identities, symbolically (re-)constructing national identities and belonging.

In summary, therefore, this thesis does not attempt to provide an all-encompassing account of audience response, but rather seeks to interrogate the ways in which films may

[96] Isolina Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), pp. 16-17.

attempt to emotionally engage spectators and how such engagement functions in relation to the cinematic construction of migrant and national identities. Therefore, emotional engagement can be analysed not separately from, but *in relation to* a film's socio-political imperative, providing a new analytical tool for evaluating cinematic forms of *impegno.*

PART ONE

3. ENCOUNTERING ALTERITY AND SELF-TRANSFORMATION IN *QUANDO SEI NATO NON PUOI PIÙ NASCONDERTI* AND *TERRAFERMA*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore how encounters with alterity become a means for self-transformation for the Italian protagonists, and the ambiguous ethical implications of this. On the one hand, the emotional trajectories of the films analysed here support an ethics of care towards the Other, on the other hand, emotional engagement is encouraged primarily with the Italian protagonists and the focus on the white male protagonists' journey of self-transformation can be seen as problematic. Both *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2005) and *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialese, 2011) confront crises in identity which come about after the Italian protagonist encounters the "Other," a migrant character. In transitioning from adolescence to manhood, the protagonists momentarily lose their sense of self when their naivety and innocence are challenged by society and their experiences with alterity. Ultimately, the protagonists contend with the ethical dilemma of how to care for the Other, which results in their moral growth and maturity.

To support my analysis, I will refer to the works of academics which reflect the ambiguities within these two films. There are several common threads which emerge from the literature; both films are seen to explore Italian national identity through coming-of-age narratives in which the Other is instrumental in the ethical awakening of the Italian character.[1]

[1] The films have been analysed in the following: Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in New Europe*, pp. 167-170; Elena Benelli, 'The Other from Another Shore: Identity at Sea in Quando Sei Nato Non Puoi Più Nasconderti,' in *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema: Shifting Demographics and Changing Images in a Multi-Cultural Globalized Society*, ed. by Grace Russo Bullaro (Leicester: Troubadour Pub., 2010), pp. 219–39; Ipek A. Celik-Rappas, and Philip E. Phillis, ''Do the Right Thing': Encounters with Undocumented Migrants in Contemporary European Cinema,'' *Studies in European Cinema*, 17 (2018), 36–

In particular, the protagonists' journeys support an ethic of hospitality toward the Other. As Giovanna Faleschini Lerner discusses, *Quando sei nato* consciously juxtaposes unconditional hospitality, portrayed through the character of Sandro, and conditional hospitality, as displayed by Bruno, his father, allowing us to reflect on our own limits of welcoming the Other.[2] Ipek A. Celik-Rappas and Philip E. Phillis, on the other hand, critique the portrayal of victimhood in *Terraferma* which reinforces conditional hospitality and the hierarchical relationship between the saved and the saviour.[3]

O'Healy also comments on the problematic depiction of migrants as lacking agency and subjectivity which reinforces stereotypical media representations of migrants which, as will be argued, also happens in *Quando sei nato*.[4] Nathan's claim that Crialese's work "goes against the mediatic images" of immigrants and takes an "undidactic" stand against such representations is too reductive and does not consider the conflicting representations of migrants within the film.[5] Furthermore, the didactic message that individuals have a responsibility toward the (less fortunate) Other clearly forms part of both films' commitment to challenging dominant immigration discourses, and it is through mechanisms of emotional engagement that this message is conveyed, albeit somewhat problematically. The following analysis of emotion therefore supports O'Healy's arguments, demonstrating that although

50 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17411548.2018.1498611>; Giovanna Faleschini Lerner, "From the Other Side of the Mediterranean: Hospitality in Italian Migration Cinema," *California Italian Studies*, 1 (2010), 1-19 http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/c311008877; O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties,* pp. 109-118, pp. 153-162; Nathan, *Marvelous Bodies*, pp. 111-129.

[2] Lerner uses Derrida's concepts of conditional and unconditional hospitality to propose that Sandro and Bruno personify these ethics. See Lerner, 'From the Other Side of the Mediterranean,' pp. 5-10. In *Of hospitality*, Derrida theorises that power relations are inherent in conditional hospitality, since in welcoming the other as a guest into our home we assert authority over them. In this scenario, the immigrant becomes dependent on the host country's benevolence. Unconditional hospitality, on the other hand, occurs when one gives up ownership of one's house to the other. Jacques Derrida, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[3] Celik-Rappas and Phillis, 'Do the Right Thing,' p. 46.

[4] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 160.

[5] Nathan, *Marvelous Bodies*, pp. 127-129.

the film is sympathetic to irregular immigration in certain aspects, it also reinforces stereotypical representations of migrants.

In their article 'Do the right thing,' Celik-Rappas and Phillis place *Terraferma*, and I would add *Quando sei nato*, within a wider strand of European cinema that, despite good intentions, reinforces paternalism and uses the Other to construct a compassionate European identity. As will be demonstrated, an analysis of the filmic emotion supports a reading of this paternalism and the problematic subtexts that lie within the sympathetic portrayal of immigration. Furthermore, they state an interesting point which is relevant for the discussion of *impegno* made in the literature review to this thesis. They note that films such as *Terraferma* "reflect humanitarian-based individual action as the prevalent conception of political activism especially in European borderlands," which differs from political activism of the 1960s that was dependent on a political party or movement.[6] This echoes discussions of postmodern *impegno* which highlight a break-up of a monolithic commitment tied to a communist agenda into "a fragmentary attention to specific issues" that are driven by ethical rather than politically ideological impulses.[7]

Indeed, both *Quando sei nato* and *Terraferma* can be seen to be socially and politically *impegnati* ("committed") as they oppose the hostile anti-immigration politics that have gained traction across Europe, by presenting the hardships that some migrants face and encouraging hospitality towards the Other. Thus, the films filter macro-level political issues through a personal-lens and in doing so critique the political response to immigration and promote individual humanitarian action instead.[8]

[6] Celik-Rappas and Phillis, 'Do the Right Thing,' p.38.
[7] Burns, *Fragments of impegno*, p. 1.
[8] As noted in the literature review, scholars have noted the trend in contemporary *cinema d'impegno* to filter macro-level issues through a personal lens.

This chapter will focus on the films' use of empathy and compassion to counter harmful political discourses on immigration that sustain a narrative of threat and invasion, by suggesting a shared humanity between subjects and promoting an ethics of care for the Other. It will therefore be argued that emotional engagement, rather than being antithetical to socio-political commitment, is a mechanism through which these films convey the ethical and didactic dimensions of their *impegno*. However, an analysis of the filmic emotion also reveals the contradictory nature of the portrayal of immigration in these films since the suffering migrant becomes little more than a tool for the formation of the Italian character into a compassionate responsible subject. Therefore, the following will consider factors relating to filmic emotion such as which characters have emotional subjectivity, to what extent we are encouraged to emotionally engage with characters, and which types of emotion we are encouraged to feel, in order to demonstrate the limitations and contradictions of the films' ethical perspective and socio-political commitment. Consequently, the manner in which emotion *functions,* rather than emotion *per se*, can be seen to have an impact on the reception of the films by film critics and academics alike, and on the extent to which the films can be considered forms of *impegno*.

3.2 The Journey to Ethical Awakening

Quando sei nato and *Terraferma*, made in 2005 and 2011 respectively, can be identified within a corpus of socially conscious films that spotlight Italy's relatively new position as a host country. They are also two of the more commercially successful films to discuss immigration to Italy, with Giordana's film grossing $1,780,221 and Crialese's grossing

$2,343,302.[9] The films received recognition and won awards at international film festivals; *Terraferma* won the Special Jury Prize at the 2011 Venice Film Festival and *Quando sei nato* won the Prix François Chalais at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival.[10] However, the reception of both films was far from homogenous with critics divided over the films' attributes and shortcomings.

In her review in *La Repubblica*, Claudia Morgoglione reported that after the screening of *Quando sei nato* critics were split between ""those who judged it an unsuccessful work, with parts of the screenplay being forced and some very exaggerated passages, and those who instead found it moving."[11] In another review, Anton Giulio Mancino praises Giordana's work for its ability to merge artistry with political *impegno* and for not giving in to emotion.[12] This is another example of how a film's *impegno*, that is, its ability to engage with social and political issues, is presumed to be reinforced by a lack of emotion, echoing a long-standing reason-emotion dichotomy. However, the film does clearly attempt to engage the spectator emotionally, above all through empathy and compassion, and this has important implications for the ethical and political perspective of the film, thus demonstrating that emotion warrants further consideration than a cursory glance. I will first examine how *Quando sei nato* primarily

[9] *Quando sei nato non poui più nasconderti* box office: https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0418091/?ref_=bo_se_r_1
Terraferma box office: https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt1641410/?ref_=bo_se_r_1 [Accessed 15 December 2021]

[10] See https://www.filmitalia.org/en/film/28106/ and https://www.filmitalia.org/en/film/56867/ for a complete list of festivals for *Quando sei nato* and *Terraferma* respectively [Accessed 15 December 2021]

[11] Claudia Morgoglione, 'Giordana: 'Racconto gli immigrati visti con gli occhi di un bambino,'' *La Repubblica*, 5 May 2005 <https://www.repubblica.it/2005/e/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/giordana2/giordana2/giordana2.html?ref=search > [Accessed 15 December 2021] Original quote: "chi l'ha giudicata un'opera non riuscita, con alcune forzature nella sceneggiatura e alcuni passaggi molto retorici, e chi invece l'ha trovata emozionante."

[12] Anton Giulio Mancino, 'Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti,' *Cineforum*, 45 (5), (2005), Screen Studies Collection, 35–36 <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/quando-sei-nato-non-puoi-più-nasconderti/docview/223108358/se-2?accountid=8630> [Accessed 15/12/2021]

constructs an empathic relationship between the spectator and the Italian protagonist in order to support the narrative's ethical humanitarian message.

In *Postmodern Ethics* Zygmunt Bauman discusses the shift from the search for a universal, cohesive, non-ambivalent ethical code to the disbelief in such a possibility, leading to the so-called "ethical crisis of postmodernity."[13] The pluralism of often contradictory rules and ethical standards, freedom of choice and a lack of guidance from authorities which are often contested, are factors which have led the individual into a condition of moral uncertainty and ambiguity, in which we are each our own moral agents.[14] These observations are particularly relevant for *Quando sei nato* and *Terraferma* which both narrate an ethical identity crisis that arises when Sandro and Filippo are forced to question and establish their own moral conscience.

I refer to this as an ethical identity crisis following the idea that identity is constructed in relation to the Other, and that in our connection with others we form values and beliefs about what is important. In these films, the encounter with migrants compels the protagonists to consider their responsibility to the Other, in a Levinasian manner, and question the values and beliefs that they live by.[15] Therefore, the encounter with the Other questions their sense of self and demands that they form an ethical code by which to abide as they transition into adulthood. Filippo and Sandro are thus presented as their own moral agents who must respond to the demands of the Other, and in empathising with their experiences the spectator is also encouraged to support such an ethics of care and hospitality.

[13] Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), pp. 9-10, p. 17.
[14] In particular, see chapter 1 of Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (1993).
[15] Emmanuel Levinas describes ethics as a process of interrogation that occurs when the self encounters alterity, that is, in the face-to-face encounter with the Other, in which the self is responsible for the Other. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1979 [1969]).

As Carroll has argued, the protagonists of films "are morally correct in accordance with the ethical system of the film," so that when we cast allegiance with them, we are also evaluating them as morally virtuous characters.[16] Therefore, the emotional response we are encouraged to have does raise ideological and ethical concerns.[17]

As discussed in the literature review, this thesis recognises the openness of the reception process and the spectator's agency in accepting or opposing a film's view. However, film can be analysed for the ways in which its aesthetics, narrative, and form attempt to promote a certain emotional response from viewers. The following analyses explore the techniques that these films employ to encourage a certain emotional response from the audience and how this contributes to the cinematic representation of identities and has wider socio-political implications. Therefore, I will first consider the Italian protagonists; the characters with whom we primarily engage, and who act as bridge characters through which a white Italian (or European) audience is presented with the Other. This is a common narrative tactic not only within Italian cinema but also European immigration cinema, as Ballesteros identifies white European filmmakers as attempting to elicit "a spectatorial identification with white "bridge characters" who are aware of and sympathetic to immigrants' predicaments."[18]

Giordana and Crialese confront the topic of immigration from the perspective of young Italian male protagonists. In *Quando sei nato*, Sandro (Matteo Gadola) is the twelve-year-old child of a bourgeois couple who own a factory in Brescia. Filippo (Filippo Pucillo), on the other hand, is the twenty-year-old protagonist of *Terraferma*, who leads a sheltered life in a small fishing village on the small Sicilian island of Linosa. Although the characters come from contrasting backgrounds – a privileged child from a prosperous Northern city and a

[16] Carroll, *Engaging the Moving Image,* p. 84.
[17] As argued by Plantinga, *Moving Viewers*, p. 191.
[18] Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema*, p.149.

Southern Italian whose way of life is becoming increasingly precarious – the two characters are both positioned as the moral conscience of the film, and it is their journey to maturity that we follow.

As O'Healy has noted, this echoes the tradition in Italian cinema of positioning the male child as moral conscience and future of the nation which emerged in films of the 1940s.[19] It recalls, for example, neorealist films such as *Roma città aperta* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) and *Ladri di biciclette* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948), in which the finales focus on the perspective of the male child. What's more, the title "Terraferma" (literally, firm ground), as well as the film's narrative context of a small Sicilian fishing village, is an evident nod to Luchino Visconti's acclaimed 1948 neorealist film *La terra trema* ('the earth trembles'). These earlier films often focused on working-class struggles and nation building in the post-war period, whereas the two films under analysis here place the question of Italian identity within a transnational context by confronting the ethical dilemma of welcoming the migrant Other.

3.3 Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti

3.3.1 Empathising with the Ethical Encounter

Giordana wrote the screenplay for *Quando sei nato* with Sandro Petraglia and Stefano Rulli, who commented: "with Marco Tullio Giordana we didn't want to make a film about the "immigration problem" but to narrate an encounter between the cultures of innocent teenagers."[20] Giordana himself stated that the film is "about us not them," emphasising again

[19] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 110.

[20] Marco Tullio Giordana, Sandro Petraglia, Stefano Rulli and Lorenzo -Codelli, *Quando Sei Nato Non Puoi Più Nasconderti* (Venezia: Marsilio, 2005), p. 16 cited in Nathan, *Marvelous Bodies*, p. 115. Original quote: "con Marco Tullio Giordana non volevamo fare un film sul "problema dell'immigrazione" ma raccontare un incontro tra culture di adolescenti innocenti." ."

the innocent gaze of the child who views migrants "outside of schemas of pure racism."[21] This innocent gaze is presented to us as that of Sandro Lombardi, with whom we are immediately aligned in the film's opening scene as he gets off a bus in a town square in Brescia. The camera moves behind Sandro to reveal what he sees: an African man in a telephone box, attempting to use the phone despite an "out of order" sign. When Sandro tells him that the phone won't work, the man walks towards Sandro in an agitated and distressed manner, stripping his clothes and repeating the phrase "Soki obotami okoki komibomba lisusu te," which Sandro memorises to later try to decipher what it means. The camera is placed slightly behind and alongside Sandro so that the spectator has access to his subjective viewpoint, which is interspersed with shots of his face to convey his bewilderment at what he is witnessing. As the man weeps, the police arrive and take him away, leaving Sandro (and the spectator) confused and unable to shift his gaze.

Although Sandro is later shown to be in contact with ethnically diverse characters, such as the immigrants who work in his father's factory, this initial scene represents an encounter with alterity which cannot be deciphered or assimilated within his innocent worldview. Viewed through a Levinasian lens, in this face-to-face encounter Sandro is called to respond to the man but does not know how to, and it is this latter point that becomes the ethical dilemma around which the film revolves.[22] This is underlined by Sandro's later discovery that the phrase the man had been repeating is a name that means "once you are born you can no longer hide," which can be understood as Sandro's new understanding of the world of intersubjective relationships and responsibility from which we cannot escape.

[21] Giordana et al*., Quando Sei Nato*, p. 6 cited in Nathan, *Marvelous Bodies*, p. 116. Original quotes: "di noi non di loro" and "fuori dagli schemi di razzismo puro."
[22] Emmanuel Levinas develops an ethics of the face-to-face encounter in *Totality and Infinity* (1969).

In Stadler's work that addresses the ethical relevance of film narrative, she comments that the cinematic experience "offers the opportunity to practice working through challenging ethical scenarios without requiring us to experience them first hand because it enables us to emotionally experience a kind of felt understanding or visceral knowledge."[23] Therefore, the spectator is also called to imaginatively work-through Sandro's dilemma since the film establishes an embodied empathic relationship between the spectator and Sandro in which they are aligned with his perception, positioning, and movements in ways that allow them to comprehend his subjective experience.

Sandro's changed perspective and entrance into a new chapter of his life is symbolically represented by his baptismal-like submersion in the Mediterranean Sea. The location of the Mediterranean is significant for this transformation since it is a fluid space, "an intricate site of encounters and currents," and "a continual interweaving of cultural roots and historical routes."[24] One evening, whilst on a yacht trip with his father Bruno (Alessio Boni) and his father's friend Popi (Rodolfo Corsato), Sandro loses his balance and falls into the sea, with neither adult realising until it is too late. In this scene, the film diverges from the common news reports which depict migrants stranded at sea, instead presenting an Italian audience with a white Italian child in such a perilous situation. This subverts audience expectations and restructures common representations of certain bodies occupying certain spaces, potentially reinforcing the anxiety or shock that the scene may induce in an Italian audience. That is, it subverts and reimagines the spectator's embodied knowledge of the real that informs their understanding of the cinematic image.[25]

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[23] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 155.

[24] Iain Chambers, "The Mediterranean: a Postcolonial Sea," *Third Text*, 18 (2004), 423–33 (p.427, p. 429) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0952882042000251769>

[25] Sobchack theorises how our embodied pre-existing knowledge contributes to how we take up meaning in the cinematic experience in *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 205-225.

Furthermore, a kinaesthetic empathy is created between the spectator's body and that of Sandro's which heightens the affect of the scene.[26] As Sandro struggles in the sea and shouts for help, the camera itself is unsteady and at times partially submerged, alternating between shots of Sandro and his gaze which shows the boat disappearing out of view, allowing the spectator to better imagine his situation through the means in which the film mimics Sandro's embodied experience. As Sobchack describes, this is possible because of the way in which film "visually, audibly, and kinetically intends toward the world or toward its own conscious activity in a structure of *embodied* engagement with the world and others that is similar in structure to our own."[27] Meanwhile, the suspense is heightened as the images of Sandro are interspersed with scenes of Bruno and Popi who are unaware of what has occurred until eventually, Bruno goes to check on Sandro and realises that he is missing.

Unable to swim any longer, Sandro sinks beneath the surface of the water, illuminated by a ghostly white light and seemingly doomed, when suddenly he is miraculously saved by Radu, a migrant from a passing boat, again subverting common news reports of migrants being rescued from the sea. This point marks his rebirth and his temporary suspension of his Italian identity, as when he is taken aboard the migrant vessel, he pretends to be Kurdish to avoid being held for ransom by the merciless "scaffisti" (traffickers). Referring to Vincenzo Marra's *Tornando a casa*, Capussotti describes the *mise en scène* of "becoming the other" as "a political move embedded in new left politics – that is, political campaigns supported by slogans such as 'we are all Vietnamese…blacks…homosexuals' that embody taking on the same position as the marginalised group or the oppressed."[28] Here too, Sandro temporarily

[26] As described in the literature review, D'Aloia considers how films are capable of creating kinaesthetic empathy which contributes to the development of emotional empathy.
[27] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 285.
[28] Enrica Capussotti, 'Moveable Identities: Migration, Subjectivity and Cinema in Contemporary Italy,' *Modern Italy*, 14 (2009), 55–68 (p.61) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13532940802528908>

assumes the position of the migrant allowing the audience to primarily empathise with his experiences and making him a bridge character through which they view Otherness. However, in order to explicate the implications of Sandro's "becoming the Other," it is worth briefly revisiting the relevant characteristics of empathy as defined in the introduction of this thesis.

Empathy is a complex process that involves varying levels of feeling with another subject. We do not necessarily have to feel emotions of the exact same type and strength but responding to the other's situation with care can produce congruent emotions in the empathiser.[29] The structure of empathy is inherent in the filmic experience itself since both involve a perceptive, emotive, and cognitive dimension. Furthermore, cinema's ability to create kinaesthetic empathy between the spectator's body and on-screen bodies accompanies and promotes the development of emotional empathy.[30] In this sense, the "body" of the film mediates the gap between spectator and character.[31] This is evident in the scenes on the migrant boat, such as the out-of-focus shot that imitates Sandro's eyesight adjusting as he wakes up, aligning us spatially, visually, and corporeally with him (see figure 1).

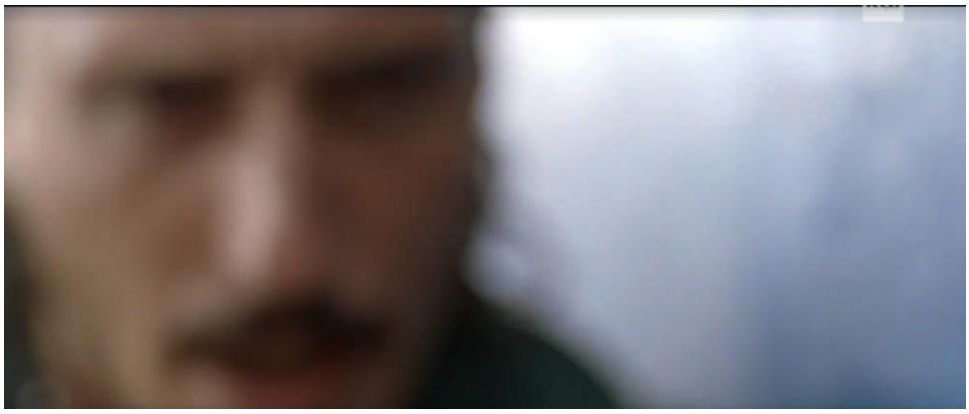
Tornando a casa (Vincenzo Marra, 2001) tells the story of a group of precarious Sicilian fishermen who are forced to fish illegally in African waters. In the finale the protagonist Franco attempts to save a man at sea but becomes stranded himself and is eventually saved by a passing boat of immigrants. Once aboard, he hides his Italian identity and takes the ID of the migrant he had tried to save.

[29] See for example Plantinga*, Moving Viewers*, p. 100.

[30] See D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy' (2012).

[31] As discussed in the literature review, Vivian Sobchack provides an account of the phenomenological dimension of the cinematic experience, for example in Sobchack*, Carnal Thoughts* (2004).

Figure 1: Sandro wakes up on the boat carrying migrants to Italy. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (37:14).



The experience of the perilous migrant journey is therefore mediated through Sandro as well as through the film body itself, with the film shifting between more objective and more subjective vision, thus alternating the spectator's own perspective and positioning within the cinematic space. For example, when one of the traffickers attempts to sexually assault Alina, the younger "sister" of Radu who saves and befriends Sandro, the scene unfolds from multiple perspectives which reflects cinema's ability to move dynamically between differing levels of engagement. The camera alternates between a more objective position depicting the faces of the trafficker and Alina, to a low angle subjective shot which is revealed to align with Sandro's positioning as he is sat on the floor witnessing what unfolds. The camera remains uncomfortably close to the characters throughout, so that the spectator cannot avoid the depraved actions of the trafficker. Here we have an interesting example of how the spectator may sympathise with or feel *for* Alina but are positioned *alongside* Sandro and thus are more closely engaged with his perspective.

This fluid movement between the poles of empathy and sympathy, in which spectators both inhabit a first-person point of view and observe, emotionally engage and

ethically evaluate, is an example of what Sinnerbrink has dubbed *cinempathy*.[32] In these scenes, Sandro is reflective of how empathy works in the cinematic experience at large; he, like the spectator, is placed alongside the migrant subject and perceives their experiences, imaginatively interprets, and emotionally responds to them, and finally comes to a more comprehensive understanding of these experiences. On the crowded boat, which is an intertextual reference to Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* (1994), Giordana utilises many medium and close-up shots to convey a claustrophobic feeling and rests upon the diverse faces of the migrants aboard, simultaneously highlighting alterity and a common humanity. Again, the spectator moves fluidly between seeing and being seen, and between objective and subjective vision, so that, like Sandro, they too are part of the intersubjective face-to-face encounter.

Although the appropriation of the migrant's story may be seen as problematic, Sandro's continued privilege is made evident to the spectator, who is aware that he can reassume his Italian identity when the boat reaches its destination in Italy, so that his experience is not presented as being identical to that of the migrant. This is further emphasised during later scenes at the detention centre where Sandro is allowed to witness what the migrants experience, but he receives continued privileges such as a private dorm. Furthermore, whilst empathy is primarily elicited in relation to Sandro's experiences, the complex interplay of perspectives described above underlines how the spectator navigates multiple intersubjective relationships and maintains their own unique position. The role of Sandro therefore underlines the very nature of empathy itself in that it "entails by necessity a difference between the subject of empathic experience and the subject of the empathized

[32] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, pp. 94-95.

experience."[33] For example, the film often encourages the spectator to empathise with Sandro's character on the migrant boat, as demonstrated by figure 2, which shows close-ups of migrants from Sandro's perspective. The positioning of the camera within the cinematic space therefore situates the spectator in a way that allows them an embodied understanding of Sandro's experience, who himself is empathising with the experience of the migrants.

Figure 2: The film aligns the spectator with Sandro's gaze. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (51:12).

The affect of the images is reinforced by sentimental music and the length of time the camera lingers on the faces of the migrants. At other times, however, the camera more evidently takes on the position of another "body" on the boat so that the spectator is more closely aligned with the migrants themselves. Therefore, although the spectator comes to view Otherness through the innocent eyes of Sandro, as Giordana has asserted, they are simultaneously offered the film's own perspective, and in navigating the two they are called to evaluate what they see from their own unique position. In establishing intersubjective relationships with others, not only does Sandro develop his own ethical character, but the spectator's emotional and empathic engagement with him also encourages them to question

[33] Dan Zahavi, 'Empathy, Embodiment and Interpersonal Understanding: From Lipps to Schutz,' *Inquiry*, 53 (2010), 285–306 (p. 294) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00201741003784663>

their own responsibility, and this forms the crux of the film's ethics and humanitarian message.

The ethical perspective of the film develops in subsequent scenes as we follow Sandro's journey to the "centro di permanenza temporanea" (immigration detention centre) and he attempts to help Alina and Radu remain in the country. The film continues to depict Sandro's empathic experience by depicting him as embodying the same marginalised spaces that the migrants inhabit, such as the detention centre, and witnessing first-hand the effects of institutions that determine their legality and belonging, responding himself with care and attempting to welcome them unconditionally. In doing so, the spectator continues to engage with the migrant's experiences primarily through empathic engagement with Sandro.

As with the scenes on the boat, the spectator is most often placed alongside Sandro and has access to his perspective and his emotional response to situations through reaction shots. For example, the film shows the men's dorms from Sandro's perspective, as the camera pans across the faces of the translators, mimicking Sandro's gaze and embodiment of space before we see his reaction shot. However, they are also presented with perspectives that are not mediated through Sandro's character, as shown in figures 3 and 4, when Radu and other men are processed by a guard in the detention centre. As the men give their names and country of origin, they are shot in close-up looking directly into the camera at the spectator, who becomes an object of vision as well as a subject of vision in this face-to-face encounter.

Figures 3 and 4: close-ups of man (left) and Radu (right) being processed at the detention centre. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:01:24 and 1:01:55).

Sandro is not present in this scene, underlining the spectator's more direct engagement with the men's gazes which may bring into question their own responsibility to the Other. This reminds us that although the spectator is often encouraged to empathise with Sandro, they also engage with and make meaning from the entirety of the film's "body," as Sobchack argues.[34] Here, the spectator is called to evaluate the affective and sensuous dimensions of the cinematic image through intense close-ups of the men's faces, potentially encouraging feelings of compassion. As Stadler argues, "understanding arises in and through embodied perceptual experiences," therefore it can be argued that this scene exemplifies how the film invites an embodied encounter with the migrant Other in a way that encourages the spectator to ethically evaluate their own responsibility, as Sando does.[35] As discussed in the literature review, works of *impegno* can be conceived of as promoting individual responsibility and critical awareness in spectators. Therefore, scenes such as this also demonstrate the potential role of emotional engagement in intersubjective forms of understanding and critical evaluation which support the film's ethical position.

As mentioned, this scene is an example of how the film attempts to incite compassion in the viewer. Another example in which this is evident occurs when Alina runs desperately

[34] As theorised in her works *The Address of the Eye* (1992) and *Carnal Thoughts* (2004).
[35] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 56.

after Sandro when he leaves the detention centre to return home with his parents. The barrier closes separating the two children and symbolising the difference between Sandro's privilege and Alina's vulnerable and marginalised position. As figure 5 depicts, the spectator is aligned with Sandro's perspective so that they see Alina run towards him.

Figure 5: Alina runs after Sandro as he leaves. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:18:06).

The spectator is therefore encouraged to empathise with how Sandro may emotionally respond to Alina with feelings of compassion. In fact, as discussed above, the film attempts to elicit a strong empathic engagement with Sandro throughout, which can be said to contribute to the moral-ethical experience of the film since it questions Sandro's and the spectator's responsibility toward the Other and supports an ethics of care. In this sense, the type of emotional engagement that the film evokes contributes to its didacticism, since it is through Sandro's innocent worldview that the spectator may be led to question the treatment of migrants in Italy and their own responsibility for others. The film's humanitarian message of welcoming the Other becomes pronounced as it is presented through the innocent and naïve perspective of Sandro, who demonstrates much compassion for Alina and Radu, and with whom the spectator is encouraged to empathise.

Such salient attempts to engage the spectator emotionally may explain criticisms such as those of Manohla Dargis, who writes that Giordana "takes an unfortunately didactic

approach to the issue in his film,"[36] since in the above cited scenes, compassion is evidently used as a mechanism to convey the narrative's humanitarian message. Therefore, on the one hand, emotional engagement is shown above to be integral in forming an intersubjective relationship of responsibility and in questioning one's own ethics of care and responsibility toward the Other. On the other hand, the too obvious working of emotion can result in the film's didactic message becoming overly pronounced and thus undermined. Overall, however, the spectator's potential empathic relationship with Sandro means that they interact with his journey to maturity and ethical awakening through emotional engagement which may also inform their own ethical deliberation. Such empathic and emotional responses originate from modes of embodied perceptual engagement with the film, supporting Stadler's assertion that "one of the ways in which film narratives are of particular value to ethical understanding[...]is the capacity of film to elicit an embodied response from spectators."[37]

If, as has occurred traditionally in Italian cinema with the male child protagonist, Sandro can also be read as depicting the moral conscience and future of the nation itself, then the film can be seen to promote a compassionate Italian identity which has a responsibility towards the Other.[38] Although, it must be noted that the film does not offer any simplistic solution to welcoming migrants into the national body, as the open ending of the film demonstrates. In the film's conclusion, Sandro travels to Milan in an attempt to rescue Alina: he finds her alone in a dilapidated building and comes to the stark realisation that Radu is in

[36] Manohla Dargis, 'Anxiety and Turbulence Permeate 3 Films at Cannes,' *New York Times*, 16 May 2005. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/16/movies/anxiety-and-turbulence-permeate-3-films-at-cannes.html [Accessed 16 December 2021]

[37] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 11.

[38] Celik-Rappas and Phillis have also noted the trend in European cinema of utilizing the "the Other-in-need as an avatar in order to construct a compassionate European identity, one firmly devoted to humanitarian ideals." Celik-Rappas and Phillis, 'Do the Right Thing,' p. 39.

fact her pimp and not her brother. Following this, the pair share a sandwich in silence on the curb side surrounded by construction works, and the film comes to an end.

O'Healy observes that the ending highlights the discursive abjection of migrants which separates them from the social body, so whilst Sandro is determined to remain by Alina's side, he is unable to help her in any meaningful way.[39] Lerner relates this specifically to the ethico-political relationship, stating that the finale demonstrates the difficulty of translating unconditional hospitality into a viable social practice that will resolve issues relating to immigration and integration.[40] Therefore, although the film promotes the formation of a responsible, compassionate Italian citizen, the finale ensures that discussions surrounding immigration are not overly simplified by placing individual action within the larger political and social structures that also determine belongingness, and thus leaving space for further reflection. However, as discussed above, the overly didactic use of emotion may cause criticisms and in fact impinge upon the spectator's willingness to accept the film's view. In addition to this, the spectator's empathy with Sandro can also be seen as problematic, despite it being integral in conveying the film's primary ethical question of how to respond to the Other in need. As discussed below, although the spectator may empathise with Sandro, their emotional engagement with migrant characters remains limited, as they primarily become an object of Sandro's (and the spectator's) compassionate gaze and thus a didactic tool for ethical development.

[39] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 118.
[40] Lerner, 'From the Other Side of the Mediterranean,' pp. 9-10.

3.3.2 Filmic Emotion and Migrant Identities

From the above analysis, we can argue that the spectator's understanding of the film's ethics and socio-political commitment, or *impegno*, is shaped by filmic emotion. In particular, emotional engagement and empathy structure the spectator-other relationship in the cinematic context, which is fundamental for ethical deliberation - in this case of one's responsibility towards the Other in need. However, it must be recognised that the Italian character maintains a privileged position in the emotional trajectory of the narrative, whereas engagement with migrant characters serves primarily to reinforce the protagonist's development into a compassionate, responsible subject. In this section, therefore, I consider how emotion functions in ways that limit the subjectivity of the migrant characters and reinforce stereotypical media representations and postcolonial discourses. In other words, I will be questioning how the way the film elicits emotion in relation to some characters undermines its ability to "talk back," to use Graziella Parati's phrase, to dominant representations of migrants.

In *The Art of Talking Back* (2005), Parati transfers Adriana Cavarero's feminist concept of "relational identity" into a postcolonial context to analyse representations of otherness.[41] Relational identity is "intended as individuality and constructed in a constitutive relationship between the self and the other," in which the question "who are you?" rather than "what are you?" is privileged.[42] This concept is taken up by Parati to address discourses on migration that often reduce the identity of immigrants to "whatness" through the representation of

[41] Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2005). Parati refers to Adriana Cavarero's work on relational identity, grounded in Christine Battersby's concept of feminist metaphysics, outlined in Franco Restaino and Adriana Cavarero, *Le filosofie femministe* (Turin: Paravia Scriptorium, 1999), as well as her work *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti: filosofia della narrazione* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1997).
[42] Parati, *Migraton Italy*, pp. 105-106.

stereotyped characteristics.[43] Some films, however, allow for the construction of narratable selves that convey "whoness" and which therefore talk back to the dominant models of alterity inherent in laws, politics, and the media that reduce migrants to a "what."[44] Parati's work provides a useful reference for my research to analyse the extent to which films question or reinforce hegemonic representations of Otherness. I will borrow the key concepts of "whoness" and "whatness" in order to explore how filmic emotion contributes to their construction. Furthermore, as Cavarero states, the relational self is an identity that lends itself to being narrated and exists in relation to the other, which I argue is relevant to the ethical significance of the cinematic experience itself.[45]

Stadler's work on film ethics and narrative finds similarities with Cavarero's concept, since she describes personal identity as being intersubjectively formed and recognized through shared narratives.[46] What's more, "personal identity and ethical identity are both constituted by relationships and emotional attachments or loyalties to significant people, places, values, ideals and so forth."[47] Therefore, since emotions are part of both our relations with others and ethical deliberation, it is valid to consider the place of filmic emotion in the construction of on-screen migrant identities.

In *Quando sei nato*, the type of emotional engagement with migrant characters limits the narratability of their stories and reinforces gendered and postcolonial discourses that construct the migrant as a "what," that is, the criminal (Radu) and the victim (Alina). Radu is initially portrayed as a sympathetic character who saves Sandro from drowning and protects

[43] Parati, *Migration Italy*, p. 107.
[44] Ibid., p. 141.
[45] Ibid., pp. 105-106.
[46] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p.72
[47] Ibid., p. 75.

him aboard the boat. The spectator may also feel compassion for him, as Sandro is shown to, since he is not protected by the Italian law that allows unaccompanied minors to remain legally within Italy and is therefore separated from Alina. Radu escapes from the detention centre with Alina to avoid deportation and they make their way to Sandro's house. When Sandro's father, Bruno, says that he must turn himself in, Radu responds angrily, asking if it is fair to separate him from Alina just because he is eighteen years old. Following this, however, Radu betrays Sandro's friendship by stealing from the Lombardi household and running away with Alina. He does not appear again in the film, however in the finale his character becomes further deplorable when it is revealed that he is in fact Alina's pimp, not her brother as he claimed.

As O'Healy has noted, the film displays an ambivalence in regard to irregular immigration, since the initial sympathetic portrayal of irregular migrants is undermined by stereotypical fears that circulate in society.[48] In the study *Rapporto sul razzismo in Italia* (2009), Grazia Naletto et al analyse the language used by the Italian press to report news stories involving immigrants between 2007-2009, not long after the release of this film. They conclude that immigration is often framed in terms of illegality and there is an insistence on relating those who commit crimes with their nationality. Overall, the media contributes "to conveying a "negative, distorted, dehumanizing" image, in short discriminatory, of foreign citizens present in our country."[49] For example, following a crime committed by two Romanian girls in 2007, politician and member of *Lega nord* Piergiorgio Stiffoni is reported in

[48] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p.115

[49] Grazia Naletto, 'Il Razzismo in Prima Pagina: Alcuni Casi Esemplari,' in *Rapporto Sul Razzismo in Italia*, ed. by Grazia Naletto (Roma: Manifestolibri, 2009), pp. 52-55 (p. 53) <https://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/wp-content/uploads/rapportosulrazzismo.pdf> [Accessed 03 February 2022] Original quote: "a veicolare un'immagine «negativa, distorta, deumanizzante», in sintesi discriminatoria, dei cittadini stranieri presenti nel nostro paese."

La Repubblica as saying "the Romanian alarm continues... these men from the East, known as drunks, brutes, murderers, exploiters of minors and children, and thieves, have been in our country for ten years committing crimes" (30 April 2007, *La Repubblica*).[50]

Therefore, although it is valid to not portray all migrant subjects as innocent victims, *Quando sei nato's* narrative imbues Radu with "whatness" by reinforcing common mediatic representations of immigrant men as criminals that pose a threat to society. This is emphasised by the way in which the film promotes limited emotional engagement with his character, reinforcing detachment from him. For example, throughout the film the camera presents both Radu and Alina predominantly either from Sandro's perspective or a more objective, distanced position. The spectator is rarely alongside them in a position of strong empathic engagement in which the spectator is encouraged to understand their experiences from their perspective. Therefore, Alina and Radu predominantly remain objects of the spectator's (and Sandro's) emotions, reinforcing power relations between the self and Other.

Alongside rarely having access to Radu's subjective experiences, he displays little emotion so that his thoughts and feelings remain unclear, and the spectator's initial sympathy for him may give way to feelings of betrayal and disgust when Radu is revealed to be Alina's pimp. These latter feelings are encouraged not only by the narrative, but also due to the way in which the film has primarily attempted to elicit empathy with Sandro's feelings. Therefore, Radu's individual identity is not narrated, but rather he is presented via a story of fragmented stereotypical characteristics that reinforce his "whatness."

[50] Cited in Giulia Cortellesi, 'L'uccisione di Vanessa Russo,' in *Rapporto Sul Razzismo in Italia*, ed. pp. 59-63 (p.61). Original quote: "l'allarme rumeni continua...Sono dieci anni che questi signori dell'Est, conosciuti come ubriaconi, violenti, assassini, sfruttatori di minorenni e di bambini, pirati della strada stanno nel nostro paese a commettere delitti."

When Radu and Alina leave the Lombardi household, the film focuses on the feelings of Sandro who has been hurt by his friend's betrayal, further encouraging the audience to feel antipathy for Radu and marking him as a character who can no longer be helped. This latter point is supported by the finale in which Sandro remains by Alina's side only, as Radu disappears from the narrative. This underlines another of the film's ambiguities; the Lombardi's fixation on adopting Alina but not Radu because she is "più piccolina" [younger] and "indifesa" [vulnerable] at first appears to question the politics of humanitarianism that deem certain bodies as more worthy of protection than others.[51] However, this critique is undone by the narrative and filmic emotion that removes Radu from Sandro's (and the spectator's) sphere of concern.

On the other hand, the film presents Alina as worthy of compassion and thus reinforces discourses that invest migrant women with a gendered vulnerability.[52] Italian films often depict immigrant women as sex workers or victims, who sometimes suffer at the hands of men in their own ethnic community.[53] This can be seen to reflect public discourse that links

[51] Some scholars have explored the negative effects that a politics of humanitarianism can have on populations. For example, Hammami addresses the representational regimes that deem certain bodies as "grievable" and worthy of protection and others as not, in particular reference to Palestinian resistance. See Rema Hammami, 'Precarious Politics: The Activism of 'Bodies That Count' (Aligning with Those - That Don't) - in Palestine's Colonial Frontier,' in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed. by Judith P. Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 167–90; Tiktin, on the other hand, explores the role that humanitarianism and compassion play in providing legal permits for undocumented immigrants in France, which has led to illness becoming a prerequisite for aid. Thus, resulting in a limited humanity that is produced by a politics of compassion. See Miriam Ticktin, 'Where Ethics and Politics Meet,' *American Ethnologist*, 33 (2006), 33–49 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/ae.2006.33.1.33>

[52] In *Vulnerability in Resistance*, Butler et al question dominant conceptions of vulnerability as victimization and passivity, and paternalism as the site of agency. It is noted that whilst there is an unequal distribution of vulnerability amongst certain populations, their agency and ability to resist should not be negated. Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay, eds., *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[53] For example, *Vesna va veloce* (Mazzacurati 1996), *Saimir* (Munzi 2004), *La sconosciuta* (Tornatore 2006), *La straniera* (Turco 2009), *Io loro e Lara* (Verdone 2010), *La nostra vita* (Luchetti 2010), *Il vizio della speranza* (De Angelis 2018), *La vita davanti a sè* (Ponti 2020).

sex work to the exploitation of foreign women who lack agency and self-determination.[54] Furthermore, these women are often seen to be victims of the patriarchal system in their own ethnic community and in need of "our" support.[55] Thus, similarly to Radu, the spectator's emotional engagement with Alina is limited; they are primarily encouraged to feel compassion for her and her suffering becomes the motivation for Sandro's internal growth. This, coupled with the lack of subjective access to her character, reinforces her "whatness" as the passive female migrant victim, commonly represented in the public sphere.

As mentioned above, the spectator's intersubjective relationship with Alina is more mediated and distanced than with Sandro, and they almost never occupy an evident empathic position alongside her in the cinematic space. In addition to this, she demonstrates limited emotional responses, with the exception of the scenes in which Radu and Sandro leave her and she is visibly distressed, underlining her vulnerability and lack of agency outside of these relationships. Given the above, Sandro's relationship with Alina can be described as predominantly one of paternalism, and the spectator is aligned firmly with Sandro's position through the above discussed empathic engagement with his character. The finale of the film epitomises these arguments; we follow Sandro as he navigates his way through a migrant camp in Milan in search of Alina, with the camera mimicking his movements and aligning the spectator with his own inquisitive gaze. As figure 6 shows, we are positioned alongside Sandro as he opens the door to find Alina in her room.

[54] Luca Trappolin, 'Gender Victims and Cultural Borders: The Globalization of Prostitution in Italy,' *Dialectical Anthropology,* 29 (2005), 335-348 (p.340) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10624-005-2825-7>
[55] Trappolin, 'Gender Victims and Cultural Borders,' p. 341.

Figure 6: the spectator is aligned with Sandro when he finds Alina in Milan. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:44:21).

When Sandro realises that Alina is a victim of sex trafficking, the film's focus remains on his emotional response. In a rare moment, the camera takes Alina's position to view Sandro crying from her perspective (see figure 7). However, this functions above all to centre Sandro's feelings of despair and pity for Alina and his ethical dilemma of how to care for her.

Figure 7: the spectator's attention is focused on Sandro's emotional response to Alina's predicament. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:47:13).

The final scene shows a wide-shot view of Sandro and Alina sitting on a curb, allowing the spectator distance and time to evaluate Sandro's ethical dilemma and Alina's place within Italian society which, as discussed above, forms part of the film's *impegno*. However, as demonstrated, the limited emotional engagement with Alina reinforces her as primarily an instrument in Sandro's growth and ethical formation which, as we shall see, aligns with other

films such as *Terraferma* that "utilize the Other-in-need as an avatar in order to construct a compassionate European identity, one firmly devoted to humanitarian ideals."[56]

3.4 Terraferma

3.4.1 The Ethical Encounter and Italian Identity

Like *Quando sei nato*, *Terraferma* also received mixed reviews which largely praised the cinematography but were critical of the narrative and the way in which the topic of immigration had been dealt with.[57] In *Cineforum*, Leone describes the film as "squisitamente politic[o]" [extremely political] yet unsuccessful at pairing the socio-political with the familial and cultural environment.[58] In *Variety*, Weissberg writes more starkly that *Terraferma* "lays everything out nicely and neatly so [audiences] can easily digest the arguments and feel good about themselves for not wanting people to die,"[59] which reflects academic works that argue that films such as this are made for white Western audiences. For example, Ballesteros discusses how European films on immigration by white Western filmmakers often reflect a white guilty conscience or national identity crises which, as will be argued via an analysis of

[56] In general, Celik-Rappas and Phillis note "a paternalistic tendency in European cinema's representation of migration from the 1990s and onward." Celik-Rappas and Phillis, 'Do the Right Thing,' p. 36.
[57] For example, Stephanie Merry writes that "the movie excels at atmospherics, including a strings-heavy soundtrack and the evocative sounds of open water." Stephanie Merry, 'Terraferma movie review: the inhabitants of a small island are torn over an influx of African immigrants,' *The Washington Post*, 5 September 2013 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/goingoutguide/movies/terraferma-movie-review/2013/09/04/95f46c1e-11ae-11e3-85b6-d27422650fd5_story.html> [Accessed 16 December 2021]
[58] Lorenzo Leone, 'Tra vecchio e nuovomondo,' *Cineforum*, 51:7, (2011), Screen Studies Collection, 27–29 <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/tra-vecchio-e-nuovomondo/docview/1688040785/se-2?accountid=8630> [Accessed 15 December 2021]
[59] Jay Weissberg, 'Terraferma,' *Variety*, 424:6, (2011), 83 <https://www.proquest.com/magazines/terraferma/docview/896131321/se-2?accountid=8630> [Accessed 15 December 2021]

filmic emotion, also occurs in this film.[60] The political nature of the film is evident in its critique of Italy's response to the arrival of immigrants by sea, however as the reviews demonstrate, its portrayal of migrants is also a point of contention. In this regard, I intend to discuss the spectator's emotional engagement with the film to demonstrate how, similarly to *Quando sei nato*, the film paradoxically supports a critique of anti-immigration rhetoric whilst also reinforcing power relations and problematic representations of migrants.

Terraferma is similar to *Quando sei nato* in that it revolves around an ethical dilemma spurred by the encounter with the migrant Other and documents the journey of a young Italian man to maturity and ethical awakening. Like *Quando sei nato*, Crialese's film displays a contradiction between its sympathetic portrayal of the plight of immigrants and its reinforcement of stereotypical postcolonial depictions of migrants. It will be argued, however, that *Terraferma* reinforces unequal power relations between the Italian and migrant characters more starkly through the depiction of compassion and guilt. Furthermore, unlike Sandro in *Quando sei nato*, Filippo is not presented as forming an intersubjective relationship of care with the migrants, which instead occurs through the maternal figure Giulietta (Donatella Finocchiaro). Overall, the entire family in *Terraferma* is more evidently presented as playing crucial and defined roles in forming Filippo's character and the spectator is encouraged to support certain values over others, in such a way that the film portrays clearly defined gendered and generational perspectives.

We are introduced to the youngest family member, Filippo, aboard his late father's fishing boat at sea, connecting him to the traditional way of life of his grandfather, Ernesto

[60] See Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema*, pp. 15-17.

(Mimmo Cuticchio), and the South more generally. He is presented as a sympathetic child-like character, despite being twenty years old, as he dances playfully on the deck of the boat. He is further infantilised in subsequent scenes, for example when he is teased by a group of peers, or when his uncle suggests that he needs to spend more time with him after the death of his father. His displays of emotion are also child-like, such as when he pushes his uncle in frustration, or gets angry at his mother for embarrassing him in front of a group of young tourists. Filippo is at a crossroads in his life and is developing from adolescent to responsible adult; a transition that is urged by his mother Giulietta, who explains that Filippo needs to think to the future and earn a stable living, which fishing on the small island of Linosa cannot provide. The spectator is encouraged to empathise with his character as they follow his journey to maturity, which is intimately linked to the forging of his ethical character that is spurred by his encounter with the migrant Other.

Filippo and his grandfather continue to take their boat on fishing trips despite the failing local fishing economy. The lack of stable jobs on the island motivates Giulietta's desire to leave; from this perspective, the islanders and the migrants are shown to both experience precarity to some degree and as a result seek to migrate further North. It is on one of their fishing trips that Ernesto and Filippo encounter a group of migrants stranded on a dinghy. At the time, under the much-criticised *pacchetto di sicurezza*, the law criminalised anyone who aided illegal immigration.[61] This law becomes the moral crux of the film's narrative: should Filippo abide by this law or should he respect the so-called "law of the sea," that is, the traditional moral code by which the fishermen live that supports helping those in need. As stated above, the film immediately aligns Filippo (and the spectator through their

[61] The Italian security package, or *pacchetto di sicurezza*, was introduced in 2008 and was criticised for being incompatible with EU law and human rights.

engagement with his character) with his grandfather's traditional perspective, which is symbolised by a shot that places Ernesto at the helm of the boat with Filippo's image reflected next to him on the glass window (see figure 8).

Figure 8: the composition of the shot aligns Filippo with his grandfather. Crialese, *Terraferma* (03:19)

When they encounter the stranded migrants, the spectator is most evidently encouraged to empathise with Filippo as the film mimics his embodied modes of being; we view the dinghy as if through the binoculars that Filippo uses, which is followed by a reverse-shot that shows his reaction. The camera also moves to the movements of the boat as the migrants swim towards it, creating a kinaesthetic empathy that contributes to the spectator's sense of proprioception within the cinematic space. This kinaesthetic empathy is also developed by the way in which the camera remains predominantly in close-up and alters its view quickly, so that some images are blurred or out of focus, allowing the spectator to empathise with a sense of panic and urgency.

Thus, the spectator is predominantly aligned with Filippo, who looks to Ernesto for direction, underlining that he has not yet formed his own ethical character like his grandfather. Ernesto is unwavering in his actions and immediately jumps into the sea to save Sara (Timnit T.) and her son, whilst Filippo helps others climb aboard the boat. However, the

film also quite often emphasises its own perspective, so that the spectator is positioned as another "body" on the boat, such as when the camera pans across the faces of the migrants before resting on Filippo's face (see figures 9, 10 and 11), allowing them time to imaginatively interpret his feelings and emphasising his journey to ethical awakening.

Figures 9, 10, 11: the camera pans across the faces of the migrants on the boat (top) before showing Filippo's reaction (below). Crialese, *Terraferma* (36:00-36:12).

As I argue, this journey is reinforced by filmic emotion, however emotion functions in some significantly different ways than in *Quando sei nato.* Sandro is placed in a position of empathy in relation to the migrant experience, whereas Filippo's journey is largely separated from it. That is, his actions are driven by brief encounters with migrants, yet he is not shown to construct any meaningful, intersubjective relationships with them. Rather, as will be discussed, it is predominantly through the maternal figure Giulietta that the spectator is encouraged to empathise with an intersubjective relationship of care and compassion between characters (despite this also being problematic in certain aspects). Thus, the potential for emotional engagement with the migrant characters, as mediated through

Filippo's character, is limited at best and problematic at worst, as demonstrated below by an analysis of two scenes.

Therefore, the way in which *Terraferma* elicits emotion differs from the empathic relationship encouraged in *Quando sei nato* between spectator, Sandro, and the migrants. Filippo does not even speak to Sara - the Ethiopian woman who is saved by Ernesto and hidden from the police in their garage - until the final scene when he tells her to board the boat so that he can transport her to the mainland, which is reflective of the "white saviour" narrative. This dissonance between the characters (and thus between the spectator and the migrant characters) emphasises to a greater extent the objectification of the migrant as a tool for constructing Italian identity.[62]

If we look at the emotional trajectory of the film, Filippo's feelings are privileged within the narrative as the spectator is encouraged to reflect on and empathise with his experiences and internal struggle. For example, when their boat is impounded for violating the law, Filippo becomes angry at the deemed injustice of it, and naively asks his mother: *"*is it true that it's illegal to save people out at sea?"[63] Another significant moment in his journey and the emotional trajectory of the narrative comes after he fails to help migrants who desperately

[62] Of interest to note here is the documentary *[s]comparse* by Antonio Tibaldi (2011) [accessed 1 September 2022 via a private vimeo link requested from the director]. It documents behind the scenes of the filming of *Terraferma,* including the treatment of the real-life immigrants hired to play versions of themselves, which also reveals a disconnect between the immigrants themselves and the Italian film crew, raising questions of the ethics inherent in producing such a film. In the documentary, some of these non-professional actors raise disputes over the small pay they receive (just €200 for three days' work). There is also discontent due to contracts not being provided prior to arriving on set, with some feeling misled over the pay they would have received, however feeling compelled to accept as they had already travelled from Palermo to Linosa. The documentary reveals other problematic treatment of the migrant actors, such as those who had to act out traumatic events that were very similar to their own experiences. Some of the migrants also comment on the need to depict the migrant's journey prior to arriving in Europe and the conditions of their home countries for those who are too poor to leave, something which is lacking in depictions of immigration in Italian cinema.

[63] Original quote: "è vero che salvare la gente in mezzo mare è proibito?"

try to board his boat in the middle of the night (this scene is discussed in more detail below). He returns home, closes himself in his room and cries in despair, whilst his mother tries to comfort him from behind the closed door. Shots alternate between Filippo and Giulietta separated by the door, symbolising the end of his reliance on his mother and his changed character. There is also evident use of the scene of empathy, as dubbed by Plantinga, since the camera lingers in close-up on Filippo's facial expressions to convey his emotions and to attempt to elicit an empathic response in the viewer (see figure 12).[64]

Figure 12: Filippo struggles after the traumatic events of the night before. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:14:19)

This is an example of how the film attempts to elicit an emotional response to reinforce the significance of Filippo's experiences, thus contributing to the meaning of the narrative. Filippo's emotional reaction stands out as a salient emotional marker in the film's narrative, encouraging the spectator to empathise with his feelings of guilt and despair which become the motivation for his subsequent actions. The spectator likely understands that his emotions are an evaluation of the events of the night before, that is, he feels guilt for not helping the men stranded at sea. Understanding his predicament may encourage them to

[64] See the literature review for a discussion of the scene of empathy as described in Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy,' (1999).

support compassionate action, resulting in a feeling of gratification when Filippo eventually accepts his responsibility to the Other in need and breaks the law to take Sara to the mainland.

This final scene is framed as a heroic, compassionate act; after Ernesto and Giulietta decide it is too risky to board the ferry with Sara and her son hidden in their van, Filippo impulsively drives them to the family's boat, aptly named *Santuzza*, to take them to the mainland alone. The position of the camera aligns the spectator alongside Filippo in the van as he drives away from his home. Once on the boat, the visual aesthetics and music reinforce the emotional impact and affect of the scene through a heightened sensuous engagement with the film. For example, the up-tempo track *Après la pluie* by René Aubry is laid over the images to amplify the suspense of the scene. This compliments the dramatic chiaroscuro lighting which illuminates the characters' faces in turn, with the camera resting ultimately on Filippo's steadfast gaze (see figure 13).

Figure 13: Filippo's face is illuminated by chiaroscuro lighting as he drives Sara to the mainland in the dramatic finale. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:22:30).

The spectator is shown the characters in close-up, so that they are intimately aligned with them as they begin their journey. The film then cuts to an overhead shot that zooms out from the small boat in the expanse of the dark ocean, as the music fades out to the harsher diegetic sounds of the wind and waves. The aesthetics, music, and modes of embodied existence replicated by the film contribute to the ways in which the spectator can empathise

with the characters and sense the immensity of the journey and the heroism of Filippo's actions. Thus, it is not only the narrative that provides meaning but, as Sobchack argues, the spectator may also make meaning out of bodily sense.[65]

For the audience, Filippo's journey may become an imaginative exercise in moral behaviour, which is reinforced by the ways in which the film encourages emotional engagement that informs their evaluation of his ethical dilemma. As argued, emotion has the potential to shape the spectator's understanding of the narrative; the film has encouraged the audience to empathise with Filippo and to feel compassion for Sara, thus likely resulting in their support of his decision to take Sara to the mainland, that is, they may will him to "do the right thing."[66] Therefore, the formation of an ethical Italian identity is framed as the responsibility of the young, male character, reflecting again the gendered symbolism of the film's moral conscience and the future of the nation, as has been traditional in Italian cinema.

In the film's conclusion, the inner conflict that Filippo has struggled with - between accepting his responsibility for the Other and abiding by societal law - is resolved, marking the final stage of the *bildungsroman* and reaffirming the imagined values of hospitality of his grandfather's generation. In this sense, as O'Healy states, the "film is less concerned with the experience of contemporary migrants than fascinated with the imagined values of an idealized Italian past."[67] Furthermore, this privileging of the older generation's perspective is reminiscent of Amelio's *Lamerica* which depicts a nostalgic view of a lost compassionate and

[65] See Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye* (1992) and *Carnal Thoughts* (2004).
[66] For a defence of the value of emotion in rational ethical deliberation and its ability to shape our understanding in narrative see Chapter 5 'Resistance and Responsiveness: Emotion and Character Engagement' in Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, pp. 130-147.
[67] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 160.

hospitable Southern culture in contrast with a modernity based on individualism and capitalism.

Although the open-ended nature of the scene leaves room for ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the success of the trip, and therefore the impact that his actions can truly have on the larger political issue of welcoming migrants into the country, the affective nature of this scene serves to dramatize his actions as heroic and morally correct. This explains the above-stated critique that the film allows audiences to "feel good" about themselves, since if the audience empathises with Filippo and his actions, they may derive gratification from their own ability to feel compassionately. The emotional trajectory of the film therefore primarily encourages the audience to evaluate the development of Filippo's character into a compassionate Italian citizen that supports humanitarian ideals, whilst remaining somewhat detached from the subjective experiences of the migrant characters, as discussed below.

3.4.2 Gendered Perspectives: Compassion and Victimhood

Despite his initial struggle and inertia in responding to the migrants, Filippo eventually becomes the character that displays the most agency by "saving" Sara. Unlike Sandro and Alina, however, he is not shown to develop an intersubjective relationship of care with Sara, rather, as will be discussed below, his actions are spurred by guilt. In *Terraferma*, it is Giulietta who is most obviously placed in a reciprocal relationship of care and responsibility with Sara, as is demonstrated by both the narrative and the formal aspects of the film. Giulietta and Sara are represented as embodying a shared sisterhood and motherhood which unite them. Giulietta, however, is initially hostile to Sara's presence, and this is conveyed to the audience

via reverse-shots that focus on the faces of the women and places the spectator intimately between their gaze so as to also implicate the spectator in the encounter with the Other (see figures 14 and 15).

Figures 14 and 15: the initial encounter between Giulietta (left) and Sara (right). Crialese, *Terraferma*, (39:42 and 39:48).

This is also clear in a shot which frames Sara between a doorway as she returns Giulietta's (and the spectator's) gaze, evidently engaging the viewer with Giulietta's subjective perspective so that they are encouraged to empathise with her ethical predicament of welcoming the Other and are placed intimately in an intersubjective relationship with Sara (although, the voyeuristic framing of this shot also reinforces Sara's objectification).

Despite her initial hostility, Giulietta's maternal qualities are evidenced and accompany her increasing compassion for Sara. For example, Giulietta holds Sara's baby and calms her because, as Sara states, "she can smell your hands, she was born by your hands."[68] It is also significant that Giulietta is framed holding Sara's baby as she listens to Sara recount her harrowing journey to Italy. Their shared sisterhood and common humanity are most evidently depicted in the film's finale, in which an ethics of care is sensuously and emotionally comprehensible to the viewer. Figures 16 and 17 demonstrate how the emotional register of

[68] Original quote: "lei sente odore di tue mani, lei è nata con le tue mani."

the women's faces have changed from their initial encounter and now convey a sense of warmth.

Figures 16 and 17: the final encounter between Giulietta (left) and Sara (right). Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:17:21 and 1:17:26).

In this sequence, the spectator is placed in an immersive empathic relationship via an abundance of close-up reaction shots, alternating between each woman's perspective, and visual emotional cues such as Sara's tears and the pair's embrace. Thus, the spectator is encouraged to empathise with the women's feelings and established intersubjective relationship of care. Furthermore, Giulietta's eventual compassion and acceptance of her responsibility for the Other is established through gendered tropes of motherhood and care.It is through the spectator's engagement with Giulietta, in which they are encouraged to empathise with her emotional responses to Sara, that an ethics of care for the Other is most evidently supported. Therefore, although agency is masculinised through Filippo's final actions, care and compassion are feminised via emotional engagement with the maternal figure.

However, within this intersubjective relationship both Giulietta and the spectator are placed in a privileged position within a hierarchy between the subject and object of compassion. As Lauren Berlant describes, "compassion is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is *over there*. You, the compassionate one, have a resource that would alleviate

someone else's suffering."[69] Sara is most obviously depicted as a worthy object of compassion only once she reveals her traumatic past. In this scene, Giulietta is framed behind Sara who holds her child, further emphasising her gendered vulnerability, as she narrates the violence committed against her during her journey from Ethiopia to Italy. The camera moves so that the spectator is placed alongside Giulietta, aligning them with her perspective of Sara, followed by a reaction shot of Giulietta looking pitiful. Thus, the spectator is presented with Giulietta's emotional response to Sara and is encouraged to also respond compassionately to her story.

The emotional and affective quality of the scene is reinforced by shots that linger on Sara's face to convey emotional cues and allowing the spectator time to reflect on her past experiences. The dangerous and life-threatening journeys that migrants are often forced to make is a well-documented reality, one which the refugee and non-professional actress Timnit T. undertook herself.[70] This forms part of the film's political critique of laws and attitudes that treat migrants as unworthy of humanitarian assistance. However, Sara is defined almost exclusively by her experiences of injury and victimhood which both reinforce the uneven power dynamic between the observer and the object of compassion and limits her identity to categories of "whatness," that is, the suffering victim lacking agency. The fact that Sara is actually nameless in the film (her name is given only in the credits) is another signifier of her lack of identity beyond stereotyped characteristics.[71]

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[69] Lauren Berlant, *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York, London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2004), p. 4.

[70] Timnit T. undertook the dangerous crossing from Libya to Italy in a dinghy holding 70 people and was one of only 5 to survive. William Spindler, "Award-winning film exposes the drama of mixed migration in the Mediterranean," *The UN Refugee Agency*, 15 February 2012 <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2012/2/4f3be42e6/award-winning-film-exposes-drama-mixed-migration-mediterranean.html> [Accessed 16 March 2022]

[71] O'Healy notes this in *Migrant Anxieties*, p.159. In fact, all the migrants are nameless in the film's dialogue.

It should be noted that *Terraferma* can be seen to resist the tendency in Italian cinema and media, noted by scholars such as O'Healy and Ponzanesi, to depict black women as overtly sexualised.[72] Furthermore, the maternal figure is uncommon in Italian cinema which tends to limit migrant women to the roles of domestic worker, *badante* (carer), or sex worker.[73] However, like the figure of Alina, Sara's humanity is problematically tied to gendered characteristics and trauma. When she is taken aboard Ernesto's boat, he unzips her jacket to reveal her pregnant belly, whilst the other migrant men are given cursory attention (a theme which pervades the film).[74] In this shot, the entirety of the screen is filled by her body, with Ernesto's hand gently holding her belly (figure 18).

Figure 18: Ernesto holds Sara's pregnant belly. Crialese, *Terraferma* (34:19).

Therefore, the spectator is encouraged to consider her as vulnerable and in need of protection, and thus empathise with Ernesto's decision to hide her in their garage. Her

[72] Áine O'Healy, "'[Non] è Una Somala': Deconstructing African Femininity in Italian Film," *The Italianist*, 29 (2009), 175–98 http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/026143409x12488561926306; Sandra Ponzanesi, "Edges of Empire: Italy's Postcolonial Entanglements and the Gender Legacy," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 16 (2016), 373–86 http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1532708616638692

[73] Examples of migrant women that are sex workers can be found in *Vesna va veloce* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996), *Io, loro e Lara* (Carlo Verdone, 2010), *La nostra vita*, (Daniele Luchetti, 2010), *Gli ultimi saranno ultimi* (Massimiliano Bruno, 2015), and *Il vizio della speranza* (Edoardo de Angelis, 2018), among others. Examples of migrant women who are carers or domestic workers can be found in *Teste rasate*, (Claudio Fragasso, 1993), *L'assedio* [Beseiged] (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1998), and *Contromano* (Antonio Albanese, 2018), among others.

[74] The importance of her motherhood is also emphasised in the scene in which she gives birth, as it is reminiscent of religious iconography; after a perilous journey, she is given refuge in the family's garage and is framed in chiaroscuro lighting, surrounded by Filippo, Giulietta and Ernesto as she gives birth.

gendered characteristics are also emphasised in other scenes, such as figure 19 which shows Sara tightly framed between a doorway with her shirt half removed, revealing her nude shoulder as she breastfeeds her child.

Figure 19: Sara is framed between the doorway as Giulietta (and the spectator) gaze at her. Crialese, *Terraferma* (54:14).

Although Sara returns the spectator's gaze, the composition of the shot reinforces the uneven power dynamics between observer and observed as the spectator peers through the door at Sara from the dark and isolated space of the garage, placing her in a position of vulnerability so as to encourage a compassionate response. These instances reinforce representational regimes that denote some bodies as more worthy of protection than others, as has been discussed by Hammami.[75] Furthermore, Giulietta pities Sara only once her trauma is revealed, which echoes a trend in European cinema and humanitarian politics in general to inscribe the migrant body with injury in order to reveal their humanity.[76]

[75] Hammami, 'The Activism of 'Bodies That Count',' p. 171.

[76] Celik-Rappas discusses *Terraferma* alongside other European films such as *Children of Men* (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006), as films which reflect humanitarian and compassionate discourses that require refugees to be innocent victims. In particular, innocence is narrated by characters which undergo violence and crisis. See Ipek A. Celik-Rappas, "Refugees as Innocent Bodies, Directors as Political Activists: Humanitarianism and Compassion in European Cinema," *Revista Latino Americana De Estudios Sobre Cuerpos, Emociones y Sociedad*, 9:23 (2017), 81–89 <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/refugees-as-innocent-bodies-directors-political/docview/1928420933/se-2>

In her article 'Where Ethics and Politics Meet,' Miriam Ticktin analyses the effects of the "illness clause" in France which grants papers to undocumented immigrants for "humanitarian reasons," and which relies on the compassion of regulating bodies.[77] Ticktin argues that by replacing politics with humanitarian ethics, a limited category of humanity is produced in which only passive, suffering persons become worthy of political recognition.[78] From her ethnographic research, she concludes that "compassion is elicited differently according to race and gender" since "compassion depends on circulating narratives, images, and histories and often on maintaining an unequal power relation between nurse and patient and citizen and foreigner - distinctions that are already heavily gendered and racialized."[79] This practice of utilising discourses of humanitarianism and compassion to provide basic human rights places injury and trauma as a defining factor of humanity (of non-citizens).[80]

Terraferma can be seen to depict such gendered and racialized images, stemming from colonial discourses, which can underpin acts of compassion, as demonstrated by the above scenes in which Sara's vulnerability and trauma are revealed. Furthermore, Sara's passivity and lack of agency ensure she does not threaten the power relation between citizen

[77] Miriam Ticktin, 'Where Ethics and Politics Meet: The Violence of Humanitarianism in France,' *American Ethnologist*, 33 (2006), 33–49 (p. 33) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/ae.2006.33.1.33>

[78] As discussed in chapter five, Carpignano's film *Mediterranea* exposes the difficulty of obtaining a residence permit in Italy and the problem with relying on humanitarian protection to give residency to immigrants. In the film, Abas is given a temporary *permesso di soggiorno* (residence permit) for three months which allows him to work on the orange-groves. However, in order to stay in Italy, he must be given a permanent job contract to apply for residency. Under the Bossi-Fini law, only documented migrants can get a work contract, but you cannot become documented without a work contract. This catch-22 keeps migrant labour unregulated and exploitative. Ironically, Abas is offered a residency permit only after he sustains grave injuries from a violent attack.

[79] Ticktin, 'Where Ethics and Politics Meet,' p. 43.

[80] Humanitarian protection is essential in safeguarding vulnerable migrants, however, as Ticktin demonstrates in her fieldwork, it can become problematic and exclusionary when migrants are only afforded basic rights based on injury or illness, and when the application process is tied to subjective acts of compassion which can reinforce gendered and racial hierarchies. Prior to 2018, asylum seekers in Italy could apply for residence permits for humanitarian reasons, however this protection was abolished under the Salvini security decree, forcing many migrants already in Italy into "illegal" status, and the decree was highly criticised by the United Nations. In 2020 the Salvini decree was overturned, and humanitarian protection was reintroduced.

and foreigner. This is reinforced via the limited ways in which the film elicits emotional engagement with her character, as she is predominantly presented as an object of compassion for both the family and the spectator. Therefore, although *Terraferma* attempts to challenge certain cinematic tropes such as the foreign sex worker, it falls short through its depiction of conditional compassion which perpetuates victimhood and thus plays into the innocent-victim/guilty-criminal binary that is often associated with immigrants.[81] Furthermore, whilst *Terraferma* avoids the sexualisation and commodification of black women's bodies which is common in Italian media, it nonetheless reduces Sara's character to her body by relying on images of her pregnancy and narratives of violence committed against her body to depict her humanity and engender compassion in Giulietta and the viewer.

3.4.3 Postcolonial Haunting and White Guilt

Terraferma contains several images that have a spectral quality and suggest a postcolonial haunting of the present day. Jacques Derrida introduced the concept of hauntology in his book *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1993/2006).[82] He coined the French word *hantologie* (hauntology), a near-homonym of *ontologie* (ontology), to describe the manner in which the present is haunted by spectres of the past and of alternative or lost futures. His repeated reference to Hamlet's phrase "the time is out of joint" underscores the untimeliness of the spectre, a figure

[81] Crowhurst discusses this paradigm in relation to migrant sex workers in particular. See Isabel Crowhurst, "Caught in the Victim/Criminal Paradigm: Female Migrant Prostitution in Contemporary Italy," *Modern Italy*, 17 (2012), 493–506 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13532944.2012.707000

[82] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York, NY: Routledge, [1993] 2006).

which cannot be fully present, but which nonetheless exerts real effects on the present. As Mark Fisher explains, hauntology has two directions: "the first refers to that which is (in actuality is) no longer, but which is still effective as a virtuality […] The second refers to that which (in actuality) has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual" and can thus essentially be thought of as forces which act at a distance.[83]

The notion of haunting and spectrality has been adopted by postcolonial theorists to examine how traces of the colonial past emerge in the present and alter conceptions of the contemporary nation. As O'Riley writes, "postcolonial haunting is frequently portrayed as the Freudian *unheimlich* of history and is figured as an interruptive or affective moment in the course of Western consciousness where the repressed colonial scene returns."[84] The Freudian *unheimlich* (the uncanny) is that which should have remained hidden but resurfaces, thus in a postcolonial sense it marks the disruptive temporality of the return of the colonial past. Bhabha describes this belated temporality of the emergence of specters of coloniality as a "time-lag" which "keeps alive the making of the past."[85] Thus, for Bhabha, postcolonial haunting is the manner in which the marginalized histories of postcolonial and diasporic subjects emerge as a disruptive force that renegotiate conceptions of the contemporary nation.

These theories are particularly relevant in the Italian context, in which the downplaying of Italy's colonial past has been noted by several scholars such as Lombardi-Diop

[83] Mark Fisher, 'What Is Hauntology?,' *Film Quarterly*, 66 (2012), 16–24 (p. 19) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/fq.2012.66.1.16>

[84] Michael F. O'Riley, 'Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect, and the Situated Encounter,' *Postcolonial Text*, 3:4 (2007), 1-15 (p. 1) https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/728/496 [Accessed 04 September2023]

[85] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004 [1994]), p.364.

and Romeo who write, “Italian civil society has, until recently, been kept in ignorance with regard to its colonial past – this part of history has been absent from school textbooks and general public domain.”[86] The film *Terraferma* can be seen to comment on this suppressed colonial history (and its continued postcolonial implications), for example by means of the many underwater shots, or the images of various objects that are hidden in the depths of the Mediterranean Sea; traces of the many lives lost in making the dangerous crossing.[87] Furthermore, such images have more than a mere metaphorical function, and have a particularly affective quality that instils the film with a sense of postcolonial haunting and uncanniness that is perceptible and sensible to the spectator. For example, towards the beginning of the film, Filippo and Ernesto’s boat collides with a wreckage; as figure 20 shows, Filippo discovers the remains of a small boat with Arabic script floating in the sea, bringing into question the fate of those aboard.

Figure 20: the wreckage of a boat that Filippo and Ernesto discover during a fishing trip. Crialese, *Terraferma* (04:39).

Such an image disrupts the present by marking the presence of an absence, bringing the spectator into relation with that which is no longer. Thus, this scene highlights the

[86] Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, eds., *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.7.
[87] 2000 migrants have died crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2023 alone. Laurel Wamsley, ‘Nearly 2,000 Migrants Have Died Crossing the Mediterranean This Year. Here’s Why’, *NPR*, 28 June 2023 [Accessed 04/09/2023]

disjunctive temporality of the present which is haunted by the past as well as lost futures. The Arabic script and location of the wreckage suggest a relationship to Africa, including those countries that were once part of Italy's (and Europe's) colonial conquests (such as Sara's homeland, Ethiopia). Therefore, the uncanny presence of the wreckage simultaneously signifies a return of occluded histories of colonialism, as well as the ongoing repression of displaced postcolonial subjects.

Another striking scene whose meaning is disrupted and altered by a postcolonial haunting depicts a boat crowded with tourists enjoying themselves and dancing to Lu Colombo's *Maracaibo,* some of whom then jump into the sea and their silhouettes are shot from below the surface of the water.[88] The scene initially has a comedic quality which gives way to an uncanny feeling that derives from its visual similarities with an earlier image of the small boat that Filippo and Ernesto discover, which shows migrants waving for help (see figures 21 and 22).

Figures 21 and 22: the image of tourists (left) echoes the earlier image of stranded migrants (right). Crialese, *Terraferma* (52:11 and 31:01).

[88] Despite the upbeat rhythm of this 1980s dance hit, it narrates a dramatic and morbid love-story between Fidel Castro (named Miguel in the song) and a Cuban dancer who flees to save her life. To escape, she takes to the sea and is bitten by a shark. Significantly, it is precisely this part of the song that accompanies the images of the tourists on the boat as they jump into the sea, which contributes to the more serious undertones of the images.

This scene demonstrates the affective dimension of haunting that comes from the domestic scene and that "which invades or disturbs it."[89] In addition, the image (and the film in general) may be informed by the spectator's extra-cinematic embodied knowledge deriving, for example, from news stories documenting boats overcrowded with migrants, many of whom die at sea (the latter signification in particular is conjured by an underwater shot of the tourists' bodies in the ocean). Such images have become common in the Italian collective imaginary, from the media coverage of the unprecedented docking in Bari of the ship Vlora in 1991 which carried thousands of Albanian refugees, to current-day news stories of migrant crossings, as well as well-known cinematic representations such as Amelio's *Lamerica*.[90] Such images therefore have a particularly affective quality which can be felt by the viewer, and which stems from "our own extra-cinematic, cultural, and embodied experience and knowledge" which "charges" the images with a sense of the "real."[91] Such an affective response to audiovisual images can be seen to contribute to the spectator's overall emotional and ethical contemplation of the film.[92]

In these examples, the affect and feeling of uncanniness derive from the disruption of the present by "the furious emergence of the projective past," that is, by the return of repressed (post)colonial histories which cannot be dissociated from modernity, despite the

[89] Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2014), p. 125.
[90] Albania refugees migrated to other countries after the fall of the communist regime. The Vlora transported around 20,000 Albanians to the port of Bari on 8 August 1991, taking Italian media and authorities by surprise. The image become iconic and is referenced in films such as Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica.* Guido Bonsaver, 'Accented Voices in Contemporary Italian Cinema,' in *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*, ed. by Emma Bond and Federico Faloppa (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 345-364 (p. 345).
[91] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 211, p. 215.
[92] Plantinga has explored the many factors that contribute to emotional elicitation in the cinematic experience, and the ways in which affect and cognition work together. See for example Carl Plantinga, 'The Affective Power of Movies' (2013).

postcolonial amnesia that has occurred in Italy.[93] As O'Healy writes, "little acknowledgment of Italy's complicated past as both a colonial power and impoverished emigrant nation inflects the dominant rhetoric on immigration, which is laced with images of invasion, flooding, or contamination."[94] *Terraferma* can therefore be seen to ethically question the disavowal of such histories via the affective and sensible dimension of certain images.

Notwithstanding the above, the film's ethical perspective is contradicted by the representation of the migrant characters who do not have a narratable story that conveys "whoness," but who rather lack subjectivity and agency, reinforcing hegemonic depictions of Otherness. Sara is the only migrant character with a voice, albeit limited, whilst the representation of the other migrant characters, all of whom are men, further undermines the film's apparent ethical commitment to challenging hegemonic public discourses on immigration. This is demonstrated by one of the most striking scenes of the film, from which stems Filippo's white guilt which becomes a driving force of the narrative, and which reveals the complexities and contradictions of the film from a postcolonial perspective.

One evening, Filippo takes Maura out to sea at night-time on a small fishing boat. Alone at sea, Maura undresses and jumps into the water, however the romantic tone of the scene suddenly shifts to horror when Filippo hears a strange distant noise and shines a light to reveal a group of African men swimming frantically towards their boat. Panic ensues as Filippo pulls Maura aboard and proceeds to beat the men back with an oar to avoid the boat from capsizing as the men desperately grab onto the side. During this scene, the camera is predominantly positioned closely alongside Filippo and Maura on the boat, occasionally

[93] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 364.
[94] O'Healy, 'Deconstructing African Femininity,' p. 178.

changing to a more objective wide shot to reinforce the imminent danger they face in being capsized, so that the spectator is encouraged to empathise with the Italian couple's experiences.

A sense of panic is conveyed to the spectator via dark lighting and a quick alternation of shots between Maura's frightened face, Filippo who desperately tries to keep the men off the boat, and the men themselves. Such meta-movements of the camera, along with the visible intense movements of the characters, create a kinesis that, in D'Aloia's words, ""fills in the gap" between bodily presence of the spectator and bodily absence of the character," contributing to the potential emotional empathic engagement with the film.[95] Our focus is primarily drawn to the men's hands as they grab at the boat, yet their faces remain largely indistinguishable in the dark (see figures 23 and 24). Maura, on the other hand, is illuminated by a bright light so that her distress and fear are evident in the several close-up reaction shots of her face (see figure 25).

Figures 23 and 24: the shot above shows the men's hands grabbing at the boat in dark lighting, whilst the shot below shows the boat about to capsize as they try to pull themselves aboard. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:03:01 and 1:03:13).

[95] D'Aloia, *Cinematic Empathy*, p.98

Figure 25: the lighting and camera focus ensure that the spectator can easily read Maura's emotional facial cues. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:03:08).

As Plantinga argues, the focus on such facial expressions does not only convey the character's feelings but can also elicit and strengthen affective and empathetic responses in the viewer.[96] Therefore, the almost complete lack of facial recognition of the migrant men detracts from the spectator's ability to empathise with them, whilst they are firmly encouraged to consider Maura's subjective experience and Filippo's need to protect her. Eventually, the Italian pair escape and the camera faces a semi-nude Maura crying on the floor of the boat, whilst Filippo steers the boat away from the stranded men as they disappear into the darkness. The composition of the shot, in which Maura is huddled below Filippo who stands above her, reinforces her vulnerability and fear, and shows Filippo to be her protector. As they drive away extra-diegetic orchestral music fades in, which has a deep, eerie register,

[96] Plantinga, 'The Scene of Empathy,' p. 240.

reinforcing the affect and mood of the scene. The filmic emotion of this scene, therefore, reinforces postcolonial and gendered discourses that surround immigration.

Although Filippo's failure to help the men later becomes a source of guilt for him, as discussed below, this scene remains problematic for its invocation of fear in relation to immigrant men. Rather than questioning narratives of threat, invasion, and fear of migrant men that circulate in public discourses, the scene is composed of images that reinforce such feelings. Although Filippo's actions may make the spectator uncomfortable, the aesthetics and narrative justify the Italian characters' fear; the men appear almost zombie like, grabbing at the boat, and the camera does not focus on their faces or expressions. Thus, the emotions of the men are not depicted, and therefore they are not represented as feeling subjects.

On the other hand, the spectator is very much encouraged to consider and align themselves with Maura's feelings, as described. Overall, the camera movements, editing, music, and lighting work together to create a sense of panic and fear, which privileges Maura's and Filippo's experiences. Furthermore, the scene is reminiscent of colonial discourses of white women in need of protection from the sexual aggression of African men, in particular the last shot which depicts a semi-nude Maura huddled next to Filippo who stands above her as he takes her to safety. The way in which the spectator is encouraged to emotionally engage with this scene, therefore, evokes sentiments of the European far-right that associate the black refugee in particular with threats of invasion.[97]

[97] Proglio et al note that, "the figure of the Black refugee (more so than any other migrant group) is routinely discursively mobilized by the European far-right as representative of the "threats" of invasion, racial contamination, and ethnic substitution." See Proglio et al, *The Black Mediterranea,* p. 15.

The subsequent scene - in which several exhausted migrants appear in the sea and are carried ashore by tourists on the beach - serves to question Filippo's inability to help those stranded at sea the previous night and to demonstrate his guilt which eventually motivates him to help Sara reach the mainland. This scene also crystalises the binary depiction of migrants that pervades the film as well as discourses on immigration in general. As Proglio et al note, the stereotype of the black African migrant of today is dominated by two metaphors: "one which describes the African migrant essentially as a victim of stronger forces she or he cannot control; and another which describes the same subject basically as a criminal threat and a violent invader."[98] Thus, these two successive scenes transport the spectator from the latter to the former of these metaphors as the tone of the filmic emotion shifts from fear to compassion.

The scene begins with a close-up of Filippo asleep on the beach, underlining the nightmarish quality of the previous scene, and re-aligning the viewer with his character. When Filippo hears a commotion, he turns and the camera follows his gaze before showing glimpses of bodies being carried out of the sea, so that the spectator can empathise with Filippo's subjective experience. It is also at this moment that the film changes to slow motion to underscore the dramatic importance of the scene and, through close-up reaction shots of Filippo, the impact that witnessing this suffering has on him. Through spatio-temporal alignment, the spectator is positioned alongside Filippo on the beach, also becoming a witness to the dramatic events, as tourists are shown giving assistance to the almost lifeless migrants. The combination of slow-motion, a solemn soundtrack, and many close-up shots of the migrants' defeated facial expressions (see figure 27), may engender feelings of compassion in

[98] Proglio et al, *The Black Mediterranea*, p.10.

the spectator, which stands in stark opposition to the effects of the previous scene, however here too the characters lack any subjectivity. This scene still privileges Filippo's perspective and emphasises the impact that witnessing the suffering Other has on his personal ethical journey, whilst the migrants function as an object of Filippo's (and potentially the spectator's) compassion.

Figure 26: close-ups of the suffering migrants may engender compassion in the viewer. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:07:56).

The end of this scene brings our attention back to Filippo, as he is shown visibly upset and disturbed by what he has witnessed. These two scenes therefore become pivotal moments in the ethical development of his character, as his guilt spurs him to recognise his responsibility for the less fortunate Other.

Therefore, although at times the film seems to knowingly critique the complicity of Western neoliberal society with ongoing postcolonial trauma through its sense of postcolonial haunting, it ultimately focuses not on the voices of those marginalised peoples of modernity, but on the absolution of white guilt and the formation of a compassionate European identity by eliciting empathy with the character of Filippo. As Ballesteros writes, European films such as *Terraferma* "provide audiences with an opportunity for redemption through identification with their white European characters' empathetic alignment with immigrants and their

concrete acts of solidarity."[99] That is, the film portrays a "postcolonial guilty conscience,"[100] which is most evidently depicted by Filippo's inability to help the stranded men and his emotional distress that follows. His guilt motivates him to take Sara to the mainland, making amends for his previous actions and transforming him into a morally good, compassionate subject. If the spectator empathises with Filippo, as they have been encouraged to do throughout the film, then their own guilt may be absolved as they imagine themselves to likewise be compassionate subjects who would also respond to the Other in need.

3.5 Conclusions

Regarding *Terraferma*, I agree with O'Healy that "in a project that appears to be concerned with the lives of migrants, the migrant characters are mostly denied the kind of agency and subjectivity accorded to the natives."[101] O'Healy also comments on aspects of *Terraferma* that have been highlighted in this analysis, such as the reflection of gendered and racialised media representations in which migrant women are often associated with care, victimhood and needy motherhood and migrant men with invasion, aggression, and threat.[102] However, this analysis diverges from O'Healy's and other works in its analytical scope which intends to bring attention primarily to the way in which emotion functions within the film in relation to its political and ethical perspective.

[99] Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema*, p. 143.
[100] Ibid.
[101] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p.159.
[102] Ibid., p. 160.

An analysis of emotional engagement contributes to our understanding of both films' paradoxes and the resulting diverging reviews. This chapter has demonstrated that emotion can be an illustrative means of understanding a film's *impegno*, that is, understanding its socio-political critique and how it is conveyed, and therefore of better analysing why a film is perceived as successful or not in its ability to challenge hegemonic powers. In this case, the filmic emotion displays contradictions in these films' abilities to "talk back" to common mediatic depictions of migrants that are founded in gendered and racialised colonial discourses.[103]

On the surface, the films' use of compassion creates a sympathetic portrayal of the migrant's plight and offers an alternative vision of care and responsibility that opposes an "us" versus "them" narrative in which migrants are excluded from human rights. For example, by empathising with Filippo and Giulietta and feeling compassion for Sara, the spectator is encouraged to support an ethic of care for the Other; thus, the filmic emotion serves the didactic purpose of supporting an ethics of humanitarianism in the face of lacking politics. However, as with *Quando sei nato*, a more nuanced analysis of the filmic emotion supports critiques that the film is also paternalistic and reiterates stereotypical representations of migrants. The migrant characters demonstrate little emotional subjectivity, rather they become objects of the Italian characters' emotions, that is, of their compassion and fear. Thus, the migrant women remain trapped in narratives of victimhood, and the migrant men remain tied to narratives of criminality, threat, and invasion.

[103] As discussed above, this phrase is used by Parati in *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back* to describe literature and cinema that challenge stereotypical and discriminatory laws and cultural practices.

The feelings of the Italian characters, on the other hand, are privileged, and the spectator is predominantly encouraged to empathise with their subjective experiences. Both films reinforce gendered characteristics, especially regarding the migrant characters, however these are more pronounced in *Terraferma* in relation to the Italian characters. Giulietta's compassion is most evident as she forms the most meaningful intersubjective relationship with Sara, emphasising her common maternal care and reinforcing the importance of the family in Italian society.[104] In his journey from adolescence to manhood, Filippo reflects a masculinist notion of agency as he alone attempts to save Sara, and in doing so recalls the values of hospitality of his grandfather's generation. In fact, both Sandro and Filippo reflect a tendency to frame Italian identity formation as a masculine endeavour, reinforcing hegemonic conceptions of Italian identity as white, male, and heterosexual. Furthermore, their characters reinforce the tradition of humanism and solidarity which relates to ideas surrounding Italianness, as is demonstrated by the notion of the *italiana brava gente* [the good Italian people].[105]

Therefore, both *Quando sei nato* and *Terraferma* are primarily an interrogation of the self since the Other is little more than a tool for the construction of an Italian identity based on compassion and hospitality. However, unlike Sandro, Filippo is not shown to empathise to the same extent with the migrant experience and does not form any intersubjective relational bonds with them, reinforcing to a greater extent the objectification of the migrant character.

[104] Likewise, Ballesteros argues that "the mother and the family are the pillars of an Italian nation that puts itself at risk in order to save an African family of immigrants and protect its unity." *Immigration Cinema*, p. 169.
[105] Anna Triandafyllidou, "Nation and Immigration: A Study of the Italian Press Discourse," *Social Identities*, 5:1 (1999), 65-88 (p. 80) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504639951626> In her article, Triandafyllidou examines public discourse on immigration between 1990-1995 to demonstrate its effect on the redefinition of Italian identity, concluding that "the immigrant as the Other within the national territory activates a process of re-definition of the national identity which aims at emphasising the differences between insiders and outsiders," p. 81.

In both films, the limited and stereotypical manner in which the film encourages emotional engagement with the migrant characters demonstrates that it is not emotion *per se* that deters from a film's *impegno*, but the type of emotional engagement supported by the film which can have ideological and ethical implications.

In Duncan's article on Italy's postcolonial cinema, he asks if "its representations of the migrant subject rework and expand narratives of national belonging?"[106] Whilst the spectator's potential empathic engagement with both films can be seen to support the didactic purpose of critiquing hostile anti-immigration attitudes and promoting humanitarianism, ultimately the open-ended conclusion of both films keep migrants at the periphery of the nation and the national body. In particular, how the films direct the spectator's emotional engagement with characters reinforces the divide between Italian subject and migrant Other. That is, the films do not offer new relationships of affectivity between spectator and migrant character in order to question representations of Italianness and Otherness, and therefore dominant notions of national belonging remain largely unchanged.

[106] Duncan, 'Italy's Postcolonial Cinema,' p. 196.

4. EMPATHY AND PRECARITY IN *COVER BOY: L'ULTIMA RIVOLUZIONE* AND *FIORE GEMELLO*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the exploration of films that depict relationships between Italian and migrant characters. Whilst the previous chapter analysed how the migrant Other becomes a tool for the development of an ethical, humanitarian Italian identity, this chapter considers two films that foreground empathy between an Italian and a migrant protagonist who both live in precarious conditions: *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* by Carmine Amoroso (2006) and *Fiore gemello* by Laura Luchetti (2018). It is argued that such depictions of empathy and solidarity between characters can facilitate spectator empathy and contribute to understanding and critiquing shared transnational experiences of precarity, marginalization, and vulnerability. Furthermore, the feelings of affection that develop between characters form an integral part of these films' resistance to hegemonic structures, which is reinforced by the spectator's potential emotional engagement with the film.

There are several films that depict a shared precariousness between Italian and migrant characters, however, this is often a marginal subtext in a film that focuses predominantly on the precarious experiences of the Italian. For example, in *Nessuno mi può guidicare* (Massimiliano Bruno 2011), after losing her fortune, the protagonist Alice (Paola Cortellesi) moves to a working-class neighbourhood of Rome inhabited predominantly by immigrants. The film touches on their shared precarity and solidarity, however the narrative revolves around Alice's experiences.[1] The migrant characters therefore predominantly serve

[1] Other examples of films which depict precarious Italian protagonists and precarious migrants as secondary characters are *Gomorra* (Garrone, 2008) *La nostra vita* (Luchetti, 2010), *Gli ultimi saranno ultimi* (Bruno, 2015), and *Il vizio della speranza* (De Angelis, 2018).

as a subtext to bolster the Italian protagonist's precarity, whilst overlooking the ways in which multiple forms of inequality intersect and produce diverse socio-political conditions that affect their experiences.

Cover boy and *Fiore gemello* have been chosen instead due to the extent to which the theme of shared precarity is explored and how empathy and solidarity are depicted. *Cover boy* narrates the story of Ioan (Eduard Gabia), a young Romanian man who moves to Italy, and Michele (Luca Lionello), a precarious Italian living in Rome. Ioan in fact reluctantly agrees to go to Italy with his friend, countering the common narrative that migrants desire to move to a utopian West. Bardan and O'Healy have also discussed the unusual trajectory of the film that explores Westerners travelling to the East.[2] The undesirability of Italy is reinforced by Ioan's arrival in Rome as he struggles to find work or anywhere to sleep. Michele has a low-paid precarious job and therefore offers to rent a room to Ioan for a few euros a night. For a while, Ioan and Michele live equally precarious lives struggling to find work. During this time, they form a friendship bond although Michele's sexual desire for Ioan is also evident. As they become closer, they fantasize about opening a restaurant together in the Danube Delta. Ioan's fate changes when he is suddenly offered a modelling job in Milan by photographer Laura, leaving Michele alone. After realising that Laura has exploited him, Ioan travels back to Rome to find Michele and fulfil their dream. However, having lost all hope of a better future, Michele commits suicide before Ioan returns. Subsequently, Ioan travels back to the East to the Danube Delta, where he and Michele had planned on building a future together.

[2] Alice Bardan and Áine O'Healy, 'Transnational Mobility and Precarious Labour in Post-Cold War Europe: The Spectral Disruptions of Carmine Amoroso's Cover Boy (2006),' in *The Cinemas of Italian Migration: European and Transatlantic Narratives*, ed. by Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 69–90.

Fiore gemello tells the story of the lost innocence of two young characters: Anna (Anastasyia Bogach), a 16-year-old Italian girl, and Basim (Kalill Kone), a 16-year-old boy who has migrated from the Ivory Coast. Anna meets Basim when he intervenes to protect her from the unwanted advances of two Italian boys. Anna's traumatic past has left her unable (or unwilling) to speak, and the pair form an unlikely bond that overcomes their limited verbal communication. Anna finds precarious work in a florist to support them, but Basim cannot work due to lack of documentation and is forced to turn to sex work. The two young characters are precarious and vulnerable, but they find strength and comfort from each other to move forward and finally rid themselves of the threat imposed by Manfredi. The final scene shows them crossing a road and disappearing into the shrubland as they continue their journey to Northern Europe, although the exact destination is unknown.

The following analysis focuses on how empathy functions in relation to representations of shared precarity, marginalisation, and vulnerability between the migrant and Italian experience and how an ethics of care towards the other is shown to alleviate the characters' isolation and suffering. In fact, the experiential and emotional empathy between the characters is shown to build social relations and feelings of affection which precarious subjects are often denied.[3] Following the understanding that ethical deliberation involves embodied actions and responses including perception and emotive and imaginative experiences, I explore how the depictions of empathy in *Cover boy* and *Fiore gemello* enable the spectator to ethically evaluate a number of issues relating to identity, migration, and precarity.[4] Furthermore, I argue that the kind of emotional engagement that the film

[3] Alice Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity: A Transnational Perspective,' in *Work in Cinema: Labor and the Human Condition*, ed. by Ewa Mazierska (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp.69-91 (p. 72).
[4] This understanding of ethical deliberation is argued in Jane Stadler, *Pulling Focus: Intersubjective Experience, Narrative Film, and Ethics* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008), p. 61.

encourages has the potential to shape the spectator's understanding of others' experiences and create concern for the lives of others which, as Stadler argues, is central to ethics.[5]

As discussed in the literature review, Sinnerbrink argues that cinema's potential to evoke ethically significant experience and philosophical thinking stems from its "power of perceptual fascination, emotional engagement, and cognitive understanding."[6] The following analysis considers the ethical potential of these films, particularly in relation to the manner in which the spectator's embodied perception and emotional engagement could contribute to their understanding of the narratives and facilitate the development of an ethical relationship between film and spectator. The relationship between self and other is central to ethics as well as the cinematic experience in which we engage with the perspectives and experiences of others. Furthermore, emotions form part of the cinematic experience and, as Stadler asserts, contribute to cognitive understanding and ethical deliberation.[7] Therefore, films engage the audience with others' experiences and, via embodied perception and emotional engagement, encourage them to interrogate, evaluate, and reflect ethically on what they view. This process can be seen to function in the two films under discussion to question hegemonic forms of belonging and the conditions that affect the lives of precarious subjects.

[5] Stadler, *Pulling Focus,* p. 32.
[6] Robert Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 6.
[7] Jane Stadler, *Pulling Focus,* p. 143.

4.1.1 Critical Reception

Cover boy is a low-budget film that grossed little over €115,000 and was presented at the first *International Rome Film Festival* in 2006.[8] Following this, it circulated the international film festival circuit, appearing at 25 festivals in countries including America, Spain, and Poland.[9] Similarly, *Fiore gemello* cannot be described as a commercial film having only grossed around €11,000.[10] It premiered at the *2018 Toronto International Film Festival* and was screened at another 36 festivals internationally.[11] Besides comedies and some notable exceptions such as *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (Giordana, 2005), films in which immigration to Italy features centrally often follow a similar path and find their audiences mainly through the festival scene.[12] It is worth considering the type of audience that these films may attract; one which perhaps seeks out this type of socially engaged film with a willingness to enter a dialogue on a subject matter. Therefore, although these films do not have an impact on mass audiences, they can nonetheless generate discussion in certain public spheres.

Amoroso's film has been studied by scholars of Cinema and Italian Studies, and their insights will inform parts of this analysis, in particular in relation to questions of precarity and

[8] Figure taken from the *Italian Cinema and Immigration Database* (Italian Studies at Oxford) https://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/mml_apps/italian_movies/ [Accessed 14 July 2021]. Bardan and O'Healy note that the film's "original budget of about two million euros was approved by the Italian Ministry of the Arts in 2002. This sum was reduced by 75 percent due to a drastic change in media policy imposed by Berlusconi's right-wing government in 2004, just after production had begun." As a result, the script had to be drastically revised (Bardan and O'Healy, 'Transnational Mobility,' p. 70).

[9] For a complete list of festivals, see https://www.filmitalia.org/en/film/28075/ [Accessed 14 July 2021]. Luca Lionello was nominated for a Silver Ribbon Award in 2008 for Best Supporting Actor, and the film was nominated for a David Di Donatello Award in 2009 for Best Producer and Best Supporting Actor.

[10] $13,062 according to Box Office Mojo https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt4389006/?ref_=bo_se_r_1 [Accessed 14 July 2021]

[11] For a complete list of festivals, see https://www.filmitalia.org/en/film/77948/ [Accessed 14 July 2021]. It received an honourable mention at the Toronto International Film Festival.

[12] *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* grossed $1,780,221 internationally. Figure taken from https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0418091/?ref_=bo_se_r_1 [Accessed 16 July 2021]

migration.[13] Derek Duncan's article '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy' places *Cover boy* within a trend of Italian films that narrate an unsuccessful romance between a foreign man and an Italian woman (in this case, the romance between photographer Laura and Ioan).[14] In *Cover boy*, as well as films such as *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004) and *Zora the vampire* (Manetti Bros, 2000), the migrant man can be read as a queer subject who highlights the constructedness and limits of national belonging. Duncan's use of queer theory to interrogate narratives of national belonging is referenced by Abigail Keating in her article which also addresses themes of deviation, mobility, and identity construction.[15] In agreement with Duncan, Keating locates the film's queerness in terms of both personal identity, and national belonging and inclusion. Keating also discusses the characters' shared economic precariousness and Otherness in a transnational context. These are themes that are common to other analyses by Ciavola, Bardan and O'Healy.[16] Bardan and O'Healy discuss the characters' shared precariousness and vulnerability in their work whilst also dissecting how the film presents issues of memory, spectacle, and spectrality.

The following analysis will discuss many of these themes but approaches them from a critical perspective that expands existing research. By analysing how empathy and feelings of affection are depicted between precarious, vulnerable subjects, I will discuss the potential for emotional engagement to shape the audience's understanding of the films and the cinematic ethical experience. It should be stated that there are notable differences between the narratives of *Cover boy* and *Fiore gemello*; however, the aim of this

[13] To my knowledge, no academic works have been written on Luchetti's film *Fiore gemello*.
[14] Derek Duncan, '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy,' *New Cinemas,* 6:3 (2008), 167–182 <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.6.3.167/1>
[15] Abigail Keating, 'Europe of 'Others': Deviations, Mobility, and the Construction of Identities in Carmine Amoroso's Cover Boy,' *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 2015, 58–73 <http://dx.doi.org/10.33178/alpha.9.04>
[16] Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' (2013); Bardan and O'Healy, 'Transnational Mobility,' (2013).

chapter is to focus on their shared themes of precarity, migration, marginalisation, and vulnerability which create solidarity between the protagonists, and the techniques employed to elicit empathy with their experiences.

4.1.2 Cinema of Precarity

In 2011 Guy Standing described the emergence of a new social class that he coined the *Precariat*.[17] This class is characterized by precarious jobs, chronic insecurity, and reduced rights which create a constant sense of transiency and affect material and psychological welfare. This class includes traditional denizens such as migrants, but also more recently other groups such as young, educated citizens who cannot secure the career promised them and fall into a precarious existence, as happens to Michele in *Cover boy*.[18] We learn that Michele moved to Rome to attend university, however his education was fruitless, and his employment history consists of short-term spates of precarious manual jobs. Ioan, on the other hand, becomes precarious once he arrives in Italy, becoming a denizen with limited rights and struggling to find work without documentation. He works precariously as a mechanic until the police arrive to inspect the legal status of the workers, after which his employer will no longer risk allowing him to work there.

As well as only having access to insecure, intermittent jobs, Standing defines the precariat as also living insecurely, with uncertain access to housing, as well as lacking community benefits and strong family and local support networks.[19] These conditions affect

[17] Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011).
[18] Standing defines denizens as those with a more limited range of rights than citizens, such as migrants. Not only this, they also "lack 'the right to have rights'," for example asylum seeks who are denied refugee status. Guy Standing, *A Precariat Charter: from Denizens to Citizens* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p. 9.
19 Ibid., pp. 16-19.

Ioan who arrives in Italy alone without a place to stay and is furthermore denied access to certain public spaces. Similarly, Michele is a solitary character who has no support network on which to rely.

The protagonists in *Fiore gemello* also live in these precarious conditions, however they are only sixteen years old and thus the film presents us with an extremely vulnerable precarious group. We learn that Anna no longer has a father or any family support, however through flashbacks the film suggests that even when her father was alive they lived precariously as he reluctantly worked as a migrant trafficker due to a lack of other employment options. Like Michele, after she loses her father, Anna has no family or support network and becomes a transient subject trying to escape her past. In a way, Basim is even more precarious than Anna since he does not have a residency permit and therefore cannot even find insecure jobs. Consequently, he is exploited by older men who pay him for sex work, knowing that he has little other choice. Basim's character therefore comments on the vulnerability of migrant children who arrive in Italy alone. He too becomes a transient subject, heading to "Northern Europe" in the hope of finding a better future. The vagueness of their destination suggests that a place which will afford the young couple security and safety, as desired, does not exist or will be difficult to find. Nonetheless, the ending is ambivalent as despite the uncertainty the tone remains hopeful, reflecting the potential power that comes from solidarity.

In her work on the cinema of precarity, Alice Bardan discusses precarity from a transnational perspective and places *Cover boy* within a larger trend of European cinema that narrates stories of the growing class of the precariat, to which I would also add *Fiore*

Gemello.[20] Bardan outlines themes in European cinema of precarity which resonate with *Cover boy* and *Fiore gemello* and which will form part of this analysis.[21] Firstly, these films highlight the difficulty of maintaining traditional class hierarchies as an increasing number of average Europeans become precarious, therefore there is no longer an emphasis on a clash between immigrants and European citizens.[22] As a result, national identity is no longer shown to be important, and this can be viewed as a remapping of the notion of the border.[23] Secondly, Bardan highlights that "precariousness impacts not only the material conditions of life, but also the quality of work and life," with films often depicting a loss of hope for upward mobility.[24] In relation to the conditions of life, she also draw's attention to Berlant's description of the cinema of precarity as a cinema that emphasises the present as a transitional zone.[25] This echoes Standing's work that attributes a sense of transiency to the precariat, as mentioned above. Lastly, she writes that "precarity is often understood as the condition of being unable to predict one's fate, which translates in turn into an increasing inability to build social relations and feelings of affection."[26]

These conditions of precarity relating to identity, social relations, mobility, and marginalisation will be explored in the analysis of *Cover boy* and *Fiore gemello* in relation to empathy, emotional engagement, and ethical evaluation. I demonstrate how empathy becomes a tool in forming collectivity between precarious subjects and explore how emotions

[20] Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' (2013).
[21] Bardan includes *Cover boy* in her chapter 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' (2013). Furthermore, Bardan and O'Healy give a detailed analysis of the film in 'Transnational Mobility,' (2013). Whilst these works inform this thesis for their discussions of precarity, among other things, this chapter takes a different analytical perspective by focusing on emotion and empathy.
[22] Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' p. 73.
[23] Bardan and O'Healy, 'Transnational Mobility,' p. 74.
[24] Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' p. 76.
[25] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 201 cited in Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' p. 72.
[26] Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' p. 72.

contribute to the moral-ethical experience. Therfore, I argue that we can conceive of these films as *impegnati* because of the way emotional engagement can be seen to function in relation to their socio-political narratives.

4.2 Building the Foundation for Emotional Engagement and Empathy

Cover boy and *Fiore gemello* are films that explore precarity as a transnational phenomenon and the protagonists become bound together by their shared experiences as precarious subjects. The films depict experiential empathy between the characters which develops into emotional empathy as the narrative progresses. As a result of this, I argue that the audience is also invited to emotionally engage with the characters and ethically evaluate a number of themes pertaining to migration, precarity, and identity. As discussed in the literature review, the argument that emotional engagement is a crucial part of ethical thought since emotions are caused by evaluations of situations in relation to morals, concerns and beliefs is supported by scholars such as Plantinga, Sinnerbrink, and Stadler.[27] Furthermore, film spectatorship relies on a relationship between the self and the other which is also at the basis of ethical thought. It is in this sense, as Stadler notes, that our emotional responses to screen characters and our narrative understanding of their situations are inseparable from the capacity for rational ethical evaluation.[28]

One of the first evaluations that we make as spectators relates to character allegiance. Smith defines character allegiance as a moral and ideological evaluation of characters which

[27] See Carl R. Plantinga*, Screen Stories: Emotion and the Ethics of Engagement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018); Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics,* (2016); Stadler, *Pulling Focus,* (2008).
[28] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 164.

creates a more-or-less sympathetic or antipathetic stance towards them.[29] In *Fiore gemello,* Anna is dramatically introduced into the narrative as she runs frantically away from Manfredi; a migrant trafficker who is obsessed with Anna and pursues her at all costs. We later learn that Anna fled because she witnessed Manfredi murder her father. Although the spectator does not initially know anything about Anna, they are made aware of her fear via her physical movements, emotional response, and facial expressions. Furthermore, her vulnerability is emphasised by her young age in comparison to the older Manfredi who appears hostile and threatening. It is therefore likely that the spectator evaluates Anna as a vulnerable character in danger and forms a sympathetic stance towards her which builds throughout the narrative to a deeper level of empathetic engagement as more about her past is revealed. Similarly, character allegiance is built with Basim when he intervenes as two boys harass Anna. Evaluating Basim's actions as "good" reflects the values and beliefs that one may hold and builds sympathetic engagement with his character. Even these seemingly elementary examples of character engagement highlight the ways in which spectators are called upon to respond to what they view and how film "facilitates an intersubjective form of understanding central to practical judgment in ethics."[30]

Ioan's introduction in *Cover boy* is a more complex example of how character engagement is built. The film begins with a montage of archival footage showing events leading up to the end of the Cold War and the Romanian Revolution, culminating with footage of Nicolae Ceauúescu's last speech in 1989. This archival footage then becomes a part of the first fictional scene as the film shows a clip of a man paying homage to those who sacrificed

[29] Murray Smith, 'Altered States: Character and Emotional Response in the Cinema,' *Cinema Journal*, 33 (1994), 34–56 (p. 35) <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1225898>
[30] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 34.

themselves for the revolution. As the camera pans out, these images are shown to be on a television that a young Ioan is watching. Following this, Ioan's father returns to take him to safety in the countryside, but on the way he is shot dead in the street. The archival footage at the beginning of the film will be recognisable to many viewers as it contains well known historical events such as John F. Kennedy's 'Ich bin ein berliner' speech. The film therefore utilises the spectator's extra-cinematic knowledge to create images that are charged with an embodied sense of the real.[31]

As Sobchack has argued, spectatorship of any film is a dynamic engagement that contains both fictional and documentary consciousness, as we always have extra-textual knowledge and embodied experiences that inform our viewing.[32] In *Cover boy*, this documentary consciousness, that is, the "particular mode of embodied and ethical spectatorship that informs and transforms the space of the irreal into the space of the real" is particularly evident and may impact the spectator's emotional engagement with the subsequent scenes.[33] The spectator locates Ioan's childhood experience and pain within the real-life events and traumas documented in the opening scene. Following the scene of his father's death the film cuts to Ioan as a young man working as a mechanic. By this point, the spectator has been encouraged to form a sympathetic stance toward his character after witnessing his traumatic past, however he is not portrayed as a victim. As we shall see, after he moves to Italy he becomes precarious, but he is able to resist exploitation and has the possibility of returning to the East, which is viewed more favourably than Italy.

[31] See chapter 11 in Vivian Carol Sobchack*, Carnal Thoughts Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 258-285.
[32] Ibid., p. 215.
[33] Ibid*.,* p. 206.

4.3 Precarity and Marginalisation

As both films continue, they provide opportunities for the spectator to respond by ethically evaluating the experiences of precarious subjects through intersubjective forms of understanding and emotional engagement. One way that this is achieved is by aesthetically marking the space that the characters inhabit as precarious and creating a sense of marginalisation that is evident to the spectator. When Ioan arrives in Italy he has nowhere to stay and attempts to occupy different spaces which are continuously denied to him. First, he is told he cannot sleep outside the Colosseum by the Roman gladiator, then he is moved from outside Termini station by the police, and finally Michele removes him from the bathrooms in the station (although on their second encounter he offers for Ioan to move in with him). In these scenes the images of Rome differ from the collective imaginary of the city and reinforce a sense of marginalisation; the Colosseum is empty before the tourists arrive; and Termini station in the evening is crowded with the homeless, rather than commuters. These spaces become unavailable to Ioan as he is designated as "Other," separate from accepted notions of "Us."

The film, however, highlights that it is not only migrants who occupy these spaces, but rather precarious subjects in general. The space therefore is not mapped according to conventional notions of nationality but by other identificatory categories affected by precarity, such as economic and social status. As Bardan and O'Healy state, the film "subverts conventional notions about how nationals and migrants are fundamentally different from each other," by highlighting their shared economic precariousness and desire for a better future.[34] In particular, the film depicts these spaces in a way that encourages the spectator to

[34] Bardan and O'Healy, 'Transnational Mobility,' p. 74.

empathise with Ioan and Michele's embodied experiences of them. For example, when Ioan arrives at the Colosseum, the camera "looks up" in a manner that mimics his embodied existence, aligning us with his movements and subjective experience. However, in these initial scenes, the film also reinforces a sense of social marginalisation by predominantly depicting Ioan's movements around Rome via a distanced, more objective camera position. This allows the spectator to empathise with his isolation in Italian society, as they too are placed at a distance within the intersubjective relationship. For example, when Ioan sleeps outside Termini station with other homeless people, they are shot from a distance using documentary-style aesthetics, whilst the camera remains close to the ground so that the spectator can empathise with their physical and figurative "lower" and more vulnerable standing (see figures 1 and 2).

Figures 1 and 2: the homeless sleep outside Termini station. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (19:20 and 19:24).

As discussed above, such a documentary style also contributes to instilling the images with an embodied sense of the "real" which may enhance their affect. Similarly, Michele is visibly separated and marginalized from society, which the film conveys via a more distanced engagement with the peripheral spaces that he occupies, such as the several shots of him working alone in Termini station. These aesthetic devices allow the spectator to identify the shared experiences of precarious Italians and immigrants and encourage empathetic engagement with their embodiment of marginalised spaces. Thus, this allows them, as

Lindner describes, "to trace the connections between cinematic and everyday, lived modes of embodiment."[35]

As discussed in more detail below, after Michele and Ioan meet and form a relationship, the film elicits a more intimate and emotionally empathetic viewing experience via less mediated and more subjective shots. For example, the film shows several close-ups of the couple, at times aligning the spectator with Michele's desiring glances. Whilst the former more distanced, objective viewing position allows the spectator to ethically reflect on the lived experiences of precarious subjects via empathetic engagement with their embodiment of space, the more emotionally engaged scenes that follow likewise have the ability to support critical reflection. It will be argued that the deeper emotional engagement encouraged in these scenes does not deter from the film's *impegno*, but rather the spectator's potential emotional empathy with the characters can contribute to their understanding of the effects of precarity on their lives (in particular, Michele's). Moreover, these scenes offer further insights into queer forms of belonging.

We should therefore not consider emotional responses as purely affective or sentimental, but as part of a wider spectrum that fully encompasses the different ways films critically engage audiences. As discussed in the literature review, this is similar to Sinnerbrink's conception of *cinempathy*, that is, "the synergy between affective attunement, emotional engagement, and moral evaluation that captures more fully the ethical potential of the cinematic experience."[36] An example of how these differing levels of engagement with the film work together occurs toward the end of the narrative; after Ioan leaves Rome, Michele

[35] Katharina Lindner, *Film Bodies: Queer Feminist Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), p. 6.
[36] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, p. 95.

loses yet another job and so he attempts to sell trinkets to tourists at the Vatican, a job commonly associated with immigrants. In this scene, his marginalisation is emphasised by the composition of the shot: a deflated Michele sits on a curb as people walk past him, literally and figuratively standing above him. As with the earlier images of the homeless outside Termini, here too the spectator is positioned on Michele's subordinated level and at a distance to convey a sense of his social exclusion (figure 3). Following this, a close-up of Michele's face (figure 4) conveys his feelings of despair and further encourages spectator empathy by reinforcing our understanding of Michele's dire circumstances.[37]

Figures 3 and 4: After Michele loses his job, he is forced to sell trinkets outside the Vatican. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (1:18:24 and 1:18:31).

Fiore gemello also visually depicts marginalised spaces to reflect the conditions that affect precarious and vulnerable subjects and to reinforce the protagonists' solitude. The film is set on the small Sardinian Island of Sant'Antioco, however the precise location may be unclear to some viewers as the scenery focuses mostly on deserted countryside and the occasional dilapidated building. Although some viewers may recognise it is set in Sardinia, the lack of location markers or signs of habitation emphasise its "Otherness" and peripheral setting. The film's setting brings into focus Italy's "Southern question" and its history of internal colonisation by aesthetically depicting the South as "Other." As discussed in the thesis

[37] For an explanation of how facial close-ups can elicit empathy see Carl Plantinga, "The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film," in *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, ed. by Greg M. Smith and Carl R. Plantinga (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 239-255.

introduction, Italian nation-building consisted of a coloniality that deployed institutional racism against Southerners and the socio-economic annexation of southern territories.[38] In *Fiore gemello*, the barren landscape and lack of economic opportunities remind the viewer of this history and the subsequent migration of Southern Italians in search of economic security.[39] According to Verdicchio, Southern Italians were "Othered" in the process of constructing a national identity due to their supposed racial differences.[40] As Italy colonised external territories it continued its process of "Othering" and the racialization of colonial subjects to reinforce the construction of a homogenous Italian national identity.

The film's setting is significant, therefore, as it opposes ideological narratives that differentiate Italians from immigrants by reminding the viewer of a shared history of discrimination, economic precarity, and migration. Anna and Basim's similar existences are emphasised by the isolated, peripheral spaces that they travel through alone. For example, figure 5 conveys a sense of solitude to the viewer by the composition of the shot which places Anna at a distance and the scale of the surroundings which appear to engulf her.

[38] Miguel Mellion, "De-Provincializing Italy: Notes on Race, Racialization, and Italy's Coloniality," in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 83–88.

[39] Between 1876 and 1976 approximately 26 million Italians emigrated to countries such as the United States, Canada, Argentina, and Northern Europe. Large migrations also occurred within Italy: in the period from 1955 to 1974, a total of 1,363,553 Southern Italians moved from Italy's southern regions to wealthier urban centres in the north of Italy. Emigration continues to be a relevant phenomenon, with many young, educated Italians moving abroad in search of better job opportunities. See Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, 'Italy's Postcolonial 'Question': Views from the Southern Frontier of Europe,' *Postcolonial Studies*, 18 (2012), 370-371 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2015.1191983>

[40] Pasquale Verdicchio, 'The Preclusion of Postcolonial Discourse in Southern Italy,' in *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, ed. by Beverly Allen and Mary Russo (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997), pp. 191– 212 (pp. 193-194).

Figure 5: Anna's isolation is reinforced by the surrounding cinematic space. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (4:30).

There are also minimal extra-diegetic sounds throughout the film and little dialogue, so that the sound of the surrounding nature becomes notable within the diegesis. The effect of such a soundtrack is to emphasise the visual isolation of the protagonists, allowing for a deeper level of empathy with their predicament. This demonstrates how we do not just perceive a film visually, but our other senses contribute to informing the significance of the cinematic image. It is one way, therefore, in which the protagonists' embodiment of space is conveyed to the spectator via film's use of embodied language. Or as Sobchack describes, how film experience "entails the visible, audible, kinetic aspects of sensible experience to make sense visibly, audibly, and haptically."[41]

The Italian social body is virtually absent in *Fiore gemello*, with Anna and Basim only coming into contact briefly with other characters who are themselves solitary. The effect of this is twofold: on one hand, it emphasises their shared precarious and marginalised existence within the periphery of the Italian national body; on the other hand, it highlights alternative forms of belonging within a space that can be viewed as "Mediterranean," intended as Iain Chambers describes as a site of cultural and historical hybridity.[42] Today's migration

[41] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p.9.
[42] Iain Chambers, 'The Mediterranean,' *Third Text*, 18:5 (2004), 423-433, <DOI:10.1080/0952882042000251769>

phenomenon has revealed the porosity of the constructed European-Mediterranean divide and highlights Southern Italy's cultural hybridity.[43] In *Fiore gemello*, the concept of *mediterraneità* can be read through the linguistic and ethnic pluralism of the protagonists. Anna is Italian but communicates non-verbally throughout the film, whilst Basim is from the Ivory Coast and speaks Italian, French (which comments on the colonial history of current migratory flows), and occasionally an indigenous Ivorian language.

As Lombardi-Diop and Romeo discuss, the concept of *mediterraneità* has been taken up by Southern critical thinkers who acknowledge the forms of contamination of languages and cultures beyond national borders which has long been a part of the history of the Mediterranean.[44] Anna and Basim's marginalised existence therefore questions hegemonic ideas of national belonging from which they are excluded, whilst simultaneously reconceptualising the periphery as an alternative hybrid-Mediterranean space in which new identities and forms of belonging can be imagined. As I argue, it is within this space that Anna and Basim form their own sense of belonging which makes them more resilient to the effects of precarity despite their vulnerability.[45] This also occurs to some degree in *Cover boy* before Ioan's departure, however ultimately the sombre ending suggests a more pessimistic worldview.

In *Fiore gemello* and *Cover boy*, the Italian and migrant characters are shown to share similar experiences of precarity and marginalisation. As a result, the audience is asked to reflect upon similarities, rather than differences, between Italians and immigrants. The films

[43] For more on Southern Italy's postcolonial condition see Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 'Italy's Postcolonial 'Question',' pp. 367-383.
[44] Ibid., p. 376.
[45] Butler et al challenge the assumption that vulnerability and resistance are mutually oppositional. This is discussed in more detail below. See *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed. by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

convey a tangible sense of these lived, shared experiences, which lead to the characters developing feelings of affection and care for one another. Furthermore, as discussed below, this can lead to the development of the spectator's own empathy and emotional engagement with the films, which can be seen to reinforce their ethical potential.

4.4 Cover boy: Transnational Queer Desire

The films' protagonists continue to be marginalised and precarious after they meet, however they are no longer isolated and can build emotional and social bonds with one another. As mentioned, the spectator is engaged in a more intimate intersubjective relationship with Ioan and Michele after they meet and share a private domestic space together. This is demonstrated when Ioan moves in with Michele, as the film replicates their subjective gazes and makes use of more close-ups which allow the spectator to engage with the sensuousness and emotional cues of their faces, encouraging a stronger empathetic response.

In *Cover boy*, Michele represents the growing Italian precariat who are affected by high unemployment and an increase in temporary, precarious, flexible work.[46] Despite holding a bachelor's degree, Michele is only able to find manual jobs with temporary contracts. After he loses his job, he struggles to find employment and is forced to sell trinkets on the street. Michele is affected by many of the conditions outlined by Standing that affect the precariat, such as chronic insecurity, a constant sense of transiency, a lack of social and economic rights,

[46] In the 1990s Italy's protectionist labour regime was replaced by policies that legalised temporary job contracts. Bardan, 'The New European Cinema of Precarity,' p. 74. Furthermore, according to Eurostat figures, Italy has one of the lowest employment rates for young people (15-29) in Europe. See https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/yth_empl_020/default/bar?lang=en [Accessed 27 September 23]

and no support network which result in feelings of frustration, alienation, and anxiety.[47] His (and many others') predicament becomes clear when he cooks for Ioan and explains, "it's not only foreigners who are broke here. If you don't have a safety net, if you don't have family that helps you, you're a foreigner at home."[48] These words, which demonstrate a kind of fraternity between Michele and Ioan, are reinforced by the social interaction of eating together and the techniques that encourage the spectator's embodied engagement with the film.

This scene clearly supports the conception of empathy as "an *accompaniment*" in which "the empathising subject is side-by-side with the empathised subjects."[49] The camera alternates between close-ups of both Ioan and Michele, so that the spectator is closely aligned alongside them, focusing on their bodily and facial gestures in a manner that conveys the intimacy of this encounter. This scene demonstrates how film's "mechanical movements *embody* the human spectator's modes of experiencing the world."[50] This is emphasised, for example, by a close-up that focuses the spectator's attention on Michele's face as he in turn looks at Ioan with an intensity that suggests a homoerotic desire. There are several scenes that convey this desire; in particular, the scene in which they frolic naked in the sea has evident homoerotic undertones. The way in which the film portrays desire between the characters has ambivalent connotations but ultimately, as I will now argue, can be seen to queer normative constructions of national identity.

[47] Standing, *A Precariat Charter*, pp. 19-22.
[48] Original quote: "non è solo il morto di fame lo straniero che arriva. Qua, se non c'hai il culo parato, se non c'è famiglia che ti aiuta, poi sei straniero in patria."
[49] Adriano D'Aloia, "Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience," in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2012), pp. 91-108 (p. 94).
[50] Ibid., p. 102.

As discussed in the thesis introduction, I follow Duncan in analysing the queerness of this film not in rigid terms of same-sex desire, but by the ways in which it reveals the normative limits of national identity and subverts fixed notions of belonging.[51] Although Michele and Ioan's relationship is never clearly homosexual, the feelings of affection and desire between the couple queers traditional depictions of the Italian heteronormative family. The audience is also implicated in Michele's desire as the camera takes his point of view, for example, when gazing voyeuristically at Ioan in the shower, or watching him sleep on the sofa. The latter occurs after the pair have reconciled following an argument; filmed at nighttime, the men's bodies are lit by soft warm tones that accentuate the intimacy of the private space of their apartment. Michele walks over to Ioan sleeping on the sofa and as he looks down the film cuts to show us his perspective. The camera then pans across Ioan's semi-nude body, ultimately resting on his sleeping face. Such movements mimic Michele's own perception and allow the spectator to empathise with his desire via their own body's ability to make sense of such replicated forms of embodied existence.

Thus, as Duncan states, the film "queer[s] the Italian spectator through an exploration of modes of affective relationality beyond those offered in the safer space of national cinema."[52] This is particularly evident in the scene when Ioan tells Michele he is leaving Rome after being offered a modelling job in Milan. Nostalgic music accompanies shots that linger on Michele's face as he becomes overwhelmed with emotion and cries, giving time for the audience to reflect on his feelings. These shots may promote emotional empathy by encouraging the spectator to imagine what Michele is experiencing and respond with

[51] Derek Duncan, '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy', *New Cinemas* 6: 3 (2008), 167–182 <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.6.3.167/1>

[52] Derek Duncan, 'The Geopolitics of Spectatorship and Screen Identification: What's Queer about Italian Cinema?,' *Italianist Film Issue* 33:2 (2013), p. 260.

congruent emotions. There is little dialogue in this scene, but the spectator is able to empathise with Michele's emotions and understand the poignancy of the scene via the ability to make sense of his bodily response. The extensive use of close-ups of his face is significant since, as Plantinga argues, facial expressions communicate emotions and strengthen affective and empathetic responses.[53] Therefore, this scene is exemplary of the way in which film can implicate the spectator in feelings of queer desire.

By considering queerness in other terms than same-sex desire, we can also analyse the ways in which the film's depictions of the body and space contribute to its ability to queer national identity. As Lisa Dolasinski has highlighted in relation to the film *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Claudio Giovannesi 2012), cinematic spaces are relevant to the protagonist's queerness and his sexuality continually adapts in different locations.[54] Location also plays a pivotal role in relation to Ioan's sexuality and the possibility for himself and Michele to exist beyond the heteronormative boundaries of Italian society. In particular, beaches often act as queer sites, and it is within this setting that the homoerotic desire between Michele and Ioan is most evident.[55] As Handyside notes, the ocean renders the beach a location of liquidity, fluidity, and change and it becomes a context in which the body is produced in different and non-normative ways.[56] From this perspective, the beach in *Cover boy* becomes a place in which Ioan and Michele are able to construct an alternative relationship and feelings of affection which are symbolised by their naked, playful interaction in the ocean.

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[53] See Plantinga, 'Scene of Empathy,' pp. 239-255.

[54] Lisa Dolasinski, 'Precarious Masculinity: Intersections of Race, Gender, and Desire in Claudio Giovannesi's Alì ha gli occhi azzurri,' *gender/sexuality/Italy*, 3 (2016), 120-135 <https://doi.org/10.15781/5py6-0a59>

[55] For cinematic accounts of beaches as queer sites see Dolasinski, 'Precarious Masculinity,' (2016), and Fiona Handyside, 'The Possibilities of a Beach: Queerness and François Ozon's Beaches,' *Screen* 53:1 (2012), 54-71 <https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/hjr056>

[56] Handyside, 'The Possibilities of a Beach,' p. 55, p. 71.

It is also significant that the two men plan to open a restaurant together in the Danube Delta whilst at the beach, underlining it as a space of queer potentiality in which the two men can visualise a future together. If we take Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin's argument that "queer can be used to describe any sexuality not defined as heterosexual procreative monogamy" then Michele and Ioan's desire to create a future together becomes a queer desire that challenges heteronormativity.[57] However, the beach itself functions as a marginal space and ultimately Michele and Ioan's relationship cannot succeed within the heteronormative boundaries of the nation, which is represented by the location of the city.[58]

Handyside argues that the beach is a "place where corporeality and the sensations of the body come to the fore" and this is also evident in *Cover boy*.[59] On a deserted beach, Michele removes his clothes and runs into the sea towards Ioan. Ioan cannot swim, so Michele holds him in his arms to teach him how to float (see figure 6). Our attention is drawn towards the naked bodies of the men and their embrace, whilst the camera itself floats on the surface of the water mimicking Ioan's movements.

Figure 6: the queer potential of Michele and Ioan's relationship is most evident in the scene at the beach. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (38:30).

[57] Harry Benshoff and Sean Griffin, *Queer Cinema: The Film Reader* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2004), p. 1.
[58] Duncan has likewise discussed how non-normative sexuality in Italian cinema functions to mark the symbolic limits of national belonging. See Duncan, 'Loving Geographies' (2008).
[59] Handyside, 'The Possibilities of a Beach,' p. 56.

The focus on corporeality and the sensuousness of their embrace can be understood in terms of Sobchack's cinesthetic subject which highlights the way in which the spectator's senses contribute to their engagement with film, and how meaning therefore originates from the conjunction of the spectator's body and cinematic representation.[60] These moments of sensuality therefore have the power to bring the spectator closer to the characters and allow the spectator to better sense their feelings of affection, thus contributing to their emotional engagement with the film. As Galt and Schoonover argue, aesthetic-affective means which move viewers emotionally allow them to experience otherness.[61] From this perspective, scenes such as those on the beach allow the spectator to experience less common cinematic representations of desire and affection (both transnational and queer) which, as the conclusion of the film demonstrates, are often excluded from heteronormative constructions of Italian identity.[62] Furthermore, the precariousness of the characters complicates their marginalisation further and ultimately prevents them from fulfilling their dreams of building a better future together, since it is Ioan's precarious condition that prompts him to leave Michele and move to Milan to secure a work contract.

4.4.1 Melancholic Feelings: The Haunting of Lost Futures

The emotional trajectory of the film is closely related to Michele and Ioan's relationship and its developments. Michele's initial hostility towards Ioan gives way to feelings of desire, affection, and solidarity as they both navigate a similar precarious existence. Their

[60] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 55.
[61] Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover, *Queer Cinema in the World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 213.
[62] Duncan has made a similar observation that the film's ending "intimates that queer subjects do not sit easily within Italy's borders, cinematographic or geopolitical." Duncan, 'Geopolitics of Spectatorship,' p. 260.

unity and transiency, for example, are allegorized by the scenes in which the pair drive together on a vespa around Rome and its outskirts. The above discussed scene at the beach contains emotion markers which contribute to the spectator's comprehension of the characters' happiness and feelings of affection for one another.[63] As discussed, a subsequent scene that contains evident emotion markers comes when Ioan tells Michele he is leaving Rome to go to Milan; by this point, the film has already laid the foundations to allow the spectator to be emotionally invested in their lives and future together, making the scene particularly poignant.

Michele's struggle to survive after this point, both economically and psychologically, underlines the social need for interdependency and the infrastructural and environmental conditions necessary for living. As Butler explains, "the dependency of human and other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported."[64] In particular, she highlights "the ways in which we are vulnerable to decimated or disappearing infrastructures, economic supports, and predictable and well-compensated labor."[65] Michele's social relations and networks of support and sustenance fail him, leaving him so hopeless that he commits suicide. Prior to this scene, Michele is shown lying down in his apartment as Berlusconi is heard on the TV at a 2006 conference held by Confindustria (a large association of Italian manufacturing and service companies) in which he accuses the centre-left of fabricating the economic crisis. By overlaying Berlusconi's speech onto images of Michele's semi-nude body, the film comments on his vulnerability to the

[63] Smith describes emotion markers as "highly visible textual cues for the primary purpose of eliciting brief moments of emotion" in Greg M. Smith, *Film Structure and the Emotion System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 43.
[64] Judith Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance' in *Vulnerability in Resistance*, ed. by Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), pp. 12-27 (p. 19).
[65] Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability,' p.21.

precarious environment in which he lives – an environment that lacks the social and economic infrastructure which is necessary to survive.

The allusion to Michele's suicide is so slight that it could be missed on a first viewing, leading to a deferred comprehension of what has actually happened and heightening the emotional impact of the film's conclusion. After being deluded by the photographer Laura, Ioan decides to drive back to Rome to meet Michele and begin their journey to the Danube Delta. He phones Michele's landlord (Luciana Littizzetto) to ask her to inform Michele of his plans, however she does not. Later that evening, Michele's landlord is disturbed by the noise coming from his TV; as she enters his apartment, we follow her gaze across an empty living room. As the camera moves towards the bedroom doorway, we are briefly shown a chair that has been knocked over before we are shown a reaction shot of the landlord's face. The scene then cuts to Ioan and Michele driving through Romania and discussing plans for their future restaurant. The film lacks any editing that would suggest that this is an imaginary encounter, thus confusing the distinction between the past and present, and possibly even reassuring the spectator that nothing has happened to Michele.

The significance of the previous scene in the apartment is only revealed in the final scene of the film; as they cross the river on a ferry Ioan tells Michele they are going to "the most beautiful place in the world," that is, the Danube Delta. The grey, dull landscape undermines this assertion and hints at the illusory nature of their conversation. As they speak, the camera alternates between the characters before finally revealing that Ioan is in fact by himself and the figure of Michele was a figment of his imagination, a spectre. Bardan and O'Healy discuss spectrality in *Cover boy* as a means to question how historical memory is transmitted and reworked, arguing that haunting functions in the film "to destabilize

traditional notions of identity— personal, political, and national."[66] Indeed, the spectre of Michele can be read as a haunting of the past in several ways; not only the haunting of the memory of Michele which stays with Ioan, but also the haunting of the historical traumas of communism, the Romanian Revolution, and migration. The lasting impressions of these histories on the present can be described by Mark Fisher's definition of hauntology as that "which is (in actuality is) no longer, but which is still effective as a virtuality."[67] Fisher, however, defines a second direction in hauntology as that "which (in actuality) has not yet happened, but which is already effective in the virtual."[68] In other words, it is not only pasts that haunt the present but also lost or alternative futures.

In *Cover boy*, one lost future is that in which Ioan and Michele fulfil their dream of living together and escaping economic and social precarity. Another lost or alternative future refers to the larger political context of post-war communism in Italy and its failure to materialize; resulting in the loss of an imagined future different from the capitalist neo-liberal society which failed both Ioan and Michele.[69] More than anything, the emotional potential of the final scene comes from the haunting of Michele and Ioan's lost future together. The impression left by this lost future can be understood via the affective dimension of haunting and by an aesthetics that foregrounds nostalgia and melancholy; from the grey tones of the sky and water to the melancholic piano music composed by Marco Falagiani and Okapi. These

[66] Bardan & O'Healy, 'Transnational Mobility,' p. 85.
[67] Mark Fisher, "What Is Hauntology?," *Film Quarterly*, 66 (2012), 16–24 (p. 19) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/fq.2012.66.1.16>
[68] Ibid.
[69] The pervasiveness of consumerism and the capitalist market is visually marked by the use of spectacle and images, for example the giant billboards for designer clothes at Termini station, and the fashion-show in Milan. Bardan & O'Healy also discuss this in 'Transnational Mobility' (2013).

aesthetic devices reinforce a melancholic sense of loss when the camera finally reveals that Ioan is alone, contributing to the film's ethics.

As Duncan posits, the elimination of Michele and Ioan from the national landscape could appear to be a conservative conclusion to the film, were it not for the fact that the ending "dramatizes in sentimental mode how wronged the two men had been."[70] Developing this line of thought, I argue more explicitly that it is precisely our emotional engagement with the film that primes us for such critical and ethical thinking. As argued in the literature review, the cinematic experience can be described as inherently empathetic in nature since the spectator is encouraged to perceive, imagine, and thus comprehend the feelings and experiences of the cinematic other. In this sense, it is possible for the spectator to become implicated in the feelings of desire and empathy between Michele and Ioan.[71] The emotions the spectator may feel are not irrational but are the result of an embodied intersubjective understanding of the predicament of the other. That is, their ethical evaluation can be seen as the result of an embodied, sensuous, emotive engagement with the characters and the precarious conditions that affect their lived experiences of marginalization and vulnerability. This supports Sinnerbrink's argument that the ethical potential of the cinema comes from "cinema's power of stimulating sensation, affective response, emotional engagement and cognitive understanding, all of which work together to elicit ethical experience via aesthetic means."[72]

[70] Duncan, 'The Geopolitics of Spectatorship,' p. 260.
[71] It is worth noting that if we consider individual characteristics of spectators, feelings of empathy may be even stronger among those who have lived similar experiences. For example, some Italian spectators may be precarious themselves.
[72] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, p. 20.

Furthermore, the emotional trajectory of the film encourages the spectator to feel empathetic feelings of loss and melancholy in the finale, bringing to light the difficulty of Michele and Ioan's queer relationship existing within established heteronormative boundaries of the nation. The spectator's potential empathy with Michele and Ioan, therefore, may encourage them to consider transnational phenomena that affect immigrants and Italians alike, challenging the idea that Italians are necessarily different and better off than immigrants and revealing the constructed nature of national identity discourses.

4.5 "Twin Flower": Interdependency and Resilience

In *Cover boy*, empathy is depicted as a means of creating solidarity with others and relieving the emotional hardship of living a precarious life, although ultimately the film suggests that this alone is not enough to provide Ioan and Michele with the resources they need. In this respect, Luchetti's *Fiore gemello* communicates the need for interdependency more powerfully, as its title "twin flower" suggests. Anna and Basim form an interdependent relationship as a means of resilience against their precariousness and solitude. Although *Fiore gemello* does not criticise the detrimental effects of labour casualization as *Cover boy* does, Anna and Basim can nonetheless be described as precarious and the conditions that cause their precarity are alluded to throughout the film. Anna is the daughter of a migrant trafficker (it seems this is due to a lack of other employment options) and after he is killed, she has no networks of support to sustain her, leading her into a transient, insecure existence. Basim is a child migrant from the Ivory Coast, without papers or the rights afforded to Italian citizens. They represent the children of the precariat; the latest generation to be affected by insecurity,

vulnerability, and marginalisation from society. They are in search of a better future, or at least, are trying to escape the trauma of their past.

Aspects of Anna and Basim's stories can also be understood through the concept of postcolonial haunting, discussed in the previous chapter, as traces of the past disrupt the present to reveal occluded histories of colonialism. Anna is haunted by the memory of her father's death and is ferociously pursued by his killer, Manfredi. In flashbacks it is revealed that Manfredi has always had a disturbing obsession with the young girl, and he is portrayed in a Manichean fashion as a sinister, exploitative character lacking any redeeming qualities. More than once, he tells Anna that he fears loneliness and thus, in one sense, he becomes a personification of the evils of solitude. His character, played by convicted ex-mafioso Aniello Arena, evokes fear and disgust and can be interpreted as a traumatic past that haunts both Anna and Basim as well as Italy itself.[73] That is, Manfredi embodies a haunting past that disturbs the present, not only in terms of the memory of Anna's father's murder, but also because his character conjures up Italy's often negated colonial past via his implication with postcolonial trafficking.

Although not explicitly referenced, Manfredi's character is a migrant trafficker and thus carries with him traces of the historical memory of Italy's (and Europe's) colonial past and the imbalance of power created by colonialism which continues to exist and propel contemporary migratory flows.[74] Therefore, Manfredi's violent irruptions into Anna and Basim's present life allude to the larger issue of Italy's violent colonial past which is inseparable from its current

[73] Aniello Arena was a member of the Camorra and was convicted of murder in 1991. He began acting from within prison through the theatre company *Compagnia della Fortezza* and stars in other films such as *Reality* (Matteo Garrone, 2012) and *Dogman* (Matteo Garrone, 2018).
[74] For discussions on Italy's postcolonial condition see *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

treatment of immigrants. Basim's character ties these two threads together; although details of his past are not revealed to us, it is alluded to in the scene where his joy at playing an imaginary game of football turns into sorrow as he kneels on the ground and cries. This scene begins with a wide shot which allows the spectator to sense his loneliness and vulnerability, before showing a close-up of his face to encourage empathy as the spectator focuses on his emotional response. Although we do not know details of his past, this sudden and unexpected shift in emotion marks the moment as particularly salient and invites the spectator to empathise with his feelings and to reflect on his current predicament as a migrant child and what may have caused him to emigrate alone.

Other scenes, such as those in which he is sexually exploited by older men, may cause feelings of disgust and sorrow in the spectator who can perceive his emotional pain, thus encouraging them to think about the potentially dangerous environments that immigrants may be forced to enter. In Stadler's words, this is an example of "how emotional responses have a place in rational deliberation, how the imaginative activity involved in watching films enables audiences to envision ethical situations and possibilities, and how character engagement can expand the sphere of moral concern."[75] Thus, in *Fiore gemello*, any empathy and emotional engagement felt by the spectator may reinforce their ethical consideration of the narrative and themes such as child migration and trafficking. Furthermore, as discussed above, this relates to a sense of haunting that is evoked in the film via Manfredi's antipathetic character, who reveals the uncanny significations of a complex and repressed history which nonetheless resurfaces in current representations of immigration.

[75] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 3.

On the surface, Basim and Anna come from opposing worlds, however they are brought together by their similar experiences as vulnerable, precarious children. Initially Anna is hesitant to follow Basim on his journey, however over time the strength of their relationship grows, and they become dependent on one another. Anna does not verbally speak after the trauma of her father's murder, so that our attention is drawn to the alternative, corporeal modes of communication between herself and Basim. This focus on the corporeal is reinforced by slow paced scenes and an aesthetic that foregrounds the tactile-sensuousness of the everyday. This can be seen as another aspect of the film's *meridionalità* (Southerness) which accompanies the Mediterranean space discussed above. It is worth noting that this resonates with what Lombardi-Diop and Romeo identify as a trend among Southern Italian scholars who "have recently reclaimed *meridionalità* (Southerness) and its specific counter-modern elements (slowness, hospitality, cultural hybridity, linguistic and ethnic pluralism, etc.) as a response to the violence of what is perceived as Northern capitalist hegemony."[76] Here, however, I am primarily concerned with the ways in which sensuousness and corporeality contribute to the emotional and affective dimensions of the film experience and promote spectator empathy.

In an interview about the film, the director Luchetti said, "there's no better way of expressing immense pain than through silence."[77] The limited dialogue in the film has the effect of communicating more than just Anna's pain; it is accompanied by visuals and sounds that underscore both the tactile, intuitive aspects of Anna and Basim's relationship and the embodied nature of the cinematic experience. When Basim first meets Anna he says, "I'll have

[76] Lombardi-Diop & Romeo, 'Italy's Postcolonial 'Question',' p. 375.

[77] Vittorio Scarpa, 'Laura Luchetti: Director of Twin Flower,' *Cineuropa*, 15 April 2019<https://cineuropa.org/en/interview/370902/> [Accessed 8 October 2021]

to imagine all of your answers," words which also pertain to the spectator's relationship with her. The camera focuses on Anna's facial and bodily movements to communicate her feelings and thoughts, for example when she fiddles with her necklace as a means of comfort, adjusts her hair self-consciously when dining with Basim, or exchanges desiring glances with him. If we are to regard vision as embodied, as argued by Sobchack, the depictions of these movements, touches and gestures become part of the film's "carnal sensuality."[78] That is, spectators make sense of what they see through their bodies and its senses, and therefore their bodies have the potential to empathise with those of the characters.

D'Aloia makes this point in his article on cinematic kinaesthetic empathy, arguing that "the nature of the film experience of narrative cinema as a *sui generis* form of intersubjective relationship between the spectator and the character is structurally empathic."[79] This corporeal engagement with the film and its characters forms part of a complex intersubjective relationship in which the spectator may imagine and at times feel what the characters do. When Anna breathes on a glass window and writes her name in the condensation with the tip of her finger, it is possible to imagine the cold touch of the glass (figure 7); or when Basim drags a stick along a metal fence, the sensation of the metallic vibrations may resonate with the spectator.

[78] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 51; Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 49.
[79] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 100.

Figure 7: Anna writes her name in the condensation on a window, highlighting the film's focus on the tactile sensuousness of the everyday. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (21:20).

Further details of the film's visual and sound aesthetics flesh out the spectator's intersubjective relationship with the film, allowing them a deeper understanding of the experience of the characters. For example, nature features prominently in the film, both visually and aurally: we hear and "see" the wind almost constantly; we hear crickets and birds chirping; we see close-ups of ants and flamingos, and panoramic shots of the sea. The film therefore utilises the spectator's embodied knowledge and imaginative capabilities to provide the grounds for emotional empathy to develop.

The bath scene between Anna and Basim eloquently captures the tactile and sensuous dimensions that shape the spectator's engagement with the film. The scene occurs after Anna discovers Basim has been earning money through sex work. Anna sees Basim with a client; his vulnerability is highlighted by his positioning against a wall whilst he closes his eyes as if to shut out the experience. The setting is dark and desolate, and only the harsh sound of the wind against a plastic sheet can be heard; aesthetics which can be seen to reveal his psychological pain. When he returns, Anna bathes him in a warmly lit room of the abandoned building that they have made home; she sits in the bathtub behind him, gently caressing and cleansing his body. Neither speak and eventually he turns to face Anna as they embrace and

kiss; they are shown to be open and vulnerable to one another, responding to each other's needs with care and affection (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Anna and Basim's relationship of care and affection is epitomised by the scene in which they embrace in the bathtub. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (1:03:12).

This scene exemplifies the dynamic way in which it is possible to make sense of films and how it is necessary to consider emotional response within a "realm of affect."[80] The potential emotional impact of this scene derives from a complex combination of narrative, character engagement, embodied perception, lighting, sound and so forth. As the characters empathise with each other, the perception of the corporeal, tactile dimensions of the film encourages the spectator to also feel or imagine congruent emotions and to grasp their experiences via the bodily associations that the images invoke.[81] In particular, Anna and Basim can be seen to support an ethics of care for the other, which has the potential to extend to the spectator through their empathic and emotional engagement with them. Therefore, the spectator's emotional engagement with the film can be seen to contribute to its *impegno,* since hegemonic conceptions of nationality are challenged by the spectator's ability to

[80] As discussed in the literature review, Noël Carroll uses this term in "On Some Affective Relations between Audiences and the Characters in Popular Fictions," in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 164.
[81] As discussed in the literature review, Plantinga uses the term "congruent emotions" to describe emotions of similar valence that we feel when empathising. See Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

empathise with alternative transnational modes of belonging. Furthermore, the film can be seen to attempt to elicit empathy with Anna and Basim's relationship, thus promoting an ethic of care and solidarity as a form of resistance amongst vulnerable, precarious subjects.

4.6 Exploitation and Resistance

Thus far, empathy has been considered for its potential to contribute to the audience's ethical and critical understanding of the films in question. Character empathy is juxtaposed, however, by antipathetic characters that lack the ability to empathise with the protagonists and are motivated by self-interest.[82] In both films, a lack of empathy is related to the exploitation and commodification of young migrant men, which is eventually resisted and refused. In *Cover boy*, photographer Laura is attracted to Ioan's clean face and offers him a modelling job in Milan. Similarly, when Ioan accompanies his friend Bogdan to a "marketing" job he is told that he must be clean. When Ioan arrives, he discovers that what Bogdan described as a marketing opportunity is actually sex work for a wealthy man. This desire for cleanliness – which is reinforced aesthetically by the light, minimalist spaces of Laura's apartment and the fashion show – contrasts with the unethical actions of commodifying both Ioan's body and his (and Romania's) history.[83]

Laura's voyeuristic gaze is introduced before we even see her character: we view Ioan through the lens of a camera as it "shoots" him whilst he walks unknowingly through Rome, after which Laura is revealed to be the photographer. In Milan, Ioan discovers photos of the

[82] Plantinga notes the importance of antipathies, as well as sympathies, in enforcing moral systems. See Plantinga, *Screen Stories*, p. 198.
[83] Keating argues similarly, stating that the film presents "an aesthetic purity that enhances their desire for cleanliness, but stands in juxtaposition with what unfolds as an impure desire to objectify and ultimately commodify Ioan's body." See Keating, 'Europe of "Others",' p. 9.

Romanian revolution in Laura's apartment and we learn that she used to be a photojournalist, however she gave up this career because, in her words, "it was useless."[84] Despite Ioan having lived through the revolution, Laura dismisses his experiences and memories by telling him that he must have been too young to remember anything from that time, placing herself in a position of superiority regarding historical memory. Following this, Ioan goes to an event for a clothes brand *Exile* and is stunned to see a poster in which a photo of his naked body, taken in the privacy of Laura's apartment, has been superimposed on to a photo of the Romanian revolution. The poster, which is accompanied by the words "Exile: wear the revolution," shows Ioan with his arms raised above his head whilst a soldier seemingly points a gun at him, recalling both the traumas of the revolution and the death of Ioan's father.

Prior to this scene, Ioan is in Laura's home and looks over real-life photos of the revolution; the camera shows one of these photos from Ioan's perspective and then shows a close-up of his face before returning to the image as it fades into documentary footage (see figures 9 and 10), as if it were his flashback, merging his subjective memory with historical memory.

Figures 9 and 10: documentary footage is incorporated into Ioan's flashback. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (1:24:03 and 1:24:08).

Although the aesthetics suggest this footage is real, Ioan's subjectivity is again reinforced as it merges with a fictional scene of Ioan's childhood when he sees his father shot.

[84] Original quote: "non serviva a niente."

As Sobchack argues, the ability to integrate the real and the irreal forms part of cinematic ethics. The film utilises the spectator's "documentary consciousness," that is, "a particular mode of embodied and ethical spectatorship that informs and transforms the space of the irreal into the space of the real."[85] Such documentary consciousness informs the viewing experience and relies on "embodied and extratextual knowledge, posited and particularized existence."[86] Thus, the use of documentary materials draws on the spectator's own embodied extratextual knowledge to contribute to the meaning and emotional impact of the images and the narrative. Furthermore, by "charging" the cinematic image "with an embodied and subjective sense of what counts as the existential and objective "real"," the realism of Ioan's flashback is reinforced.[87]

The above flashback immediately precedes the sequence in which the fashion poster is revealed. Repulsed by the commodification of his body and his pain he leaves Milan to return to Rome. As Bardan and O'Healy explain, this scene in particular criticises the appropriation of images of traumatic human experiences for commercial gains.[88] Furthermore, Bogdan's previous assertion that foreigners like them are viewed only as "a piece of meat to exploit" finds resonance in Laura's exploitative actions and leads Ioan to realise that Michele offered a more sincere relationship based on reciprocity.[89] Significantly, the preceding documentary images and Ioan's memories may contribute to the emotional

[85] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 206.
[86] Ibid., p. 219.
[87] Ibid., p. 211.
[88] For example, Bardan and O'Healy reference the visual associations that can be drawn from the Exile poster, such as the image of "The Warsaw Boy," as well as the controversial advertising campaign created by photographer Oliviero Toscani for United Colors of Benetton during the late 1980s and 1990s. Bardan & O'Healy, 'Transnational mobility,' p. 81.
[89] Original quote: "un pezzo di carne da sfruttare."

impact of this scene and prime the spectator to empathise with Ioan, allowing for critical and ethical reflection of the appropriation and commodification of the trauma of others.

Within the emotional trajectory of the film, Laura's character has the function of propelling the narrative towards the melancholic finale. As discussed above, the ability to understand Ioan's feelings of anger and disgust at the appropriation of others' traumas and the manipulation of historical images for commercial gain is informed by an embodied and ethical spectatorship. Conversely, Laura's actions reflect an inability to empathise with Ioan, marking her as an antipathetic character and encouraging us to support Ioan's rejection of his heteronormative romantic relationship with her. It is also in this sense, therefore, that the film can be read as queer since ultimately, as Keating argues, heteronormative and Western assimilation threatens Ioan's identity, leading him to reject this way of life and return to Eastern Europe.[90]

In Duncan's article that asks, "what's queer about Italian cinema?," he brings attention to a pattern in Italian cinema to queer seemingly straight migrant subjects since "migrants are rarely figured as reproductive heterosexuals and their relationships with Italians usually end catastrophically."[91] This is the case in *Cover boy*, as Ioan ends his romantic relationship with Laura in favour of returning to his queer relationship with Michele. The spectator, who has been encouraged throughout the film to empathise with Michele and Ioan, most likely desires their unification which ultimately never comes. Nonetheless, this highlights the films potential to queer spectatorship since it "extend[s] the spectator's horizon of expectation and structure of feeling beyond borders."[92] That is, the film's finale derives its melancholic and regretful

[90] Keating, 'Europe of "Others",' p. 12.
[91] Duncan, 'The Geopolitics of Spectatorship,' p. 259.
[92] Ibid., p. 260.

feeling from the unfulfilled desire to see their transnational queer relationship succeed, thus demonstrating how emotional engagement is integral to the film's ability to critique hegemonic conceptions of nation and belonging.

Fiore gemello also juxtaposes Anna and Basim with antipathetic characters that exploit or harm them. However, Anna and Basim both overcome their difficulties together, subverting the trope of failed relationships between Italian and migrant characters.[93] As discussed above, Manfredi is depicted as a cruel character, driven by loneliness to pursue Anna. It is Basim who eventually saves her from Manfredi, inverting the white saviour narrative that is incorporated into many Italian films that depict immigration.[94] In addition to this, *Fiore gemello* also depicts the exploitation and sexual commodification of young migrant men, as well as violence against queer subjects. Basim makes a tentative friendship with a queer sex worker, Stella, who also appears to be marginalised from society.[95] Italian cinema often shows solidarity and empathy between differently marginalised subjects, for example immigrants, sex workers, the precariat, homosexuals, and trans people.[96] Ballesteros also notes this "tendency to articulate

[93] Duncan has noted that relationships between migrants and Italians usually end catastrophically. See Duncan, 'The Geopolitics of Spectatorship,' p. 259. O'Healy has also brought attention to the fact that representations of interracial intimacy in Italian dramatic films often involve violence, expulsion, or death. See Áine O'Healy, 'Screening Intimacy and Racial Difference in Postcolonial Italy,' in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity,* ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 205-220 (p. 206). The trope of failed relationships can be seen in a diverse range of films, for example, *Pummarò* (Michele Placido, 1990), *Vesna va veloce* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996), *Io loro e Lara* (Carlo Verdone, 2009), *La giusta distanza* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 2007), *Riparo* (Marco Simon Puccioni, 2007), *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004) and *Ali ha gli occhi azzuri* (Claudi Giovannesi, 2012). It should be noted, however, that the representations of migrants in these films are complex and the films are often sympathetic to the migrant experience in some way, at times offering a social critique of discrimination and xenophobia.

[94] Although at times presented in complex, ambiguous, or minor ways, the white saviour narrative can be read in the following Italian films: *Vesna va veloce* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996), *Quando sei nato non puoi pui nasconderti* (Marco Tullio Giordana, 2005), *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialese, 2011), *Besieged* (Bernardo Bertolucci, 1996), *Io loro e Lara* (Carlo Verdone, 2010), *Lezioni di cioccolato (*Claudio Cupellini, *2007)*, *Contromano* (Antonio Albanese, 2008), *Il vizio della speranza* (Edoardo De Angelis, 2018).

[95] I use the term queer to describe this character as their gender and sexuality are ambiguous and they do not conform to typical heterosexual cisgender representations.

[96] For example, *Gli ultimi saranno ultimi* (Massimiliano Bruno, 2015) tells the story of Luciana, a factory worker whose contract is not renewed because she becomes pregnant and thus she falls into a precarious existence that tolls heavily on her mental health. Manuela, a secondary character, is a transgender woman who is likewise

ethical and social concern by bringing together various marginal (or "undesirable") positions in society to reinforce the category of Otherness."[97] A recent and apparent example of this is Edoardo Ponti's *La vita davanti a sé* (2020), starring Sofia Loren as Madam Rosa: a former sex worker and Jewish Holocaust survivor who takes in Momo, an orphaned Senegalese boy, whilst also babysitting the child of transgender sex worker Lola.

In *Fiore gemello*, Basim's Otherness is emphasised by his friendship, albeit marginally represented, with Stella. Their similar experiences of marginalisation are depicted by images such as figure 11. The spectator is placed behind Basim as he watches Stella, and both of their figures are seen in silhouette against an expanse of dark water, thus aligning the viewer spatially and visually with their peripheral and isolated embodiment of space.

Figure 11: Basim's Otherness and marginalisation is reinforced by his relationship with Stella. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (38:39).

What's more, the violence committed against both these characters highlights their shared vulnerability. Stella is violently attacked one night, presumably a hate-crime, whilst Basim is beaten by his client after he refuses to commodify himself anymore. The latter in particular reveals ambiguous feelings of desire and fear in relation to the immigrant subject,

precarious and works as a mobile hairdresser and erotic dancer. Manuela's character can be seen to reinforce the discrimination and difficulties that Luciana faces.

[97] Isolina Ballesteros, *Immigration Cinema in the New Europe* (Bristol: Intellect, 2015), p. 22.

reflecting colonial discourse that likewise both desired and feared the racialised Other.[98] The attack on Basim also demonstrates his social abjection: after refusing to be sexually commodified and no longer serving a purpose to the client, the latter reacts violently; an act which physically conveys his repulsion at Basim (or that which Basim signifies to him) and an attempt to reaffirm the boundaries between himself and what he considers a polluting other.[99] The spectator has been encouraged to emotionally engage with Basim's character throughout the narrative so that by this point they may empathise with his experiences, thus making this scene particularly affective and encouraging them to find these actions morally reprehensible. Therefore, this is an example of how the spectator's potential ethical deliberation of his experiences is shaped by the complex interplay of perception, imagination, emotional response, and cognitive evaluation that unfolds in the cinematic experience.

Like *Cover boy*, the antipathetic and unempathetic characters of *Fiore gemello* contribute to reinforcing the spectator's allegiance with the protagonists and create moments of intense emotion and affect. When Anna sees Basim's bloodied face when he returns home, she does not speak but reacts viscerally in a distressed manner, demonstrating the care and compassion that she now feels for him. The lack of dialogue again highlights the spectator's embodied and sensuous engagement with the images, as they must make sense of Anna's feelings via an imaginative interpretation of her facial and bodily cues. The spectator's

[98] In his widely influential book *Orientalism* (1978), Edward W. Said locates this ambivalence in the discourse of Orientalism.

[99] In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva develops an account of the abject as that which is both repulsive and fascinating about our bodies, and which results in the loss of distinction between the self and the other, thus causing the reaction of horror. Abjection has since been used to explain discriminatory behaviour such as homophobia and racism. See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1982). For an account of social abjection see Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London: Zed Books, 2013). Tyler draws on Kristeva's psychoanalytical account to theorise abjection as a social force that produces waste populations in order to constitute state boundaries.

character engagement thus far as well as their ethical reasoning may also encourage them to feel disgust and sorrow at the senseless violence committed against Basim, therefore demonstrating the role of emotional engagement in constructing an ethics of care towards others.

Basim and Anna now clearly exist in an interdependent relationship of care and empathy, and despite their vulnerability, they both exhibit agency to resist and reject those who attempt to exert their power on them. In fact, as demonstrated in *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Butler, Gambetti & Sabsay eds., 2016), vulnerability and resistance are not mutually exclusive, but the former should be considered as a condition of the latter. In Basim's act of resistance, he exposes his vulnerability to his precarious condition and in doing so also exerts his agency. As Butler writes, "vulnerability, understood as a deliberate exposure to power, is part of the very meaning of political resistance as an embodied enactment."[100]

In one way or another, Manfredi and the client try to impose exploitative forms of dependency on Anna and Basim, who instead choose to form their own relationship of interdependency and belonging. Examples of successful interracial relationships between Italians and immigrants are rare in Italian cinema; this film therefore can be seen to queer traditional cinematic representations of national belonging that are constructed around heteronormative white Italian families who sit within clearly defined geographic borders of Italy. *Fiore gemello* represents instead a transnational and interracial precarious couple who find belonging in a mobile, Mediterranean landscape. As argued, the film's elicitation of empathy and emotional engagement can contribute to the spectator's ability to ethically evaluate their precarious condition and to experience alternative relationships of belonging.

[100] Butler, 'Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance,' p. 22.

4.7 Conclusions

This chapter has analysed two films that explore the transnational phenomena of precarity and migration in order to demonstrate how emotional engagement has the potential to contribute to the spectator's critical and ethical reflection of such themes. Despite narrative and stylistic differences, *Cover boy* and *Fiore gemello* both depict similar lived experiences between Italian and migrant characters in ways that question hegemonic conceptions of national borders, identity, and belonging. They also critique to different extents the effects of precarity, by demonstrating in particular the need to form social relations and feelings of affection which a precarious and marginalised existence renders difficult. It is in this sense that the personal becomes political, demonstrating a contemporary form of *impegno* in which the focus on the personal can be an effective means of understanding "the hegemonic interests that condition people's lives."[101]

In particular, the character's lived experiences of marginalisation and vulnerability are reinforced via modes of embodied perception and emotional engagement that allow the spectator to empathise with their predicaments and share in their feelings of affection for one another. In fact, it is precisely the spectator's potential embodied, sensuous, and emotive engagement with the film that allows them to share in alternative transnational, queer forms of belonging that stand outside of the symbolic white heteronormative boundaries of the nation.

[101] Original quote: "[gli] interessi egemonici che condizionano la vita delle persone." William Hope, "Introduzione: un nuovo cinema politico?" in *Un Nuovo Cinema Politico Italiano?,* ed. by William Hope, Luciana D'Arcangeli, Silvana Serra (Leics, UK: Troubador Publishing, 2013), p. xiii

5. *MEDITERRANEA:* ANGER AS AN ACT OF RESISTANCE

5.1 Introduction

Mediterranea (2015) is Jonas Carpignano's feature debut that stands out within this corpus of films as one of the most informed, innovative, and nuanced depictions of the migrant experience in Italy. The film premiered in the International Critics' Week section of the 2015 Cannes Film Festival before circulating on the international film festival scene. Although it was nominated for awards at several film festivals, it grossed little over $46,000 internationally and did not have commercial distribution within Italy.[1] With the notable exception of comedies, many of the films that relate to immigration make little impact at the box office but are noted amongst film critics for their engagement with social issues. *Mediterranea* is one such film, which has received praise for its "stark" and "timely" depiction of immigration.[2]

The film depicts the 2010 unrest amongst the predominantly African community in the Calabrian town Rosarno. Although many films on immigration reflect upon current socio-political issues, *Mediterranea* stands out for its dramatic and docu-style interpretation of a specific real-life event. It is not only innovative for its depiction an act of immigrant protest, but also for its nuanced and intimate portrayal of immigrant life in Southern Italy. Therefore, it is a prime example to explore the relationship between emotion and socio-political *impegno*. In particular, by considering how empathy may contribute to the spectator's ability to interpret the anger of the migrant community as an act of political resistance and agency.

[1] Figure taken from: <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt3486542/?ref_=bo_gr_ti> [Accessed 15 October 2020]

[2] Benjamin Dodman, "*Mediterranea* Explores the Perilous Journey to Europe," *The Atlantic*, 21 May 2015 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2015/05/cannes-review-mediterranea/393776/> [Accessed 15 October 2020]

The film conveys the building tensions between the locals and the immigrant community, revealing the oppressive power structures between them which are resisted by the act of protest. The film opposes racist and anti-immigration discourses through techniques which promote emotional engagement and allegiance with the immigrant community, thus bringing into question the role of filmic emotion in contributing to critical awareness of the events that unfolded.

Carpignano's film is closely related to the two-day long protests that erupted amongst the predominantly African immigrant community of Rosarno in January 2010. Carpignano himself refers to these protests as race riots, which significantly underlines the necessity of considering how race relations played a pivotal role in the treatment experienced by the African community in Rosarno and their subsequent act of resistance.[3] According to news articles, African immigrants in Rosarno worked in exploitative conditions in orange groves controlled by the local mafia, the 'Ndrangheta, and lived in inhumane conditions in abandoned buildings and shacks.

Tensions came to a head in January 2010 when two immigrants were wounded after being shot with an air rifle by a local man. Immigrants took to the streets to protest the violent and deplorable conditions they were forced to endure, causing damage to buildings, cars, and public property.[4] In response, they were attacked by hostile locals and the violence of the

[3] *Mediterranea Press Materials: A Conversation with Jonas Carpignano* https://ff.hrw.org/sites/default/files/films/press_kits/MEDITERRANEA_Press%20Notes.pdf [Accessed 18 October 2023]

[4] Antonio Maria Mira, '10 Anni Fa. Dopo La Rivolta Di Rosarno Nulla: Stranieri Più Nascosti e Sempre Sfruttati,' *Avvenire*, 7 January 2010 <https://www.avvenire.it/attualita/pagine/rosarno-dopo-la-rivolta-nulla> [Accessed 12 August 2020]; 'A Rosarno La Rivolta Degli Immigrati,' *Corriere*, 7 January 2010 <https://www.corriere.it/cronache/10_gennaio_07/rosarno-rivolta-immigrati_4649d878-fbd4-11de-a955-00144f02aabe.shtml> [Accessed 2 September 2020]; 'La Rivolta Nera Di Rosarno,' *La Stampa*, 8 January 2010 <https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2010/01/08/news/la-rivolta-nera-di-rosarno-1.37028179> [Accessed 2 September 2020]

protests escalated, with both Italians and immigrants being injured.[5] Riot police intervened and in response to the protests they heeded the demands of locals to remove the immigrants from the town. As a result, over 1,000 migrant workers were removed, the shacks they had lived in were dismantled, and many even faced deportation. Although John Hooper described these events in *The Guardian* as a "bloody ethnic cleansing,"[6] many Italian media reports focused predominantly on the damage and violence experienced by local Italians.[7] In a video published by *Rainews24*, one local implies that the migrants posed a sexual threat to women.[8] In another video published by *Il fatto quotidiano*, a woman refers to them as possible kidnappers of children.[9] The racial and postcolonial undertones of these comments are evident, demonstrating enduring harmful colonial stereotypes of African subjects deemed a threat to the whiteness of the Italian people of Rosarno.

When Carpignano heard of the events he went to Rosarno to speak to people and collect their stories, which led to him settling in the nearby town Gioia Tauro where he lived for five years working on the script for the film.[10] He developed a strong relationship with the immigrant community in the area and met people who became part of his film as versions of themselves, including the lead actor Koudous Seihon. The experiences of Seihon are strongly

[5] Áine O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties. Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), p. 220.
[6] John Hooper, 'Southern Italian Town World's "only White Town" after Ethnic Cleansing,' *The Guardian*, 11 January 2010 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/11/italy-rosarno-violence-immigrants> [Accessed 18 October 2023]
[7] Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop provide an overview of the public reaction to the protests, concluding that the image of the black migrant was constructed as violent and uncivilized in contrast with the local Italians who were deemed in danger. Giaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e Nero: Storia Dell'identità Razziale Degli Italiani* (Firenze: Le Monnier, 2013), pp. 131-133.
[8] Published by *Rainews24*. <www.youtube.com/watch?v=arUYiBwbNOk&feature=relmfu> cited in Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e nero*, p. 132.
[9] Published by *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RpQ3tV7Ki4w> cited in Giuliani & Lombardi-Diop, *Bianco e nero*, p. 132.
[10] He originally directed a short film on the protests titled *A Chjàna* (2012) which won the Controcampo prize at the Venice Film Festival.

reflected in the character Ayiva; he too made the arduous journey from Burkina Faso to Italy, worked in the orange groves in Calabria to support his family, witnessed the 2010 riots first-hand, and became an activist for immigrant rights.[11] The film itself could therefore be described as a docu-film given the extensive methods used to understand the immigrants' own experiences of the events leading up to the protests and their incorporation into the script, as well as the use of predominantly non-professional actors, many of whom had lived through the events.[12]

In fact, many of the incidents that happen in the film were taken from real-life experiences, such as the scene of the hostile confrontation outside of a club sparked by an Italian man who assaults Annabel, a Nigerian woman (analysed below).[13] Carpignano even went to Burkina Faso to retrace Seihon's journey to Europe via Mali, Algeria, and Libya, and the film's desert scenes were shot in the Moroccan Sahara.[14] These production methods result in a film that realistically reflects the daily lived experiences of many immigrants in Italy; their limited work options, their destitute living conditions, and the discrimination and exploitation they face. However, far from the usual trope of victimhood present in many depictions of immigration, *Mediterranea* is enriched by a cast of diverse, complex, and individualised migrant characters who construct alternative forms of belonging and demonstrate agency in their acts of resistance.

Mediterranea is told predominantly from the perspective of Ayiva, a young man who travels with his friend Abas from his home in Burkina Faso to Italy in the hope of finding better

[11] *A Conversation with Jonas Carpignano*.
[12] The only professional actor is Alassane Sy who plays Abas. Sy himself had migrated as a child from Mauritania to Senegal and later to Paris and New York.
[13] *A Conversation with Jonas Carpignano*.
[14] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 221. Information on the production of the film is also available on the website *Nataal*, a media brand founded by Alassane Sy: <https://nataal.com/mediterranea> [Accessed 18 October 2023]

economic opportunities and providing for his daughter whom he left in the care of his sister. Over twenty minutes of the film's opening are dedicated to depicting the dangerous and challenging journey that they take to reach Italy. In other films, such details are usually only referenced at most, as with Sara's journey in *Terraferma*, or neglected altogether. As O'Healy observes, this is one way in which the film "opens the Africa-Italy borderscape in ways that other films unfolding in similar geographical territories fail to acknowledge." Another way that it achieves this is by demonstrating the important role that digital technologies play in migrants' experiences and in staying connected with families across vast global distances.[15] In general, unlike many other films, *Mediterranea* depicts activities and environments that are part of real migrants' everyday lives, such as the call-centre and the use of social media.[16]

Once in Italy, they receive a three-month temporary work contract and find seasonal work on the orange groves, the conditions of which are also depicted with levels of detail rarely seen in other films. Ayiva and Abas befriend other African immigrants originating from various countries, as well as a savvy Romani boy called Pio, conversing in a mixture of French, English, Arabic, Italian and native African languages. By day Ayiva works tirelessly and attracts the attention of Rocco, the orchard owner, who shows him benevolence by finding more work for him and inviting him to his home for dinner. However, his benevolence is revealed to be self-serving and limited when he refuses to give Ayiva a work contract, understanding that irregular migrant labour is more beneficial to him. Abas, on the other hand, refuses to work so diligently for such little pay and becomes more and more disillusioned by their lives in Italy.

[15] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 218.
[16] Ibid., p. 225.

By night, the pair spend their time with friends, drinking beers and listening and dancing to music, creating spaces of belonging for themselves.

Throughout the film, not only is the exploitation of migrant labour depicted, but also the hostility and discrimination of some of the local Italian men towards the migrant community, creating a sense of tension that builds and erupts into protest. The film offers a counter-narrative to the media portrayal of the riots, by framing them within the context of the migrant community's subjective experiences of discrimination and exploitation. It will be argued that the manner in which the film elicits emotion and develops empathy with Ayiva and the migrant community is integral to understanding their experiences of oppressive socio-political structures which lead to the protests. Therefore, it contributes to a critical awareness of the migrants' anger as an act of agency and resistance. Furthermore, the way the film elicits empathy with the migrant community contributes to its ethical potential by allowing the spectator to visualise and engage with alternative cinematic depictions of space and identity in a way that challenges hegemonic constructions of them.

5.2 Character Engagement: Developing Empathy with the Migrant Community

The following analyses how *Mediterranea* encourages the spectator to emotionally engage and empathise with Ayiva and his experiences beginning with his journey to Italy, to understand how this contributes to the socio-political and ethical implications of the film. I will first analyse the different mechanisms that establish character engagement in *Mediterranea* and how this contributes to its overall ability to elicit emotion. In doing so, I will explore not only how the film encourages spectators to subjectively align with Ayiva, but also

how it attempts to elicit empathy and an embodied understanding of his experiences and the migrant community more broadly.

As outlined in the methodology, scholars attribute several factors to cinema's ability to emotionally engage spectators. Carl Plantinga discusses how films can encourage certain emotional responses from spectators through character engagement, that is, by eliciting sympathies, antipathies, allegiances, and other responses to fictional characters. Plantinga views these modes of character engagement as well as narrative structure as essential in manipulating the emotional responses of viewers.[17] Murray Smith provides an account of how we imaginatively engage with characters, describing this process as three levels which form a "structure of sympathy": *recognition, alignment*, and *allegiance*.[18] Recognition describes the spectator's construction of a character from the perception of textual elements. Alignment is the process by which spectators are placed in relation to characters in terms of access to their actions and to what they know and feel. This is achieved above all through spatial attachment and subjective access. Lastly, allegiance refers to the "pro" attitude we feel towards a character which we base on a moral and ideological evaluation.[19] This concept of "character engagement" can account for the different levels of spectator engagement that can ultimately create allegiance with a character. Allegiance is produced not only by the film, but by an active spectator who evaluates the textual information given.

Therefore, by analysing the formal language of film, we can understand how spectators are encouraged to engage with characters and how this contributes to the emotional

[17] Carl Plantinga, 'The Affective Power of Movies,' in *Psychocinematics: Exploring Cognition at the Movies,* ed. by Arthur P. Shimamura (New York: online edn, 2013), pp. 94-112 (pp. 14-17) <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199862139.001.0001>
[18] Murray Smith, 'Altered States: Character and Emotional Response in the Cinema,' *Cinema Journal*, 33 (1994), 34–56 (p. 34) <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1225898>
[19] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

trajectory of their viewing experience. In addition, as discussed in the methodology, I will follow an interdisciplinary approach that also considers more descriptive phenomenological understandings of spectatorship, to consider how such aesthetic and formal properties of film affect the viewing experience in terms of sensibility and embodiment. In doing so, I will analyse the ways in which the film initially creates allegiance and sympathy for Ayiva, and how this provides the basis for a deeper level of emotional empathy to develop.

The opening scene of *Mediterranea* immediately aligns us with the protagonist Ayiva through spatial attachment and point of view. As Ayiva comes into focus, the handheld camera tracks him closely as he walks towards a truck. As Ayiva looks up, the camera mimics his gaze showing us his subjective point of view as he speaks to the people aboard the truck. The subsequent handheld shot tracks Ayiva as he climbs onto the truck and then traces his gaze as the camera pans down to show Abas standing on the ground. This opening scene not only aligns the spectator with his perspective but, through imitation of his modes of embodiment, allows them to empathise with his embodiment of the cinematic space.

The camerawork continues to reinforce the spectator's alignment with Ayiva throughout the film, mainly by handheld tracking shots, point of view shots and close-ups. These techniques align the spectator's gaze with that of Ayiva, however, as discussed in more detail below, the spectator's gaze does not always merge directly with Ayiva's but is in proximity to his. This contributes to creating a relationship between the spectator and the migrant community as a whole, as the camera becomes another "body" alongside the characters. The subjective camerawork functions with other aspects such as the narrative to portray Ayiva as a sympathetic character whom the spectator is encouraged to critically engage with as they develop an understanding of his experiences. They learn, for example,

that Ayiva's motivation for migrating north is to provide for his sister and daughter living in Burkina Faso. The film also depicts him as hard working and optimistic, even in the face of exploitative working conditions. He hopes to gain a work contract so that he can request a residence permit and reunite with his daughter. The spectator is therefore encouraged to morally evaluate Ayiva as a virtuous character and sympathise with his goals and motivations, thus laying the foundations for emotional empathy to develop.

Plantinga describes emotions as "concern-based construals" since we have an emotion when we construe or appraise a situation in relation to our concerns.[20] That is, an emotion is an intentional mental state, accompanied by physiological arousal, that is directed towards an object. Creating allegiance and sympathy for a character is therefore an essential part of emotional engagement since the audience becomes concerned for the character's well-being, goals, and motivations. Spectators may feel fear, for example, if a character that they are sympathetic towards is in danger. In the case of *Mediterranea*, devices such as narrative and camerawork align the viewer with Ayiva (and also the African community as a whole), providing the conditions necessary for the spectator to become emotionally invested in his story.

I will now turn to some of the key scenes from *Mediterranea* which attempt to elicit a strong emotional response from the spectator. Most scholars agree there is a bodily and cognitive dimension to emotions, for example, Plantinga describes emotions as mental states that are often accompanied by subjective feelings, physiological arousal, and action tendencies (cognitive and physical responses to emotion).[21] Therefore, an analysis which also

[20] Plantinga, 'The Affective Power of Movies,' p. 95.
[21] Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and the Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 55-56.

considers an *embodied* conceptualisation of subjectivity can aid our understanding of the film's ability to engage the viewer and elicit emotion. Having discussed some of the techniques that immediately align the audience with Ayiva and lead to character allegiance, I will now consider the phenomenological implications of this relationship and its significance.

As discussed in the methodology, scholars such as Vivian Sobchack expanded the conception of film viewing by exploring our corporeal and sensuous engagement with film. As Sobchack explains, "the film experience is meaningful *not to the side of our bodies but because of our bodies.*"[22] Thus, we experience films corporeally and affectively through all our senses as embodied beings. Sobchack defines this conception of the spectator as the *cinesthetic subject*; a body which mediates experience, language, subjective vision and objective image and which functions both figuratively and literally in conjunction with cinematic representation.[23] Sobchack describes film itself as a body in the way that it "uses *modes of embodied existence* (seeing, hearing, physical and reflective movement) as the vehicle, the "stuff," the substance of its language."[24] Following this concept, Adriano D'Aloia describes the film experience as a relationship between the body of the spectator and the *quasi*-bodies of the characters and the film. The meta-movements of the camera and depicted objects and subjects, as well as the similarities between the characters' bodies and movements and those of the spectator, are capable of eliciting sensory responses from the spectator.[25] As discussed in the literature review, this *quasi*-intersubjective relationship between bodies is structurally

[22] Vivian Carol Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), p. 51.
[23] Ibid., pp. 54-55.
[24] Vivian Carol Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 4.
[25] Adriano D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience,' in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol, UK: Intellect, 2012), pp. 91-108 (p. 98).

empathic, and "fills the gap" between bodily presence of the spectator and bodily absence of the character. [26] Therefore, this type of kinaesthetic empathy bridges the gap between visual perception and bodily perception and ultimately "supports the rise of emotional empathy." [27]

The development of kinaesthetic empathy is evident in *Mediterranea* and will inform the remainder of this film analysis. The opening of the film focuses on Ayiva's and Abas' journey from Algeria to Italy. They travel in a group heading north through Libya to reach the coast where they believe someone will transport them across the ocean. During their journey they are ambushed by a group of armed men who force them to hand over their money. Most of the migrants comply, however one man is seen to be in an agitated state and opposes the armed men who subsequently shoot him. As discussed above, the opening scenes immediately align the spectator with Ayiva and to a lesser extent Abas. A combination of subjective camerawork and narrative encourage character allegiance and sympathy with Ayiva's goals and motivations, so that the spectator may become emotionally invested in his journey. There are key scenes throughout the narrative, beginning with their journey to Italy, which build tension and a sense of threat and fear, which ultimately comes to a head in the film's finale. The potential emotional impact of these scenes derives not only from the narrative but also develops from the kinaesthetic empathy between spectator and character.

The first shot of the characters' journey across the desert shows a close-up of Ayiva's head as he ties a headscarf, preparing for the trek ahead. The camera remains intimately close to Ayiva throughout, mimicking his gaze and movements, "filling in" the gap between visual perception and bodily perception. The film focuses on the physicality and scale of the journey

[26] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 98.
[27] Ibid., p. 106.

by foregrounding the unsteady movements of a handheld camera and alternating between tight-framing and wide panoramic shots. A handheld camera is used throughout the film, which foregrounds the body's significance in the viewing experience by imitating the movements and embodiment of space of Ayiva and the other migrants. As the migrants set off on their journey, the spectator is shown Ayiva in close-up before the camera pans across and tilts up to show their guide in wide shot atop a steep hill (see figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Ayiva begins his journey. Carpignano*, Mediterranea* (9:26).

Figure 2: The spectator is aligned with Ayiva's perspective as he views the imposing landscape. Carpignano*, Mediterranea* (9:32).

The movement from close-up to a low-angled wide-shot aligns the spectator's gaze with that of Ayiva whilst emphasizing the scale of the imposing landscape. As Ayiva and Abas climb the rock-face, the unsteady movements of a handheld camera in close-up creates a kinaesthetic energy that allows the spectator to empathise with the characters' mobility. There is no dialogue and no extra-diegetic music so that the sound of their footsteps and the wind is all that can be heard. The emphasis on these diegetic sounds, along with the camera movements, has the effect of bringing the spectator adjacent to the bodies of the characters. These techniques continue to be implemented throughout these scenes, inviting an embodied encounter with the migrant journey. This use of *modes of embodied existence* such as hearing, seeing and physical movement creates motor empathy which can be seen to support the progressive development of emotional empathy.

These scenes also begin to frame the characters as a community, with this visual further developing in the second half of the film. An overhead shot reveals the group of people who are travelling through the desert along with Ayiva. As the journey continues, the camera positions the spectator alongside, or within, the group. The film achieves a feeling of collectivity through aesthetics that create a sense of proximity to the characters, for example, by the intimately close position of the camera that imitates their movements. In a night-time scene, *chiaroscuro* lighting is created as characters carry torches whilst travelling, forming silhouettes and glimpses of figures in the dark, so that the spectator's vision approximates that of the traveller (see figure 3).

Figure 3: The film creates a sense of proximity with the migrants' journey. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (11:41).

This lighting, coupled with the camera positioning and unsteady handheld camera movements, contributes to conveying a feeling of proximity as it reinforces the spatial alignment of the spectator with a member of the group. In these scenes, the spectator is not aligned exclusively with Ayiva but becomes another body among the group of travellers. There are several scenes in which these subtle techniques emphasise this point; for example, as dawn breaks, the camera tracks Ayiva and the others walking, and as Ayiva's head turns to glance across the desert the camera pans from him to the vast scenery. The spectator's gaze is not merged directly with Ayiva's but is parallel to his. This recalls D'Aloia's description of a *quasi*-intersubjective relationship between spectator and film which is structurally empathic. D'Aloia bases his understanding of empathy on Edith Stein's definition of empathy as an *accompaniment,* rather than a projection or fusion. As D'Aloia paraphrases, for Stein "the empathising subject is side-by-side with the empathised subjects, and their adjacent position implies a paradoxical *proximity at a distance*."[28] Consequently, D'Aloia draws an analogy

[28] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 94.

between the “structure” of empathy and the “structure” of film experience. Indeed, the filmic techniques, or “structure” of the film, described in these scenes create kinaesthetic empathy which, as D’Aloia argues, accompanies and contributes to the potential to elicit an emotional response from the spectator throughout the film.

The armed robbery and murder form the first scene of the film which encourages a strong emotional response from the spectator. The techniques used thus far to create allegiance and kinaesthetic empathy with Ayiva (and more generally, with the migrant community) have laid the foundations for this scene to be emotionally impactful. The armed men ambush the group of travellers and force them to the ground before searching them for money. The film contains a condensed number of emotion cues which encourage the spectator to empathise with the migrants’ fear. Firstly, the spectator likely recognises the dangers inherent in this situation; it is an example of how the spectator’s embodied extra-cinematic knowledge contributes to how they make meaning of the images they see.[29] In addition, their emotional response is shaped by their established sympathetic stance towards Ayiva, and thus fear may be elicited due to the evaluation that Ayiva’s life is in imminent danger. Furthermore, frantic camera movements change perspective rapidly and create a sense of confusion and disorientation which contributes to conveying a sense of fear and panic. After hearing the fatal gunshot, the sounds of the characters are omitted from the diegetic soundtrack so that all the audience hears is the wind. This focuses their attention on the expressive behaviour of the characters in distress which may elicit feelings of sorrow in the audience.

[29] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 215.

The emotional response of the audience can in part be explained by their sympathetic stance toward the protagonist. Noël Carroll, for example, bases our emotional stance toward fictional characters predominantly on concepts of care, sympathy, and concern, or "pro-attitudes" that we have for others.[30] As described above, concern for Ayiva likely contributes to the audience's emotional response, however it would be limiting to analyse emotional engagement with the film with regard to sympathy only. In terms of Smith's "structure of sympathy," the audience engages with the character who is killed only on the most basic level of recognition. They are not given access to the subjectivity of his character (alignment) nor encouraged to morally evaluate him (allegiance), and yet the spectator may feel sorrow caused by the events that unfold.

This is where a phenomenological understanding of empathy can broaden our understanding of a film's ability to elicit emotion. If we take Stein's definition of empathy as an "accompaniment," rather than a projection or fusion, we can understand narrative cinema as inherently empathic.[31] The scenes that lead up to this moment in the narrative depict modes of comportment that resonate with our own, thus giving rise to a kinaesthetic empathy that puts the spectator's body in proximity with that of the characters. Consequently, although the spectator engages with Ayiva's character to the greatest extent, they are encouraged to empathise with the experiences of the migrant community as a whole. This scene therefore has the ability to elicit an emotional response in part because of the empathic intersubjective relationship between film, characters, and spectator that was established from the opening scene and developed as the narrative progressed.

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[30] Noël Carroll, 'On Ties That Bind: Characters, the Emotions, and Popular Fictions,' in *Philosophy and the Interpretation of Popular Culture*, ed. by William Irwin and Jorge J. E. Gracia (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), pp. 77-97 (p. 78).
[31] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 93.

5.3 Social Space and Identity

The above scene represents the first instance of a threatening space which gives rise to subsequent related emotions such as fear and anger. Once in Italy, the film documents several instances in which the migrants must navigate threatening and hostile spaces caused by unequal power structures. In these scenes, I will argue that the way in which the film reflects the modes of embodiment of the African characters contributes to the spectator's ability to emotional engage with the film and to critically reflect on the protests as an act of resistance. The protests, arguably the most affective scene, occur towards the end of the narrative and are ultimately a reaction to the many hostile environments and discrimination that the characters encounter throughout the film. The emotional trajectory of *Mediterranea* is therefore tied to the racialised and gendered experiences of the African community and the social sphere that they inhabit.

In *Film Bodies* (2018) Katharina Lindner theorizes a queer feminist film phenomenology and in doing so highlights how gendered experiences are tied to embodiment, as well as to "normative cultural practices and structures of meaning."[32] Lindner brings together various feminist works to support her analysis of gendered modes of embodiment and their relationship to the body's cultural framing.[33] Such an approach can also be applied to *Mediterranea* to explore modes of subjectivity not only in relation to gender but also race. The scenes in *Mediterranea* that encourage the greatest emotional response from the viewer are those that are clearly related to the oppressive racialised and gendered

[32] Lindner references Johanna Oksala, 'A phenomenology of gender,' *Continental Philosophy Review* 39/ 3 (2006), 229-244 (p. 240) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11007-006-9025-2> cited in Katharina Lindner, *Film Bodies: Queer Feminist Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018), p. 66.
[33] On this note, Lindner discusses feminine modes of embodiment, such as those identified in Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing like a girl: a phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality', *Human Studies*, 3:2 (1980) 137-156 cited in Lindner, *Film Bodies*, p. 43.

context of the characters' experiences. This is demonstrated above all through spaces that become threatening or unavailable to the African community. The film narrates the characters' resistance to the oppressive power dynamics of these spaces and focuses on the migrants' embodied experiences. Furthermore, by focusing predominantly on the African characters and portraying spaces of solidarity between the migrant community, the film can also be seen to queer cinematic depictions of Italian space and reveal anxieties about the instability of a hegemonic white masculine Italian identity.

The first scene set in Italy demonstrates the relevance of the cultural sphere for the subjectivities of the characters, a theme which is further developed as the film progresses. Ayiva and Abas are rescued from sea and taken to a refugee detention centre in Italy. A static shot shows a group of men wearing identical tracksuits being led by an official guard down a corridor towards the camera (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Ayiva and Abas arrive at the detention centre. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (22:14).

The characters walk in a close huddle which, along with their identical clothing, has the effect of homogenising them. This shot can be seen to comment on the structures of

power, represented by the official guard, which regulate and produce subjects within discourse.[34] The film thus demonstrates how the characters become identifiable and intelligible as "migranti" [migrants] or "extracomunitari" [non-Europeans] within this new socio-political context, stripping them of their individual identities. The film, however, situates this within a narrative context that develops individualised character identities, reaffirming their "whoness" to the spectator, as discussed in chapter one.

Following this scene, Ayiva finds Abas in the courtyard and asks him "what's wrong?" Abas does not respond, but a close-up of his face reveals his feelings of sadness and disillusionment at their current predicament. As Judith Butler argues, "the body that one lives is in many ways a body that becomes liveable only through first being cast in a culturally intelligible way. In other words, the cultural framing of the body precedes and enables its lived experience."[35] *Mediterranea* goes on to explore the ways in which the cultural framing of subjects as abject immigrants and racialized subjects shapes the lived experiences of the African characters, and the ways in which they resist such oppressive social structures. [36]

Once in Italy, Ayiva and Abas are given a temporary work permit, and they move to Rosarno where Ayiva's uncle resides. They meet an old friend, Mades, who takes them to a shanty town on the outskirts of Rosarno where they will stay. As the group of friends walk there, a car speeds past them, causing a brief moment of humour as Abas asks, "that's how

[34] Stuart Hall, 'Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse,' in *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, ed. by Margaret Wetherell, Simeon Yates, and Stephanie Taylor (London: SAGE, 2001), pp. 72-81 (p. 78).
[35] Judith Butler, 'Athletic genders: hyperbolic instance and/or the overcoming of sexual binarism,' *Stanford Humanities Review,* 6:2 (1998), para. 12 cited in Lindner, *Film Bodies*, p. 220.
[36] Abjection was first theorised by Julia Kristeva and is used here in relation to Kristeva's definition of abjection as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite." See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 4. See also Tyler's theorisation of abjection as a social force which binds societies together through forms of exclusion, in Imogen Tyler, *Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain* (London: Zed Books, 2013).

they drive here?" The mood changes as the car turns around and stops to face them before suddenly accelerating towards them, nearly hitting Ayiva and the others. This scene introduces a diegetic voyeuristic and hostile colonial gaze which reappears in crucial scenes later in the film, whilst still maintaining an empathic relationship between spectator and the migrant community. As the car breaks and turns around, the camera is positioned amongst the group of friends so that the spectator sees what they see: the menacing headlights of the car facing them. As the car drives dangerously towards them, the point of view is alternated with close-up reaction shots of the men's faces which convey their uneasiness at the situation, however the shot is never from the point of view of the car, firmly aligning the viewer with Ayiva and his friends (see figures 5 and 6).

Figure 5: the film focuses on the men's facial reactions to the threatening behaviour. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (28:52).

Figure 6: this shot aligns the spectator with the men's perspective. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (28:55).

There are several elements that contribute to conveying a sense of fear in this scene; the threat that the car poses to the characters' safety; the facial reactions of the characters, which are used to communicate and elicit congruent emotions; and the hidden identity of the driver who cannot be seen in the dark. The latter conveys an imbalance of power between the driver (presumably white and male) and the group of African men as they are denied the ability to gaze back at the driver, rendering the gaze both voyeuristic and colonial.[37] Furthermore, although we do not know what causes the driver to behave in this way, the social and political context of the film suggests that he views the group as abject Others who do not belong in the national body.

The type of emotional response that the film attempts to elicit from this scene is therefore related to the imbalance of power that stems from the social and political conditions in which they live, and which frame their bodies as racialized abject Others. In Lindner's phenomenological approach to gender, sexuality, and the body in cinema, she draws attention

[37] It is reasonable to assume that the driver is intended to be a white Italian male, as threatening behaviour in the rest of the film always comes from this character type. The colonial gaze establishes a subject/object relationship between colonizer and colonized and was discussed by Edward Said in relation to 'Orientalism.' See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* 25th edn (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2014 [1978]).

to feminine modes of embodiment identified by Iris Marion Young "which include an inhibited intentionality and a restricted and restricting taking up and moving through space, experienced as threatening and/or unavailable."[38] In *Mediterranea*, it is migrants, both men and women, who must navigate threatening spaces and whose lived experiences are impacted by both gender and race. As we shall see, however, throughout the film the migrant characters resist the oppressive structures imposed on them and the final protest can be seen as an attempt to reclaim space and agency.

The scene becomes more significant when considering the embodied empathic relationship between the spectator and the characters. The spectator is placed alongside the characters and therefore also becomes the object of the menacing gaze, thus encouraging them to resonate emotionally, in Carroll's words, with the group.[39] The spectator perceives the facial cues of the characters and their bodily comportment, and consequently they may feel congruent emotions which allow for an empathic understanding of their situation and experience. In addition, the way in which the film replicates embodied vision contributes to how the images are informed by the spectator's senses. Again, a handheld camera in close-up creates a kinaesthetic empathy by mimicking the movements of the characters and their embodiment of space, firmly positioning the viewer alongside the group of men. The ethics of this scene therefore lie in the intersubjective relationship between the spectator and the characters that forms solidarity and empathy, and which encourages the spectator to reflect upon the discrimination that they experience due to their migrant identity.

[38] Lindner, *Film Bodies*, p. 43. Lindner references Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing like a girl: a phenomenology of feminine body comportment, motility and spatiality', *Human Studies* 3:2 (1980), pp. 137–56.
[39] Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations,' pp. 171-172. As discussed in the literature review, empathy can denote congruent emotions rather than shared identical emotions.

This scene, which occurs shortly after they arrive in Italy, sets a precedent for the rest of the film. The subsequent key scenes of heightened affect and emotion continue these themes of discrimination, surveillance, and threat, commenting on the relationship between the bodily, the spatial and the social.[40] In *Mediterranea*, the socio-political context is crucial for understanding both Ayiva's experiences and the emotional trajectory of the film. There are two types of space represented in the film; space that is governed by restrictive structures that are oppressive, and a more liberating marginal space that the migrant community creates for itself. The first refers to scenes of the refugee detention centre, the police station, and the work environment. Regarding the latter, the film is also unique for the detailed portrayal of migrant labour which draws attention to the dangers and physical burden of the work as well as the poor wages and lack of opportunities. In the orange groves the workers are filmed in close-up, focusing on their faces and hands as they laboriously pick the fruits. The camera itself is nestled between the branches of the trees so that at times it obscures the spectator's vision, which contributes to conveying the sense of also being immersed within the groves, hidden from the general social body (see figure 7).

Figure 7: the film provides an intimate portrayal of migrant labour in the orange groves. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (43:48).

[40] Lindner explores the relationship between the bodily, the social and the spatial from a queer feminist perspective, and here I expand on this to also include a postcolonial perspective. See in particular 'Chapter 5 Céline Sciamma's 'Queer' Cinema: Affirming Gestures of Refusal in Tomboy and Girlhood' in Lindner, *Film Bodies,* pp. 194-245.

In these spaces governed by Italian authority figures, such as the orange groves and the detention centre, Ayiva conducts himself carefully; he avoids confrontation and works diligently despite poor pay and working conditions, in the hopes that he will receive a permanent work permit. By the end, however, his anger at how he and the others have been treated forces him to join the protests. On the other hand, the spaces that the characters embody most freely are marginal spaces such as the shanty town, the women's apartment, and the nightclub. However, the migrants' presence in certain spaces is contested and tensions arise when Italian men impose themselves on spaces that the migrant community attempt to embody freely, such as the women's apartment and the nightclub.

The scenes of conflict in the apartment and the nightclub create moments of intense opposing emotions and also bring the gendered experiences of migrant women into focus. Music and dance are central to these scenes, and they represent prime examples of how a consideration of both the phenomenological as well as the formal aspects of film contribute to understanding how films emotionally engage the spectator. The first scene takes place in the Nigerian women's apartment and begins joyously; Ayiva and friends arrive at the apartment to socialise with the women, they drink a beer, listen to music, and joke amongst themselves. Rihanna's song *S&M* is playing on the TV and one of the women dances to it, saying "Rihanna is my sister" (see figure 8).

Figure 8: the African community is depicted as a space of community and belonging. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (45:59).

Rihanna's music recurs throughout the film; *We Found Love* is Ayiva's ringtone, and it is the song that his daughter plays over skype with the mp3 player that he bought her. This last scene happens after Abas is assaulted and Ayiva is brought to tears when his daughter plays the song, as it is associated with his friendship and the hopeful expectations they had of living in Italy which were never realised.[41] Rihanna's lyrics of finding love in a "hopeless place" is an apt analogy for Ayiva's experiences in Italy. In this scene, the song *S&M* is also significant as a transnational song by a gay icon who herself transcends national borders, thus offering, in Derek Duncan's words, "a 'trace' or even a promise that other forms of sociability or kinship are possible."[42] As the song plays, the light, fun mood of the scene, which is reinforced by the words of the sexually liberal song, is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of two Italian men who beckon one of the women over, at which point it becomes evident that the women are sex workers. The words of Rihanna's *S&M* which embrace female sexual liberation contrast the

[41] Rihanna's music is also related to the image of the West that is spread by globalisation. This theme is also brought up in a scene prior to leaving Burkina Faso, when Ayiva and Abas look at photos on Facebook of their friends in Italy, which make it seem like an attractive destination, however when they arrive, they realise that these images were not an accurate representation of their friends' lives.

[42] Derek Duncan, 'Trans-Regional Optics and Queer Affiliations in the Work of Jonas Carpignano,' in *Queering the Migrant in Contemporary European Cinema*, ed. by James S. Williams (London: Routledge, 2020), pp. 188-200 (p. 198).

commodification of migrant women's bodies and the lack of other work opportunities for African women in this part of Italy.[43]

As throughout the film, the camera remains intimately close to the African characters in this scene, creating a kinaesthetic energy as it often changes focus, following their movements and gazes around the room. As D'Aloia notes, "the situations with most potential for empathy are those in which a strong kinaesthetic intensification is invited," which is the case in this scene which privileges the movements of both the camera and the characters' bodies.[44] The focus on the characters' faces as they smile and laugh also encourages the spectator to empathise with their feelings. However, the mood of the scene immediately changes as the Italian men enter the apartment. As they walk in, they are filmed from the friends' perspective, again reinforcing a position of empathy with the migrant community (see figure 9). They are also shown at more of a distance, changing the previous felt intimacy of the scene, and at a slight low angle to emphasize the unequal power dynamics between the characters. The uninhibited movements, dancing, and laughter of the characters immediately cease, and a shot shows the group sitting awkwardly in silence, before Mades announces that they should leave (see figure 10).

[43] Sex work can by all means be a freely chosen job, however some migrant women are faced with few other employment opportunities when they arrive in Italy if they do not have a work permit. There are also reports of women being trafficked after coming to Italy under the pretence of a job offer. According to *The Guardian*, for example, 80% of women brought to Europe from Nigeria are unknowingly "sponsored" by sex traffickers who have paid for their journey (statistic from the International Organization for Migration). See Barbie Latza Nadeau, ''Migrants Are More Profitable than Drugs': How the Mafia Infiltrated Italy's Asylum System,' *The Guardian*, 1 February 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/feb/01/migrants-more-profitable-than-drugs-how-mafia-infiltrated-italy-asylum-system> [Accessed 3 June 2021]

[44] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 95.

Figure 9: the mood of the scene changes as the Italian men enter the apartment. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (47:45).

Figure 10: a reverse-shot shows the discomfort of the group. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (48:00).

The sudden change of mood therefore becomes palpable as the freedom of movement and expression of Ayiva and his friends becomes replaced by rigidity and silence as the Italian men invade their space. Thus, in this scene the narrative is reinforced by techniques such as camera movement, positioning, editing, and music, which contribute to enabling the ""carnal thoughts" that ground and inform more conscious analysis."[45] As a result, it allows the spectator to empathise with the ways in which spaces are embodied and subjectivities are shaped in relation to different social structures and power dynamics.

[45] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, p. 50.

The opposing dynamic of the above scene is developed and exasperated to the point of confrontation in a subsequent scene in a nightclub. The scene begins with Ayiva, Abas and their friends dancing in a nightclub to Sean Paul's *Got 2 Luv U,* another song that contributes to the film's transnational scope that widens cinematic depictions of Italy and national belonging. Our focus is on the joyous unrestrained movements of the characters as they dance together, and at one point we see Abas and Annabel intimately embrace and kiss (see figures 11 and 12).

Figure 11: the migrant characters dance freely in the nightclub. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:07:40).

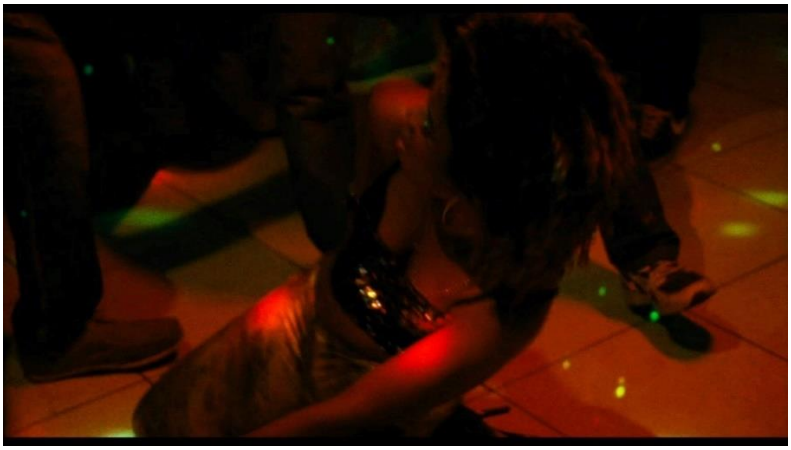
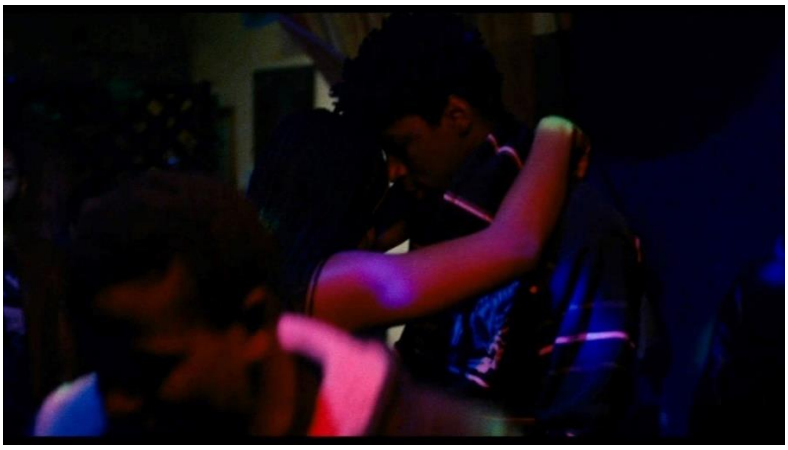


Figure 12: the migrant characters are shown to care for one another. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:07:50).



Scenes such as this one and the apartment scene, which depict a migrant community expressing joy and love for one another, independent of Italian characters, are rare in Italian

cinema on migration.[46] As with the apartment scene, a "strong kinaesthetic intensification is invited" by the movements of the characters as they dance, due to a "structural homology [that] allows the viewer to identify the movement seen on the body of the actor with that which is felt and experienced from the inside of his/her own body."[47] D'Aloia terms this "motor empathy," which allows the spectator to bridge the gap between "external" perception and bodily "inner" perception, and which supports the rise of emotional empathy.[48] Therefore, it is via the spectator's embodied perception that they may be able to empathise with the group's joy and with their uninhibited embodiment of this space of community and belonging, which contrasts the spaces in which their autonomy is restricted. However, the migrants' embodiment of this space is soon contested by some locals who enter the club. Once again, the mood suddenly shifts as Ayiva's expression reveals he is troubled by something; the camera then follows his gaze to reveal a group of Italian men watching them, alerting Ayiva and the viewer to the imminent confrontation (see figures 13 and 14).

[46] Italian films on migration usually also depict an Italian protagonist, for example romantic relationships are often between an Italian character and a migrant, and migrant communities are not usually shown in scenes of such joy and happiness. One exception is *La straniera*, which shows a romantic relationship between two migrant characters, however the community aspect is not present in this film either. A recent series that goes against this trend is *Zero* (Paola Randi, 2021). Although it doesn't deal primarily with migration, it does highlight issues that first-generation black Italians face living in Italy and the majority of the protagonists are black Italians who form a friendship group.

[47] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 98.

[48] Ibid., p. 106.

Figure 13: the focus on Ayiva's face alerts the spectator to the imminent confrontation. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:08:08).

Figure 14: a hostile colonial gaze persists throughout the film. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:08:41).

A feeling of tension is also elicited by the music as Sean Paul's song becomes undercut by a suspenseful extra-diegetic note. The group of friends leave the club and walk past the same men, one of whom sexually assaults Annabel as she walks past, leading to an aggressive confrontation between the groups. The intrusion in the apartment was accepted as a part of the women's work; here, however, the objectification of Annabel's body undermines her sexual agency and is an attempted exertion of power that the group refutes, causing an eruption of anger. In particular, Medhi confronts the men and states, "I'm not afraid of you." Ayiva and others intervene to de-escalate the tense situation and drag Medhi away, however he walks backwards, returning the Italian men's threatening gaze in an act of resistance.

Again, here the spectator is firmly aligned with the migrant community, as their focus is drawn to Medhi's emotional response, and the camera takes a position among the group as they walk away from the confrontation. The film has thus far encouraged an empathic understanding of the increased tension and threat felt by the migrant community, so that Medhi's anger can be considered as a response to the social sphere that they inhabit. This anger is thus an emotion that is intertwined with the political as it is a refusal of the oppressive racialised and gendered structures that the characters experience as migrant subjects. The strong empathic relationship that the film can be seen to elicit between the spectator and the migrant community up to this point allows for a felt understanding of their experiences, thus encouraging critical reflection of the final protests as a response to the oppressive socio-political environment that shapes their lives. Therefore, the film offers a counter-narrative to the media response that focused on the effect that the immigrants' presence and the protests had on local Italians.

5.4 Empathising with Anger as an Act of Resistance

As the film progresses, other events in the narrative continue to reinforce empathy and allegiance with the migrant community. For example, the women are evicted from their apartment by the police because the locals object to their presence, and when they return their home has been damaged by an arson attack. By this point, Abas can no longer tolerate their current situation and demands action be taken, whilst Ayiva avoids confrontation and continues to work in the hope of receiving a work contract and a residency permit. However, his boss Rocco subsequently tells him that he will not give him a work contract, a pivotal moment that contributes to Ayiva's participation in the protests.

The conversation between Rocco and Ayiva is significant not only for how it functions in propelling the narrative, but also for how it comments on Italy's own past of emigration and Rocco's ambivalent relationship with Ayiva. Rocco rewards Ayiva's hard work with more job opportunities, and even welcomes him into his home for dinner with his family. However, these gestures of good will are undermined by moments that reveal an ambivalence towards him, such as the family's lack of interest in the news and conditions that affect migrants, or Ayiva's personal life.[49] In the end, Rocco's refusal to give him a legal work contract reveals his actions to be based on self-interest and not sympathy.

Rocco recalls his own grandfather's emigration when explaining why he will not give him a contract. Although Italy itself has historically been a country of emigration, this history can often be left out of public discourses on recent immigration trends.[50] Here, Rocco uses the difficulties his grandfather faced in America to justify his own actions, saying that his grandfather and family had to help each other out to survive, and that is what Ayiva must do. There is irony in his words: "he and his family had to take care of each other […] That's how people should do it. Help one another." Rather than being an opportunity for empathy, Rocco uses his family's heritage of migration to distinguish himself as someone who cannot help Ayiva, since it is implied that he can only be helped by "his own" people. Such behaviour is reminiscent of "amoral familism," identified by Edward Banfield in Southern Italy as the focus on the immediate nuclear family and the inability to act together for the common good.[51]

[49] Marta, Rocco's daughter, seems fond of Ayiva and is the only one to ask him about his home in Burkina Faso. However, even Marta's relationship with Ayiva reveals an ambivalence and unequal power dynamic, underlined by their first meeting when Marta takes pleasure in tipping over a crate of oranges that Ayiva must pick up.
[50] Between 1876-1976 approximately 26 million Italians emigrated around the world. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 3.
[51] Edward C. Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1967).

Furthermore, Rocco's words underline how Ayiva and migrants in general are Othered to justify their exclusion from the social fabric.

This scene may appeal in particular to an Italian audience who are aware of Italy's history of emigration, and who may themselves have family members who partook in this phenomenon (which continues today). Therefore, it may activate both personal and collective memories amongst the audience as a means of encouraging empathy with Ayiva, as many Italians also migrated in search of economic prosperity and experienced discrimination as immigrants.

Following this conversation, Ayiva enters an empty warehouse and the film focuses on his facial and bodily cues, both key in allowing for emotional empathy to develop, to convey his feelings of anger and frustration as he repeatedly stomps on a rat. The film shows his face in close-up for some time as he breathes heavily after his outburst, giving the audience time to reflect on his experience and feelings. As Plantinga argues, a close-up of the human face for a long duration "promotes spectator empathy through facial feedback and emotional contagion."[52] Ayiva then learns that two black people have been shot and protests have erupted. Ayiva is concerned about Abas' whereabouts and frantically searches for him until he finds him about to join the protest. Abas and others walk together, and Ayiva follows slightly behind, demonstrating his continued reluctance to risk jeopardizing his stay in Italy. This is also a narrative strategy to encourage allegiance with Ayiva, as throughout the film he is reinforced as the rational, calm character who avoids confrontation even in the face of

[52] Carl Plantinga, "The Scene of Empathy and the Human Face on Film," in *Passionate Views: Film, Cognition, and Emotion*, ed. by Greg M. Smith and Carl R. Plantinga (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp.239-255 (p.244).

discrimination. Therefore, when he finally does protest, his anger is even more palpable and the scene's affect becomes intensified.

It is the scene of the protest that best encapsulates the dynamic interaction between the kinaesthetic, corporeal dimensions of cinematic experience and its ability to emotionally engage the spectator. Furthermore, conceiving of the spectator as a *cinestethic subject*, as Sobchack describes, aids our understanding of this complex relationship between spectator and film, as there are multiple ways that the spectator's body may mediate the cinematic experience.[53] As described above, from the beginning the film encourages empathy and allegiance with the migrant characters, in particular with Ayiva, through a combination of techniques which emphasise the relationship between the spectator's embodied cinematic experience and the onscreen experiences of the characters. Frederik Svenaeus, for example, emphasises that empathy is always situated within a situation, so that preconditions such as sympathy and the perception of the expressive bodies of other persons are important in creating an emotional pull.[54] The film has thus created the conditions necessary to make this protest scene emotionally and affectively impactful.

As Ayiva watches the protests unfold, the unsteady handheld camera changes perspective frequently, reflecting the movement and chaos of the protests and creating motor empathy that reinforces emotional empathy. As throughout the film, we are *alongside* the protesters, on their level on the street, at times aligning with Ayiva's perspective and at times focusing on his facial reaction as he watches the protests unfold and witnesses the locals injure his friends. This immersive and less mediated relationship between spectator and the protests

[53] Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 54-55.
[54] Frederik Svenaeus 'The Phenomenology of Empathy: a Steinian Emotional Account,' *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, 15 (2015), 227–45 (pp. 238-240) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11097-014-9411>

is further reinforced by utilising an abundance of close-up and medium shots of Ayiva and the other protesters. As well as the increased kinetic movement of this scene, the musical score also heightens the tension as we watch Ayiva contemplate how he should respond (see figures 15, 16 and 17).

Figure 15: Ayiva watches the protests unfold. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:26:58).

Figure 16: unsteady, quick camera movements convey the energy and tension of the protests. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:27:34).

Figure 17: the film utilises many close-ups to allow the spectator to consider Ayiva's feelings. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:27:39).

The chants of the protesters fade as Ayiva picks up a metal pole, so that focus is drawn to the uncomfortable sound of the metal scrapping against the pavement as he walks towards a car. There is a brief moment of silence before he strikes the car and the other sounds of the protest return, heightening the affect of the scene. The images are also rendered more striking by the bright colour of flames as a car is set fire to (see figure 18). Thus, we are immersed in the physicality of the scene, creating a kinaesthetic intensification as the protesters unleash their anger by destroying cars and shop windows.

Figure 18: the striking colour contrast heightens the affect of the scene. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:28:00).

The scene, however, is not purely affective, but works in relation to the emotional trajectory of the narrative and the spectator's knowledge of prior events. Although the violence of the protests could be interpreted negatively by the spectator, the empathic structure of the film thus far has encouraged them to perceive and understand the experiences of Ayiva and thus emotionally resonate with him. The anger expressed in this scene, albeit extreme, can thus be understood as a form of political resistance, or as Lindner describes, as an example of "the ways in which oppressively racialised and gendered social structures are embodied and felt and, importantly, resisted and refused."[55] Furthermore, the images of police beating protesters and the men who attack Abas continue to remind the viewer of the violence committed against the migrant community which led to the protests in the first place.

The emotional response elicited by *Mediterranea* may also be strengthened in relation to the extra-filmic knowledge that the spectator has. As mentioned above, *Mediterranea* is based around the real-life protests that occurred in Rosarno, Italy in 2010 after two African immigrants were shot, and the cast is composed of mostly non-professional actors who were migrants themselves. Spectators living in Italy may be aware of the protests in Rosarno, as it was well documented in the media and by Italian newspapers. However, even those who do not know the specific Italian context may very well bring their own embodied experience and existential knowledge to the film which shapes the meaning they infer from the images, especially in a time when Black Lives Matter protests have gained momentum across the globe and immigration is frequently discussed in politics and the media.[56]

[55] Lindner, *Film Bodies*, p. 227.
[56] For example, shortly before the release of this film there was large unrest in Ferguson, USA following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson in 2014. Protests continued to spread throughout 2015 after the death of Freddie Gray whilst in police custody.

As Sobchack discusses, the spectator's embodied knowledge contributes to making cinema a phenomenological experience.[57] As she notes, engagement with a film always depends "on the viewer's existential knowledge of and social investments in the context of a lifeworld that exceeds and frames the text," so that "ultimately it is our own extracinematic, cultural, and embodied experience and knowledge that governs how we first take up the images we see on the screen and what we make of them."[58] *Mediterranea*'s dynamic relationship with the real therefore depends on the spectator's own extra-cinematic experience and knowledge which influences how they engage with the film. The images become charged with a sense of the real which may strengthen the spectator's emotional response. Furthermore, Carpignano interrogates the 2010 protest from the perspective of the migrants which, as discussed above, was mostly disregarded by the media. Therefore, it allows the spectator to question their own knowledge of the events and to engage with a different narrative, thus encouraging them to reflect ethically on the events that unfolded.

5.5 Conclusions

From the above analysis of *Mediterranea* it is evident that the emotional trajectory of the narrative and the manner in which the film attempts to elicit emotion relate to its socio-political commitment and the potential ethics of the cinematic experience. Sinnerbrink describes ethical experience in the cinema as unfolding "through a situated, emotionally engaged, aesthetically receptive response to images that work on us in a multimodal manner,

[57] See 'Chapter 11 The Charge of the Real Embodied Knowledge and Cinematic Consciousness,' in Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 205-225.
[58] Ibid., p. 211, p. 215.

engaging our senses, emotions, and powers of reasoning."[59] Similarly, Plantinga describes an ethics of engagement, in which emotion is a vital component of cognition and ethical experience, as one that includes "affect, emotion, and all other forms of bodily experience as they relate to the "making sense of" and responding to the screen story."[60]

Mediterranea encourages the audience to reflect on ethical concerns relating to immigration by foregrounding an embodied empathic relationship between the spectator and the migrant community to convey the experiences of those who are marginalised and exploited within the Italian social sphere. Therefore, it promotes an interrogation of hegemonic conceptions of national belonging that rely on the exclusion of others and demonstrates the hostility and violence involved in upholding Italy as a white masculine space. It is in this sense that the film can be seen to queer Italian space; rather than focusing on the experiences of Italian characters, as the majority of Italian migration films do, *Mediterranea* constructs an intersubjective relationship with the migrant community as a means of creating empathy with their experiences and demonstrating alternative forms of subjectivities and belonging. Furthermore, the film portrays the migrant community as a complex, diverse space that wields agency; Ayiva and the others are not passive victims and the anger they express at the protests demonstrates their active resistance.

Following the protests, Abas is given a residency permit for one year based on humanitarian grounds due to being assaulted, which is a subtle critique of the laws in place that only protect migrants once a violent crime has been committed against them. Although Ayiva states that they will return to Burkina Faso, the film ends ambiguously and throws this

[59] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, p. 20.
[60] Carl Plantinga, *Screen Stories: Emotion and the Ethics of Engagement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 112.

declaration into uncertainty. In the final scene, Ayiva completes one last job for Rocco by assisting with Marta's birthday party. The film ends with a close-up of Ayiva as he gazes into the house where Marta's family and friends are celebrating, then he finally goes inside as the music fades and the image goes out of focus. This ambiguity invites the spectator to reflect on Ayiva's future: what will he choose to do and what will the repercussions be? This moment is made more incisive because of the established empathic relationship with Ayiva which may leave the spectator concerned for his future well-being.

Furthermore, the music that accompanies this final image is significant and contributes to providing space for consideration of the migrant's current place in Italy. As discussed above, the diegetic music that is heard throughout the film symbolises global popular culture and is performed by artists such as Rihanna and Sean Paul who themselves embody the transnational via their own migrations and multi-ethnic backgrounds. As Carpignano himself states, "it is nearly impossible to give her [Rihanna] a definite national identity […] She's a great example of the hybridization of global culture."[61] This music, as well as the plurilingual dialogue, is one way in which the film queers space, by immersing the audience in a soundscape that defies national borders and fixed ideas of nationality. On the other hand, the music heard in the final scene, *Ricchi e Poveri's* "Sarà perché ti amo," epitomizes traditional Italian cultural heritage, reminding the viewer of the continued hegemony of dominant rigid conceptions of Italianità over queer transnational forms of subjectivity and belonging. The racial and transnational diversification championed by Carpignano has led Duncan to define him as a "trans-regional queer theorist, whose cinematic optic aligns subjects distant from normative configurations of social subjectivity and their

[61] *A Conversation with Carpignano*.

entitlements."[62] Moreover, it is precisely the film's powerful potentiality to elicit an embodied empathic relationship between the audience and the migrant community that allows for a critical understanding of such non-normative subjectivities and the socio-political conditions that constrain their existence.

Mediterranea thus demonstrates how emotional engagement can be an effective way of exploring ethical and political issues. The film is political in a broader sense that it represents the social realities of immigration, however it is also political in the sense that it investigates the relationship between the micro and the macro-level by considering how hegemonic structures condition people's lives.[63] I argue therefore that *Mediterranea* uses mechanisms of emotional engagement to support its exploration of these political themes and to promote critical awareness in the spectator, so that emotional engagement can be considered a strategy of *impegno*.

[62] Duncan, 'Trans-Regional Optics,' p. 198.
[63] William Hope, 'Introduzione: un nuovo cinema politico?' in *Un Nuovo Cinema Politico Italiano?,* ed. by William Hope, Luciana D'Arcangeli, Silvana Serra (Leics, UK: Troubador Publishing, 2013), pp. ix-xx (p. x).

6. FROM MIGRATION TO POSTMIGRATION: CINEMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF DIASPORIC SUBJECTS

6.1 Introduction

The first part of this thesis demonstrated how, even in seemingly sympathetic cinematic portrayals of immigration, stereotypical tropes, racialisation of migrant characters and power dynamics can persist. In general, Italian cinema has been shown to reveal underlying anxieties related to immigration that circulate in the wider social arena.[1] Furthermore, the first part of this thesis has explored how hegemonic conceptions of national identity and symbolic borders of national belonging can be both reinforced and resisted in depictions of immigration in Italian cinema. The following chapters continue this line of enquiry through a postmigration perspective by considering the representation of diasporic subjects and first-generation Italians in Italian cinema, with the objective of analysing how discourses surrounding immigration continue to shape representations of these subjects, as well as to demonstrate how hegemonic conceptions of Italian identity and national belonging can be questioned and broadened through cinematic representation.

Until recently there has been a lack of critical literature that analyses the development of the figure of the first-generation Italian in Italian cinema.[2] Leonardo De Franceschi's 2018 monograph *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta* provides the first comprehensive overview of

[1] O'Healy's book *Migrant Anxieties* is an in-depth exploration of transnational concerns relating to immigration that can be read in contemporary Italian cinema. Áine O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties: Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019).

[2] Whilst there is a lack of literature that considers the development of such cinematic representations of children of immigrants, there are works that explore films on diasporic subjects, such as Duncan's analyses of *Saimir* and *Good morning Aman*. See Derek Duncan, "Italy's Postcolonial Cinema and its Histories of Representation," *Italian Studies*, 63:2 (2008), 195-211 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/007516308x344351>; Derek Duncan, "Shooting the Colonial Past in Contemporary Italian Cinema: Effects of Deferral in Good Morning Aman," in *Postcolonial Italy Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 114-124.

the emergence of this subject in Italian film, TV series, and documentaries, and sets it within the socio-political context of the campaign for citizenship reform.[3] De Franceschi notes a rise in the number of films, series, and documentaries that depict first-generation characters in the period 2006-2013, after the formation of *Rete G2* and coinciding with the increased public discussion on the matter of citizenship.[4]

In terms of cinematic production, we see the release of films such as *Good morning Aman* (Claudio Noce, 2009), analysed in the following chapter, *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Claudio Giovannesi, 2012), and S*e chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui* (Vittorio Moroni, 2013). These films focus in particular on representations of instability and conflict in relation to the identity of first-generation or diasporic subjects, who are faced with various social and institutional boundaries.[5] In this period, he also identifies films that depict the daughters of immigrant parents in "need" of saving and liberating from their culture of origin, such as the romantic comedies *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (Luca Miniero and Paolo Genovese, 2008) and *Lezioni*

[3] De Franceschi uses the term *seconde generazioni* (second-generation immigrants). He notes that the term can be problematic, however he finds it a useful umbrella term to include both those born in Italy and elsewhere, who have at least one immigrant parent. Leonardo De Franceschi, *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta: le seconde generazioni in Italia fra cinema e serialità* (Canterano, RM: Aracne editrice, 2018), p. 12. This thesis, however, uses the term first-generation Italians, as explained in the thesis introduction.

[4] *Rete G2* is a national organisation established by children of immigrants born and/or raised in Italy, and it campaigns for citizenship rights for such subjects: <https://www.secondegenerazioni.it/> [Accessed 11 May 2022]

It should be noted that De Franceschi also identifies the presence of *meticci*, or black mixed-race Italian characters, in Italian cinema far before this date; for example, Goffredo Alessandrini's *Abuna Messias* (1939), in which King Johannes has an Italian father and Ethiopian mother and the film is set in Ethiopia in the 1800s. Or Francesco De Robertis' *Il Mulatto* in (1950), in which Angelo is the child of an Italian woman and an African American soldier. However, De Franceschi separates these figures from later representations of the first-generation Italian, in that they are depicted specifically as "children of colonialism" or "children of war," and their representations nonetheless transmit a racial understanding of citizenship that reaffirms whiteness. Later films, such as *Akiko* (Luigi Filippo D'Amico, 1961), present mixed-race Italians as a peculiar exception in society and reinforce citizenship based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* (see *La cittadininanza come luogo di lotta*, pp. 142-153). There are also some films that emerge post-1989 after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as Italy begins to emerge as a host country for migrants. For example, *Un'anima divisa in due* (Soldini 1993) and *Prendimi e portami via* (Tonino Zangardi, 2003) both of which depict the relationship between an Italian man and a Romani woman (pp. 161-162). However, it is not until 2006 onwards that he identifies a concrete focus on the experiences of children of immigrants which explores the dynamics of identity and recognition (Ibid., p. 165).

[5] For De Franceschi's summary of these films and their themes, see *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta*, pp. 166-169, p. 171, p. 195.

di cioccolato 2 (Alessio Maria Federici, 2011), the latter of which will be discussed in chapter eight. From 2014 onwards, De Franceschi notes a shift from a tendency to represent a common identity of first-generation Italians to an anti-essentialist stance that moves in differing directions, with some films resisting representations of assimilation into the national body, for example *Io, rom romantica* (Laura Halilovic, 2014).[6] However, some common themes persist, such as the image of a collective identity that, although occurring in films that depict the experiences of diverse subjects, continues to reinforce exclusionary or colonial discourses that uphold a white Italian identity.[7] Finally, De Franceschi also highlights films made by first-generation, diasporic, or migrant filmmakers, such as *Per un figlio* (Suranga Deshapriya Katugampala, 2016) and *A Ciambra* (Jonas Carpignano, 2014).[8]

De Franceschi's work presents a timely overview of the history of the emergence of the first-generation character in Italian film, TV, and documentary which, as he states, contributes to bringing the experiences of these subjects into the public domain, albeit often in a more limited sphere than the mainstream.[9] Whilst De Franceschi's work focuses on providing a comprehensive summary of films, series, and documentaries, tying them together by common themes and providing a short analytical synopsis of each, this research instead offers an in-depth analysis of two films in order to provide a more descriptive account of how cinematic representation explores, reinforces, and subverts the symbolic confines of national

[6] De Franceschi, *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta,* pp. 206-211.
[7] Ibid*.,* pp. 217, pp. 221-223. For example, *La scuola più bella del mondo* (Luca Maniero, 2014) depicts a scene in which students and teachers dress in blackface. De Franceschi notes other common themes that permeate films, such as the eroticization of female characters (for example, of Indian-Italian Lucia in *Santa Maradona*, Marco Ponti, 2001), Ibid., p. 156.
[8] Although beyond the scope of this thesis, De Franceschi also discusses TV series, web series and documentaries that depict first-generation characters. For example, Fred Kuwornu's documentary *Blaxploitalian* (2016) and Sergio Basso's documentary *Giallo a Milano* (2009). I would also like to bring attention to *Zero*, co-written by Antonio Dikele Distefano and loosely based on his novel *Non ho mai avuto la mia eta*. Released on Netflix on 21 April 2021 but unfortunately cut after the first series, *Zero* is ground-breaking for its focus on the lives of a group of marginalised black Italian youths in Milan.
[9] De Franceschi, *La cittadininanza come luogo di lotta,* p. 205.

identity and belonging in relation to children of immigrants, and in particular, how emotional engagement contributes to this process.

The analysis of the cinematic representation of first-generation Italians can aid our understanding of shifting conceptions of identity, both of diasporic identities and Italian national identity. It should be noted, however, that the figure of the first-generation Italian is still relatively marginal in Italian cinema, which is due in part to the difficulties faced by first-generation and migrant filmmakers when producing films. In a conversation with filmmaker Fred Kudjo Kuwornu, he discussed the lack of funding opportunities for first-generation and migrant filmmakers due to their legal status as non-citizens.[10] He also attributed the lack of diversity in Italian cinema to the exaltation of a few well-known Italian directors and the continued favouring of films that are reminiscent of neorealism. Furthermore, even the few funding opportunities available, despite their importance for addressing inequality in the industry, are often not enough to fund a feature-length film.[11]

Although the representation of first-generation Italians in Italian cinema emerged relatively recently and continues to be modest, there has been a promising recent increase in variety of content and production that has led to innovative and diverse representations of

[10] Fred Kudjo Kuwornu (personal communication, 4 May 2022). Kuwornu was born and raised in Italy to an Italian Jewish mother and a Ghanaian father who moved to Italy in the 1960s. He is now based in Brooklyn and regularly participates in screenings and lectures at universities and conferences aimed at promoting the black Italian experience and civil rights. <https://www.dotherightfilms.nyc/bio-fred-kuwornu> [Accessed 16 May 2022]

[11] For example, the *Premio Mutti* is an award created in 2008 by *Officina Cinema Sud-Est* and *Cineteca di Bologna* and works in collaboration with the organisation *Archivio Memorie Migranti*, with the support of the *Associazione Amici di Giana*. It awards first-generation and migrant filmmakers with a sum of €18,000 to produce shorts, documentaries, and films. The objective of the award is to "promuovere linguaggi e forme nuove di autorappresentazione attraverso il cinema e il documentario, e di stimolare lo sviluppo di politiche culturali più inclusive" [promote new languages and forms of self-representation through cinema and documentary, and to encourage the development of more inclusive cultural policies]. <https://www.archiviomemoriemigranti.net/premio-mutti-amm/> [Accessed 18 May 2022]. However, as Kuworno highlights, this is a modest sum for the production of a feature length film. Fred Kudjo Kuwornu (personal communication, 4 May 2022).

these identities.[12] This was also noted at a recent roundtable at the 2022 Marcello Film Festival which discussed diversity on the Italian screen. During this roundtable, actor Maurizio Bousso described the shifts we are witnessing in Italian cinema and TV as a radical moment.[13] An important recent production in this sense is *Autumn Beat* (2022), the first feature-length fiction film focusing on the lives of black Italians and directed by a black Italian filmmaker, Antonio Dikele Distefano. Nonetheless, as also emphasised at the roundtable, there is still much work to be done to bring light to diverse forms of *italianità* and to break away from narratives that typecast immigrants and their children in what are mostly minor roles. Those films that do depict first-generation characters in primary roles tend to have a smaller reach in terms of national audience, since they largely circulate through international film festivals and have a modest release in theatres, if at all, for example, *Good morning Aman* (Noce, 2009), *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Giovannesi, 2012) and *Per un figlio* (Katugampala, 2017).[14]

Comedies provide an exception to this trend; in Italy *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* grossed $1,879,629 which is substantially more than the above mentioned films and many of the films under analysis in this thesis.[15] This may not be surprising given the popularity of comedies in Italy; in the period 2010-2012, during which time *Lezioni* was released, all but one of the top-30 grossing Italian films were comedies.[16] Furthermore, the top three highest-grossing Italian

[12] Recently there has been an increase in productions by first-generation Italians themselves, for example *Bangla* by Phaim Bhiuyan (2019), *Il Legionario* by Hleb Papou (2021), and *Autumn Beat* by Antonio Dikele Distefano (2022). These films depict Italians of diverse ethnic backgrounds in leading roles and have varied narratives that avoid typecasting children of immigrants in predictable roles.

[13] The roundtable took place on 2 October 2022 following a screening of *Il Legionario* (Hleb Papou, 2021). The roundtable consisted of academics as well as professionals from the Italian film industry. The roundtable was part of the Marcello Film Festival held in Birmingham, U.K.

[14] The films grossed the following: *Good morning Aman* $42,032, *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* $142,747 and *Per un figlio* was not released in theatres. Figures taken from <www.boxofficemojo.com> [Accessed 12 November 2022]

[15] Figures taken from <www.boxofficemojo.com> [Accessed 12 November 2022]

[16] Catherine O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 47.

films of all time are comedies.[17] What remains less obvious and under-explored is the choice to reflect serious contemporary social matters through non-serious means. For example, *Lezioni* (and other similar films such as *Questa notte è ancora nostra*) comments to varying degrees on the topics of immigration, racism, diasporic experiences, integration, multiculturalism, and national identity. The comedy in these films therefore is surely not intended simply as escapist entertainment but as a means of breaking down and interpreting larger social phenomenon in a way that is appealing to a wider audience. The popularity of this neglected genre thus supports its legitimacy as object of analysis; therefore, chapter eight explores how comedy functions in relation to representations of immigration and cinematic constructions of national identity. *Good morning Aman*, on the other hand, offers a unique case study in chapter seven to explore how its non-realist techniques of deferred meaning and fragmented narrative impact the empathic relationship between spectator and film in a way that allows for diasporic narratives to emerge and unground hegemonic conceptions of national identity and belonging.

As discussed in the thesis introduction, national identity is analysed in the following chapters as a socio-political construct which intersects with other categories such as race, gender, and sexuality. The construction of an Italian national identity can be traced back to the period of Unification and was consolidated by Fascist and colonial discourses, images, and laws which worked to establish and protect Italians' racial identity as white, constructing a national identity that was in opposition to racialised and Othered subjects in the colonial

[17] The highest grossing being *Quo Vado* (Gennaro Nunziante, 2016), followed by *Sole a catinelle* (Gennaro Nunziante, 2013) and *Tolo Tolo* (Checco Zalone, 2020) <https://www.statista.com/statistics/591272/italian-movies-with-highest-box-office-italy/> [Accessed 15 November 2022]. All these films star Checco Zalone.

empire. It was also during the rise of nationalism that a virile, heterosexual male stereotype was reinforced as part of a new national consciousness.[18]

As argued in the thesis introduction, these dominant conceptions of Italian identity continue to be upheld through exclusivist narratives. In relation to first-generation Italians in particular, Hawthorne has demonstrated how "the question of citizenship has re-emerged as one of the key terrains of struggle over the boundaries of race and nation in contemporary Italy."[19] Regarding this, I would like to bring attention to two exemplary events: firstly, current Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's 2018 appeal to support immigration which is "most compatible with one's own culture," for example, by accepting immigrants from Venezuela, who are imagined to share the same cultural values as Italians because they are "Christian" and "often of Italian origin."[20] This echoes citizenship laws (and ideas of belonging) that make bloodline a prerequisite, as well as demonstrating the continued exclusionary rhetoric that attempts to uphold Italian identity as white and Christian since it implicitly deems those immigrants that are none-Christian and not of (white) Italian heritage as being unworthy of being incorporated into the national body. Secondly, when Egyptian-Italian singer Alessandro Mahmood's song *Soldi* won the 2019 Sanremo Music Festival, the media contested if he could really be deemed Italian despite being born in Milan.[21]

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[18] Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), p. 10.

[19] Camilla Hawthorne, "L'Italia Meticcia? The Black Mediterranean and the Racial Cartographies of Citizenship," in *Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*, ed. by Gabriele Proglio, Camilla Hawthorne, et al. (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2021), pp. 169-198 (p. 180).

[20] Giorgia Meloni's speech: "Ogni nazione ha diritto a privilegiare un'immigrazione più compatibile con la propria cultura. Ci servono gli immigrati? Prendiamoli in Venezuela: sono cristiani e sono spesso di origine Italiana." She made her speech in 2018 at *Atreju*, an annual right-wing youth rally initiated by Meloni herself in 1998. The clip of her speech was disseminated again in 2019 by her party *Fratelli d'Italia*. The clip is available on *La Repubblica*'s Instagram page, posted 25 August 2022 [Accessed 10 November 2022].

[21] Claudia Fascia, 'Sanremo 2019, Mahmood e le polemiche: 'Sono italiano al 100% faccio Marocco-pop',' *Ansa*, 12 February 2019 <https://www.ansa.it/sanremo_2019/notizie/2019/02/11/sanremo-2019-mahmood-e-le-

Such examples reflect anxieties over Italy's racial and cultural status, anxieties which can be traced back to the Unification and the "Southern question." Therefore, I propose to view these following films within the larger socio-political and historical context of national identity in order to explore how they comment on hegemonic conceptions of Italianness in relation to diasporic subjects. In particular, chapter seven comments on the fragility of the nation via its uncertain narrative and nonlinear temporal structure, whilst chapter eight reveals dominant conceptions of Italianness - in particular white, heterosexual masculinity - to be unstable through the need to reaffirm itself in relation others. In both cases, the manner in which emotional engagement supports the films' ideological and socio-political narratives will be analysed. Therefore, it will be argued that the way emotion functions can be integral to both contributing to and deterring from a film's *impegno*, that is, its ability to question hegemonic structures and promote ethical awareness.

polemiche-sono-italiano-al-100-faccio-marocco-pop-_bf2f355d-9438-4351-b5a2-57d4fa77c25c.html> [Accessed 10 November 2022]

7. NATIONAL IDENTITY, POSTCOLONIALISM, AND EMPATHY IN *GOOD MORNING AMAN*

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the representation of diasporic subjects within Italy in relation to questions of national identity and postcolonialism. Within the corpus of films that focus on Italians born to immigrant parents, there are several films that centre the experiences of a young, male, diasporic protagonist. In this category, a number of films share similar themes and can be described as coming-of-age narratives, for example, *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004), *Good morning Aman* (Claudio Noce, 2009), *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Claudio Giovannesi, 2012), *Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui* (Vittorio Moroni, 2013), and *A Ciambra* (Jonas Carpignano, 2017).[1] In these films, the protagonists are either the son of immigrants or a migrant who arrived in Italy at a young age, and they embody a queerness since they stand outside of dominant and ideological discursive boundaries of Italian identity and national belonging.

As discussed in the thesis introduction, the term queer is used here to denote identities and forms of belonging that challenge normative and hegemonic notions. Some characters' queerness, such as Nader in *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri*, and Aman in *Good morning Aman*, is more evidently depicted by ambiguous relationships that blur the line between the homosocial and the homoerotic.[2] Furthermore, these films depict a relationship with another

[1] Suranga Deshapriya Katugampala's *Per un figlio* (2016) also shares many similar themes with this corpus but stands apart due to its nuanced depiction of the matriarchal relationship and balanced perspective of the intergenerational clash, as well as the son's seemingly unproblematic integration with his Italian peers. However, it is worth mentioning for its analogous themes of intergenerational conflict, differences between the parent's culture of origin and Italian culture, and its depiction of heterosexuality as a performative act that bonds the son with his Italian peers.

[2] For example, Dolasinski has identified the homoerotic tensions at play in *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* and sees these as intersecting with hegemonic understandings of national belonging and masculinity. Lisa Dolasinski, "Precarious Masculinity: Intersections of Race, Gender, and Desire in Claudio Giovannesi's Alì ha gli occhi azzurri," *gender/sexuality/Italy*, 3 (2016), 120-135 <https://doi.org/10.15781/5py6-0a59>

(usually older) man who either *betrays* the protagonist, or is betrayed *by* the protagonist, and this is depicted as a crucial point of struggle in the latter's identity formation. In short, these films can be seen to reveal the entanglements of national identity, race, gender, and sexuality in coming-of-age narratives.

In this regard, Derek Duncan has used Queer Theory to understand the representation of male migration from Eastern Europe in Italian cinema, demonstrating the intersections of sexual and racial difference. Duncan defines the male migrant as a queer subject in that he conflicts with normativities of race and sexuality, representing an alterity that cannot be assimilated into the national body.[3] This chapter will consider how these categories of identification intersect and are explored in the film *Good morning Aman* by Claudio Noce (2009), giving particular attention to the ways in which the film subverts fixed notions of national identity. In particular, Noce's film stands out for its nonlinear structure and deferred meaning of images which produce a somewhat disorienting viewing experience. It therefore offers a unique example of how such non-conventional filming techniques work to create an empathic relationship between the spectator and the film and contribute to its ability to engage with postcolonial questions of identity.

Like many of the films mentioned in this thesis, Noce's *Good morning Aman* circulated mainly on the international festival circuit after its premier at the International Film Critic's week of the 66th Venice International Film Festival in 2009, although it did have a small theatrical release in Italy which grossed a modest $42,032.[4] The film was Noce's debut for

[3] Derek Duncan, '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy,' *New Cinemas,* 6: 3 (2008), 167–182 <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.6.3.167/1>

[4] Figure taken from <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/releasegroup/gr484528645/> [Accessed 26 May 2022]

which he was nominated for the *David di Donatello* for best new director.[5] The feature-length film comes after Noce's documentary *Aman e gli altri* (2006) and his short *Adil e Yusuf* (2007), both of which focus on Somali youth living in Rome, and it is Aman from the documentary who becomes the star of *Good morning Aman*.[6]

The film focuses on the character Aman, a young disaffected Somali man who moved to Italy when he was four years old and lives in the *Corviale*, a large housing complex located in the capital's south-west periphery and which has become a symbol of urban degradation.[7] The complex was originally constructed for the white working-class population in 1982, however it is now home to a significant number of immigrants.[8] Despite speaking Italian with a Roman accent, Aman is constantly reminded of his differences and receives racist remarks from various characters throughout the film, including his manager who fires him. One night he meets Teodoro, a mysterious middle-aged white Italian man who, for unknown reasons, has remained housebound for three years and shows an intense desire to befriend Aman, despite his overt racist beliefs. After going to his apartment, Aman discovers that Teodoro slipped money into his jacket and so, having lost his job, continues to spend time with him whilst trying to understand what Teodoro expects in return. Eventually, it is revealed that

[5] It was also screened at Cairo International Film Festival (2010), Annecy Cinema Talien (2009), Dubai International Film Festival (2009), Villerupt Italian Film Festival (2009), and Istanbul Italian Film Festival (2009). <https://www.filmitalia.org/en/film/46246/> [Accessed 27 May 2022]. Themes relating to immigration and border mobilities are also evident in Claudio Noce's *La foresta di ghiaccio* (2014), starring Russian actress Ksenia Rappoport, known for her role in Giuseppe Tornatore's *La sconosciuta* (2006). Besides interpreting some of the grim realities of illegal immigration such as exploitation and death, illegal immigration largely acts as the dramatic backdrop of this noir-thriller, providing the premise for the narrative's dramatic finale.

[6] *Adil e Yusuf* is available on <https://vimeo.com/114490537> [Accessed 6 November 2023]

[7] Corviale is also the setting for *Et in terra pax* directed by Matteo Botrugno and Daniele Collucini (2010), a film that bleakly portrays the lives of those who live in a disadvantaged area affected by unemployment and crime. Massimo, one of the main characters, is a black Italian, however, besides his racialised nickname, little distinction is made between characters who are shown to be both victims and perpetrators of the destitute conditions that govern their lives.

[8] Derek Duncan, "Shooting the Colonial Past in Contemporary Italian Cinema: Effects of Deferral in Good Morning Aman," in *Postcolonial Italy Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 114-124 (p. 124).

Teodoro (purposefully or accidentally) killed a young Senegalese man one night after hitting him with his car, and thus his remorseful desire to be close to Aman is revealed. The film draws to its conclusion with a complex montage that cuts abruptly and indistinctly between past and present, reality and fantasy, and culminates with Teodoro's suicide.

Although academic literature on the film is scarce, it has drawn the attention of Derek Duncan and Áine O'Healy for its postcolonial implications.[9] By applying theories such as Bhabha's time-lag and his postcolonial translation of Freud's "unheimlich," Duncan argues that the film's fragmented temporal structure and uncertain narrative imitates the intrusion of the postcolonial past onto the present.[10] O'Healy, on the other hand, focuses on what she identifies as postcolonial desire which resurfaces through Aman and Teodoro's ambivalent relationship. She also argues that, in addition to noir techniques, the film has elements of the melodramatic as demonstrated by the characters' display of an all-consuming melancholy, isolation, and unattainable desire.

These works provide insightful, interconnected arguments that I will draw on to support my own analysis, particularly in relation to postcolonial themes. This chapter aims to build on the analysis of the formal techniques and narrative aspects that Duncan and O'Healy highlight by applying an analytical perspective that considers how the emotional and empathic engagement of the spectator may be affected and what implications this has regarding the film's engagement with discourses on national identity as well as its questioning of the (post)colonial past and present. I consider the ways in which the cinematic empathic

[9] The film is often recognised and mentioned in relation to Italian cinema on migration but is rarely the focus of analysis, apart from in the works by Duncan and O'Healy. See Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' (2012); Áine O'Healy*, Migrant Anxieties. Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), pp. 192-197.

[10] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994) cited in Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' p. 119.

structure differs in this film in relation to others already analysed, resulting in the need to interrogate the meaning of the image which could produce empathic feelings of frustration and ambiguity in the viewer. Furthermore, I will explore the ways in which an ambivalence permeates the film which contributes to its ability to comment on (post)colonial questions and how the film suggests a fraught relationship between past and present, which allows for an ethical interrogation of national identity and belonging. Fundamental to both these effects is the film's emphasis on time and kinesis which foregrounds the embodied, sensuous, and affective dimensions of the spectator's emotional engagement and ethical evaluation. In addition, this analysis will also consider how empathising with Aman, who embodies a queerness in relation to white heteronormative masculinity, allows the spectator to consider alternative forms of masculinity and Italianness.

Good morning Aman engages the spectator with images, movements, and temporalities that are at times challenging to comprehend, which has implications for how the spectator may emotionally engage with the film and empathise with the protagonist, Aman. The following will explore how Noce's film employs techniques that alter conventional models of engagement, and foreground the sensuous, affective, and corporeal dimensions of cinematic empathy. Firstly, it blurs the distinction between different perspectives and as a result moves dynamically between different levels of engagement, providing a distinct example of what Robert Sinnerbrink terms *cinempathy,* as discussed below. Secondly, it exaggerates movement as a means of creating a kinaesthetic energy that contributes to the spectator's embodied empathetic engagement. And lastly, by deferring the meaning of images, it in effect impacts the final step in the process of empathy in which we come to a cognitive understanding of the other's experience. However, as will be argued, this could in

fact contribute to the spectator's ability to empathise with Aman by potentially producing similar feelings of ambivalence and frustration.

As discussed in the theoretical framework, empathy can be conceived of as sitting within a wider spectrum of emotional engagement which is affected by many conditions, such as aesthetics, narrative, character engagement, affect, bodily perception, and embodied experience. The differences between sympathy and empathy are often obscure and the two responses are not distinct, making it useful to conceive of them instead as part of a complex process of emotional engagement in which a range of emotive relationships of varying type and intensity may occur. Films foreground the relationship between perception (as embodied), emotional engagement and cognitive understanding, and Sinnerbrink argues that it is from this relationship that the ethical potential of cinema derives.[11] This thesis supports the arguments of scholars such as Sinnerbrink who do not view empathy as independent from sympathy, since cinema enables "dynamic movement between poles of empathy and sympathy in an experientially rich manner" which enables spectators to "emotionally engage with and ethically evaluate, the fictional characters with whom we align ourselves within a cinematic world."[12] He dubs this mode of engaging with films as *cinempathy,* and we see techniques in *Good morning Aman* that play on this dynamic, fluid movement in order to question objective and subject vision, past and present, and reality and fantasy.[13]

Furthermore, in order to provide a descriptive account of the relationship between emotional engagement and ethical evaluation of this film, it is essential to consider the audience's cinematic engagement as an embodied experience, as argued in the theoretical

[11] Robert Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), p. 6.
[12] Ibid., p. 94.
[13] Ibid., p. 95.

framework. Of particular relevance to this film is D'Aloia's argument that kinaesthetic empathy with a film precedes and gives rise to emotional empathy, thus highlighting the latter as being grounded in the lived-body. The spectator, therefore, is conceived as a *sensible* body - one which makes meaning out of bodily sense.[14] Thus, grounding my analysis in these theories allows me to explore the relationship between the spectator's embodied empathy and emotional engagement and the ethical potential of the film which resides largely in its ambivalence and questioning of one "correct" narrative.

According to Sinnerbrink, ethical experience in the cinema "unfolds […] through a situated, emotionally engaged, aesthetically receptive response to images that work on us in a multimodal manner, engaging our senses, emotions, and powers of reasoning."[15] Similarly, Jane Stadler's work emphasizes the interconnected phenomenological and cognitive dimensions of cinematic ethics by demonstrating "how narrative and narrating are important in ethical life, how emotional responses have a place in rational deliberation, how the imaginative activity involved in watching films enables audiences to envision ethical situations and possibilities, and how character engagement can expand the sphere of moral concern."[16] Therefore, I wish to consider this film's aesthetic and narrative features in relation to the nexus between spectatorship as an embodied experience and ethical deliberation. In doing so, I will explore how the spectator's potential engagement with the film and responses such as empathy may reinforce the film's questioning of one dominant national narrative and allows for an embodied sense of others' experiences.

[14] Following Sobchack's conception of the cinematic experience. See Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton University Press, 1991).
[15] Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics*, p. 20.
[16] Jane Stadler, *Pulling Focus: Intersubjective Experience, Narrative Film, and Ethics* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2008), p. 3.

7.2 Empathising with the Cinematic Marginalised Subject

From the opening scene of the film, the spectator is immediately aligned with Aman's perspective as the film shows a close-up of his eyes followed by out-of-focus images of crowds in slow-motion, presumably the object of his vision, which is overlayed by the ethereal chimes of Valerio Vigliar's soundtrack (see figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: intense close-up of Aman. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (00:00:29).

Figure 2: out-of-focus shot from Aman's perspective. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (00:00:49).

This initial image of Aman's eyes and the subsequent alignment with his perspective and positioning brings the spectator's attention immediately to his own corporeality and embodiment of the cinematic space. Aman sits in a sports car, seemingly his own, and confidently gazes directly into the camera, shifting the object of his vision from the crowds to

the spectator. Suddenly, a salesperson briskly opens the car door and removes him, revealing that it is in fact a show car parked at Termini station. As he gets out, his voiceover narrates the success of the Somali-Canadian rapper K'naan, and this preoccupation with socio-economic standing recurs at various points throughout the film. Although uncertainty is subtly cast on the initial presumed reality of Aman sat in his own sports car (falsely suggesting his own success in line with that of rapper K'naan's) through dreamlike visuals and sounds, it is not until the scene is intercut suddenly by the salesperson that it is revealed to be one of Aman's fantasies. This opening sequence introduces formal techniques and themes that persist throughout the film, such as the unclear delineation between reality and fantasy, images whose meanings are not immediately evident, and Aman's delusions and desires about his own success. Even the detail of rapper K'naan's name, which means traveller, hints at the film's exaggerated use of motion to come (as discussed in more detail below), which is symbolic of the movement of diasporic subjects such as Aman.

Significantly, this scene also introduces the technique of rapidly changing the film's perspective and the spectator's understanding of images, thus influencing their level of engagement with the film, from a more mediated to a more immersive position and from more objective to subjective vision. For example, they are initially situated within an immersive position, focusing on Aman's corporeality and vision through the intense close-ups of his eyes, followed by a shot from his perspective. The spectator's positioning within the cinematic space then changes again so that they face Aman, and he becomes the object of their vision as the spectator does for him. This is followed by an aerial shot as he gets out of the car, removing the spectator yet further from his perspective and allowing for a more objective understanding of the scene. Thus, the spectator is encouraged to glide between the poles of empathy and sympathy, in which they both share Aman's experiences and retain their

own unique position in relation to the body of the film. This also highlights an embodied relationship with the film, as the camera movements mimic and alter the body's own sense of proprioception, creating a kinesis which can be felt, and which builds throughout the film.

On this point, Adriano D'Aloia's concept of the cinematic experience as being inherently empathic and as relying on both motor and emotional participation can assist in understanding the ways in which the film promotes a tactile, kinaesthetic empathy that accompanies emotional empathy (as discussed in the literature review). As D'Aloia states, "in the case of strong elicitation of sensory responses, movements in film (both the meta-movements of the camera and the depicted movements of objects and subjects) can generate an effective internal *kinesis* in the spectator." This internal kinesis is a factor that brings the spectator's body closer to that of the character and "precedes and accompanies emotional empathy: a structural homology allows the viewer to identify the movement seen on the body of the actor with that which is felt and experienced from the inside of his/her own body."[17] Therefore, as D'Aloia summarises, "empathy is not a purely physiological reaction, nor a purely cognitive act. Rather, it is a *feeling* composed of different levels, namely perceptual, emotional and cognitive, grounded in the lived-body."[18]

Hence, *Good morning Aman*'s intense use of camera-movement should be understood in relation to the body of the spectator and the effect that it may have on the latter's engagement with the cinematic world. For example, the meta-movements of the camera contrast with an often-motionless Aman, creating a paradoxical sense of restlessness and immobility that allows the spectator to sense Aman's own lack of agency and frustration. In

[17] Adriano D'Aloia, "Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience," in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason, (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 91-108. (p.98).
[18] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 101.

one scene, Teodoro and Aman are sat motionless in armchairs whilst the camera relentlessly circles back and forth around them. In the conversation that ensues between them, Aman insinuates that his manager fired him because he was jealous that Aman was a skilled salesman, although the audience knows this to be false as he was employed as a cleaner and was in fact fired for attempting to sell a car without permission, as well as due to the manager's racist beliefs. The camerawork therefore creates a felt kinesis that reflects Aman's restlessness with his current social and economic standing whilst his own stationary position works together with the dialogue to reflect his obstructed attempt at upward mobility. As O'Healy states, the "film conveys Aman's mounting restlessness, frustration, and sense of exclusion through the abundant use of a handheld camera, elliptical editing, extreme close-ups, and the virtual absence of establishing shots."[19] Specifically, these cinematic techniques are capable of generating a strong kinaesthetic identification between the body of the spectator and the film's body which, as D'Aloia argues, creates the potential for emotional empathy.[20]

This intersubjective relationship between spectator, film, and character privileges the perspective of Aman, whose marginalisation within Italian society is depicted narratively as well as by means of an affective, sensuous engagement that allows the spectator to grasp his lived experiences which are impacted by socio-economic exclusion and racism. In this sense, Lisa Dolasinksi's observations about *Ali Blue Eyes* are particularly relevant here too. She writes, "immersed in Nader's world, the spectator experiences his comings and goings first-hand, participating, therefore, in the creation of an affective bond between audience and

[19] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties,* p. 193.
[20] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 106.

character."[21] Through being situated so intimately within the world of Aman, such an affective bond is elicited which contributes to conveying his feelings and experiences and thus to the spectator's understanding of his sense of marginalisation, frustration, and pathos. As O'Healy discusses, this sense of pathos is associated with Aman's lack of agency and unfulfilled desires, that is, "with the thwarted voice of the marginalized."[22]

The film encourages a firm alignment with Aman through spatio-temporal attachment and subjective access which allows the spectator to sense his frustration at his inability to fulfil his dreams and at his social exclusion.[23] For example, at times the spatio-temporal alignment places the viewer alongside Aman, who is positioned at a distance from other characters. This affects the viewer's own sense of corporeal positioning within the cinematic space, allowing them to empathise with Aman's own physical separation from others. This occurs, for example, when his friend Said announces he is leaving Italy to move to London in the hopes of finding better work opportunities.[24]

Two initial scenes in particular emphasise Aman's sense of social exclusion and non-belonging which becomes exacerbated by Said's departure. Firstly, at the mosque he stands alone at a distance and gazes through the door at Said and other men praying. Shortly after, at Said's goodbye gathering, Aman is again positioned apart from the group, gazing indoors from outside the bar. In both scenes, the camera functions to align the spectator corporeally with Aman, giving them access to his subjective vision which is particularly accentuated in the

[21] Dolasinski, 'Precarious Masculinity,' p. 123.
[22] O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 197.
[23] As Plantinga states when discussing the structure of engagement, these are the two fundamental ways that we align with characters. Allegiance is thus a deeper level of engagement based on a moral evaluation of characters. Carl Plantinga, *Moving Viewers: American Film and The Spectator's Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 106.
[24] As is the case in many of the films discussed in this thesis, immigrant and first-generation characters are often shown to be affected by precarious work and unemployment.

second instance by zooming in on Said in slow-motion as he gazes back at Aman (and the spectator) from the bar (see figure 3 and 4). This focuses the spectator's attention on the affect of the image and allows them to sense the homosocial bond between the two which, in Said's absence, becomes replaced by delusional phone-calls.

Figures 3 and 4: Reverse-shots between Aman and Said, before Aman's departure. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (08:43 and 09:00).

The film uses techniques, such as a repeat lack of establishing shots, which enable a more immersive, unmediated experience in which the spectator may not be able to always immediately recognise their place within the cinematic space. For example, a scene in which Aman sits outside his estate, again separated from his peers who sit behind him, cuts to a close-up of Teodoro as he looks directly at us and says "sono contento che sei venuto" [I'm glad you came by]. This phrase is significant as it is repeated several times, reinforcing a sense of haunting that permeates the film, as discussed below. The combination of the abrupt cut, the lack of establishing shot and Teodoro's direct address of the spectator is disconcerting and

disorienting, until the camera changes perspective and reveals that Teodoro is in fact speaking to Aman inside his apartment.

As with the opening scene, visual and narrative cues are obscured or proffered retrospectively, so that the spectator's engagement with the film develops uncertainly. Furthermore, the film continuously offers the spectator different levels of engagement and different viewpoints, which may cause them to question the meaning of what they are seeing. In this way, their potential empathy with Aman comes not only from the narrative and character engagement which enable them to comprehend experiences from his subjective viewpoint, but also from the way in which the film "uses modes of embodied existence" to tangibly convey his experiences of uncertainty, exclusion, and frustration as a marginalised subject who is faced with numerous socio-economic boundaries.[25] This is achieved, for example, by means of the positioning and movements of the camera that allow the spectator's body to sense Aman's own moving through space and physical marginalisation. In this sense, the visceral, sensuous dimensions of empathy, as discussed extensively by Lindner in *Film Bodies*, are shown to be particularly relevant in understanding cinematic modes of embodiment, in this case, of marginalised and racialised subjects.[26]

7.3 Postcolonial Desire and Masculinity

One scene in which the sensuous dimensions of cinematic engagement are most evident portrays an ambivalent exchange between Aman and Teodoro, in which it is precisely

[25] Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye*, p. 4.
[26] Katharina Lindner, *Film Bodies: Queer Feminist Encounters with Gender and Sexuality in Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018).

the sensuousness of the film's images which assist in conveying to the spectator the simultaneous underlying feelings of desire and repulsion of the scene. In Teodoro's apartment, Aman tries to take back his hash from Teodoro's hand, who instead grips onto his hand with his own, pulling Aman towards himself, and challenging him to use physical force to get it back. In their tussle Teodoro slaps Aman (see figures 5 and 6), leaving him stunned, before seemingly attempting to kiss him as he grabs his face (see figure 7), from which Aman pulls back. Suddenly, Teodoro breaks their physical proximity by turning and lifting his shirt to reveal a graphic tattoo of a naked woman to allay any suspicion of homosexual intent (see figure 8).

Figure 5: Aman's reaction after being slapped by Teodoro during their altercation. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (33:05).

Figure 6: Teodoro's tussle with Aman conveys ambivalent feelings of repulsion and desire. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (32:59).

Figure 7: Teodoro grabs Aman's face seemingly in an attempt to kiss him. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (33:09).

Figure 8: Teodoro reveals his tattoo to deny any homosexual intent. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (33:30).

This scene is demonstrative of how meaning emerges from the conjunction of cinematic representation and the spectator's body, whose synaesthetic abilities contribute to informing their understanding.[27] That is to say, this scene can be analysed for the way in which it "provoke[s] in us the "carnal thoughts" that ground and inform more conscious analysis."[28] As Sobchack elaborates, "the film experience is a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression. It entails the visible, audible, kinetic aspects of sensible experience to make sense visibly, audibly, and haptically."[29]

[27] As argued by Vivian Sobchack, for example in her definition of the "cinesthetic subject" outlined in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), p. 55.
[28] Ibid., p. 50.
[29] Sobchack, *Address of the Eye*, p. 9.

Thus, in this scene, the physicality and desire of their exchange can be felt sensuously by the spectator whose body is able to comprehend the kinetic tension that is conveyed, for example, by the quick alternation of camera angles and out of focus shots that mimic movement. The camera remains predominantly in close-up and the scene is darkly lit, further conveying the physical proximity and tension between the characters. In addition, sounds, such as that of Teodoro's hand slapping Aman's face, are not only heard but inform our haptic sensibilities as well. Not only can the aggression of the scene be felt, but there is also a palpable tension of desire as Teodoro grabs Aman's face and seemingly attempts to kiss him. This desire is tangible throughout the film, through Teodoro's many intense gazes, embracing of Aman and touching of his face, and exists alongside Teodoro's more hostile and violent attitude towards Aman.

As O'Healy discusses, such an ambivalent affective relationship and libidinal tension between the two men points not simply to Teodoro's sense of remorse for killing a young Senegalese man, but also to the asymmetrical power relations between them and the ambivalence of colonial desire. That is, she relates the tension between the evident libidinal desire and Teodoro's hostile racist attitude to "the ambivalent matrix of attraction and repulsion that historically structured the encounter of the colonizer and the colonized other and points to the uncanny endurance of colonial desire in the postcolonial era."[30] Whilst Teodoro's racism is explicit from the dialogue and narrative, the tension described here cannot be wholly attributed to such factors, as it often occurs in scenes with little or no dialogue. Instead, the tension between these opposing feelings can be comprehended via the sensuous dimensions of the cinematic experience. In this scene in particular, the physicality of Aman's

[30] O'Healy*, Migrant Anxieties,* p. 192.

interaction with Teodoro is particularly perceptible as the spectator's attention is brought to the kinetic and tactile qualities of the images. D'Aloia states that, "the most effective cases of empathic relation in the film experience are those in which the movement of the represented body elicits tension and creates a field of energy that vitalises the space between the character's body and the spectator's body."[31] Such a strong kinaesthetic engagement with the film - by means not only of the characters' movements, but also the rarely static camera and changing sense of spatiality - contributes to the spectator's ability to empathise with Aman's experiences which are affected by an ambivalent tension.

Furthermore, another salient manner in which the film invites an embodied encounter is through images that dwell on affect and feeling, such as the many medium to close-up shots of Teodoro embracing and touching an uncomfortable Aman (see figure 9).

Figure 9: Teodoro embraces an uncomfortable Aman. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (49:57).

Thus, Teodoro becomes an embodiment of colonial ideals of masculinity that oscillate between violence and desire for the other. Teodoro's many ailments, failed marriage, and inability to leave his house also comment on the problematic and oppressive nature of such restrictive ideals. Aman's presence, however, queers this type of hegemonic masculinity and

[31] D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy,' p. 98.

his ambivalent relationship with Teodoro reveals the power dynamics inherent in upholding such restrictive notions of identity. The above scene demonstrates how, as Williams states, "the migrant body in emotional turmoil is pictured in such intensive and animate close-up that it opens up masculinity to forms of homoeroticism that directly implicate the viewer."[32] Therefore, by engaging so intimately with Aman's experiences, the spectator is able to empathise with alternative forms of masculinity that queer ideologically rigid conceptions of Italianness constructed around whiteness and heteronormativity.

7.4 Ambiguity and Empathy

The kinaesthetic empathy discussed above builds throughout the film creating tension that erupts in the final ten minutes, beginning with Aman imagining Teodoro's car accident which develops into a complex montage of images, which is discussed more fully in the following section. Following this, Aman goes to Teodoro's apartment and slashes the painting hanging on the wall with a knife. This painting is significant as Teodoro brings attention to it at the beginning of the film, and its imagery becomes incorporated into Aman's final delusions. In this montage, therefore, the increased kinesis builds tension and contributes to tangibly conveying a feeling of anger and frustration that Aman demonstrates by destroying Teodoro's painting.

Subsequently, the montage delves further into Aman's imagination as shots of himself and Teodoro at the hospital are intercut with shots of the two men walking up a mountain,

[32] James S. Williams, 'Queering the migrant Being beyond borders,' in *Queering the Migrant in Contemporary European Cinema* ed. by James S. Williams (London: Routledge, 2020) pp.3-29 (p.18) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429264245>

which has an evident likeness to the landscape in the aforementioned painting. At one point Aman views Teodoro whilst his back is turned as he stands on a large rock on the mountaintop, mirroring the figure depicted in the painting. The film then cuts to Teodoro standing on a rooftop edge and committing suicide, before returning to the mountain scenery where, sat next to Aman, he repeats the phrase "sono contento che sei qui con me" [I'm happy that you're here with me].

This final sequence of events - from the car accident to Teodoro's suicide - cuts between what seems to be the past and present, and between reality and fantasy, and in doing so shifts cinematic time and space in a rapid and at times indistinct manner. In Duncan's article that considers the postcolonial implications of this film and how these "flashes from the past interrupt and disrupt narratives being worked out in the present," he states that they "do not offer the spectator direct clarification of what happened in the past, nor do they unambiguously elucidate the present."[33] Whilst Duncan focuses on how the film's temporal structure and traces of the past are symptomatic of colonialism's "disjunct" legacy, I would like to comment on how such a narrative structure and deferral of meaning may shape the spectator's empathic engagement with the film.[34]

Indeed, the events of the past and present are never fully clarified, and the ending of the film demonstrates this, leaving the viewer searching for meaning. The final scene is so similar to the opening scene that it suggests a return of difference that reinforces the lack of chronological linearity that emerges in the film, demonstrating an uncertain relationship between past and present. The film brings us back to Termini station where Aman (wearing

[33] Duncan, *Shooting the Colonial Past*, p.119.
[34] Ibid.

identical clothing as the opening scene) gets into the same sportscar that he was initially removed from, as his voiceover narrates rapper K'naan's inevitable fall from the number one spot in the charts. We then hear another of his phone calls to Said, in which he declares that he is coming to London, expanding the diasporic subject's geographical journey from Somalia and suggesting a desire to move beyond Italy's borders in order to find economic and social recognition.

In this scene, past and present, as well as fantasy and reality, become indistinguishable as the ontological nature of the events remains unclear. The similarity to the opening scene, as well as the previous montage of past, present, and oneiric images, throws any certainty over time and reality into doubt. As throughout the film, the spectator is forced to interrogate the meaning of the image, and thus their cognitive understanding is deferred which may cause them to feel frustration or uncertainty. Therefore, when considering the process of empathy, in which we perceive, imagine and then come to an understanding of another's experiences, the final step in this process is not graspable in any straightforward way, and as a result this may generate ambiguity in the viewer.[35] However, the effect of such a technique may actually contribute to their ability to empathise with Aman since a sense of frustration and ambivalence may be elicited in the viewer which demonstrates an affective and emotional congruence with Aman's own experiences. Furthermore, by not always clearly establishing Aman's imagination from reality, his subjective perception of events is presented in a less mediated manner, allowing for a more immersive and affective viewing experience, as also documented by the above discussed scenes which foreground the spectator's sensuous engagement with the film.

[35] The literature review discusses empathy as a three-step process that is perceptive, emotive, and cognitive.

Thus, similarly to Lindner's account of how gendered experiences are related not only to embodiment but also to wider cultural and discursive practices which structure meaning, here we can likewise trace the interconnection between empathic and embodied engagement with Aman's experiences and wider social structures of discrimination.[36] That is, the emotive and tactile dimensions of the film contribute to understanding Aman's experiences of marginalisation and racism and his ambivalent, uncomfortable relationship with Teodoro, all of which are inseparable from the legacy of colonialism and those enduring aspects of its structures and discourses, discussed in the thesis introduction, that continue to underpin hegemonic conceptions of national identity and belonging and which shape experiences of racism, marginalisation, and socio-economic exclusion in Italian society.

7.5 Postcolonial Ambivalence

7.5.1 Postcolonial Theory

I will now seek to expand on this relationship between the cinematic engagement of the spectator and the postcolonial implications of *Good morning Aman*, by examining how the film is paradigmatic of Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and how this relates to the ethics of spectatorial engagement. In particular, I will consider how ambivalence can be understood through an embodied engagement with Aman's experiences, paying particular attention to the film's temporalities and the manner in which it presents the past to the spectator. Duncan has already considered how Bhabha's concept of the time-lag characterises postcolonial time in Italian cinema, in particular reference to *Good morning Aman*.[37] By drawing on Bhabha's

[36] Lindner, *Film Bodies*, (2018).
[37] Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past' (2012).

postcolonial readings of the Freudian *unheimlich* and "deferred action" he analyses how "flashes from the past interrupt and disrupt narratives being worked out in the present" in a way that recalls Bhabha's sense of the present as "disjunct and displaced."[38] By exploring the narrative features and temporal structure of the film, he concludes that traces of the past are presented in such a way that reveal "fragments of personal experience […] to be embedded in, and redolent of, broader political patterns." The following analysis develops from this insightful article which demonstrates the ways in which Italy's repressed colonial history resurfaces in Italian cinema, in this case, by intimating "postcoloniality's precarious temporalities."[39]

In particular, I will look at how *Good morning Aman* is suggestive of Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence and how the film encourages the spectator to engage in such a way that allows them a felt, tangible understanding of the ambivalence that underwrites Aman's experiences.[40] That is, I am considering ambivalence in both a postcolonial sense and in terms of spectatorial ambivalence. Regarding the former, Bhabha posits that racialised subjects' lived experiences are marked by ambivalence. Such an ambivalence resides in the knowledge produced by the colonizer about the colonized, such as that demonstrated in Said's *Orientalism,* which in its insistence on "fixity" in the ideological construction of Otherness reveals slippage and difference.[41] As Bhabha states, colonial discourse is ambivalent since it

[38] Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' p. 199; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, [1994] 2004).
[39] Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' p. 122.
[40] Bhabha introduced his theory of the ambivalent splitting of the time of the nation in his essay *DissemiNation*, and further developed the concept of ambivalence in his book *The Location of Culture*. Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,' in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291–322; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, [1994] 2004).
[41] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism,* 25th edn (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, [1978] 2014)

produces "that 'otherness' which is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity."[42]

As discussed above, this kind of ambivalence is revealed through Aman's relationship with Teodoro who simultaneously displays feelings of repulsion and desire for Aman. In general, Teodoro and the other white men in the film can be seen to project an ambivalence onto Aman who himself is shown to live a double or split experience which is most obviously rendered formally by the film's labyrinthine temporality. I also use Bhabha's concept in terms of the ambivalence of modernity itself which, as elaborated below, stems from the split between official discourse and that which resists it.

Therefore, I intend to question how Aman is depicted as experiencing postcolonial ambivalence and how the film encourages the spectator to engage in such a way as to also convey a feeling of ambivalence, in the colloquial sense of experiencing opposing or uncertain feelings. I also take inspiration from Martin-Jones' work which draws on Deleuze's concepts of de- and re-territorialization to demonstrate how popular films' use of nonlinear temporalities can be seen to question and renegotiate the dominant view of national identity.[43] In a similar vein, I would also like to consider how *Good morning Aman* is illustrative of an attempt to negotiate transformations in Italy's national identity and how it is suggestive of an ethical questioning of Italy's past and its relationship with its postcolonial present, relating this specifically to spectatorial ambivalence.

[42] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 96.
[43] David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

7.5.2 The Time-Image and National Identity

Following Martin-Jones' Deleuzian approach to understanding how national identity is constructed in cinema, I would also like to explore how the narrative time of the penultimate and final sequence of *Good morning Aman* signals an examination of transformations of national identity, and to ask what effects this may have on spectatorial engagement.[44] Here it is worth summarising some of the theoretical underpinnings of *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*. Martin-Jones draws on Deleuze's distinction between the *movement-image*, that is, broadly speaking, a singular and linear narrative, and the *time-image*, or discontinuous narrative time.[45] He argues that the movement-image creates the illusion of one "correct" national identity and analyses a range of films from different cultural contexts to demonstrate the deterritorialising potential that the time-image has on the narrative and national identity. That is, how does the labyrinthine structure of the time-image displace the narrative by uncovering many pasts that may or may not necessarily be true, in ways that unground (deterritorialize) national identity, and conversely, how does a return to the movement-image reterritorialize the narrative into one linear timeline, and thus reassert one view of the nation.

Martin-Jones also draws on Homi Bhabha's seminal work *DissemiNation* (1990) in which he argues that the nation is narrated in double time; that is, time is split between the pedagogical, which aims to establish one dominant view of the nation, and the performative in which the past must be constantly rethought in the present in a process that continually renegotiates national identity. In narrating the nation, therefore, "there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive

[44] This approach is undertaken by Martin-Jones in his book *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity* (2006).
[45] Martin-Jones bases his work on Deleuze's theories of cinematic time that he established in his works: Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, (London: The Athlone Press, [1983] 1986); Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, (London: The Athlone Press, [1985] 1989).

strategy of the performative," from which subsists the ambivalence of modern society.[46] Martin-Jones relates Bhabha's pedagogical time, which aims to establish one dominant view of national identity, to Deleuze's classical conception of time since "its linearity is based upon the ability to make the present appear to be a repetition of the past, a repetition of the same that guarantees the status of official history as a singular truth."[47] As Bhabha describes, it is this "ambivalent movement between the discourses of pedagogy and the performative" which "opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference."[48] In particular, in this gap or time-lag, the multiple temporalities and histories of postcolonial or diasporic populations may emerge to unground the pedagogic view of the nation. Again, Martin-Jones frames this ungrounding in Deleuzian terms as a deterritorialising of the national narrative, whilst the constant need to rethink the past in the present works to reterritorialize it.[49] Thus, he analyses films that incorporate aspects of the time-image to demonstrate how they de- and re-territorialise the national narrative, reflecting "a crisis of national identity formally rendered literal by multiple, jumbled or otherwise discontinuous narrative time," and I consider how *Good morning Aman* works in a similar way.[50]

I not only frame the effects of the film's temporalities in terms of the national, but I also take into consideration how its questioning of the past (or pasts) in relation to contemporary Italy is situated within wider transnational histories. As Martin-Jones demonstrated in his later work *Cinema Against Doublethink* (2019), a less Eurocentric understanding of Deleuzian theory allows for the time-image to be understood as re-

[46] Bhabha, *DissemiNation*, p.297
[47] Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, p. 33.
[48] Bhabha, *DissemiNation,* p. 300.
[49] Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, pp. 33-35.
[50] Ibid., p. 37.

activating world memory and keeping alive the lost pasts of colonial modernity.[51] Therefore, the ambivalence that characterises Aman's experiences, as rendered by the double time of the (national) narrative, should be understood within the context of shared transnational histories and "the global structural inequality fostered by colonial modernity" which affects the lives of diasporic subjects such as Aman.[52]

In this later work, Martin-Jones considers the time-image as enabling encounters with other (lost) pasts which are not our own, and thus providing the potential for us to reconsider the relative centrality of our own past within world memory so as to oppose "doublethink" (the reduction of history to one). Therefore, the time-images of *Good morning Aman* do not only question the dominant view of the nation, but also reveal the "historical alterity (the lost pasts), of those excluded from modernity."[53] The following seeks to relate the ethics implicit in this to the effects that the labyrinthine structure and time-images of the final sequences may have on the spectator's empathic and emotional engagement with the film, specifically in terms of the ambivalent viewing experience that it elicits.

First, it is necessary to briefly consider the social and political transformations within Italy at the time the film was released to allow us to understand the ambivalence and tension between multiple and diverse narratives within the national context. *Good morning Aman* was released shortly after right-wing politician Silvio Berlusconi was re-elected in April 2008, leading a centre-right coalition between *Popolo della Libertà* and *Lega Nord*. The government was openly hostile to immigration, introducing tough legislation for immigrants who were discursively linked to crime and a threat to the nation. For example, Berlusconi commented

[51] David Martin-Jones, *Cinema Against Doublethink: Ethical Encounters with the Lost Pasts of World History* (London: Routledge, 2019).
[52] Ibid., p. 41.
[53] Ibid., p. 24.

on such legislation as "security measures" that would "allay the fear that citizens have; it's their right not to be afraid anymore."[54] This was a continuation of the anti-immigration rhetoric that his previous government peddled in 2001-2006, during which time the restrictive Bossi-Fini law (Legge 189/2002) was introduced as well as the controversial policy between Italy and Libya to return migrants found in international waters back to Libya, where they were often subjected to violence. However, such political rhetoric and harsh policies dismiss the conditions created by (post)colonialism which propel such transnational migrations, which is consistent with Italy's repression of its colonial history, as discussed in the thesis introduction.

Such politics also fuelled the dominant public discourse of immigration as an "invasion" of and a threat to the nation which reinforced a distinction of identities between "us" and "them." As Faloppa writes, by the early 2000s "the new rhetoric of 'sbarchi' and 'emergenze' became persistent, as well as the juxtaposition between 'us' (the standard white middle-class readership) and 'them' (the undistinguished mass of dangerous newcomers)."[55] Such alarmist rhetoric that focuses on the arrival of "illegal" migrants and a need to protect a homogenous national identity also obscures the social reality of Italy's diverse demographic and does not account for the narratives and histories of those immigrants and their children who have long resided in the nation. This ties in with that discussed in the thesis introduction, regarding discourses that marginalise certain identities and reinforce a homogenized, white, heteronormative Italian identity. As Bhabha states, "the political unity of the nation consists in a continual displacement of its irredeemably plural modern space […] Quite simply, the

[54] Elisabetta Povoledo, "Berlusconi Moves to Tighten Immigration and Ease Trash Crisis," *The New York Times*, 22 May 2008. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/22/world/europe/22italy.html> [Accessed 10 October 2022]
[55] Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver and Federico Faloppa, 'Introduction,' in *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative,* ed. by Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver and Federico Faloppa (New York: Peter Lang, 2015), pp. 1-28 (p. 7).

difference of space returns as the Sameness of time, turning Territory into Tradition, turning the People into One."[56]

Thus, in this context, *Good morning Aman* can be seen to unground (or deterritorialise) the linear narrative of one "correct" national identity by depicting the fracture of time into multiple temporalities that open up the potential for multiple pasts, or for multiple histories, to re-emerge. Furthermore, the time-image enables an encounter with other pasts of those excluded from colonial modernity and the national narrative, despite sharing (often forgotten) histories with Italy. I would now like to consider how such formal qualities and de-territorialising of the narrative affect and are reinforced by empathy and spectatorial engagement.

7.5.3 Traces of the (Colonial) Past

As discussed above, the film aligns the spectator immediately with Aman's subjective point of view which remains prioritized throughout. Although the audience is closely aligned with Aman, little is revealed to them about his past except that he migrated to Italy from Somalia at a young age. Spectators may be aware of postcolonial factors that underpin such transnational migrations from their pre-existing knowledge, however Italy's colonial involvement in Somalia (or elsewhere) is never mentioned in the film. A colonial history, however, is alluded to through the traces of the past that disrupt the present, as discussed by Duncan, as well as by Aman's ambivalent relationship with Teodoro.[57] In fact, Teodoro and his

[56] Bhabha, *DissemiNation*, p. 300.
[57] Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past' (2012).

past likely become the object of the spectator's fascination as they try to understand the motives behind his unexpected benevolence, just as Aman does.

Teodoro is presented as a racist and violent man who crudely asserts his heterosexual masculinity, for example by revealing a tattoo of a naked woman on his back and sexually objectifying a waitress. In general, it can be said that he is symbolic of an exaggerated depiction of white heterosexual masculinity that has circulated in public discourse since colonialism and fascism, structuring normative ideas of masculinity and national identity that still dominate today, as discussed in the thesis introduction. The following argues that these ideas of national identity and Italy's repression of its colonial history are undermined and challenged by disturbing the relationship between past and present through the film's temporal structure and use of the time-image, and how as a result the affect of the film is bolstered by a feeling of ambivalence since the spectator is presented with an ambiguous and multiple narrative.

Most of the film's narrative develops linearly, and it is only within the final ten minutes that it splits into a labyrinthine temporal structure. Nonetheless, from the outset the film brings attention to the constructed nature of the narrative and questions its reliability. As discussed above, from the opening scene we are presented with alternating perspectives and images whose meanings are not immediately clear which create an uncertain viewing experience and, following this, the film continues with an exaggerated use of elliptical editing. As Lindner describes, there are "fundamental underlying parallels and resonances between the spectator's and the film's modes of spatiality and embodiment that 'ground' our corporeal encounters with film."[58] Here, therefore, the film's editing has the effect of "ungrounding" the

[58] Lindner, *Film Bodies*, p. 45.

spectator, of rendering their positioning within cinematic time and space uncertain and ambiguous. For example, in one scene Aman leans against a wall in his neighbourhood whilst his voiceover misleadingly tells Said that he will be promoted at work soon. He then seemingly looks into the distance at something and the film cuts to a shot of Sara, his romantic interest, so that the spectator is led to believe that they are viewing a continuation of the same time within the film's narrative. However, as the scene develops and the audience sees Aman approaching Sara, they become aware that he is now outside Termini station and wearing different clothing.

Thus, these unpredictable movements between time and space bring attention to the editing of the film and highlight the gaps in narrative time. On one hand, as already discussed, these camera movements and editing style elicit a felt kinesis that contributes to the potential for empathic engagement. On the other hand, it highlights the artificiality of the cinematic medium itself, focusing attention on what has been left out of the narrative, which may create ambiguity in the spectator as they actively seek meaning in a narrative that is presented as not necessarily true. Furthermore, this is reinforced by the way in which the film quickly alters the spectator's sense of proprioception, leading them to ambivalently inhabit the cinematic space.

The narrative is further complicated by imagery and phrases that repeat themselves throughout the film in a way that intimates a sense of postcolonial haunting, as outlined in chapter three. For example, Teodoro repeats similar versions of the phrase "sono contento che sei qui" [I'm happy you're here] at various points, creating an audible trace throughout the narrative. Images also recur in the film in a way that interrupts the present narrative with a past memory; one such image is that of the unknown Senegalese man lying on the road after

being struck by Teodoro's car which compositionally and visually resonates with an earlier shot of Aman lying on the rooftop (see figures 10 and 11).

Figures 10 and 11: The first shot shows Aman lying on the roof terrace, followed by a later shot of the Senegalese man after he has been hit by Teodoro's car. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (15:11 and 1:25:36).

Another example is the photo of Teodoro and his red sports car, details of which become incorporated into Aman's subjective vision of the car accident. Such traces of the past that resurface in the present can be said to be reflective of the disruptive temporality of postcolonial haunting. As O'Riley summarises, the "disruptive quality of postcolonial haunting is frequently portrayed as the Freudian *unheimlich* of history and is figured as an interruptive or affective moment in the course of Western consciousness where the repressed colonial

scene returns."[59] Therefore, Bhabha's concept of the delay or "time-lag" which "keeps alive the making of the past"[60] characterises the time of the film, as Duncan argues, since these traces "[take] the spectator insistently back to a past that is still being played out very uncertainly in the present."[61] These examples demonstrate how the spectator is encouraged to recall the past throughout the film, as is also evidenced by the use of anachronism.[62] It is also in this sense that the spectator is able to empathise with Aman; like him, the spectator is also encouraged to recall the past and seek to understand its relationship to the present. However, as argued below, the film resists presenting the narrative as an unproblematic continuation of the past in a way that signals an unstable national identity.

7.5.4 The Effects of Narrative Time in *Good Morning Aman*

It is only within the final ten minutes that the film's narrative splits into a labyrinthine temporality; after hearing differing narratives of how Teodoro hit and killed a Senegalese man with his car, the film presents us with an imagined flashback which develops into a complex montage of images. First, the film cuts between present-day Aman and what he imagines happened in the past when the accident occurred. Unlike a conventional flashback that works like a movement-image to maintain linearity by portraying the present as a continuation of a past first cause, here the past is shown to be imagined and virtual and therefore just one of the possible pasts that may be true. This sequence therefore works like a time-image since it

[59] Michael F. O'Riley, "Postcolonial Haunting: Anxiety, Affect, and the Situated Encounter," *Postcolonial Text*, 3:4 (2007), 1-15 (p. 1) <https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/728/496> [Accessed 13 October 2022]
[60] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 364.
[61] Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' p. 122.
[62] For example, the black and white photos in Teodoro's apartment, the black and white film on his TV, and the Beethoven soundtrack playing over the scene of the car accident.

"effects a past that begins with the present moment and works backwards in order to uncover the many pasts that may, or may not necessarily be true."[63] Following this, the narrative continues along a labyrinthine temporal structure as the film cuts between images of black youths clashing with the police, Aman talking to a security guard about his job, and Aman pointing a gun at his bigoted manager. Therefore, scenes of what appear to be the present (as suggested by the fact that he is wearing the same clothing as in the previous scene in the hospital) are fragmented by what may be fantasies or memories which "falsify" the linear narrative of the present.

Thus, the film progresses along multiple temporalities in which the past resurfaces and disrupts the narrative, in a way that "resist[s] the reterritorializing impulse characteristic of realist filmmaking."[64] The narrative continues along dual temporalities in which the virtual exists alongside the actual up until Teodoro's death. In this sequence, the moments leading up to his suicide are intercut with Aman's imaginative recollection of the events in which they walk up a mountain that, as already mentioned, recalls the previous image of the painting. Thus, *Good morning Aman* deterritorialises time's actualised form by presenting a labyrinth in which virtual and actual coexist. Or, read from a postcolonial perspective, it depicts the double time of the nation in which national pedagogical time is ungrounded by diverse temporalities. This splitting of the narrative reflects the time-lag through which minority discourses speak and "[reveal] the insurmountable ambivalence that structures the equivocal movement of historical time."[65]

[63] Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, p. 28. For this definition Martin-Jones references Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (London: The Athlone Press, [1980] 1987), p. 262.
[64] Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' p. 122.
[65] Bhabha, *DissemiNation*, p. 308.

As argued above, the spectator is often aligned with Aman and shares his subjective point of view, and empathy is encouraged through kinesis and, unconventionally, through a deferral of meaning which may create a disorienting and ambivalent viewing experience. In addition, as we have seen, the spectator is urged to question the narrative prior to the film's finale by means of exaggerated editing and traces of the past that resurface through repeated imagery and dialogue. However, it is in the penultimate and final sequence that the film most evidently encourages the spectator to engage in the reconstruction of the past alongside Aman. Like Aman, the spectator is also suspended between the movement- and time-image as his subjective reconstruction of the past, his memories and his fantasies interrupt the present narrative. The spectator may empathise therefore with his attempts to make sense of the past to give meaning to the present, but such a linear causal trajectory between the two is never concluded. Consequently, the spectator may feel a sense of ambivalence due to the different and inconclusive narratives that they are presented with. Specifically, the spectator's understanding of these sequences is informed and affected by their embodied engagement which also allows for a felt, tangible comprehension of the ambivalence of Aman's experiences, as elaborated in the below examples.

As mentioned, the narrative time splits when Aman imagines Teodoro killing the Senegalese man, and images of Aman alone at the *Corviale* estate are intercut by images of Teodoro driving his car. What could at first be construed as a flashback is more likely in fact to be Aman's imaginative reconstruction of events as he is briefly (and surreally) shown to be sat alongside the other passengers in the car.[66] Furthermore, it is shot predominantly in medium close-up, reinforcing a subjective rather than objective viewpoint. Nonetheless, these scenes

[66] Duncan also interprets this scene as Aman's subjective reconstruction of the event. Duncan, 'Shooting the Colonial Past,' p. 121.

allow the spectator to empathise with how Aman imagines these events to have occurred and with Aman's own ambivalence regarding the truth after being told about Teodoro's dark past.

Prior to this, there are several instances in which we hear Aman orally asserting a narrative that differs to the one visually presented to us via phone calls in which he tells Said fabrications about his success at work, suggesting his desire for social and economic recognition. Here, however, Aman's fantasies visually and temporally intrude on the linear narrative and problematize it by producing multiple temporalities that break-up the sensory-motor continuum. In doing so, the spectator is presented with a more immersive and less mediated experience of his subjective vision which is informed by the visual, aural, and affective dimensions of the images. For example, the extra-diegetic classical soundtrack of Beethoven's string quartet accompanies and contrasts the contemporary images, producing an anachronistic effect that creates a temporal distance between the visual and aural, undermining the veracity of the events as portrayed to the audience and suggesting a subjectiveness that is involved in any re-calling of the past.[67] In contrast with this, however, the diegetic sounds of the car hitting the man and the scream of Teodoro's wife produce immediate, felt affect and have the potential to resonate with the spectator's own body, bringing them corporeally closer to the image. Therefore, the audio can elicit opposing effects on the spectator's engagement in a way that reinforces the increasing ambiguity of the narrative.

The collision is followed by a shot which has the effect of a time slice, in which the camera moves over the still figures of the passengers, allowing time for the spectator to dwell

[67] Ludwig van Beethoven, String Quartet No. 8 in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2 'Razumovsky' "Andante con moto quasi allegretto."

on the affect and meaning of the scene, whilst also reinforcing the virtual nature of the images and questioning their veracity. Furthermore, the scene occurs at night-time so that some images - such as that of the Senegalese man running away from the car, or of his body lying on the ground - are difficult to discern. The dark lighting, along with the medium close-up position of the camera, limits the spectator's perception of the events so that it is difficult to fully grasp them, just as it is for Aman, again contributing to the virtual nature of the images which are presented as not necessarily true. The film's suggestion of multiple labyrinthine versions of the past is encapsulated by the final image of this sequence, when Teodoro declares that the man is dead despite him moving slightly, indicating the contrary. However, on first viewing, this movement is so slight that one may doubt if it really occurred.

This scene, therefore, emphasises how the development of an empathic relationship with Aman, in which the spectator is encouraged to intimately engage with his subjective experience, may contribute to their understanding of his attempts to make sense of a past that has an uncertain relationship to the present. The spectator's engagement with the film relies on immediate embodied experience to convey meaning, which is in line with the conception of empathy as something that "occurs when we observe what someone else is doing, and we ourselves live it, in some sense, rather than just understand it at an intellectual level."[68] However, meaning here is ambivalent, due to the disjunctive temporality of the time-images.

Following this sequence, the film does not return to a linear narrative, but continues along a labyrinth in which time splits into virtual and actual. The film presents a series of

[68] Albert Michotte, 'The Emotional Involvement of the Spectator in the Action Represented in a Film: Toward a Theory' in *Michotte's Experimental Phenomenology of Perception*, ed. by George Thinès, Alan Costall and George Butterworth (Lawrence Erlbaum: Hillsdale, [1953] 1991), pp. 209-217 (p. 209).

disjointed images that seem to cut between past, present, and fantasy, at times indistinctly. The last image of Aman's re-imagination of the car crash cuts to images of mostly young black men clashing with policemen as they arrest one of them. This is followed by a close-up of Aman who gazes wide-eyed into the camera, standing at the forefront of the unrest (see figure 12). The narrative continues along different temporalities, as images of Aman in Termini station alternate with images of him pointing a gun at his manager. Within this sequence, we also see another image of the black youths, this time standing still and looking into the camera (see figure 13). This is followed by a close-up of Aman fantasising about pointing a gun at his manager (see figure 14), and another image of the youths, this time shouting inaudibly and aggressively at the camera as it zooms in on them. Many of these fragmented images have qualities of the affection-image but function as a time-image since they do not extend into action but rather emerge within a virtual labyrinth of time, the Deleuzian "crystal of time," in which actual and virtual time co-exist.[69]

Figure 12: Police clash with black men while Aman gazes into the camera. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (1:26:04).

[69] Deleuze develops his movement-image taxonomy in *Cinema 1*, in which the perception-image, affection-image and action-image create a sensory-motor continuity within films. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: the Movement-Image* (London: The Athlone Press, [1983] 1986).

Figure 13: Black youths address the spectator. Noce, *Good morning Aman*, (1:27:23).

Figure 14: Aman points a gun at his manager. Noce, *Good morning Aman*, (1:27:29).

Usually, the affection-image emerges in between perception and action, however, as Laura Marks highlights, when this is not the case, the affection-image may "force a visceral and emotional contemplation in those any-spaces-whatever divorced from action" and therefore "can bring us to the direct experience of time *through* the body."[70] Here, the affection-images of Aman and the other youth function in this way, interrupting the sensory-motor continuum and thus bringing our attention to the emotive and affective dimensions of the images. As Martin-Jones has elaborated in *Against Doublethink*, this type of hesitation produced by the time-image is one way in which film "offers an encounter with other histories,

[70] Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 163.

the shared and often intersubjective histories of the world."[71] The hesitation here allows a white Italian audience to contemplate their relationship with others, in this case with marginalized immigrant and diasporic populations who are often excluded from narratives of national identity and belonging. These images therefore confront the audience with other pasts that exist alongside the officially sanctioned history of Italy that represses its colonial involvement and contemporary diversity.

The spectator's relationship with others in these images highlights their embodied engagement with the film since the gazes of the characters directly address the spectator, encouraging awareness of their own corporeality within the intersubjective relationship as they become an object for vision, as well as a subject of vision.[72] However, here the relationship with the other remains ambivalent since these images are characterized by virtual time that falsifies the present. Therefore, disjointed from any linear narrative, the spectator must rely on making sensual meaning by drawing on the emotion and affect of the images, as well as on their embodied knowledge that exceeds them.[73] For example, the spectator likely perceives the facial expressions, bodily gestures, and vocal intonation of the youths as anger, which significantly is directed toward the audience.

The spectator may also associate the images with knowledge that exceeds the film regarding transnational accounts of police discrimination and civil rights movements. Interconnected, transnational histories are also alluded to by the film's references to the civil rights movements that developed in America, for example the posters of Malcolm X and the

[71] Martin-Jones, *Against Doublethink*, p. 71.
[72] Sobchack explores this reciprocity in the cinematic experience between film and spectator in *The Address of the Eye* (1992).
[73] Sobchack discusses the extra-cinematic embodied knowledge that accompanies and informs our viewing experience in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004), see chapter 11 'The Charge of the Real: Embodied knowledge and cinematic consciousness' pp. 205-225.

Black Panthers in Aman's bedroom. Notably, these images of the anger and restlessness of the African diasporic population are framed by images of Aman pointing a gun at his manager, relating his own socio-economic exclusion and disaffection to wider societal issues of racial discrimination and marginalisation.

As we have seen, this sequence of affection- and time-images reinforces Aman's inability to act and focuses attention instead on his thoughts and emotions. The sequence culminates with him slashing Teodoro's painting with a knife, a physical expression of his inner turmoil, before continuing along dual temporalities as images of Teodoro's suicide are intercut with Aman's subjective interpretation of the event. In order to explicate further how the spectator is encouraged to empathise with Aman in a way that reinforces the enduring ambivalence of the narrative and supports an ethical questioning of the past's relationship to the present, I will now look specifically at the final scene.

Following Teodoro's death, the film returns to a single temporality as we are presented with Aman in Termini station, however it resists a complete reterritorializing of the narrative by the way in which this scene visually and aurally resonates with the film's opening scene and by the fact that it remains unclear if it is another of Aman's delusions (for example, the long cut to black before the final scene breaks continuity with the previous sequences, so that its relationship with the present, past and/or future remains unclear). The similarities between the first and final scene are unmistakable; Aman wears the same clothing, he gets into the same car, and we hear him discuss rapper K'naan again. However, this time Aman appears to own the car and we hear another of his phone calls in which he announces that he is moving to London with Said. Furthermore, his initial positive attitude towards Canadian-Somalian rapper K'naan's long-enduring success diminishes as he concludes that he will inevitably be

pushed off the top spot in the charts and no trace of him will be left, which may be read as a comment on the marginalised histories of diasporic populations.

The simultaneous similarities and differences between the first and last scene of the film are significant: the final scene works to engage spectators with the past as they recall the initial scene.[74] However, unlike a recollection-image that functions as a return of the same and re-establishes linearity, here we have a return of difference in which the recollection-image (initial scene) mismatches the perception-image (final scene). Therefore, as Martin-Jones explains, the "time-image's labyrinthine falsifying of causality ensures that what returns, the memory of the past, can be used to create the memory of the future."[75]

Here, as discussed in relation to the sequences that precede this final scene, the film presents labyrinthine temporalities so that the past's connection to the present remains elusive, we never learn the "truth" of the past. Therefore, the initial scene returns as a new memory and thus a new future that functions like those excluded narratives that may resurface and renegotiate national identity. It is significant that this future is made possible only after Teodoro's death who, as discussed, allegorically represents the continuation of colonial and limited conceptions of Italian national identity. However, the narrative choice to remove Aman from the Italian landscape, as well as the elusive nature of the final scene, shows the film's reluctance to offer a definitive reinterpretation of national identity, leaving open instead the possibility for transformation.

[74] This relates to the *recollection-image* which is a virtual past memory that comes forward and becomes actual when it encounters a corresponding image in the present. For a summary of how the recollection-image functions see Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity,* pp. 51-57.
[75] Ibid*.,* p. 60.

7.6 Conclusions

Throughout the film, and particularly during the final ten minutes, the spectator is encouraged to engage in recalling and seeking an informing past, just as Aman is shown to do. This is achieved not only through embodied engagement with Aman's character, his subjectivity, and his experiences, but also intra-textually by the way in which visual and narrative aspects of the film resurface. What becomes apparent in the final scene is the persistence of Aman's own narrative, which is evident throughout the film, but which forcefully intrudes on the film's linear narrative in the final ten minutes. What begins with voiceover phone-calls to Said develops into subjective visual reconstructions of past, present, and future events. The final scene, which may be virtual or actual, reinforces how Aman's own narrative problematises the veracity of one dominant linear narrative and thus of one idea of national identity. Aman's recollections and imaginings create labyrinthine temporalities which deterritorialise the dominant national narrative and reveal other marginalised discourses which subsist within the nation, revealing the ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space, as described by Bhabha.[76]

As argued, such multiple and inconclusive narratives may also convey a sense of ambivalence to the spectator, contributing to their ability to empathise with Aman's experiences. Stadler defines empathy as that which "brings us into relation with others by centrally involving us in their lives, and it offers a felt, experiential understanding of their situation, their values, and the impact of their circumstances."[77] Thus, the temporal structure and unconventional filming techniques of *Good morning Aman* contribute to the spectator's

[76] See for example Bhabha, *DissemiNation* (1990).
[77] Stadler, *Pulling Focus*, p. 155.

empathic engagement by allowing for a felt, experiential understanding of Aman's experiences. In particular, the time-image and affection-image create space for the viewer to encounter others through affective and emotive engagement. As Martin-Jones highlights, such use of the time-image enables "ethical encounters with another past, with a different conception of (world) history."[78]

In this case, the audience encounters immigrant and diasporic populations who are marginalized from dominant discourses of Italian national identity and belonging. Such populations often have forgotten shared transnational histories with Italy and thus, as Martin-Jones argues, the time-image here also has the possibility to "create hesitation regarding accepted views of world history" by revealing lost pasts of those excluded from colonial modernity.[79] However, as Martin-Jones also specifies, such pasts remain unknowable and this is evident also in *Good morning Aman*, as demonstrated, for example, by Aman's inability to remember his own past in Somalia, or by the affection-images of the black youths which remain disjointed from any linear narrative. Thus, this contributes to the spectator's inability to reterritorialize the narrative into a linear continuum, so that the film implicates the viewer in its ethical interrogation of the ambivalence which characterizes postcolonial societies and the lives of racialized subjects such as Aman.

To conclude, *Good morning Aman*'s focus on movement, time, and deferral of meaning may affect the spectator's emotional and empathic engagement in a way that reinforces the film's ethical interrogation of the national narrative, particularly regarding the ambivalent relationship between the (post)colonial past and present. This is evident in particular by the

[78] Martin-Jones, *Against Doublethink*, p. 27.
[79] Ibid., p. 63.

way in which the film provokes an emotive contemplation of the narrative through its foregrounding of kinetic tension and temporal manipulation. Therefore, emotional engagement with the film can be said to reinforce the spectator's critical analysis of Aman's experiences of uncertainty and exclusion which resonate with wider socio-political discourses of national identity and belonging. Finally, the manner in which the film elicits an empathic relationship with Aman's experiences allows spectators to form affective intersubjective relationships with alternative forms of masculinity that queer fixed notions of national identity.

8. *LEZIONI DI CIOCCOLATO 2:* MULTICULTURALISM AND MASCULINITY IN THE ROMANTIC COMEDY

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 The Romantic Comedy and Interracial Relationships

Italian immigration cinema has been dealt with critically by various scholars, however there has been little attention given to the representation of first-generation Italians.[1] In addition, comedy has also been neglected as a genre within the field of Italian cinema studies.[2] It has been argued that this is due to how historically more importance has been attributed to realist cinema, in particular neorealism, and its deemed ability to reflect Italian national identity. As Alan O'Leary and Catherine O'Rawe have noted, there has been a "certain tendency" in Italian film criticism to overstate the relationship between neorealism and Italian national identity which has led to several gaps within the field.[3] This privileging of realist and auteur cinema as "mirror" of the nation has caused popular genres to be dismissed by film critics.[4] O'Rawe has discussed, for example, the lack of studies on contemporary comedies and films aimed at women and teenagers.[5] Given the popularity of comedies in

[1] As discussed above, one notable exception to this is Leonardo De Franceschi, *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta: le seconde generazioni in Italia fra cinema e serialità* (Canterano, RM: Aracne editrice, 2018).

[2] The *commedia all'italiana* has received some critical attention, but contemporary comedies in particular have been ignored, with the notable exceptions of Catherine O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), and Alan O'Leary, *Fenomenologia del cinepanettone* (Soveria Mannelli, Catanzaro: Rubbettino, 2013).

[3] Alan O'Leary and Catherine O'Rawe, "Against Realism: on a 'Certain Tendency' in Italian Film Criticism," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 16 (2011), 107–28 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1354571x.2011.530767> See also Alan O'Leary, 'After Brunetta: Italian Cinema Studies in Italy, 2000 to 2007,' *Italian Studies*, 63 (2008), 279–307 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/007516308x344397> which provides a useful overview of key texts in the period 2000-2007 whilst highlighting ideological issues that persist in scholarship.

[4] O'Leary and O'Rawe, 'Against Realism,' p. 109. Furthermore, the common idea that neorealism reflects society has been suggested for example by Gian Piero Brunetta who stated, "lo schermo si fa specchio della vita nazionale" [the screen becomes a mirror of national life], in reference to post-war Italian cinema. On the jacket blurb of Gian Piero Brunetta, *Centanni di cinema italiano* (Roma: GLF editori Laterza, 2003).

[5] Catherine O'Rawe, 'La Grande Mancanza: Stars, Popular Cinema, and Italian Screen Studies,' *The Italianist*, 34 (2014), 256–59 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/0261434014z.00000000079> O'Rawe does acknowledge recent

Italy,[6] we should seriously consider O'Leary and O'Rawe's argument that non-realist genres "are equally or more central to the Italian cinema tradition, and to the elaboration of 'national' experience."[7] Therefore, this chapter seeks to contribute to the thus far modest critical attention given to Italian contemporary comedies, in particular the romantic comedy; which may be ignored not only because they are not thought to be "impegnate", but also for their presumed appeal to women and teenagers.[8] Specifically, this chapter aims to highlight how romantic comedies can be seen to reflect on socio-cultural matters and use comedy to renegotiate discourses of national identity and belonging.

This chapter is concerned with a romantic comedy which depicts an interracial relationship between a white Italian man and a first-generation Italian who is the daughter of Egyptian immigrants. There are several reasons for choosing the romantic comedy as an object of analysis, with the first being that several Italian comedies that depict immigrants or first-generation Italians also involve an interracial or interethnic romantic interest of some sort, even if it is not the main narrative focus. This occurs in the films *Sud side stori* (Roberta Torre, 2000), *Bianco e nero* (Cristina Comencini, 2008), *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (Luca Miniero

work on popular forms by scholars such as Alan O'Leary and Danielle Hipkins, amongst others, but notes there are still gaps in the research.

[6] O'Rawe cites a 2008 study in which the favourite genre among both male and female young spectators was "comic films starring Italian actors." <http://www.anica.it/online/attachments/032_anica_doxa_2008.pdf> cited in O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities*, p. 47.

[7] O'Leary and O'Rawe, 'Against Realism,' p. 113. An exception to this tendency to ignore popular filmmaking is O'Leary's analysis of the phenomenon of the *cinepanettone*, in which he addresses some film critics' assumptions that popular filmmaking is inauthentic and that its audiences are "other" and less cultured than themselves, arguing instead that they are simply unknown (*cinepanettone* or *film di natale* are popular farcical comedies that are released in Italy for Christmas). Alan O'Leary, "The Phenomenology of the Cinepanettone," *Italian Studies*, 66 (2011), 431–43 (p. 434) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/007516311X13134938380526 >

[8] O'Rawe has noted that "tensions around popular audiences are evident in scholarship and mainstream Italian film criticism." Furthermore, she has highlighted the criticism of films that have a largely female audience, for example the successful films starring Riccardo Scamarcio; *Tre metri sopra il cielo* (Luca Lucini, 2004) and *Ho voglia di te* (Luis Prieto, 2007). Catherine O'Rawe, 'The Italian Spectator and Her Critics,' *Italianist*, 30:2 (2010), 282 – 286 <10.1179/026143410X12724449730259>

& Paolo Genovese, 2008), *Io, loro e Lara* (Carlo Verdone, 2009), *Into paradiso* (Paola Randi, 2010), *Nessuno mi può giudicare* (Massimiliano Bruno, 2011), *Che bella giornata* (Gennaro Nunziante, 2011), *Contromano* (Antonio Albanese, 2018), *Tolo Tolo* (Checco Zalone, 2020), and the film under analysis here, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (Alessio Maria Federici, 2011).[9]

In this film, the interracial relationship becomes the premise through which white Italian masculinity and traditional values such as marriage are reaffirmed. This is in line with the romantic comedy genre in general since, as Tamar Jeffers McDonald states, the basic ideology underlying many of these films supports the importance of the (usually) white, heterosexual couple.[10] Nonetheless, there remains the possibility of reading these films along multiple axes due to comedy's subversive as well as conservative potential. Indeed, as argued, the humour of *Lezioni* does have subversive and conservative effects which present the audience with ideological narratives. In particular, I will examine the ways in which humour and emotional engagement function in relation to the following subtexts: the film's didacticism, particularly regarding multiculturalism and intercultural exchanges; the "Other" as a means of reinforcing traditional values within Italian culture; and the construction of national identities which intersect with questions of race, gender, and sexuality.

In general, the theme of interracial or interethnic relationships has sparked the interest of Italian filmmakers since the 1990s with the increased visibility of immigration in the public sphere, with films such as *Pummarò* (Michele Placido, 1990), *Teste rasate* (Claudio Fragasso, 1993)*, Vesna va veloce* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 1996), *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004),

[9] *Tolo Tolo* is the third highest-grossing domestic film in Italy of all time, *Che bella giornata* is the fourth highest and also starred Nabiha Akkari, protagonist of *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/591272/italian-movies-with-highest-box-office-italy/> [Accessed 8 February 2023]

[10] Tamar Jeffers McDonald, *Romantic Comedy: Boy Meets Girl Meets Genre* (Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2007) p. 13.

La giusta distanza (Carlo Mazzacurati, 2007), and *Dimmi che destino avrò* (Peter Marcias, 2012) all commenting to varying degrees on the subject.[11] Therefore, it seems pertinent to explore this topic to understand how depictions of interracial relationships in comedies work to consolidate or transform ideas of social belonging and Italian identity, particularly in relation to emotion.[12]

As O'Healy has already explored, relationships between immigrants and Italians are usually doomed, with interracial relationships often involving violence, expulsion, or death.[13] Duncan has also commented on this trope from a queer studies perspective, summarising that the "persistent failure of these romances clearly represents the incompatibility of the non-Italian in Italy." [14] However, these studies are primarily in reference to dramatic feature films, whilst romantic comedies, on the other hand, quite often portray successful interracial relationships in so far as the couple remain together in the finale. It is also interesting to note that the films that present doomed relationships predominantly explore relationships between Italians and recently arrived immigrants.[15] The successful relationships shown in

[11] Other films include *Besieged* (Bernardo Bertolucci*, 1999), Un'anima divisa in due* (Silvio Soldini, 1993), *Prendimi e portami via* (Tonino Zangardi, 2003), *La nostra vita* (Daniele Luchetti, 2010), *Riparo* (Marco Simon Puccioni, 2008), *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (Carmine Amoroso, 2008), *Billo il grand dakhaar* (Laura Muscardin, 2007), and *Fiore gemello* (Laura Luchetti, 2018).

[12] The vast array of films that depict such a relationship would also benefit from further comparative analysis of its development over time and genre, which is beyond the scope of this chapter which takes romantic comedy and emotional engagement as its primary focus.

[13] See chapter 3 of Áine O'Healy*, Migrant Anxieties: Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), pp. 78-107 and 'Screening Intimacy and Racial Difference in Postcolonial Italy,' in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 205–220. O'Healy refers primarily to relationships between an African woman and Italian man in films such as *Teste rasate* (Fragasso, 1993)*, Sud side stori* (Torre, 2000)*, Bianco e nero* (Comencini, 2008), and *La nostra vita* (Luchetti, 2010).

[14] Derek Duncan, '"Loving Geographies": queering straight migration to Italy,' *New Cinemas* 6:3 (2008), 167-182 (p. 174) <https://doi.org/10.1386/ncin.6.3.167/1> Duncan references films such as *Saimir* (Munzi, 2004)*, Pummarò* (Placido, 1990) and *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (Giordana, 2005).

[15] Some exceptions are *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* (Claudio Giovannesi, 2012), in which the protagonist is the Italian-born son of Egyptian immigrants, and *Neve* (Stefano Incerti, 2013) starring the African-Italian actor Esther Elisha; however, this film largely disregards questions of race.

comedies, however, tend to involve white Italians and first-generation Italians of different ethnicities, or immigrants who are shown to be well-integrated into Italian society. For example, the portrayal of Nadine in *Bianco e nero* (Comencini, 2008), who is shown to speak fluent Italian and live an affluent lifestyle, differs greatly from the depiction of the Romani women in films such as *Dimmi che destino avrò* (Marcias, 2012) and *Un'anima divisa in due* (Soldini, 1993), who are part of segregated and impoverished communities.

We can therefore note a development in Italian cinema of migration over time as demographics within Italian society change, from focusing predominantly on issues of welcoming the Other - with films that focus on the initial arrival and settlement of immigrants in Italy - to films that reflect themes relating to post-migration such as the integration of first-generation Italians, multiculturalism, and cultural hybridity. Furthermore, the way in which interracial relationships are depicted often differs depending on genre. As the above quote from Duncan highlights, the unsuccessful relationships between immigrants and Italians have implications for questions of national belonging. However, there is little work specifically on relationships between children of immigrants of different ethnicities and white Italians and how such narratives renegotiate discourses of national identity and belonging in relation to the emerging cinematic figure of first-generation Italians.

8.1.2 Comedy and National Identity

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, I analyse national identity in terms of a socially constructed and imagined community in which dominant images, discourses and

ideologies circulate, as outlined by Benedict Anderson.[16] I explore how dominant images of Italian national identity reveal themselves in *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*, and to what extent they are reworked or reinforced. At a time when more and more first-generation Italians are demanding social and political recognition, this film provides a fruitful example of how the traditional figure of the white heterosexual Italian man is constructed in relation to immigrants and their children, the latter of which is presented as a bridge between Italians and ethnic "Others." *Lezioni* depicts the Italian community alongside an immigrant community, highlighting their differences and similarities, and therefore will be analysed for the way in which cinema interprets the current social phenomenon of diverse forms of *italianità* becoming more visible in the public sphere and what identity constructions it reveals in doing so.

This film in particular has been chosen as it allows this thesis to contribute to addressing the lack of inquiry into the Italian romantic comedy. Furthermore, it is an exemplary film through which to explore the theme of interracial relationships that has emerged in Italian migration cinema as well as the cinematic figure of the first-generation Italian, both of which are ever-more frequent. The relationship between men is also central to the narrative, reflecting Italian cinema's tendency to frame national identity in masculinist terms.[17] *Lezioni,* therefore, is also a prime example to consider how Italian national identity and masculinity are framed in relation to both the male and female "Other."

As discussed in the thesis introduction, national identity is intended as a construction that relates to the intersecting identity categories of race, gender, and sexuality, amongst

[16] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).
[17] For example, O'Rawe argues that Italian comedies often reconstitute Italian masculinity as central to the family and nation in *Stars and Masculinities*, p. 44. Furthermore, O'Healy highlights how the male child is usually positioned as the future of the nation in Italian cinema in *Migrant Anxieties*, p. 109.

others. As Rehling argues, in Western societies white, heterosexual masculinity is often synonymous with nation.[18] Therefore, by situating this film within the larger socio-political and historical context of national identity, the following analysis explores how it reveals dominant conceptions of Italianness - in particular white, heterosexual masculinity - to be unstable through the need to reaffirm itself in relation to others.

The figure of the white heterosexual Italian man, or the *Italiano medio*, has been identified as a staple figure of Italian cinema, in particular the *commedia all'italiana*. Although the contemporary comedies under analysis here are different from the *commedia all'italiana,* traits from its legacy endure in contemporary forms of Italian comedy, such as the performance of social satire and the representation of the "art of getting by."[19] Furthermore, the *italiano medio* continues to be a pervasive figure in comedy that embodies negative as well as positive traits, such as hypocrisy and vanity.[20] Reich describes this figure as an Italian *inetto* [inept man]; an anti-hero, "a man at odds with and out of place in a rapidly changing political, social, and sexual environment," and as we will see, this also finds resonance in *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*.[21] This film transposes this trope into a contemporary setting in which the male characters are shown to struggle in the face of cultural diversity. However, as O'Rawe has noted, the *inetto* still triumphs in the end, thus bolstering white Italian masculinity.[22]

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[18] Nicola Rehling, *Extra-Ordinary Men: White Heterosexual Masculinity and Contemporary Popular Cinema*, Ebook Central (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009) p. 10.

[19] *L'arte di arrangiarsi,* or the art of getting by, is a recognisable trait in Italian culture and Italian comedy film. It is "the phenomenological representation of an individual trying to get by at any cost, even if he/she must make significant moral compromises: examples include outsmarting the legal system, changing political parties, infidelity in marriage, or concealment of identity." Rémi F. Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style: The Golden Age of Italian Film Comedies* (New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 69.

[20] For further details of the *commedia all'italiana*, see Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style* (2008).

[21] Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover*, p. xii.

[22] Regarding race, masculinity and interracial relationships in particular, O'Rawe notes how the white *inetto* in *Bianco e nero* (Comencini, 2008) still triumphs. She also describes how the identity of the *italiano medio* is bolstered by migrant others. O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities*, pp. 64-65.

At first glance *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* has a light subject matter and may not be deemed to provide such a level of social critique as the well-known films of the *commedia all'italiana*, such as *I soliti ignoti* (Mario Monicelli, 1958) and *Divorzio all'italiana* (Pietro Germi, 1961).[23] In fact, its happy and reconciliatory ending differs largely from the tradition of the *commedia all'italiana*, whose endings are often more cynical or open to interpretation.[24] Nonetheless, just as the genre of the *commedia*, these films *do* make social commentary, and the not infrequent use of comedy to depict immigrants and first-generation Italians in romantic relationships with white Italians is worthy of examination.

The film uses humour and light social satire to make sense of perceived changes in contemporary Italian society and present specific values and norms, in ways that suggest that it aims to have a didactic function for a white Italian audience. Therefore, I will consider how it uses humour and empathy as tools to engage audiences with larger social issues and to promote multiculturalism and cultural hybridity. However, I will also examine the ways in which it paradoxically sustains the dominant figure of Italian national identity; the white, heterosexual man. In doing so, it demonstrates how humour and empathy may both distance and align the spectator with characters in ways that support the film's ideological narratives. It also considers the embodied responses that humour may elicit amongst spectators in terms of promoting collective feelings of belonging.

[23] *I soliti ignoti* (Monicelli, 1960), for example, is a cynical portrayal of post-war life, including poverty and unemployment, whilst *Divorzio all'italiana* (Germi, 1963) critiqued archaic divorce laws and the practice of "honour killings."

[24] For example, the endings of *Una vita difficile* (Risi, 1961) and *La grande guerra* (Monicelli, 1959).

8.2 Lezioni di cioccolato 2

Lezioni di cioccolato 2, directed by Alessio Maria Federici in 2011, is the sequel to the 2007 homonymous film by Claudio Cupellini, both of which were written by Fabio Bonifacci.[25] The first film focuses on Mattia, a self-centred and shallow building contractor from Perugia, played by well-known actor, model, and TV personality Luca Argentero. After exploiting immigrant labour and cutting corners on safety, one of his employees Kamal (Hassani Shapi), an Egyptian man, falls and breaks both his arms. To avoid Kamal reporting him to the police, a farcical story ensues as Mattia assumes Kamal's identity and enrols in a chocolate-making course so that Kamal can achieve his dream of becoming a chocolatier. In doing so, the film narrates a typical romance story in which Mattia falls in love with fellow chocolatier Cecilia (Violante Placido), loses said love interest, and finally wins her back again.

O'Rawe has made some important observations regarding films such as this; that is, ethnic characters in contemporary Italian cinema are exceptional or ancillary, and when they do appear, they often work to shore up white Italian masculinity.[26] Regarding this film in particular, she describes Kamal as having a pedagogic function in that he educates Mattia to be a better person, as Nawal does in the sequel, and the final integration of Kamal, the migrant character, accompanies the reconciliation of the heterosexual couple.[27] As we will see, these comments are also relevant for the sequel as Kamal's positioning in relation to Mattia reasserts white Italian masculinity and the heterosexual relationship as the norm.

[25] Fabio Bonifacci is the screenwriter of many Italian comedies, including the well-known comedy *Benvenuti al Nord* (Luca Miniero, 2012), as well as other films which star Luca Argentero such as *Oggi sposi* (Luca Lucini, 2009), another comedy that narrates an interracial relationship between an Italian policeman and the daughter of the Indian Ambassador.
[26] O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities*, p. 61.
[27] Ibid., p. 64.

In the opening scene of *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*, we see Mattia lamenting that Cecilia has left him and consequently everything has gone wrong for him, including his construction business (as I discuss below, this won't be the last time that romance and labour are compared and aligned). To resolve his business woes, Mattia decides that he should return to work with Kamal, whose chocolate business is also failing. He offers Kamal money to invest in his shop, however Kamal refuses because he does not want the womanising Mattia to meet his beautiful daughter, Nawal (Nabiha Akkari). Nonetheless, Mattia meets Nawal at a bar and is immediately smitten by her, but Nawal rejects his advances and gives him a fake name, Leila, so that he is not aware of her true identity and relationship to Kamal. Meanwhile, Kamal has lied about his age to receive a loan for his business and has subsequently been summoned by the police to testify against the corrupt politician who gave him said loan. He implores Mattia to once again assume his identity and go to the police station, so that he will not be accused of fraud.

Comical and farcical scenes ensue caused by these narratives of hidden and switched identities. In return for his help, Mattia asks Kamal to teach him how to woo the Egyptian-Italian Leila (Nawal). Kamal reluctantly agrees, not knowing he is in fact dating his daughter. This dramatizes the plot and creates comic suspense since Kamal, a "traditional" man, actually forbids his daughter from dating an Italian man, attempting instead to arrange a marriage between Nawal and various Egyptian suitors. Nawal and Mattia eventually fall in love, however Nawal does not want to hurt her father and betray the traditions he holds dear.Therefore, she will only accept Mattia's love if he marries her, as a kind of compromise between her own desires and her father's patriarchal rules. After many obstacles, misunderstandings, and tears, the film's conclusion shows Mattia proposing to Nawal with Kamal's approval, resulting in a happy ending for all.

8.3 Comedy and Emotional Engagement

Romantic comedies do not only rely on humour but also elicit mixed emotions, with plots often including a tearful episode. This usually occurs when the romantic couple encounter an obstacle - as in *Lezioni* when Nawal runs away from Mattia because she cannot betray her father's values - before finally uniting.[28] Like all films, there is a range of emotive relationships between character and spectator at play here, which can elicit more distanced intersubjective relationships as well as more immersive, empathic engagement. As discussed in the theoretical framework, Plantinga describes this process as "character engagement," which involves the complex manner in which a film elicits sympathies, antipathies, allegiances, and other responses to fictional characters. I am therefore interested in how comic amusement forms part of the larger "realm of affect," and what implications this has for the spectator's potential engagement with the film and its characters, particularly in terms of sympathy, empathy, and distantiation.[29]

Comedy can have ambiguous effects, with scholars noting both its subversive and reactionary possibilities.[30] Comedy can also affect the spectator's engagement with characters in multiple ways; as Andrea Bini describes, "laughter always comes from a position of superiority vis-a-vis comic characters," however at the same time "the audience is also led to sympathize with them as they expose the pretension of "normal" people to fully identify with their own social identity."[31] Or as Jan Hokenson describes, many theories of comedy posit two

[28] For an overview of the characteristics inherent in romantic comedies see McDonald, *Romantic Comedy* (2007).
[29] Noël Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations between Audiences and the Characters in Popular Fictions,' in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 162-184 (p. 164).
[30] Frank Krutnik and Steve Neale, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (Taylor and Francis Group, 1990), p. 82, p. 94; Andrew Horton (ed.), *Comedy/Cinema/Theory* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), p. 4.
[31] Andrea Bini, *Male Anxiety and Psychopathology in Film: Comedy Italian Style* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 19.

types of humour since "we either laugh *at* the comic protagonist, as a deviant from social norms (thereby reinforcing superior socio-moral values), or we laugh *with* the comic character as a heroic underdog doing battle with the social establishment (thereby ratifying the insurgent impulse to alter the social order)."[32] Therefore, I will explore the ways in which the humour in *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* may distance the audience from certain characters with whom we predominantly laugh *at*, whilst sympathy and empathy are simultaneously encouraged in order for the audience to become emotionally invested in the story.

I also use the term sympathy as well as empathy here, as I view our level of emotional engagement as Sinnerbrink does; as shifting dynamically between the poles of sympathy and empathy, as we are moved perceptually and affectively between a more immediate and immersive position in the case of empathy, to a more mediated and reflective position in the case of sympathy.[33] Although it is important to note again that, as Plantinga argues, sharp distinctions between sympathy and empathy are counterproductive as these phenomena overlap and merge (see theoretical framework).[34] Since romantic comedies often aim to incite comic amusement and laughter, unlike the other films analysed here, the audience's feelings can be quite distinct from those of the characters; that is, we are often not "resonating emotionally" with characters as we do when we empathise (although this is also encouraged), but we could even be feeling opposing emotions.[35] However, romantic comedies do still work to create allegiances and sympathies for characters which can elicit support for their goals and the narrative drive towards the finale, and they do contain more emotionally empathetic

[32] Jan Hokenson, *The Idea of Comedy: History, Theory, Critique*, Proquest (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2006), p. 24.
[33] Robert Sinnerbrink, *Cinematic Ethics: Exploring Ethical Experience through Film* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 92-94.
[34] Plantinga*, Moving Viewers*, p. 99.
[35] As discussed in the thesis introduction, empathy "captures the idea that the audience is resonating emotionally or 'communing' with the pertinent characters." Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations,' pp. 171-172.

scenes which encourage the spectator to feel similar emotions as the protagonists. I am therefore interested in understanding how comic amusement works alongside, at times paradoxically, the audience's sympathies and emotional empathy to promote certain ideologies and values, and how this can be read in relation to dominant conceptions of national identity.[36]

Sympathy can be described as care or a pro-attitude towards another person, so that we respond with concern to their situation, which explains why spectators can become invested in these love stories and support the couples' union as they desire them to achieve happiness.[37] Carrol argues that "sympathy (and antipathy) constitutes the major emotive cement between audiences and popular fictions," and indeed it can be seen as a basic precondition for deeper emotional engagement and affective resonance.[38] The spectator is encouraged to align themselves with the protagonists' well-being and desires, and this engagement can develop into emotional empathy when, for example, in *Lezioni* Nawal cries because she loves Mattia but cannot be with him. Here, techniques such as a camera close-up and focus on her facial expressions work together with the narrative context to encourage empathy, that is, congruent feelings of sadness brought about by an understanding of Nawal's predicament and her own feelings. Notably, and perhaps obviously, these moments of stronger emotive congruence derive from non-comic situations. This leads me to ask, how does humour function in relation to the overall character engagement? And how may it distance the spectator, or affect how they direct their sympathies, their cares, and concerns?

[36] Carrol notes that the incongruity theory considers comic amusement to be an emotional state. Nöel Carroll, 'Notes on the Site Gag,' in *Comedy/Cinema/Theory*, ed. by Andrew Horton (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2001), pp. 25–42.
[37] As discussed in the theoretical framework, Carroll describes sympathy as "a nonfleeting care and concern, or, more broadly, as a nonpassing proattitude, toward another person." Carroll, 'On Ties that Bind,' p. 86.
[38] Ibid., p. 86.

It is important here to also define comic amusement per se and the theories of humour which will be relevant for the following analysis. Carrol argues that comic amusement is an emotional state, since, like paradigmatic emotions, it is directed at an object (the humorous) which causes an appraisal that, in this case, leads to enjoyment.[39] There are several theories as to what causes comic amusement, however the most widely supported is the Incongruity Theory.[40] Carrol sums up the key arguments of this theory; it posits that humour derives from a perceived incongruity, which must be non-threatening, anxiety producing nor boring, and which can be enjoyed. An incongruity is typically that which deviates from an established norm or way of thinking, for example laws of logic and nature, norms of morality and etiquette, or more broadly, our commonplace expectations.

In this way, humour often reinforces social norms (as well as questions them, for example, in the case of satire), hence it is relevant to examine romantic comedy's potential role in contributing to sustaining them, in particular since social norms, values and expectations are often inherent in representations of Otherness and national identity. Carrol highlights that "cultures are engaged in a constant process of reproducing themselves—their norms and their values (ranging from morals to etiquette)," and that humour is one way that this goal is pursued.[41] It can also be viewed as a way in which a sense of belonging is created since humour "is involved in the construction (or, more aptly, the permanent reconstruction) and maintenance of what we might call an *Us*—the us that abides by the pertinent norms."[42]

Other theories exist alongside the Incongruity Theory and will be broadly considered in relation to the potential effects that humour has on the embodied engagement of the

[39] Noël Carroll, *Humour: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 5.
[40] See Carroll, *Humour: A Very Short Introduction*, for an overview of these theories.
[41] Ibid., p. 76.
[42] Ibid., p. 77.

spectator. As also described by Bini above, the Superiority Theory posits that comedy reinforces a sense of superiority amongst an in-group who laughs at an out-group. This can be seen to contribute to creating a sense of collectivity and belonging amongst certain individuals, as Carroll highlights in the above quote, and also highlights comedy's potential to create social distance between groups and reinforce real life perceptions of others. These effects are particularly relevant when considering jokes that are constructed around racial and ethnic discourse, such as stereotypes, which often allow the dominant group to laugh at a minority group.

The Relief Theory considers how comedy allows for the release of neglected emotions which creates pleasure.[43] This theory posits that humour can thus create a collective sense of relief and "facilitate interaction between parties by making socially uncomfortable situations seem more manageable and less overwhelming."[44] Thus, the humour in *Lezioni* may also have the effect of reducing the discomfort amongst audience members when confronting polemical topics such as immigration and cultural diversity. By considering these various effects of humour, we might ask what social work films such as *Lezioni* may perform in reinforcing or questioning norms and hegemonic discourses, and whether or not this opens ideas of belongingness and conceptions of national identity. Furthermore, it allows us to consider the embodied effects that such films may have in their ability to produce feelings of pleasure and belonging and thus strengthen collective identities.

[43] Aaryn L. Green and Annulla Linders, 'The Impact of Comedy on Racial and Ethnic Discourse,' *Sociological Inquiry*, 86 (2016), 241–69 (pp. 243-44) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/soin.12112>
[44] Ibid., p. 244.

8.4 Intercultural Encounters and Cultural Hybridity

The following considers how *Lezioni* may attempt to address a white Italian audience by using comedy to educate about diversity, in particular about Italians of different ethnicities. Much of the humour in the film derives from a clash between expectations and reality; and I would like to relate this to the three elements identified by Lanzoni specifically regarding the *commedia all'italiana*; the recognition of opposites (the juxtaposition of antithetical elements creates humour); the relocation of the protagonist's space (from a familiar social milieu to an unfamiliar one, with a new cultural, social or linguistic paradigm, resulting in the need to adapt to a new awkward situation), and delayed harmonization (an unbalanced situation in need of equilibrium).[45] *Lezioni* also displays all of these elements, however, whereas comedies of the past often portrayed the economic and consumerist changes of the post-war period as underlying factors of such social shifts, this film shows Mattia grappling with new cultures once perceived as external to national borders (which as I discuss below, is one way in which he is shown to be inept).[46]

I will now refer to a scene which shows how the first two of Lanzoni's elements work together to create humour and eventually lead to harmonization; that is, the recognition of opposites and the unfamiliar cultural environment. Furthermore, I will argue that the effect it has relates to the pedagogic function that the ethnic characters have for Mattia, and the audience in general. Mattia plans a date for Leila (Nawal) and, after originally preferring to opt for sushi and dancing, decides instead to take her to dinner at a traditional Egyptian restaurant, following the advice of Kamal. As shown in figure 1, the sensual lighting and

[45] Lanzoni, *Comedy Italian Style*, pp. 73-75.
[46] Films such as *I soliti ignoti* (Monicelli, 1960), *Il sorpasso* (Risi, 1962) and *Il boom* (De Sica, 1963), for example.

Egyptian artefacts in the restaurant create an exoticized image, which is accompanied by the diegetic sound of a traditional acoustic band.

Figure 1: Mattia takes Nawal to an Egyptian restaurant for dinner. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (34:14).

Mattia begins to eat his dinner with his hands in an attempt to follow Egyptian customs, however, to Mattia's surprise Nawal uses a fork and ironically says she would've preferred sushi and dancing. In fact, she likes to live "all'italiana" (like an Italian). The audience is encouraged to align themselves with Nawal and also disapprove of Mattia's actions as a close-up shot of him eating with his hands is followed by a reverse-shot of Nawal looking bemused and a little uncomfortable (see figure 2).

Figure 2: Reverse-shots of Nawal's reaction to Mattia eating dinner. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (34:43).

This visual rejection of such a foreign custom also conveys her *italianità* (in stereotypical fashion), which she verbally reinforces declaring "amo la pizza, ascolto gli After hours" (I love pizza, I listen to the Afterhours). Following this, Mattia stops attempting to imitate Egyptian customs and the pair are shown to eventually fall in love with each other. In this scene, therefore, humour derives from the meeting of two incongruous elements; Mattia's stereotypical expectations of how Nawal lives in Italy, and the reality that she in fact prefers to live her life "all'italiana." Nawal's Egyptian-Italian identity creates an unfamiliar cultural sphere for Mattia, and the film uses this to satirize stereotypes and beliefs that exoticize other ethnicities and depict children of immigrants as segregated from Italian culture. The humour here can be explained by the above discussed Incongruity Theory since, as Arthur Schopenhauer posited, the cause of laughter is "simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation."[47]

This scene could also be viewed as a didactic moment, as this comic situation which opposes expectation with reality can be seen to perform a light social satire of those who, like Mattia, are unfamiliar with other cultures and, for example, assume all Egyptian women to

[47] Arthur Schopenhauer, 'The World as Will and Idea,' trans. by R. B. Haldane and John Kemp in *The Philosophy of Laughter and Humor,* ed. by John Morreal (Albany: SUNY, 1987), pp. 51–64 (p. 52).

behave in a homogenous manner. Furthermore, it shows Mattia's ignorance of Italians of different ethnicities who grow up within Italian society and culture. It may therefore make the audience question any preconceptions they themselves may have about ethnic populations in Italy. Gaoheng Zhang has also considered the didactic dimension of films such as this one, noting that one of their functions may be to educate Italians about basic intercultural skills, especially considering Italy's rapid shift from a country of emigration to immigration.[48]

In addition, the humour here may also elicit a feeling of relief amongst audience members who may empathise with Mattia's lack of intercultural experience by allowing them to laugh at such socially uncomfortable situations. Conversely, it could foster a sense of superiority amongst those who distance themselves from Mattia's cultural ineptitude. In both cases, humour contributes to the embodied cinematic experience by its potential to strengthen collective identities and feelings, as well as its ability to draw on and inform the shared extra-diegetic socio-cultural context.

Just as in the prequel, such intercultural blunders as that described above are used to create humour as well as to potentially educate about diversity. However, in contrast to this, some humour derives from culture clashes which reinforce difference and encourage spectators to distance themselves from certain characters, behaviours, and values. This occurs, for example, during the conversations between Mattia and Kamal in which Kamal explains how different Egyptian courtship is to Mattia's own expectations of dating, leading Mattia to perform a series of comic attempts to win over Nawal. Such attempts are presented as ludicrous, for example when Mattia dresses in Egyptian clothing and sings in Arabic to woo

[48] Gaoheng Zhang, 'Comedy Film and Immigration to Italy: Masculinity, Hybridity, and Satire in *Lezioni di cioccolato* (2007), *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (2008), and *Into paradiso* (2010),' in *The Cinemas of Italian Migration: European and Transatlantic Narratives*, ed. by Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), pp. 263-280 (p. 277).

Nawal, which incites a group of hostile white Italian men to chase him away because they presume he is an immigrant. The scene is presented in comic fashion, playing on slapstick and switched identities, thus removing any real threat of the attack which is also nullified by the audience's knowledge that Mattia can switch back to his real identity when he wants. Mattia's Egyptian costume is stereotypical and intended to be laughed *at*, as are all his attempts at "traditional" Egyptian customs ("traditional" according to the film's narrative). Therefore, cultural difference is reinforced between Italians and immigrants by evidencing in comic fashion the incongruity between them, thus making Kamal and his traditions the butt of the joke. Furthermore, these customs, in their failure, are shown to be incompatible with Italian culture.

Nawal, on the other hand, becomes a symbol of cultural hybridity: "50% Egyptian 50% Italian," as Kamal says. However, her Italianness and desire to live "all'italiana" are emphasized in positive terms, whilst her Egyptian culture is depicted as patriarchal, oppressive, and controlling (although it should be noted this is lightened by humour and subverted in some minor ways by female characters, as discussed below). Focusing on Nawal's *italianità* is a way in which the film may attempt to create empathy between herself and a white Italian audience and present her as a familiar character. She is shown to enjoy frequenting bars, studying, travelling, and wearing make-up and modern clothing; characteristics which the film equates with a western lifestyle and liberal womanhood. These are activities which an audience may empathise with also enjoying, as well as being familiar cinematic depictions of Italian femininity. This may also have the didactic function, albeit simplistic, to convey the message that children of immigrants born in Italy are "like us" (white Italians) and integrated in Italian society.

The film's narrative further encourages sympathy for Nawal as she is shown to be torn between how she desires to live and her father's wishes. This is demonstrated from the first time we are introduced to her character, as she is shown tying her hair up, wiping off her lipstick and pulling down her skirt before she returns home after college. Subsequently, the spectator is encouraged to disapprove of Kamal's patriarchal rules, and humour is a key way in which this is achieved. However, as discussed further below, the patriarchal order is not subverted but merely transposed in order to reassert the dominance of white heterosexual masculinity.

8.5 *Impegno*: Intercultural Values of Marriage and Labour

Nawal's cultural similarity to (white) Italians such as Mattia is one factor which contributes to their union seeming inevitable. Krutnik and Neale identify the trend in romantic comedies to "[negotiate] between female desire and the places 'offered' to women in patriarchal society, especially in terms of marriage and the family."[49] It is therefore significant that although Nawal is depicted as having agency (she asserts "le scelte le so fare io" [I know how to make choices]), her choice is in fact constrained by the desires of men and geared towards heterosexual marriage. That is, she can choose between marrying an Egyptian man, shown to be undesirable, and Mattia, who represents the "natural" choice. Likewise, Nawal is presented as the attractive choice for Mattia because of her virginity and desire for abstinence until marriage. These points are evidenced from their first encounter and developed throughout the narrative. They meet in comic meet-cute fashion when they bump into each other crawling on the floor of a bar as they both try to avoid being seen by a potential love

[49] Krutnik and Neale, *Popular Film,* p. 133.

interest. Their suitability is reinforced compositionally in the shot as they are both positioned on the same level, separated from others in the bar (see figure 3).

Figure 3: Nawal and Mattia's meet-cute. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (11:31).

In this scene, Mattia is escaping Giorgia, one of his many sexual conquests whose eagerness and sexual availability is unappealing to Mattia, whilst Nawal avoids being seen by one of the Egyptian suitors her father has found for her. From this initial encounter, therefore, the handsome "Latin lover" Mattia is set in comparison with Egyptian men, who are collectively presented as undesirable (discussed in more detail below), and the "virtuous" Nawal contrasts with the sexually forward Giorgia. Nawal's femininity, which is constructed around the ideals of celibacy and traditional family values, can therefore be seen to be in opposition to a post-feminist sexual liberalism and reveals a nostalgia for the traditional female figure. As we will see below, such nostalgia is further evidenced by the film's comparison of Nawal to past generations of Italian women.

From this point, Nawal is set up as Mattia's romantic interest, and the film uses both humour and character engagement to encourage the audience to support this narrative trajectory. For example, the first scene focuses on Mattia sat in a chair in a dimly lit room, confessing his romantic and economic troubles. The lighting, mise-en-scène, and dialogue

work together to suggest that he is talking to a psychiatrist (see figure 4), however a change in camera focus reveals that he is actually talking to his disinterested employee Osvaldo, thus creating two incongruous elements that result in humour.

Figure 4: Mattia confessing his troubles. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (00:52).

As well as creating comic amusement, the scene also builds sympathy for Mattia and aligns the viewer with his concerns, which develops throughout the narrative as he is shown to strive to improve his business and to win over Nawal.[50] Likewise, the narrative also encourages sympathy with Nawal, and this is complemented by humour which represents her as in need of liberating from a restrictive patriarchal authority, potentially contributing to the audience aligning with her desires.[51] For example, Kamal complains that she dresses inappropriately and reveals too much skin, to which he adds "comincia con polpaccio, poi fidanzato italiano" [it starts with calf, then Italian fiancé], referring to her bare legs.[52] Here, the humour derives not only from the suggestion that nudity will lead to a romantic

[50] Other factors should also be taken into consideration when considering the audience's sympathy for Mattia, such as the actor's popularity and his physical appeal.
[51] In De Franceschi's work on films and TV series that depict second-generation immigrants, he has also identified a "ragazza da salvare" [girl in need of saving] theme, which narrates young women straddling a hybrid-identity and in need of liberating from their traditional family culture of origin. As occurs, for example, in *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (Genovese, 2018). De Franceschi, *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta,* pp. 184-189.
[52] Kamal stereotypically speaks in a pidgin form of Italian.

relationship with an Italian man, but also from the audience's pre-existing knowledge that, despite Kamal's insistence to the contrary, she will in fact end up with Mattia (as conventions of the genre dictate). Kamal's words are also undermined by the way in which the spectator is aligned with Nawal's perspective and feelings; the camera is placed between Nawal and her mother Shabira, so that we see Kamal from their perspective as he talks, which is followed by a reverse-shot that reveals the women to be disinterested (Shabira) and frustrated (Nawal) at what they are hearing (see figure 5).

Figure 5: Reverse-shots between Kamal, Nawal, and Shabira as Kamal criticises Nawal's clothes. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (05:59 and 06:07).

As discussed in more detail below, these comic moments encourage the audience to laugh *at* Kamal's traditional values, which at times are presented as unreasonable and absurd. Thus, humour distances the viewer from his beliefs whilst they are encouraged to sympathise with Nawal and support her desire to be free to marry who she wants (although any choice

other than marriage is not presented as an option). Furthermore, the audience may feel superiority in their disapproval of Kamal's strict cultural values, thus reinforcing the film's ideological narrative that Italian culture allows women more freedoms. Here, it is also worth noting Nawal's mother's lack of voice in the film. Although she does provide some minimal subversive humour in relation to her husband Kamal, her relationship with Nawal is not developed at all. This relates to Krutnik and Neale's observation that often "the heroine is denied a 'maternal history' within which to situate her desires: the 'choices' offered to her tend almost exclusively to be in relation to men and what they desire of her."[53] Therefore, as we will see, constrained by both Kamal's and Mattia's desires, it is actually through her character that patriarchal ideals are negotiated between masculinities and between cultures, rather than being subverted.

One way in which patriarchal ideals are reinforced is by encouraging the audience to sympathise with Nawal's desire to respect her father's traditional values. Although Kamal's patriarchal attitudes are often mocked, they are not undermined but rather softened and transposed into the Italian context largely through Nawal's character. Nawal becomes the romantic interest of Mattia however, unlike the other women such as Giorgia, she wishes to remain celibate until marriage. At first, her reluctance to have a sexual relationship with Mattia is presented as a comic obstacle for him to overcome. For example, when she tells Mattia to stop kissing her in front of other people in a scene in which the pair are framed alone on a deserted hill. However, in a later scene she reveals that she is in fact a virgin and does not want to be treated like the many other women he casually sees.

[53] Krutnik and Neale, *Popular Film*, p. 159.

By presenting the conservative ideal of virginity until marriage as Nawal's choice, Kamal's patriarchal authority becomes transfigured into apparent female agency, which may make it easier for the audience to sympathise with. In general, the film often attempts to elicit empathy with Nawal's feelings, whilst Mattia and Kamal are more frequently presented in humorous situations. For example, after a comic scene in which Kamal and Mattia are arrested, the tone of the film changes as the spectator's attention is drawn to Nawal's emotional response, encouraging them to empathise with her feelings of sadness and frustration at being caught between the two men's desires. Therefore, humour is used to laugh at the men's ineptitude so as to distance the viewer from such undesirable behaviours, whilst their emotional empathy with Nawal aligns them with her desire for marriage, thus reinforcing traditional values and norms.

The scene in which Nawal reveals her virginity also highlights how the ethnic Other is used to educate the white male protagonist and to reinforce traditional values within Italian culture. In this scene Nawal's pedagogic function for Mattia becomes evident as she is placed as morally superior; as figure 6 shows, Nawal is confidently standing whilst Mattia sits sheepishly behind her, similar to a mother and child relationship, as Nawal not only schools Mattia on how to make chocolates, but also on his lack of commitment in relationships. Throughout the film, humour is used to mock Mattia's shortcomings and distance the viewer from such behaviours by creating a sense of superiority, whilst their empathy with Nawal reinforces her pedagogic function in shaping Mattia's morals.

Figure 6: Nawal teaches Mattia the value of commitment. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:00:23).

Nawal states that when it comes to relationships, Mattia has "zero livello d'impegno" [zero commitment]. The Italian word for commitment used, "*impegno*," is significant, as it also has strong connotations for work ethic. The use of the word is not coincidental, as the film makes more than one comparison between Mattia's lack of work ethic and lack of commitment in relationships. This scene finds similarities with two scenes between Mattia and his employee Osvaldo. At the beginning of the film, Mattia is similarly positioned seated in the background as he ironically complains about his failing business whilst Osvaldo is positioned standing, in the front of the frame, the only one of the two actually working. In a later scene, Osvaldo similarly scolds Mattia for his lack of "impegno," this time meaning his lack of work ethic, but the conversation leads into a discussion about romantic relationships and marriage. Mattia is shown seated with his eyes averted down whilst Osvaldo, who is visibly older, is positioned slightly higher than him in the frame (see figure 7).

Figure 7: Osvaldo discusses *impegno* and relationships with Mattia. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:15:33).

Thus, like Nawal, he is positioned as a moral guide as he likens Nawal's views on marriage to his own past experience with his wife who likewise insisted on marriage before living together. He compares his generation to today's who interact via social media and porn sites, insinuating a degradation of values, or at least a lack of effort and commitment (*impegno*). Thus, the audience is encouraged to empathise with Nawal's conservative values by drawing similarities with a nostalgic vision of a past Italian society in which both labour and the institution of marriage were valued and inextricably tied to one another.

In Italy, precarity and unemployment are high whilst marriage and birth rates are declining and are some of the lowest in Europe.[54] Thus, in *Lezioni* Mattia's shortcomings regarding work and romance can be seen to reveal larger societal anxieties surrounding these

[54] *Istat* marriage rates 2011: "In 2011, 204,830 marriages took place in Italy (3.4 per 1,000 inhabitants), 12,870 fewer than in 2010. Marriage has been decreasing since 1972, but the fall has been particularly marked during the past four years, with over 45,000 fewer weddings." <https://www.istat.it/it/archivio/75956#:~:text=In%202011%2C%20204%2C830%20marriages%20took,12%2C870%20fewer%20than%20in%202010> [Accessed 11 January 2023]; "Italy's marriage rate was the lowest in the European Union in 2019 at 3.1 marriages per 1,000 inhabitants" quoted in 'Italy marriage rate lowest in EU,' *Ansa*, 13 May 2021 <https://www.ansa.it/english/news/2021/05/13/italy-marriage-rate-lowest-in-eu-eurostat_7f2ae8be-074f-4905-afa7-65284cf327f0.html> [Accessed 11 January 2023]; *Istat* birth rates 2011: "According to advance data on the demographic balance for the resident population, 546,607 births were registered in 2011, around 15,000 fewer than in 2010. The figure confirms the downward trend which began in 2009. In three years the number of births has fallen by 30,000." <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2012/11/nati2011-eng.pdf> [Accessed 11 January 2023]; In 2011, Italy had an unemployment rate of 8.3% *Istat:* <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2011/03/201101_PressRelease.pdf> [Accessed 19 November 2023]

phenomena, which the film suggests can be placated by a return to embracing traditional values such as marriage.[55] Therefore, the film attempts to elicit empathy in the audience by highlighting intercultural similarities between immigrant and traditional Italian values. In addition, the film's ideological underpinnings are also largely shaped by the relationship between Kamal and Mattia. Therefore, I will now turn my attention to the film's construction of masculinities and the ways in which it reaffirms the centrality of the white Italian man.

8.6 Re-Centring the White Italian Man

There are several films that depict immigrants alongside Italian characters in order to draw analogies between difficulties that each face, such as precarity and social marginalisation. Such a practice can be seen as an attempt to create empathy between communities, but also as a means of underscoring the existential plight of the Italian, whilst the immigrant character remains ancillary. A clear example of this is romantic comedy *Nessuno mi può giudicare* (Massimiliano Bruno, 2011) starring Paola Cortellesi, in which affluent housewife Alice becomes bankrupt following her husband's death and is forced to move to an impoverished suburb largely populated by immigrants. Like her neighbours, Alice is afflicted by economic precarity and struggles to find a job which leads her to become an escort. The film provides a reductive portrayal of the similarities between their existential

[55] However, declining marriage and birth rates are more likely to be tied to practical obstacles such as job insecurity and inadequate policies to support work-family balance, as detailed in this United Nations report: <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/events/pdf/expert/24/Policy_Briefs/PB_Italy.pdf> [Accessed 11 January 2023]

plight by overlooking socio-political factors that diversely affect Italians and immigrants and focuses instead on Alice's experiences and her journey to redemption.[56]

This point has also been highlighted by Zhang in his article 'Comedy Film and Immigration to Italy' (2010) which analyses depictions of masculinity in the films *Questa notte è ancora nostra* (Genovese and Miniero, 2008), *Into paradiso* (Randi, 2010) and the prequel to the film under discussion here, *Lezioni di cioccolato* (Cupellini, 2007). He notes that although these films depict immigration, the narratives focus on the Italian male protagonist and rely on the rhetoric strategy of paralleling Italian and immigrant masculinities in a way that makes "use of the past and present subaltern experiences of Italians to render the social experience of immigrants in Italy familiar and commonplace to an Italian audience."[57]

This supports the didactic function that such comedies may attempt to have, as well as providing another example of how films tend to suggest a common existential plight of Italians and immigrants, which Zhang argues is a strategy to promote Italian humanism with regard to immigrants.[58] I agree that such rhetoric strategies may well (aim to) create audience empathy with immigrants, however, regarding *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*, I would also like to draw attention to how an analysis of humour and emotional engagement reveals the film to simultaneously draw parallels and differences between masculinities in a way that, in O'Rawe's words, "shores up" white Italian masculinity.[59]

[56] Other examples of films which liken Italian and immigrant experiences of hardship, precarity and/or social marginalisation are: *La nostra vita* (Luchetti, 2010), *Gli ultimi saranno ultimi* (Bruno, 2015), *Gomorra* (Matteo Garrone, 2008), *Il vizio della speranza* (Edoardo De Angelis, 2018), *Into paradiso* (Randi, 2010), *La vita davanti a sé* (Edoardo Ponti, 2020), *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialese, 2011) and *Tornando a casa* (Vincenzo Marra, 2001).
[57] Zhang, 'Comedy Film,' p. 264.
[58] Ibid., p. 266.
[59] In her work on masculinities in contemporary Italian cinema, O'Rawe observes that "non-white masculinity appears only very occasionally in order to shore up white Italian masculinity and to restore it to its central place in Italian society." O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities*, p. 61.

Lezioni di cioccolato 2 displays many characteristics of the romantic comedy, however, it can also be read as a story of homosocial bonding, a "bromance," or a father-son conflict since a significant portion of the narrative revolves around Kamal and Mattia's relationship and how they negotiate their masculinities. The fact that the film ends with images of Mattia and Kamal strolling through a garden to emphasize their regained harmony, rather than images of the romantic couple, is indicative of the film's main narrative focus. The film demonstrates enduring characteristics of the tradition of Italian comedy by presenting both men as flawed characters in satirical situations which reveal masculine anxieties in a changing social environment. For example, although Mattia embodies the "Latin lover" trope through his physical appearance, slick suits, and ability to seduce most women, he also struggles to perform certain hegemonic ideals of masculinity as a result of his inability to maintain a romantic partner (both Cecilia and initially Nawal) and his precarious social and economic standing due to his failed business.

As Reich comments in her analysis of Marcello Mastroianni's characters in post-war cinema, "underneath the façade of a presumed hyper-masculinity is really the anti-hero, the Italian *inetto* (the inept man), a man at odds with and out of place in a rapidly changing political, social, and sexual environment."[60] Mattia's shortcomings, such as his intercultural blunders and economic failings, may allow some spectators to empathise with him, with humour enabling a sense of collective relief perhaps for those who similarly struggle to understand diverse socio-cultural environments.

Both Mattia and Kamal are shown to be inept in similar ways: they are both affected by precarity to some degree and suffer from economic hardship, they struggle to make sense

[60] Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover,* p. xii.

of a culturally diverse social environment, they are at times rendered sexually impotent, and their performances of hegemonic ideals of masculinity are sometimes subverted by female characters.[61] For example, Kamal's wife Shabira provides light comical satire throughout by undermining his authority, such as when he complains that she spends too much money, but she continues to buy what she wants and humorously states that he should have told her that he was cheap before they got married. However, it is Nawal's character which most evidently shows the irony inherent in his performance of hegemonic masculinity, since her relationship with an Italian man undermines his desired role of authoritative father figure.

Similarly, as discussed above, Nawal also highlights Mattia's ineptitude with regard to relationships, work, and understanding a diverse Italian society. In relation to the latter, both men are shown to struggle to understand Nawal's cultural identity and hybridity, and this becomes a key source of humour as is evidenced by the montage in which Mattia performs Egyptian customs to impress Nawal after taking advice from Kamal (which culminates with the above discussed dinner scene). This montage begins with a scene which reverses expectations to create an incongruity that becomes the source of humour; in response to how little Mattia knows about Egyptian culture, Kamal laments "tocca insegnare proprio tutto" [I have to teach absolutely everything]. In this scene, Mattia is positioned behind Kamal whose gaze is towards the camera, emphasising his pedagogic function for Mattia as well as the audience. As a result, the stereotypical positioning of native as expert of their immediate social sphere who imparts knowledge to the immigrant is reversed, and in doing so makes a joke out of Mattia's (and potentially the audience's) inexperience of other cultures.

[61] I am referring to Kamal's inability to seduce Giorgia, as well as when Mattia interrupts an intimate moment between Kamal and his wife. Mattia, on the other hand, is unable to exert his usual sex appeal when dressed as Kamal, and he is also impeded from sexual relations with Nawal.

As discussed above, Nawal rejects Mattia's exaggerated (and stereotypical) displays of Egyptian-ness, showing both men to initially fail to understand her hybrid cultural identity. This is also evidenced in a later scene in which Nawal, Kamal, and Mattia are sat around a table, as Kamal insists that Nawal helps Mattia to understand why Leila left him, not knowing that Leila is in fact his daughter. As shown in figure 8, the composition of the shot in which the two men look toward Nawal for answers underlines her pedagogic function for both men.

Figure 8: Nawal explains the reasons behind her decisions to Mattia and her father. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:13:41).

In this scene she narrates to the male characters, as well as the audience, the need to find balance between Leila's/her own desires and her father's traditions, thus symbolising multiculturalism and cultural hybridity which is reinforced by the final union.[62] As Zhang notes, such multiculturalist films that are sympathetic to immigrants can be seen as a response to the wider political and social arena in which immigration control and integration of immigrants has become a common point of debate within governments and the media. Specifically, through Nawal's character Kamal is encouraged to embrace multiculturalism, whereas she

[62] The attitude towards immigration turned to one of security and control as public discourse linked immigration to crime and unemployment, leading to the centre-right coalition introducing the Bossi-Fini Law 189 in 2002. Integration became a later concern, as "the Agreement of Integration between the Foreigner and the State introduced in the security package in 2009 (which became law in 2011) established the intent of the Italian state to transition from emergency measures to immigration management and integration strategies." Zhang, 'Comedy Film,' p. 269.

teaches Mattia the value of marriage and labour. Even the colour scheme of the shot, in which all three characters wear similar hues that match the surrounding set, hints at the future harmonisation that will be reached by intercultural union. Furthermore, the focus on Nawal and her evident distress encourages the audience to empathise with her predicament and support reaching harmonisation through her desire for marriage.

As discussed above, it is important to remember that Nawal's perspective is constrained by the desires of men, with marriage either within or outside of the Egyptian community being the only choice offered by the narrative. We should therefore question how her character becomes a tool for the male characters to negotiate their own desires and masculinities. However, first it is necessary to explore how the film draws significant differences between masculinities which contribute to understanding how they interact with one another and with Nawal.

In particular, an analysis of the film's humour reveals differing constructions of masculinities, despite the above discussed parallels that the film makes between Kamal and Mattia. In relation to depictions of masculinity in comedies such as the prequel, Zhang makes some useful observations that resonate with the sequel, in that the Italian and immigrant masculinities are "paralleled through their mutual inferior social status, inexperience with foreign cultures, and professional disappointment," and in this way cinema depicts Italy's multiculturalism through a "cinematic negotiation of cultural blending or hybridity."[63] He draws on R.W. Connell's definition of the four types of relations between masculinities (hegemonic, subordinate, complicit, and marginalized) to argue that Mattia and Kamal

[63] Zhang, 'Comedy Film,' p. 264.

embody complicit masculinities.[64] However, in relation to the sequel in particular, focusing only on their paralleled complicit masculinities overlooks the ideological implications of the way in which the film differentiates the characters by constructing a relationship between hegemonic and subordinated masculinities as well.

R.W. Connell's *Masculinities* (1995) discusses gender as a way in which social practice is structured and a relational order in which multiple masculinities are constructed. Within such gender relations there exists a hegemonic masculinity which embodies the normative ideals of manhood to which many men aspire, and which claims authority through cultural dominance.[65] A gender hierarchy is formed by a relationship of dominance and subordination between groups of men, for example between men who embody hegemonic ideals of masculinity and those that do not. These subordinated groups of men are generally feminized, for example homosexual men. Connell also describes complicit masculinity, such as that discussed by Zhang in relation to Kamal and Mattia in *Lezioni di cioccolato*, which refers to those who may fail to embody hegemonic masculinity in its entirety, but who nonetheless uphold and benefit from such a hegemony since it reaffirms patriarchy and women's subordination. And finally, marginalized masculinity highlights the intersection of gender with other social orders such as class and race which prevent certain groups from being accepted into hegemonic masculinity, even if individuals within the group may adhere to the norms it upholds.

In *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*, there are several instances in which Egyptian masculinity is subordinated to white Italian masculinity and marginalised, such as when Kamal presents two

[64] RW Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020 [1995]).
[65] Ibid., pp. 76-81.

photos of Egyptian men to Nawal, both of whom she immediately dismisses. Their desirability is disavowed through humour, for example when she irons over a photo of one of the men, or when she crawls along the floor of a bar to avoid being seen by another before bumping into Mattia. Furthermore, the way in which Kamal and Mattia's gender identities interact has implications regarding the positioning of masculinities within the film, demonstrating them to be relational.

One comic technique employed by the film is that of swapped identities and masquerade: at various points, Mattia assumes Kamal's identity, or more generally dresses up as an Egyptian man, whilst Kamal reveals his Casanova alter ego who he refers to as John Kamal, referencing John Travolta. Mattia "passing" as an Egyptian man offers some subversive potential as it highlights the precariousness of Italians' whiteness. Nonetheless, his performance of Egyptian masculinity is intended to be laughed *at* so as to reaffirm his "natural" embodiment of dominant western masculine ideals. When Mattia pretends to be Kamal (see figure 9) he is visually and aurally feminized in relation to his Italian identity; he speaks in a higher pitched voice, wears eye liner, and is unsuccessful at flirting with female police officer Orsetti.

Figure 9: Mattia pretends to be Kamal at the police station. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (25:41).

This highlights Rehling's observation that "masculinity, whiteness, and heterosexuality are always articulated through each other, as well as through and against those other identity categories in opposition to which they define themselves."[66] Here, Mattia's whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality intersect, and they are reinforced by defining those categories in opposition to a feminized, sexually impotent, and racialized gender identity. Furthermore, his performance is intended to be laughed at, thus naturalising white heterosexual masculinity whilst subordinating others. Conversely, Kamal's transformation into "John Kamal," his performance of a ladies' man, is likewise intended to be laughed at, thus undermining his ability to embody dominant masculine ideals such as virility. This is highlighted in the scene in figure 10 in which Kamal attempts to seduce a disinterested Giorgia, who instead leaps from her seat in excitement when Mattia enters.

Figure 10: "John Kamal" tries to seduce Giorgia. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:16:13).

Kamal's imitation of a western icon of hegemonic masculinity such as John Travolta is rejected by Giorgia who instead desires Mattia, reaffirming the latter as an "authentic" embodiment of such ideals. Even the composition of the shot, in which Kamal lies vertically across the bar as Mattia enters the frame, reinforces Kamal's subordinated positioning in

[66] Rehling, *Extra-Ordinary Men,* p. 12.

relation to him. As shown by these examples, humour is utilised to disavow the desirability of Egyptian men by laughing at their inability to embody a dominant masculinity, whilst Mattia's masculinity is bolstered and naturalised through his relation to these characters.

This symbolic hierarchy between the male characters is evident throughout the film and reinforces the finale in which Mattia and Nawal's union is presented as the natural choice which, significantly, accompanies Kamal and Mattia's reharmonization. As discussed, a substantial portion of the film concerns Mattia and Kamal's relationship, and one of the heightened emotional episodes comes when Kamal finds out that he has been betrayed by Mattia. This scene is affective because of the emotional engagement that has been built with both characters throughout; the spectator has been encouraged to sympathise with the difficulties they face such as their failing businesses, and to support a happy ending which sees their friendship prosper.

Despite Kamal's strict patriarchal attitudes, he is presented as a harmless and likable character and humour is a way in which this is achieved. As Krutnik and Neale point out, the faults of characters in comedies are not presented as major flaws but are excusable and often laughed at.[67] We laugh at Kamal's controlling behaviour in a way that removes harm and makes his character likeable (or at times, someone to pity), thus the patriarchal order is not truly critiqued or subverted. For example, after learning about the fictitious Leila and her relationship with an Italian man, Kamal insults her father for raising such an unruly child. Here, the humour derives from the audience's knowledge that Leila's (Nawal's) father is in fact Kamal, and thus undermines his position as an authoritative father and, whilst mocking him, presents his flaws as harmless. Such comic techniques work together with other forms of

[67] Krutnik and Neale, *Popular Film,* p. 76.

emotional engagement, since despite laughing at Kamal's behaviour, we are also encouraged to sympathise with him. This is evident, for example, when Nawal explains her need to respect Kamal's values because of the difficulties that he has faced as an immigrant and his struggles to provide for his family. Therefore, the patriarchal order is not subverted but rather transfigured, as is typical of the father-son clash in comedies.

In Bini's work on Italian comedies, she writes that "romantic comedy is a conservative genre, dealing not with the replacement but with the readjustment of the symbolic order within a given society."[68] It is the "father-son clash in the traditional comedy plot [which] exposes a conflict between old and new values over the collective symbolic domain," and thus it is through marriage that the symbolic order is restored.[69] With this in mind, we can see how Nawal is instrumental in the renegotiation of the male characters' positioning within the patriarchal order. Initially, Kamal is often framed between Nawal and Mattia as the obstacle between their union. At the end of the film, however, the romantic couple embrace after Mattia proposes and Kamal is positioned behind them (see figure 11), visually reinforcing the signification of their future marriage which re-centres the white Italian male within the patriarchal order.

[68] Bini, *Male Anxiety*, p. 23.
[69] Ibid., p. 26.

Figure 11: Kamal is no longer an obstacle by the film's finale. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:11:00 and 1:33:55).

A previous scene also encapsulates this negotiation between Kamal and Mattia's masculinities; discussing a new recipe for a traditional Perugian chocolate, the *baci*, Mattia states that he would like to create a new recipe, stating "la tradizione può cambiare" [tradition can change], whilst Kamal objects "la tradizione mai cambia" [tradition never changes]. The pair are framed by two large sphinx statues, suggesting the conversation refers to more than chocolate; that is, as in the prequel, chocolate becomes a metaphor for cultural hybridity, and Nawal's character acts in much the same way. In the prequel, the combination of Egyptian dates and Perugian chocolate symbolised the bringing together of cultures inherent in multiculturalism. In the sequel, however, it is Nawal's own Egyptian-Italian hybridity which functions to support a multiculturalist rhetoric and her marriage to Mattia reflects her integration into society, whilst at the same time reinforcing the centrality of the white heterosexual Italian man.

Despite being presented as ludicrous at times, the strict traditional values of celibacy and marriage embraced by Kamal are softened by humour and upheld and transposed into the Italian cultural sphere through Nawal's union with Mattia. Therefore, the only one of Kamal's strict patriarchal rules which is not supported is that of endogamy. Thus, Nawal's character becomes a figure through which Kamal and Mattia reconcile their differences by renegotiating their masculinities within the patriarchal order, reasserting the white heterosexual man as central. The film's happy ending restores harmony and re-affirms social norms as well as the boundaries of Italian masculinity. Such reharmonization may contribute to the feelings of pleasure that audiences derive from comedies.[70] Furthermore, the spectator's emotional engagement with the film, in which they have been encouraged to empathise with Nawal, and to laugh at Mattia and Kamal's undesirable behaviours, can be seen to support the trajectory of this ideological narrative which presents traditional patriarchal ideals as female desire.

8.7 Conclusions

An analysis of comic amusement and emotion in *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* demonstrates the film's ability to engage with social issues relating to postmigration which can be seen to be a response to the wider socio-political sphere in which topics such as immigration, integration, and multiculturalism are widely debated. In opposition to political exclusionary discourses, in some ways the film does open discourses of belongingness and national identity by means of its representation of first-generation Italian identities and the rhetoric of cultural hybridity and multiculturalism. Depictions of Italians born to immigrant parents such as Nawal

[70] Krutnik and Neale, *Popular Film,* p. 81.

are often marginal in Italian cinema, and it is promising to see the development of this figure. By encouraging empathy with Nawal in particular, the film encourages audiences to consider other forms of *italianità*.

The film also creates empathy between immigrant and Italian communities, allowing for reflection of phenomena that affect both such as precarity. Furthermore, the film offers some subversive humour by its depiction of the ineptitude of Mattia in navigating intercultural encounters, which may also have a didactic purpose for some spectators. Therefore, filmic emotion can be seen to affect the embodied engagement of the audience by potentially creating collective feelings of openness towards immigrants and encouraging contemplation of the extra-diegetic world.

Nonetheless, despite depicting Nawal's cultural hybridity and belonging, aspects of her Egyptian-Italian identity are problematic, with the former being presented largely negatively and the latter positively. Furthermore, it is only through her marriage to Mattia that she achieves social integration. In fact, Nawal's character is instrumental in defining Kamal and Mattia's relationship and reinforcing normative conceptions of Italian masculine identity. Therefore, this film can be seen as a cultural product which demonstrates, in Robinson's words, how "the power to represent the normative must be constantly rewon."[71] In this light, Nawal's and Kamal's characters become "serviceable Others" since it is their "Otherness" against which Mattia's identity is reasserted as hegemonic.[72]

[71] Sally Robinson, *Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 4. O'Rawe draws on Robinson's work, making the observation that Italian contemporary cinema dramatizes how this power must be continually rewon. O'Rawe, *Stars and Masculinities*, p. 9.
[72] Lola Young, '"Nothing Is as It Seems": Re-Viewing *The Crying Game*,' in *Me Jane: Masculinity, Movies, and Women*, ed. by Pat Kirkham and Janet Thumin (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995), p. 284.

In a changing Italian social landscape that sees the growth of Italians born to immigrant parents, *Lezioni* can be seen to reveal anxieties regarding the unstable nature of a fixed dominant national identity, since it is through the contrast of the "ideal" marriage to Mattia with "wrongful" marriages to Egyptian men that white heterosexual masculinity is reasserted as a dominant figure in Italian society.[73] Moreover, this romantic comedy demonstrates how comic amusement in particular works together with other forms of emotional engagement in a way that reinforces traditional social values such as conservative femininity, marriage, and labour. These ideological narratives are promoted not only through allegiances created by sympathy and empathy, but humour is also shown to be a key emotive relationship that functions to support the narrative outcome. It does this by its ability to disavow certain behaviours that are deemed undesirable, such as Kamal's restrictive authority and Mattia's lack of commitment, whilst presenting such flaws as harmless.

Humour also contributes to the embodied engagement of spectators, as they may experience collective feelings of belonging in instances where humour allows them a sense of superiority in relation to certain characters, which may actually distance social groups. Feelings of gratification and pleasure may also come from the restoration of order and social norms that occurs in the finale, which reinforce the naturalisation of the marital union between Nawal and Mattia. In conclusion, therefore, the film can be seen to use emotional engagement to promote a specific negotiation of cultural values and identities, and ultimately reassert the patriarchal order within the Italian context.

[73] Krutnik and Neale identify this as a frequent narrative tactic in traditional Hollywood rom-coms. *Popular Film*, p. 141.

9. CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated Italian cinema that engages with the topic of migration to Italy. The relevance of this topic is demonstrated by the current wider socio-political context in which immigration is often a matter of public and political discourse. Since beginning this research, the number of migrants arriving annually in Italy has increased, and the latest right-wing populist government led by Giorgia Meloni continues to seek stricter measures on allowing migrants to remain in the country.[1] Hostile anti-immigrant sentiments continue to spread in Italy (and Europe in general), which reveal ideological discourses that underpin ideas about who is worthy of belonging in the nation, and fuel national discourses that promote the interests of the normative white heterosexual subject. In fact, as Sara Ahmed discusses, it is often the white male subject who is framed as being "'hurt' by the opening up of the nation to others."[2] Such an increased preoccupation with immigration has been reflected in Italian cinema since the 1990s and continues to hold the attention of Italian filmmakers, demonstrating the continued relevance of academic research in this subject area.[3]

In particular, this thesis has brought together a range of interdisciplinary studies to provide an innovative analysis of such films and to significantly develop discussions of *impegno* by considering the role of emotion in conveying political and ideological narratives and in reinforcing or challenging hegemonic discourses. Consequently, it has shown how emotion can be a tool to engage spectators with discourses surrounding immigration, national identity and belonging, thus demonstrating its importance in understanding and questioning

[1] Angela Giuffrida, 'Italian PM steps up crackdown on migrants with deportation decree,' *The Guardian*, 27 September 2023 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/sep/27/italian-pm-crackdown-migrants-deportation-decree-giorgia-meloni> [Accessed 5 December 2023]

[2] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 41.

[3] The latest film to deal with this topic is Matteo Garrone's *Io Capitano*, which competed at the 80th Venice International Film Festival, and is due to premier in the United Kingdom in March 2024.

contemporary works of *impegno*. This research has drawn on both cognitive and phenomenological film theories to analyse the ways in which films may elicit an emotional response from spectators and related this to the ethical potential of the cinematic experience. In doing so, it supports Plantinga's claim that "the *kind* of emotional experience a film offers, and not emotion *per se*, is a proper target of ideological investigation."[4]

The films examined in this thesis are demonstrative of the heterogenous character of the corpus of Italian cinema that comments on immigration to Italy. The diverse manner in which the topic of immigration is addressed, and the often personal lens through which it is filtered, are reflective of postmodern conceptions of *impegno*. As Jennifer Burns explored, the past commitment to an overarching social and political agenda has fragmented into an attention to specific issues.[5] Although some films are more overtly political than others, all the films analysed here can be seen to attempt to promote critical awareness among spectators about certain issues relating to immigration; from questioning how to welcome the Other to challenging normative conceptions of national identity. If we follow Terry Eagleton's description of politics as "the way we organise our social life together, and the power-relations which this involves," then these films can all be seen to reveal political narratives which relate to immigration and national identity. [6]

This thesis' distinct analytical approach allows us to better understand *how* such narratives are conveyed to the spectator and to what extent we can consider a film to be ethically engaged in questioning hegemonic powers. As Plantinga argues, spectator emotions

[4] Carl Plantinga, 'Notes on Spectator Emotion and Ideological Film Criticism,' in *Film Theory and Philosophy,* ed. by Richard Allen and Murray Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 372-393 (p. 372).
[5] Jennifer Burns, *Fragments of Impegno: Interpretations of Commitment in Contemporary Italian Narrative*, *1980-2000* (Leeds, UK: Northern Universities Press, 2001), p. 1.
[6] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008 [1983]), p. 169.

have a powerful rhetorical force and emotional engagement contributes to the spectator's understanding of narratives and their ability for ethical thought.[7] Thus, as demonstrated, the manner in which films attempt to elicit emotional and empathic responses from spectators reveals the ethical implications of their narratives and the potential or limitations of their *impegno*.

The first analytical chapter considered how the films *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (Giordana, 2005) and *Terraferma* (Crialese, 2011) engage with the topic of immigration through their critique of anti-immigration policies. In particular, they can be seen to support an ethic of care for the Other and humanitarianism through the promotion of compassion and empathy. Thus, the way these films elicit emotion can be seen to attempt to have a didactic function as it promotes humanitarianism. On one hand, therefore, the emotional and empathic engagement elicited by these films encourages spectators to critique the hostile and discriminatory treatment of immigrants. On the other hand, however, these films also encourage emotional responses which are problematic and reinforce stereotypes and hegemonic conceptions of national identity. For example, empathy is primarily elicited with the white Italian male protagonists and their journey to ethical awakening and maturity. Furthermore, emotional engagement with migrant characters is limited and promotes stereotypical sentiments associated with migrants such as compassion, pity, and fear which reinforce their Otherness and exclusion from the national body. Therefore, the way these films elicit emotion reveals the limitations of their *impegno* since spectators are not encouraged to

[7] Plantinga, 'Notes on Spectator Emotion,' p. 389; Carl Plantinga, *Screen Stories: Emotion and the Ethics of Engagement* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 108.

critique hegemonic representations of Italianness and Otherness, thus dominant representations of national belonging remain largely unaltered.

The next chapter analysed two films which are representative of the common theme of shared precarity between Italians and immigrants; *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (Amoroso, 2006) and *Fiore gemello* (Luchetti, 2018). These films depict empathy between Italian and migrant characters in ways that transform limited representations of belonging. This chapter demonstrated how the films elicit empathy and emotional engagement to foreground alternative emotional and affective relationships which can be considered both transnational and queer. The spectator is encouraged to empathise with the characters' experiences of marginalisation and vulnerability and thus the films promote a critical awareness of conditions that affect precarious subjects. Furthermore, the type of emotive and empathic engagement that the films encourage allow the spectator to engage with alternative forms of belonging which transcend the symbolic boundaries of the nation.

Following this, the queer potentialities of the cinematic migrant figure were further explored in Carpignano's *Mediterranea* (2015), as the portrayal of migrants in this film queers and subverts dominant white, heteronormative understandings of Italian space and identity. The signification of the film's depiction of the migrant unrest of 2010 in Rosarno is informed by its intimate empathic engagement with the migrant community. By promoting empathy with this community, the spectator is encouraged to ethically reflect on the oppressive structures that condition migrants' experiences of discrimination and exclusion. Furthermore, it was shown that the film elicits empathy with migrants' experiences in such a way that their anger can be understood as a political act of resistance, countering the dominant media portrayals of the protests and common cinematic depictions of victimhood.

The second part of the thesis moved away from representations of recently arrived migrants to diasporic subjects born or living in Italy from a young age. This allowed the thesis to consider the growing population of first-generation Italians who continue to be Othered by discriminatory and exclusionary discourses which share similar ideological underpinnings as discussions on immigration and national belonging. The figure of the first-generation Italian emerged relatively recently in Italian cinema and is often a marginal character. This cinematic figure, however, is becoming more common and its development provides a fruitful area of analysis regarding shifting conceptions of Italian national identity.

Chapter seven considered how *Good morning Aman* (Noce, 2009) portrays the experiences of a diasporic subject living in Italy in a way that critically interrogates Italy's postcolonial condition. This film stands out from the corpus for its fragmented temporal structure and deferred meaning of images which affect the emotional engagement of the spectator in a way that allows them to ethically interrogate the narrative. It is argued that the film's deferral of meaning is capable of conveying a sense of ambivalence to the spectator, which contributes to their ability to empathise with Aman's experiences. Furthermore, the multiple temporalities and use of the time-image produce a particularly emotive and affective viewing experience, allowing time for the spectator to encounter and reflect upon the narratives of marginalised subjects which problematise one dominant national identity.

The final chapter of this thesis continued its interrogation of postmigration issues with its analysis of the romantic-comedy *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (Federici, 2011). Despite their popularity with Italian audiences, comedies remain an under-explored facet of academic research. This thesis therefore contributes to addressing this gap and expanding research on *cinema d'impegno* by considering how humour can be a means of engaging spectators in

questioning socio-political issues. The chapter demonstrated how humour can be a didactic tool to educate about diversity and multiethnic cohabitation and to promote multiculturalism. Comic amusement works alongside other forms of emotional engagement to encourage empathy with immigrant communities and feelings of openness toward the other. However, this commitment to promoting openness toward the other and depicting diverse forms of *Italianità* is revealed to be limited when we consider other ways that emotion functions in the film. In fact, it is argued that the film's humour functions in relation to empathy and sympathy so as to promote conservative ideals that reinforce the centrality of the white heterosexual Italian man whilst marginalising other masculinities. Therefore, it can be seen to reveal anxieties regarding a changing social sphere which threatens traditional values and normative conceptions of Italian identity.

This thesis, therefore, has provided an in-depth examination of the role of emotion in supporting political and ideological narratives and in contributing to the potential ethics of the cinematic experience. In other words, it demonstrates how an analysis of filmic emotion enables us to understand the extent of a film's *impegno*, that is, its commitment to questioning hegemonic socio-political structures that affect people's lived experiences. Burns reminds us that "commitment" or "engagement" presupposes a relationship of reciprocity and responsibility between author and reader, in which "the writer has some responsibility for the response she produces in the reader, and that this respondent treats responsibly the commitment thus made by the writer."[8] In the cinematic experience, this reciprocity can be understood as being grounded in the relationship of embodied emotional engagement between film and spectator. Thus, although spectators may decline a film's invitation to

[8] Burns, *Fragments of Impegno*, p. 5.

respond in a certain way, this thesis has demonstrated the ways in which films may elicit emotional responses that carry political, ideological, and ethical implications.

Whilst some filmmakers' sense of responsibility to fostering awareness of socio-political factors that condition migrants' lives may seem evident, such as in *Terraferma*, the extent of their ability to critique dominant and exclusionary notions of identity and belonging may be limited and even paradoxical when considering how spectators are encouraged to emotionally respond. Conversely, the political and ethical implications of films such as *Cover boy* and *Mediterranea* become more evident when considering emotion, since their ability to encourage empathy with marginalised and precarious subjects allows spectators to ethically question the symbolic boundaries of the nation and to envisage queer forms of belonging.

Italian cinema's increased focus on the topic of immigration in recent years reflects the current socio-political climate, in which migrants are often Othered and seen as a threat to the construction of a dominant white heteronormative Italian identity. In representing the migrant "Other," therefore, these films both challenge and reinforce exclusionary discourses which uphold dominant notions of identity and belonging. In particular, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of considering the role of emotion in *cinema d'impegno* since it functions in relation to socio-political and ideological narratives in ethically significant ways. Therefore, it contributes to discussions on *impegno* by providing an innovative framework that can be applied across genres, avoiding ideological film criticism that presupposes the moral and political superiority of certain film forms over others. Furthermore, it enriches research of cinematic emotion by illustrating the relationship between emotional engagement and political and ideological discourses within the specific socio-political and historical context of immigration to Italy.

It is necessary to highlight the limitations of this research, and areas in which it can be further developed. For the purpose of this thesis, an abstract audience was posited in order to theorise how films attempt to elicit certain emotional responses which may contribute to the ethical potential of the cinematic experience. This research does, however, recognise the openness of the reception process and the unique situatedness of the spectator, as well as the audience's potential to engage in oppositional readings.[9] Therefore, the descriptive and explanatory approach taken here to explore the characteristics of film that attempt to engage spectators emotionally can be complimented and developed by ethnographic research to provide greater insights into audience responses and how specific cultural and individual factors may influence them. Therefore, this thesis creates multiple avenues for future research; firstly, it can be complimented by ethnographic research; secondly, the theoretical framework posited here can be applied to other works of *impegno,* or to other cultural and socio-political contexts.

Furthermore, this thesis took Italian cinema as its object of analysis due to the large corpus of films that explore immigration. It should be noted, however, that despite being beyond the scope of this thesis, other forms of media such as TV series would also provide fruitful research in this subject area. The popularity of other forms of media such as those of video on-demand services has grown exponentially in recent years and could therefore provide interesting comparative research in terms of depictions of migrants and first-generation Italians. From a preliminary observation, it seems that such platforms are contributing to diversifying both filmmakers and content. For example, in recent years Netflix

[9] Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 289; Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding,' in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. by Simon During (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 90-103.

has released *Zero* (2021), the first Italian series with a predominantly black Italian cast and co-written by Angolan-Italian author and director Antonio Dikele Distefano; as well as *Summertime* (2020) starring the Nigerian-Italian actor Rebecca Coco Edogamhe as the protagonist. In addition, Amazon released Distefano's debut film *Autumn Beat* (2022) which gives a nuanced, intimate portrayal of black Italian youth and the rap-music scene in Milan.

Within the context outlined in this thesis, in which the *Italianità* of first-generation Italians is often disputed and their cinematic representations remain marginal, Distefano's work emerges as a ground-breaking cinematic representation of these subjects, in particular those from the African diaspora. Distefano has also worked across different media platforms, creating multiple spaces through which the public can engage with marginalised forms of *italianità*.[10] Distefano's commitment to providing space for black Italians within Italian culture also comes through in his interviews, in which he has stated "vorrei dire all'Italia che il futuro ha anche la mia faccia" [I would like to tell Italy that the future also has my face].[11]

Autumn Beat can be described as a family-drama, as it follows the life of Tito (Hamed Seydou) and his (often strained) relationships with his brother, mother, friends, and niece. It is not overtly political, but the intimate emotive and affective engagement that it encourages between the audience and Tito contributes to its ability to challenge rigid conceptions of Italianness, and to depicting blackness as a normal trait of Italian identity. In fact, as Ardizzoni notes, "the very normalcy of his narratives points to their importance in a cultural context

[10] For example, Distefano has founded an online music magazine *Esse Magazine* <www.essemagazine.it> and presents the programme *Quello che è. Nuove storie italiane*, in which he interviews renowned public figures and members of the public, as well as often discussing his own experiences on his Instagram page: antoniodikeledistefano.

[11] Michela Ardizzoni, 'Imag(in)Ing Blackness in Italy: Redactions, Presence, and Media in Antonio Dikele Distefano's Work,' *Italian Culture*, 39:2 (2021), 223-239 (p. 237) <https://doi-org.bham-ezproxy.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/01614622.2021.2014663> [Accessed 7 December 2023]

where Black bodies have been depicted as other and therefore anomalous."[12] In particular, the film depicts transnationalism, as it is related to the migration of peoples and cultures across borders, as a normal and pervasive aspect of contemporary life in Italy. Films such as this point to continued diversification of cinematic depictions of national identity. Furthermore, the personal lens through which *Autumn Beat* achieves this demonstrates the future relevance of the theoretical framework outlined in this thesis, which considers *impegno* in relation to the emotive experience that cinema offers.

[12] Ardizzoni, 'Imag(in)Ing Blackness in Italy,' p. 227.

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10.2 Discography

Lu Colombo, *Maracaibo*, 2012

Ludwig Van Beethoven*, String Quartet No. 8 in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2,* 'Razumovsky,' 'Andante con moto quasi allegretto,' 1806

René Aubry, *Après la pluie*, 1993

Ricchi e Poveri, *Sarà perché ti amo*, 1981

Rihanna, *S&M*, 2010

Rihanna ft. Calvin Harris, 'We Found Love,' 2011

Sean Paul,' Got 2 Luv U,' 2012

10.3 Filmography

18 Ius Soli: il diritto di essere Italiani, dir. by Fred Kudjo Kuwornu (Alexander Street Press, 2012)

A Chjàna, dir. by Jonas Carpignano (2011)

A Ciambra, dir. by Jonas Carpignano (Academy Two, 2017)

Abuna Messias, dir. by Goffredo Alessandrini (Generalcine, 1939)

Adil e Yusuf, dir. by Claudio Noce (Vimeo, 2007)

Aman e gli altri, dir. by Claudio Noce (2006)

Akiko, dir. by Luigi Filippo D'Amico (Lux Film, 1961)

Alì ha gli occhi azzurri, dir. by Claudio Giovannesi (Bim Distribuzione, 2012)

Autumn Beat, dir. by Antonio Dikele Distefano (Amazon Prime Video, 2022)

Bangla, dir. by Phaim Bhuiyan (Fandango Distribuzione, 2019)

Benvenuti al nord, dir. by Luca Miniero (Medusa Film, 2012)

Bianco e nero, dir. by Cristina Comencini (01 Distribution, 2008)

Billo, il grand Dakhaar, dir. by Laura Muscardin (ACHAB Film, 2006)

Blaxploitalian, dir. by Fred Kudjo Kuwornu (Kunaki, LLC, 2016)

Buongiorno notte, dir. by Marco Bellocchio (01 Distribution, 2003)

Che bella giornata, dir. by Gennaro Nunziante (Medusa Film, 2011)

Children of Men, dir. by Alfonso Cuarón (Universal Pictures, 2006)

Contromano, dir. by Antonio Albanese (01 Distribution, 2018)

Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione, dir. by Carmine Amoroso (Istituto Luce, 2006)

Dimmi che destino avró, dir. by Peter Marcias (Pablo, 2012)

Divorzio all'italiana, dir. by Pietro Germi (Lux Film, 1961)

Dogman, dir. by Matteo Garrone (01 Distribution, 2018)

Et in terra pax, dir. by Matteo Botrugno and Daniele Coluccini (Luce Cinecittà, 2010)

Fame chimica, dir. Paolo Vari and Antonio Bocola (Lucky Red, 2003)

Fiore gemello, dir. by Laura Luchetti (Fandango, 2018)

Fuoco a mare, dir. by Gianfranco Rosi (Luce Cinecittà/01 Distribution, 2016)

Giallo a Milano, dir. by Sergio Basso (La Sarraz Distribuzione, 2009)

Gli ultimi saranno gli ultimi, dir. by Massimiliano Bruno (01 Distribution, 2015)

Good morning Aman, dir. by Claudio Noce (Luce Cinecittà, 2009)

Gomorra, dir. by Matteo Garrone (01 Distribution, 2008)

Ho voglia di te, dir. by Louis Prieto (Warner Bros. Picutres, 2007)

I soliti ignoti, dir. by Mario Monicelli (Lux Film, 1958)

Il boom, dir. by Vittorio De Sica (Dino De Laurentiis Distribuzione, 1963)

Il legionario, dir. by Hleb Papou (Fandango Distribuzione, 2021)

Il mulatto, dir. by Francesco De Robertis (Scalera Film, 1950)

Il sorpasso, dir. by Dino Risi (INCEI Film, 1962)

Il vizio della speranza, dir. by Edoardo De Angelis (Medusa Film, 2018)

Io capitano, dir. by Matteo Garrone (01 Distribution, 2023)

Io, l'altro, dir. by Mohsen Melliti (20th Century Fox Italia, 2007)

Io, loro e Lara, dir. by Carlo Verdone (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2010)

Io, Rom romantica, dir. by Laura Halilovic (Good Films, 2014)

Into paradiso, dir. by Paola Randi (Luce Cinecittà, 2010)

L'articolo 2, dir. by Maurizio Zaccaro (Mikado-Pentavideo, Medusa, 1993)

L'assedio, dir. by Bernardo Bertolucci (Medusa, 1998)

La-Bàs: educazione criminale, dir. by Guido Lombardi (Luce Cinecittà, 2011)

La dolce vita, dir. by Federico Fellini (Cineriz, 1960)

La foresta di ghiaccio, dir. by Claudio Noce (Fandango Distribuzione, 2014)

La giusta distanza, dir. by Carlo Mazzacurati (01 Distribution, 2007)

La grande guerra, dir. by Mario Monicelli (De Laurentiis, 1959)

La meglio gioventú, dir. by Marco Tullio Giordana (01 Distribution, 2002)

La nostra vita, dir. by Daniele Luchetti (01 Distribution, 2010)

La sconosciuta, dir. by Giuseppe Tornatore (Medusa Film, 2006)

La scuola più bella del mondo, dir. by Luca Miniero (Universal Pictures International Italy, 2014)

La straniera, dir. by Marco Turco (Istituto Luce, 2009)

La terra trema, dir. by Luchino Visconti (C.E.I.A.D, 1948)

La vita davanti a sé, dir. by Edoardo Ponti (Netflix, 2020)

Ladri di biciclette, dir. by Vittorio De Sica (E.N.I.C, 1948)

Lamerica, dir. by Gianni Amelio (Cecchi Gori Group, 1994)

Le ordine delle cose, dir. by Andrea Segre (Parthénos Distribuzione, 2017)

Lezioni di cioccolato, dir. by Claudio Cupellini (Universal Pictures International Italy, 2007)

Lezioni di cioccolato 2, dir. by Alessio Maria Federici (Universal Pictures International Italy, 2011)

Mediterranean, dir. by Jonas Carpignano (Academy Two, 2015)

Nessuno mi può giudicare, dir. by Massimiliano Bruno (01 Distribution, 2011)

Neve, dir. by Stefano Incerti (Microcinema, 2013)

Nuovomondo, dir. by Emanuele Crialese (01 Distrbution, 2006)

Oggi sposi, dir. by Luca Lucini (Universal Pictures International Italy, 2009)

Per un figlio, dir. by Suranga Deshapriya Katugampala (Gina Films, 2016)

Prendimi e portami via, dir. by Tonino Zangardi (Istituto Luce, 2003)

Pummarò, dir. by Michele Placido (RTI, 1990)

Qua vado?, dir. by Gennaro Nunziante (Medusa Film, 2016)

Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti, dir. by Marco Tullio Giordana (01 Distribution, 2005)

Questa notte è ancora nostra, dir. by Luca Miniero and Paolo Genovese (The Walt Disney Company Italia, 2008)

Reality, dir. by Matteo Garrone (01 Distribution, 2011)

Riparo, dir. by Marco Simon Puccini (Movimenti Film, 2006)

Rocco e i suoi fratelli, dir. by Luchino Visconti (Titanus, 1960)

Roma città aperta, dir. by Roberto Rossellini (Minerva Film, 1945)

Saimir, dir. by Francesco Munzi (Istituto Luce, 2004)

Santa maradona, dir. by Marco Ponti (Mikado, 2001)

[s]comparse, dir. by Antonio Tibaldi (Vimeo, 2011)

Se chiudo gli occhi non sono più qui, dir. by Vittorio Moroni (Mare Mosso Film, 2013)

Sole a catinelle, dir. by Gennaro Nunziante (Medusa Film, 2013)

Sta per piovere, dir. by Haider Rashid (Radical Plans, 2013)

Sud side stori, dir. by Roberta Torre (Istituto Luce, 2000)

Summertime (series), dir. by Lorenzo Sportiello and Franceso Lagi (Netflix, 2020)

Terraferma, dir. by Emanuele Crialese (01 Distribution, 2011)

Teste rasate, dir. by Claudio Fragasso (Multivision, 1993)

Tre metri sopra il cielo, dir. by Luca Lucini (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004)

Tolo Tolo, dir. by Checco Zalone (Medusa Film, 2020)

Tornando a casa, dir. by Vincenzo Marra (Sacher Distribuzione, 2001)

Un'anima divisa in due, dir. by Silvio Soldini (Angelo Rizzoli Cinematografica, 1993)

Una vita difficile, dir. by Dino Risi (Filmauro, 1961)

Va' Pensiero Storie Ambulanti, dir. by Dagmawi Yimer (Premio Mutti/Cineteca Bologna, 2013)

Vesna va veloce, dir. by Carlo Mazzacurati (Cecchi Gori Distribuzione, 1996)

Zero (series), dir. by Paola Randi et al (Netflix, 2021)

Zora the Vampire, dir. by Manetti Bros. (Cecchi Gori, 2000)

10.4 Image Appendix

Chapter 3: Encountering Alterity and Self-Transformation in *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* and *Terraferma*

Figure 1: Sandro wakes up on the boat carrying migrants to Italy. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (37:14), p. 87.

Figure 2: The film presents the spectator with Sandro's gaze. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (51:12), p. 89.

Figures 3 and 4: close-ups of man (left) and Radu (right) being processed at the detention centre. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:01:24 and 1:01:55), p. 91.

Figure 5: Alina runs after Sandro as he leaves. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:18:06), p. 92.

Figure 6: the spectator is aligned with Sandro when he finds Alina in Milan. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:44:21), p. 101.

Figure 7: the spectator's attention is focused on Sandro's emotional response to Alina's predicament. Giordana, *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti* (1:47:13), p. 101.

Figure 8: the composition of the shot aligns Filippo with his grandfather. Crialese, *Terraferma* (03:19), p. 105.

Figures 9, 10, 11: the camera pans across the faces of the migrants on the boat (top) before showing Filippo's reaction (below). Crialese, *Terraferma* (36:00-36:12), p. 106.

Figure 12: Filippo struggles after the traumatic events of the night before. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:14:19), p. 108.

Figure 13: Filippo's face is illuminated by chiaroscuro lighting as he drives Sara to the mainland in the dramatic finale. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:22:30), p. 109.

Figures 14 and 15: the initial encounter between Giulietta (left) and Sara (right). Crialese, *Terraferma*, (39:42 and 39:48), p. 112.

Figures 16 and 17: the final encounter between Giulietta (left) and Sara (right). Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:17:21 and 1:17:26), p. 113.

Figure 18: Ernesto holds Sara's pregnant belly. Crialese, *Terraferma* (34:19), p. 115.

Figure 19: Sara is framed between the doorway as Giulietta (and the spectator) gaze at her. Crialese, *Terraferma* (54:14), p. 116.

Figure 20: the wreckage of a boat that Filippo and Ernesto discover during a fishing trip. Crialese, Terraferma (04:39), p. 120.

Figure 21 and 22: the image of tourists (left) echoes the earlier image of stranded migrants (right). Crialese, *Terraferma* (52:11 and 31:01), p. 121.

Figures 23 and 24: the shot on the left shows the men's hands grabbing at the boat in dark lighting, whilst the shot on the right shows the boat about to capsize as they try to pull themselves aboard. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:03:01 and 1:03:13), p. 124-25.

Figure 25: the lighting and camera focus ensure that the spectator can easily read Maura's emotional facial cues. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:03:08), p. 125.

Figure 26: close-ups of the suffering migrants may engender compassion in the viewer. Crialese, *Terraferma* (1:07:56), p. 128.

Chapter 4: Empathy and Precarity in *Cover boy: L'ultima rivoluzione* and *Fiore gemello*

Figures 1 and 2: the homeless sleep outside Termini station. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (19:20 and 19:24), p. 146.

Figures 3 and 4: After Michele loses his job, he is forced to sell trinkets outside the Vatican. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (1:18:24 and 1:18:31), p. 148.

Figure 5: Anna's isolation is reinforced by the surrounding cinematic space. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (4:30), p. 150.

Figure 6: the queer potential of Michele and Ioan's relationship is most evident in the scene at the beach. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (38:30), p. 156.

Figure 7: Anna writes her name in the condensation on a window, highlighting the film's focus on the tactile sensuousness of the everyday. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (21:20), p. 167.

Figure 8: Anna and Basim's relationship of care and affection is epitomised by this scene in which they embrace in the bathtub. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (1:03:12), p. 168.

Figures 9 and 10: documentary footage is incorporated into Ioan's flashback. Amoroso, *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione* (1:24:03 and 1:24:08), p. 170.

Figure 11: Basim's Otherness and marginalisation is reinforced by his relationship with Stella. Luchetti, *Fiore gemello* (38:39), p. 174.

Chapter 5: *Mediterranea*: Anger as an Act of Resistance

Figure 1: Ayiva begins his journey. Carpignano*, Mediterranea* (9:26), p. 189.

Figure 2: The spectator is aligned with Ayiva's perspective as he views the imposing landscape. Carpignano*, Mediterranea* (9:32), p. 189.

Figure 3: The film creates a sense of proximity with the migrants' journey. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (11:41), p. 191.

Figure 4: Ayiva and Abas arrive at the detention centre. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (22:14), p. 195.

Figure 5: the film focuses on the men's facial reactions to the threatening behaviour. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (28:52), p. 197.

Figure 6: this shot aligns the spectator with the men's perspective. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (28:55), p. 198.

Figure 7: the film provides an intimate portrayal of migrant labour in the orange groves. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (43:48), p. 200.

Figure 8: the African community is depicted as a space of community and belonging. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (45:59), p. 202.

Figure 9: the mood of the scene changes as the Italian men enter the apartment. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (47:45), p. 204.

Figure 10: a reverse-shot shows the discomfort of the group. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (48:00), p. 204.

Figure 11: the migrant characters dance freely in the nightclub. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:07:40), p. 205.

Figure 12: the migrant characters are shown to care for one another. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:07:50), p. 205.

Figure 13: the focus on Ayiva's face alerts the spectator to the imminent confrontation. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:08:08), p. 207.

Figure 14: a hostile colonial gaze persists throughout the film. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:08:41), p. 207.

Figure 15: Ayiva watches the protests unfold. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:26:58), p. 212.

Figure 16: unsteady, quick camera movements convey the energy and tension of the protests. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:27:34), p. 212.

Figure 17: the film utilises many close-ups to allow the spectator to consider Ayiva's feelings. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:27:39), p. 213.

Figure 18: the striking colour contrast heightens the affect of the scene. Carpignano, *Mediterranea* (1:28:00), p. 213.

Chapter 7: National Identity, Postcolonialism, and Empathy in *Good morning Aman*

Figure 1: intense close-up of Aman. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (00:00:29), p. 234.

Figure 2: out-of-focus shot from Aman's perspective. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (00:00:49), p. 234.

Figures 3 and 4: Reverse-shots between Aman and Said, before Aman's departure. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (08:43 and 09:00), p. 239.

Figure 5: Aman's reaction after being slapped by Teodoro during their altercation. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (33:05), p. 241.

Figure 6: Teodoro's tussle with Aman conveys ambivalent feelings of repulsion and desire. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (32:59), p. 241.

Figure 7: Teodoro grabs Aman's face seemingly in an attempt to kiss him. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (33:09), p. 242.

Figure 8: Teodoro reveals his tattoo to deny any homosexual intent. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (33:30), p. 242.

Figure 9: Teodoro embraces an uncomfortable Aman. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (49:57), p. 244.

Figures 10 and 11: The first shot shows Aman lying on the roof terrace, followed by a later shot of the Senegalese man after he has been hit by Teodoro's car. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (15:11 and 1:25:36), p. 258.

Figure 12: Police clash with black men while Aman gazes at the camera. Noce, *Good morning Aman* (1:26:04), p. 264.

Figure 13: black youths address the spectator. Noce, *Good morning Aman*, (1:27:23), p. 265.

Figure 14: Aman points a gun at his manager. Noce, *Good morning Aman*, (1:27:29), p. 265.

Chapter 8: *Lezioni di cioccolato 2*: Multiculturalism and Masculinity in the Romantic Comedy

Figure 1: Mattia takes Nawal to an Egyptian restaurant for dinner. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (34:14), p. 288.

Figure 2: Reverse-shot of Nawal's reaction to Mattia eating dinner. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (34:43), p. 288.

Figure 3: Nawal and Mattia's meet-cute. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (11:31), p. 293.

Figure 4: Mattia confessing his troubles. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (00:52), p. 294.

Figure 5: Reverse-shots between Kamal, Nawal and Shabira as Kamal criticises Nawal's clothes. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (05:59 and 06:07), p. 295.

Figure 6: Nawal teaches Mattia the value of commitment. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:00:23), p. 298.

Figure 7: Osvaldo discusses *impegno* and relationships with Mattia. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:15:33), p. 299.

Figure 8: Nawal explains the reasons behind her decisions to Mattia and her father. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:13:41), p. 304.

Figure 9: Mattia pretends to be Kamal at the police station. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (25:41), p. 307.

Figure 10: “John Kamal” tries to seduce Giorgia. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:16:13), p. 308.

Figure 11: Kamal is no longer an obstacle by the film’s finale. Federici, *Lezioni di cioccolato 2* (1:11:00 and 1:33:55), p. 311