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The Camorra Comedy: Naples in the (Post-)National Cinematic Gaze

Ruth Glynn

Italian, School of Modern Languages,

University of Bristol,

Bristol, BS6 5DS

Email: r.s.glynn@bristol.ac.uk

Abstract:

This article addresses the contemporary Camorra comedy film with reference to the transition from a predominantly local to an increasingly national cinematic gaze on Naples. Focusing on Paola Randi's *Into paradiso* (2010) and the Manetti Bros' *Song 'e Napule* (2013), and drawing on theoretical frameworks relating to post-national and accented cinema, as well as to the nexus between national identity and masculinity, it asks what role comedy plays in the national film industry construction of Naples and its relationship with the Camorra. I argue that *Into Paradiso*'s overt projection of a post-national consciousness is diluted by its recourse to problematic historical discourses and stereotypes relating to the Italian south and its blindness to subnational inflections of Italianness. In contrast, *Song 'e Napule*'s rehabilitation of Neapolitan popular culture on the part of the anti-Camorra struggle encourages a broad reframing of the discussion of Italian national culture in the terms of differently accented practices, discourses and identities.

Keywords:

Camorra; comedy; *Into Paradiso*; *Song 'e Napule*; post-national cinema; accented cinema

Biography:

Ruth Glynn is Reader in Modern Italian Culture at the University of Bristol and author of *Women, Terrorism and Trauma in Italian Culture* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Her current research addresses cultural responses to Naples and the city's relationship with the Italian nation-state; publications here include articles on the construction of Naples in critical theory (forthcoming in *Cultural Critique*, 2019) and on cultural representations of the Allied Occupation of Naples. She has also published widely on representations of political violence in the *anni di piombo* and postmodernist literature and thought.

The Camorra Comedy: Naples in the (Post-)National Cinematic Gaze

Since the effective dissolution of the 'New Neapolitan Cinema' in the early 2000s, cinematic engagement with Naples has once again extended beyond the local context and migrated to the heart of the Italian film industry. The accompanying transition from a local to an increasingly national cinematic gaze on Naples has barely been acknowledged within Italian film studies, let alone subjected to careful critical interrogation.¹ Such inattention is not entirely surprising; a long-standing inattention to regional filmmaking on the peninsula has been compounded by a more recent and conspicuous shift away from critical discussion of national cinema in favour of transnational film industry dynamics.² Equally relevant, however, is the fact that, at the outset of the transition, high-profile nationally produced films like Andrea and Antonio Frazzi's *Certi bambini* (2004), Matteo Garrone's *Gomorra* (2008) and Marco Risi's *Fortapàsc* (2009) embraced the aesthetic innovations and socio-political critique of the 'New Neapolitan Cinema' of the 1990s. The continuity thus posited between the two bodies of work precluded extensive critical attention. It did, however, prompt Alex Marlow-Mann to conclude that the national film industry had 'assimilated the lessons' of the New Neapolitan Cinema and to assert that 'cinema will no longer be able to recycle the same images and narrative clichés of Naples with complete naïveté'.³

Marlow-Mann's conclusion rests on the exclusion of comedy from the wider cinematic panorama; only a few pages prior, he had observed that comedies directed by non-Neapolitan filmmakers in the early 2000s and produced by the national film industry continued to deploy 'conventional approaches to the representation of Naples' and to peddle stereotyped discourses indebted to nineteenth-century *meridionalismo*.⁴ For Marlow-Mann, writing in the late 2000s, comedy perhaps represented the exception that proved the rule.

¹ On the longer history of national cinematic engagement with Naples and the exchange between national and Neapolitan cinematic form in the 1970s, Stefano Masi, 'Come ti nazionalisco la Napoli verace dei film di Merola', *Cineforum*, 21.4, 1981, 21-29.

² On the transnational turn in film criticism, see *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, ed. by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London: Routledge, 2006). On the Italian context more specifically, see Laura Rascaroli, 'Italian Cinema in the Post-National Age', in *The Italian Cinema Book*, ed. by Peter Bondanella (London: PalgraveMacmillan/BFI, 2014), pp. 285-94. In addressing the national film context here, I do not intend to deny the relevance of transnational factors nor to underplay the interaction between national and transnational contexts; rather, I seek to remind the reader of the ongoing influence of national frameworks and systems within an increasingly globalised reality.

³ Alex Marlow-Mann, *The New Neapolitan Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 199.

⁴ Marlow-Mann, pp. 192-94. The films discussed are Paolo Genovese and Luca Miniero's debut, *Incantesimo napoletano* (2002), and Massimo Costa's *La Repubblica di San Gennaro* (2003); where the first is seen to be 'firmly rooted in an established comic tradition that plays on the opposition between northern and southern stereotypes' (p. 193), the latter demonstrates the internationalisation of that divide in the southern mentality.

More recent cinematic developments suggest that a revised understanding of comedy's place within the wider panorama is in order: not only have nationally produced films departed from the aesthetic conventions and socio-political charge of the New Neapolitan Cinema, resulting in a more diverse and variegated depiction of Naples, but comedy has played a prominent role in the production of a decidedly altered cinematic gaze on the city and its culture.⁵

This article begins to explore the characteristics and effects of the national film industry's engagement with Naples, with reference to two Camorra comedies: Paola Randi's *Into paradiso* (2010) and the Manetti Bros' *Song 'e Napule* (2013). In their different ways, these films – directed, produced and financed by exclusively Italian entities – reject the thematic concerns, setting, aesthetic style and narrative approach of the New Neapolitan Cinema and bring to bear innovative treatments of Naples while questioning the city's relationship with the Italian nation-state. Drawing on theoretical frameworks relating to post-national and accented cinema, I explore how these films, as products of the national film industry, portray Naples and the Camorra. I also interrogate the purposes to which comedy is put and assess the consequences of the different strategies taken with respect to the comedic treatment of the Camorra in the films in question.

Naples, the Camorra and the Mafia Movie

In order to appreciate fully the implications of the transition from a local to a national cinematic gaze on Naples, some consideration of the wider history of cinematic engagement with Naples and the Camorra is warranted, as is interrogation of the relationship between the Camorra film and its better-known 'national' counterpart, the (Sicilian) mafia film.

Since its inception, Neapolitan cinema has demonstrated a keen interest in the Camorra, documenting the evolution of its myriad forms and practices, and interrogating its relationship with the city and people of Naples.⁶ While individual decades witnessed notable spikes in the number of Camorra-centred films – usually in response to organisational change

⁵ Ample evidence of that altered gaze is provided by the seven films addressing Naples shown at the Venice film festival in 2017. These include works by Neapolitan and non-Neapolitan directors and production companies and comprise the animation film, *La gatta cenerentola*, dir. by Alessandro Rak, Ivan Cappiello, Marino Guarnieri e Dario Sansone (2017); the docufiction, *Il cratere*, dir. by Luca Bellino e Silvia Luzi (2017); and the dramas *Napoli velata*, dir. by Ferzan Özpetek (2017); *Veleno*, dir. by Diego Olivares; *Nato a Casal di Principe* dir. by Bruno Oliviero (2017); *Ammore e malavita*, dir. by Manetti Bros. (2017); *Il signor Rotpeter*, dir. by Antonietta De Lillo; and *L'equilibrio*, dir. by Vincenzo Marra (2017).

⁶ One of the earliest films shot in Naples bears the title *La camorra* (Roberto Troncone, 1905). On the long history of the Camorra on screen, see Enzo Grano, *Cent'anni di cinema napoletano e dintorni* (Napoli: Bellini, 1996), pp. 51-56; Maria Cristina De Crescenzo et al, *Napoli, una città nel cinema* (Naples: Dante e Descartes, 1995); *Napoli e il cinema (1896-2000)*, ed. by Pasquale Iaccio, Special issue of *Nord e Sud*, XLVII.4 (2000); *Naples et le cinema*, ed. by Adriano Aprà and Jean Gili (Milan: Fabbri, 1994).

and the associated emergence of a new generic form, as in the case of the ‘Malanapoli’ crime films of the 1970s – at no point in the past has the Camorra enjoyed such a continuous, abundant and prominent cinematic presence as in the period since the inauguration of the Second Republic. The origins of that cinematic engagement lie in the exponential expansion of the Camorra since the 1980s, and the devastating impact it has had on Naples and the surrounding hinterland.⁷ Its ongoing profusion, however, is also deeply indebted to the extraordinary international success of Matteo Garrone’s cinematic adaptation and Sky Italia’s televisual iteration of Roberto Saviano’s exposé of Camorra power in *Gomorra* (2006).⁸

While accounts of the Camorra’s rise would not penetrate national or international news media until the mid-2000s, already in the 1990s – in the midst of the ‘Neapolitan Renaissance’ and the apparent success of Antonio Bassolino’s mayoral administration in reforming Neapolitan politics, fostering urban citizenship, and regenerating the historic centre – a new generation of filmmakers was documenting the advance of the Camorra on the outskirts of Naples and in the vast metropolitan hinterland beyond.⁹ The thematic concerns and stylistic choices of the critically acclaimed films known collectively as the ‘New Neapolitan Cinema’ have been extremely influential in shaping the corpus of cinematic constructions of Naples and the Camorra since the 1990s. As Marlow-Mann outlines, the films of this loose ‘school’ rejected the celebratory, clichéd and commercial packaging of Naples and its distinctive cultural practices in the films of the ‘Neapolitan formula’, which emerged in the 1950s and came to serve as ‘the primary cinematic expression of Neapolitan culture throughout much of the twentieth century’.¹⁰ By shifting attention away from the historic centre as a site of visual and sensory pleasure and focusing instead on the non-descript, bleak and alienating hinterland settings of the post-industrial Neapolitan periphery, filmed in harsh lighting and cold colour palettes, the New Neapolitan Cinema displayed a primary concern with reconfiguring the way the city and its most marginalised subjects were depicted and narrated. It inaugurated what director Antonio Capuano termed a ‘new gaze’ on

⁷ On the rapid expansion and diversification of Camorra activities in the aftermath of the 1980 Campania earthquake, see Francesco Barbagallo, *Il potere della camorra (1793-1998)* (Turin: Einaudi, 1999); Isaia Sales, *Le strade della violenza: Malviventi e bande di camorra a Napoli* (Naples: L’ancora del Mediterraneo, 2006); Tom Behan, *See Naples and Die: The Camorra and Organised Crime* (London: Tauris Parke, 2009); John Dickie, *Mafia Republic: Cosa Nostra, ‘Ndrangheta, Camorra, from 1946 to the Present* (London: Sceptre, 2014).

⁸ Roberto Saviano, *Gomorra: viaggio nell’impero economico e nel sogno di dominio della camorra* (Milan: Mondadori, 2006); *Gomorra*, dir. by Matteo Garrone (2008); *Gomorra: la serie* (Sky Italia, 2014-).

⁹ For a comprehensive and authoritative account of the relationship between cinematic representations of Naples, the Camorra and the politics of the Neapolitan Renaissance, see Marlow-Mann, esp. pp. 92-97; 126-31; 179-85.

¹⁰ Marlow-Mann, p. 12.

Naples, one that was anthropological in its essence and that ‘reflect[ed] a desire to engage critically with Neapolitan society and culture, to problematise existing forms of representation, and to propose new ways of depicting the city and its culture’.¹¹

Consonant with its searing critique of the deep-seated problems at the heart of contemporary Neapolitan society was the New Neapolitan Cinema’s bleak assessment of the Camorra’s power over those who subsist on the fringes of Neapolitan territory and society. Films by Antonio Capuano (*Vito e gli altri*, 1991; *Pianese Nunzio, 14 anni a maggio*, 1996; *Luna rossa*, 2001; *La guerra di Mario*, 2005), Salvatore Piscicelli (*Baby Gang*, 1992), Mario Martone (*Teatro di guerra*, 1998), Nicola De Rinaldo (*La vita degli altri*, 2001), Vincenzo Marra (*Tornando a casa*, 2001) and Carlo Luglio (*Sotto la stessa luna*, 2006), portrayed the Camorra as the structuring axis of Neapolitan society, determining the life course of marginalised individuals, vulnerable to intimidation and exploitation. Nonetheless, as Marlow-Mann observes, overt denunciation of pervasive Camorra control was rare and explicit anti-Camorra resistance only occasionally articulated.¹² In this respect, the New Neapolitan Cinema departed from the established political approach to organised crime that dominated in the ‘Italian national film industry’ and the mainstream mafia film.¹³

The discrepancy between the New Neapolitan Cinema’s treatment of the Camorra and the national film treatment of organised crime reflects the distinctive history of the Camorra and its cinematic representation with respect to that of the Sicilian mafia. If, as Pauline Small asserts,

the tradition of Mafia film-making in Europe is generally auteur-led and the strain of Italian films is more explicitly anti-mafia [than its Hollywood counterparts], focusing on the social and political framework within which the Mafia flourishes and thereby meriting inclusion in the broad category of ‘Italian political cinema’,

¹¹ Capuano, cited in Marlow-Mann, pp. 196-97.

¹² Marlow-Mann, pp. 180-81. Among the exceptions cited are Maurizio Fiume’s *E io ti seguo* (2003); Antonio Capuano’s *Pianese Nunzio, 14 anni a maggio* (1996) and Vincenzo Terracciano’s *Per tutto il tempo che ci resta* (1998).

¹³ Marlow-Mann’s discussion of the differences between Maurizio Fiume’s *E io ti seguo* (2003) and Marco Risi’s *Fortapàsc* (2009) teases out the differences between New Neapolitan Cinema and national film industry approaches to political themes. While both treat the murder of journalist, Giancarlo Siani, the former’s use of archival footage and its less rhetorical, more ambiguous stance typify the restraint of the New Neapolitan Cinema while the latter’s heightened dramatization, spectacularization of violence and conventional approach to characterization and narrative techniques exemplify the national film industry production. Marlow-Mann, pp. 179-81.

the same cannot be said of the Neapolitan variant.¹⁴ Its roots lie not in the auteurist political tradition of Francesco Rosi, the prototype in Small's genealogy of the 'Italian' mafia film, but in popular and genre cinema.¹⁵ Rather than scrutinising and unambiguously denouncing the corrupt political powers that protect the perpetrators of organised crime, Neapolitan cinema has traditionally taken a much more ambiguous stance in relation to the Camorra and its diverse manifestations. As Marlow-Mann writes, the films of the *filone napoletano* or 'Neapolitan Formula' (i.e., the conventional and clichéd form of film-making that the New Neapolitan Cinema rejected)

define crime in moral rather than legal terms and arrive at a double standard, distinguishing between those activities and that are acceptable or even necessary to society and those that are not. Significant in this regard is the distinction frequently made between the *guappo* and the *camorrista*; the *guappo* represents a supposedly honourable tradition, which is seen as serving an important social function [...] while the *camorrista* represents the decline of that tradition into a criminal enterprise based solely around self-interest'.¹⁶

It follows, then, that the Camorra film as traditionally conceived differs from the 'Italian mafia film' – but also the New Neapolitan Cinema – in several respects; uninterested in political power or the nation-state, it retains an exclusive focus on the urban fabric, the social relations and the cultural practices particular to the city of Naples and its immediate surroundings. Most notably, it addresses an audience that is not only local but popular (comprised, that is, by “ordinary people” constructed as “other” to more economically, politically and culturally powerful social groups) and it does so through conscious deployment of popular cultural forms associated with the Neapolitan dramatic and musical

¹⁴ Pauline Small, 'Giordana's *I cento passi*: Renegotiating the Mafia Codes', *New Cinemas: Journal of Contemporary Film* 3.1 (2005), 41-54 (p. 44). The cited category of 'Italian political cinema' is from Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Companion to Italian Cinema* (London: BFI, 1996), p. 65.

¹⁵ Although Rosi addresses the Camorra in *La sfida* (1958), which tells the story of real-life boss Pasquale 'e Nola from the perspective of a local *guappo* who challenges the boss's power, the film's focus on the sympathetic *guappo* figure suggests a very different approach to the treatment of the Camorra with respect to that of the Sicilian mafia on the filmmaker's part. That apolitical stance is confirmed by Rosi's investigation of political corruption in Naples without reference to organised crime in *Le mani sulla città* (1962).

¹⁶ Marlow-Mann, p. 55. The *filone* was first classified and analysed by Vittorio Spinazzola in 'Il filone napoletano', in *Cinema e pubblico: lo spettacolo filmico in Italia 1945-65* (Milan: Bompiani, 1974), pp. 176-89.

traditions.¹⁷ In contrast to the mission of the Italian mafia film to educate and denounce the existence of collusion between local and national politicians and members of criminal organisations, the traditional function of the Camorra film is to entertain the local audience and bolster its sense of self-worth. Reflecting back in a positive light the dramas of its audience's interactions with the Camorra, the relativist distinction between *guappo* and *camorrista* serves to exonerate the minor transgressions of an audience compromised by its proximity to the organisation. At the same time, the *filone* indulges both a nostalgic desire for a return to simpler days and the fantasy of triumph over an increasingly violent criminal force.¹⁸

Recent changes to the Camorra as an organization and to Italian cinema's treatment of organised crime have reduced the traditional distance between the portrayal of the Camorra and that of other national mafias, facilitating the incorporation of the Camorra film under the broad umbrella of the 'Italian mafia film'. As the virtual extinction of the *guappo* in contemporary cinema best demonstrates, the honourable tradition represented by that figure did not survive the transformation of the Camorra in the 1980s and 1990s into a ruthless and all-encompassing global 'economic empire' prone to bitter internecine splintering and violent feud.¹⁹ Its subsequent emergence as Italy's foremost criminal organisation in the early 2000s facilitated an unprecedented identification between 'mafia' and 'Camorra' in the minds of the public – Neapolitan, national and international.²⁰

Meanwhile, the Italian mafia film was also undergoing change. Influenced by both the evolution of organised crime into the field of global business interests and by the success of television's more melodramatic approach to organised crime, Italian national film productions moved away from the political heritage of the mafia film in order to experiment

¹⁷ Alan O'Leary, 'Political/Popular Cinema' in *Italian Political Cinema: Public Life, Imaginary, and Identity in Contemporary Italian Film*, ed. by Giancarlo Lombardi and Christian Uva (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), pp. 107-17.

¹⁸ Appreciated by Stefano Masi as constituting a unique and valid alternative to the homogenisation of contemporary cinematic culture, the Neapolitan Formula films are criticised by Vittorio Spinazzola for their effusive, trivial, and apolitical homage to Naples and its inhabitants. Mediating between the two positions, Marlow-Mann reads the genre as 'articulat[ing] concerns about "progress" by displacing the political and social on to the emotional and personal'. See Stefano Masi, 'Il cinema regionale della sceneggiata fra marginalità e autodistruzione', *Cineforum*, 184 (1979), 266-81; Spinazzola, p. 189; Marlow-Mann, p. 65.

¹⁹ The return to a horizontal structure followed a unique period of centralization and hierarchical organisation on the part of Raffaele Cutolo's Nuova Camorra Organizzata, which dominated organised crime in Naples between the 1970s and the mid-1980s. See Barbagallo, Behan, Dickie, Sales.

²⁰ Figures published by the Ministero dell'interno indicate that the Camorra is now the largest and richest mafia-type organisation in Italy, with an estimated 6,700 affiliates; it is also charged with producing the greatest number of victims between 1960 and 2014. See <<http://www.lettera43.it/it/articoli/economia/2016/05/10/oltre-gomorra-i-numeri-della-camorra-in-mappe-e-infografiche/195589/>> [accessed 13 March 2018].

with a more diversified range of approaches and genres.²¹ The result, as Dana Renga has noted, is a corpus of mafia film that is ‘far from homogenous, and [...] increasingly indebted to traditional film models such as melodrama, the film noir, the political thriller, the woman’s film and the biopic’.²²

Among those more traditional and – we might add – popular film models to come to the fore in recent years is comedy. Although never entirely absent from the cinematic corpus, the mafia comedy has been relegated historically to the margins of critical concern and, like the mafia film more generally, associated exclusively with the Sicilian context.²³ The explicitly oppositional stance taken with respect to organised crime in the Italian mafia film tradition excluded the more ideologically ambiguous Camorra-focused films of the Neapolitan Formula from incorporation under that label, despite the rich comic vein running throughout. However, the greater alignment effected between the two corpuses in recent years has resulted in a more nationally recognisable treatment of Naples and the Camorra in a rich seam of film comedies characterised by stylistic innovation, generic hybridization and experimental approaches to non-cinematic media. These films include Paola Randi’s *Into Paradiso* (2010), Edoardo De Angelis’ *Mozzarella Stories* (2011) and the Manetti Bros’ *Song ‘e Napule* (2013) and *Ammore e Malavita* (2017).

What is recognisably ‘national’ about the comedies mentioned here (even when they are the product of Neapolitan directors and production houses, as in the case of *Mozzarella Stories*) is their rejection of the ambivalent and consolatory stance taken in relation to organised crime in the films of the Neapolitan Formula and their promotion instead of a clear anti-mafia stance and audience address.²⁴ However, the very choice of comedy itself – which is often associated with Naples but is also Italy’s most popular genre and one that has ‘played a key role in shaping national identity and aspirations’ – might also be deemed significant in

²¹ Film industry financing relies increasingly on non-theatrical sales including TV rights. For this reason, ‘the financial, systemic, political and stylistic influence of television on contemporary Italian cinema cannot be overemphasised’. Rascaroli, p. 286.

²² Dana Renga, ‘Modern Mob Movies: Twenty Years of Gangsters on Screen’, in Bondanella, pp. 238-45 (p. 239). The melodramatic thrust of the long-running series, *La piovra* (1984-2001), ‘where overt critiques of the Mafia are subordinated to sentimental concerns’ (Renga, p. 244), is generally agreed to have been particularly influential in this regard. See also Giancarlo Lombardi, ‘Soap Operas’, in ‘Italy’s Other Mafias in Italian Film and Television: A Roundtable’, ed. by Dana Renga and Allison Cooper, *The Italianist* 33.2 (2013), 215-18; and Rebecca Baumann, ‘Masculinity, Melodrama and Quality TV: Reviewing *La piovra*’, *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies*, 6.2 (2018), 209-22.

²³ Evidence of that marginalisation is provided by the absence of comedy among the forty films discussed in *Mafia Movies: A Reader*, ed. by Dana Renga (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).

²⁴ For Andrea Minuz, the contemporary mafia film in Italy distinguished by its anti-mafia stance and rhetoric: ‘il film di mafia è diventato film di antimafia, intrappolato nella retorica’. ‘Il nostro far West’, *Il Foglio*, 13 June, 2016 <<https://www.ilfoglio.it/gli-inseriti-del-foglio/2016/06/13/news/il-nostro-far-west-97203/>> [accessed 11 March 2018].

this regard.²⁵ As Fabrizio Montanari has observed, comedy is Italy's most commercially successful genre, appreciated for its ability to 'toccare temi molto peculiari e vicini alla cultura' and its 'authenticity' in drawing on local and national traditions, culture and customs.²⁶ Rather than confirming Small's intuition that what was emerging in the early 2000s was 'a form of post-political Mafia filmmaking, characterized by resignation to, though not at all acceptance of, the presence of illegality deeply embedded in Italian society', the contemporary Camorra comedy – like its Sicilian counterpart, represented by Pif's *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* (2013) – might be seen to constitute a new mode of anti-mafia engagement. Though politically aligned with the tradition of 'Italian political film', it eschews the gravitas, realism and overt denunciation that characterized the earlier tradition in favour of radically different methods designed to sensitize a new cinema-going public to the anti-mafia cause.²⁷ In this respect, the subgenre of Camorra film comedy is reflective of wider developments in Italian cinema, mirroring what Claudia Morgoglione terms the 'riscoperta della politica' in comic mode in the period in question.²⁸

The line of interpretation that sees comedy as a tool in the ideological battle against organised crime is well established in the criticism relating to the treatment of the Sicilian mafia in Italy's auteur cinema. There, the 'comedic turn' of the 1990s – in Roberto Benigni's *Johnny Stecchino* (1991), Daniele Cipri and Franco Maresco's *Lo zio di Brooklyn* (1995) and Roberta Torre's *Tano da morire* (1997) – was widely interpreted as an attempt to undercut the dangerous mythology that surrounds mafia power by subjecting it to ridicule. Small, for instance, writes that *Johnny Stecchino* 'encouraged the proposal that [...] at a critical period of violent mafia activity the organization could be usefully attacked through the medium of humour'.²⁹ Mario Aste, however, provides an alternative interpretation, arguing that the

²⁵ Luisella Farinotti, 'Comedy', in *Directory of World Cinema 6: Italy*, ed. by Louis Bayman (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), pp. 109-11 (p. 109).

²⁶ Fabrizio Montanari, 'I film nelle sale', in *È tutto un altro film: più coraggio e più idee per il cinema italiano*, ed. by Francesco Casetti and Severino Salvemini (Milan: Egea, 2007), pp. 11-52 (pp. 25, 42).

²⁷ Pauline Small, 'No Way Out: Set Design in Mafia Films', *Italian Studies*, 66:1 (2011), 112-27 (p. 127). Small's implicit categorization of earlier mafia film as unambiguously 'political' is challenged by Renga's observation that 'although the mafia cinema from the 1960s and 1970s by Francesco Rosi, Elio Petri and Damiano Damiani is commonly classified under the rubric of engaged or political cinema, several films by these directors share affinities with the Western, the Gothic film and the film noir'. Renga, pp. 238-39.

²⁸ Claudia Morgoglione, 'Saggio e naif, Bisio al Quirinale', *La Repubblica*, 13 March 2013.

<[http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-](http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2013/03/13/news/bisio_benvenuto_presidente-54475187/)

[cultura/2013/03/13/news/bisio_benvenuto_presidente-54475187/](http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2013/03/13/news/bisio_benvenuto_presidente-54475187/)> [accessed 15 December 2018]. The films discussed by Morgoglione include Riccardo Milani's *Benvenuto Presidente!* (2013); Roberto Andò's *Viva la libertà* (2013) and Massimiliano Bruno's *Viva l'Italia* (2012); the protagonists of all three are politicians whose comic potential is bound up with the foibles of national character and the recognised shortcomings of Italian political culture.

²⁹ Small, 'Giordana's *I cento passi*', p. 42.

film's use of comedy may be seen less as a critique of the mafia than as one of cinema's tendency to lionize mafia power. He argues, moreover, that *Johnny Stecchino*'s comic relief and its good-natured jesting about the mafia's mundane presence in everyday life represent an attempt 'to give back to the people a sense of pride that could have been lost through interference and intimidation', while simultaneously educating the audience and inviting their alignment with the anti-mafia struggle.³⁰

With these alternative readings in mind, I turn now to analyse *Into Paradiso* (2010), the debut feature film of Milanese director, Paola Randi, and *Song 'e Napule* (2013), a musical comedy by the established genre-film team of brothers Andrea and Antonio Manetti. Addressing primarily a national audience, these films characterize Italian identity as unstable or insecure and bound up with a distinct mode of Italian masculinity. Reflecting their distance from the realist gravitas of both the New Neapolitan Cinema and the political heritage of the Italian mafia film, *Into Paradiso* and *Song 'e Napule* reject the degraded, alienating and austere hinterland settings associated with the realist portrayal of organised crime in the New Neapolitan Cinema and beyond, and return the cinematic gaze to what the Manetti brothers term the 'bellezza cartolinesca' of the city's historic neighbourhoods.³¹ Like their Sicilian counterpart, Pif's 2013 *La mafia uccide solo d'estate*, they employ comedy, disingenuous characters, improbable heroes and innocent perspectives to trouble both realist and spectacularised representations of organised crime and they cast a wry smile over contemporary society and character. If that combination suggests continuities with the *commedia all'italiana* and its sardonic take on the repertoire of what Silvana Patriarca might term post-war 'Italian vices', the rather distant treatment of the Camorra and the implausible triumph enforced in both films shifts the narrative impulse away from the searing social critique of that earlier mode of Italian film comedy and towards a cultural fantasy more familiar to viewers of the 'Neapolitan Formula' film.³² The presence of such fantasy begs a series of questions about the role of comedy in the contemporary corpus of anti-Camorra films and the relationship between the new national cinematic interest in Naples and the Camorra and the existing body of Neapolitan popular culture, cinematic and otherwise. It also

³⁰ Mario Aste, 'Satirizing the Mafia: The Case of Johnny Stecchino', *American Journal of Italian Studies*, 22 (1999), 11-22 (p. 14).

³¹ Marco Manetti, cited in Davide Turrini, 'Song 'e Napule, il poliziesco dei Manetti Bros. "Cinema italiano senza fantasia"', *Il fatto quotidiano*, 13 April 2014 <<https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/04/13/song-e-napule-il-poliziesco-dei-manetti-bros-cinema-italiano-senza-fantasia/946846/>> [accessed 10 March 2018]. The film thus accords with the televisual strategy of revitalising Naples as a 'posto al sole', a site of visual pleasure, accompanied by a dark side. Lombardi, in *Italianist*.

³² Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

raises pertinent questions about the relationship between the national, high-culture discourse of *impegno* – political engagement, overwhelmingly in realist mode – and a perceived need to recuperate popular cinema, and with it a popular audience, on the part of the anti-Camorra struggle.³³

Into Paradiso and the Negation of Neapolitan Specificity

Paola Randi's *Into Paradiso* (2010) brings the cinematic exploration of Camorra rule in Naples into contact with the phenomenon of migration to Italy.³⁴ The film tells the story of Alfonso, a middle-aged biologist who is unwittingly embroiled with the Camorra when he is made redundant and turns to an old school friend turned politician, Vincenzo Cacace (Toni Servillo), for help. Charged by Cacace with the delivery of a 'gift', Alfonso witnesses a murder among the labyrinthine alleys of the old city and, seeking refuge from the gunmen, happens upon the 'Paradiso', a vibrant Sri Lankan community concealed behind unremarkable façade of a Neapolitan *fondaco* complex. There he commandeers a rooftop shack and encounters Gayan (Saman Anthony), a former cricket star who has only just arrived in Naples. Gayan's circumstances reflect Alfonso's own; having squandered the fruits of his sporting success, Gayan finds himself in Naples confronted by the bitter prospect of a menial job as a domestic worker. Over the course of the film, the friendly collaboration between Alfonso and Gayan combines with the sympathetic representation of the Sri Lankan community and an improbable triumph over the Camorra to neutralize the myth of organised crime and counter anti-migration discourses circulating in the Italian media and right-wing political spheres. The film's celebration of intercultural exchange between the native population and the new migrant community as the potential antidote to the disorder of organised crime is supported by the highly stylised and innovative incorporation of theatrical devices, stop-motion animation and video diorama and, more firmly, by the musical score's harmonious blend of electronica, spaghetti western harmonica tunes and Sri Lankan melodies.

³³ In this respect, the anti-Camorra comedy may be seen to accord with the wider post-ideological and post-hegemonic shift in ethically committed culture in Italy. *Postmodern Impegno: Ethics and Commitment in Contemporary Italian Culture*, ed. by Pierpaolo Antonello and Florian Mussgnug (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009).

³⁴ The intersection between the Camorra and migration is also seen in De Angelis' *Mozzarella Stories*, set in the Campanian countryside. Critical discussion of the relationship between *Into Paradiso* and *Mozzarella Stories* includes Giovanna De Luca, 'Into Paradiso and Mozzarella Stories: Comedy, Mafia and Immigration – An Interview with Paola Randi and Edoardo De Angelis', *Journal of Italian Cinema and Media Studies*, 3:3 (2015), 377-90; Laura Di Bianco, 'La funzione salvifica dell'immigrato: *Into Paradiso* di Paola Randi e *Mozzarella Stories* di Edoardo De Angelis', in 'Italy In & Out: Migrazioni nel/del cinema italiano', ed. by Vito Zagarrio, *Quaderni del CSCI: Rivista annuale di cinema italiano*, 8 (2012), 118-21.

Central to *Into Paradiso*'s celebration of intercultural collaboration and denigration of organised crime is its deployment of comic portrayal to weaken the implied threat of the Camorra. In accordance with that interpretation and the director's stated interest in 'deconstructing the myth of the malavita' is the film's humorous portrait of the Camorra boss, Don Fefé.³⁵ His high-pitched voice, his gorging on *sfogliatella* pastries and his predilection for playing with a remote-controlled car in the empty and surreal space of the abandoned supermarket which serves as his headquarters all suggest a mode of infantile masculinity far removed from familiar screen constructions of the boss as a dark and cold blooded embodiment of the threat of violence. Instead, his grotesque and dwarf-like physicality, generated by his ever-seated position and the exclusive use of a high-angle shot conventionally deployed to convey vulnerability or impotence, alludes to the withered or obese bodies of the socially bankrupt Sicilian mafiosi depicted in Daniele Cipri and Franco Maresco's surreal comedy *Lo zio di Brooklyn* (1995).³⁶ So too Don Fefé's foot soldiers, with their clichéd, Tarantinesque obsession with their image and the question of whether it's cooler to kill with a gun or a knife, pay parodic homage to the wannabe gangsters, Marco and Ciro, in Garrone's *Gomorra*, or Domenico and Vito in Stefano Incerti's *Prima del tramonto* (1999). Seduced by popular constructions of organised crime, they are but caricatures ripe for ridicule and easily dismissed. Their proclivity for sleeping on the job further undercuts the mythology of brutal Camorra power and renders them – no less than their boss – corporeal metaphors of the distortions and disfigurements of their world.³⁷ In this respect, *Into Paradiso*'s construction of the Camorra hints at a carnivalesque suspension of the established order of Camorra rule; eschewing *Gomorra*'s brutally realist (and realistic) representation of the economic and military power of the contemporary Camorra, *Into Paradiso* domesticates the threat of organised crime by reimagining it in the softer light of the 'Neapolitan Formula' tradition; that is to say, as unsophisticated and capable of being outwitted.³⁸

³⁵ Cited in Laura Di Bianco, 'Interview with Paola Randi (Rome, June 2012)', in *Italian Women Filmmakers and the Gendered Screen*, ed. by Maristella Cantini (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 253-61 (p. 256). On the film's deployment of grotesque corporeality for comic effect, see also De Luca, pp. 379-80.

³⁶ Of less direct relevance is the dwarf figure linked to the Camorra in Matteo Garrone's *L'imbalsamatore* (2002); rather than a grotesque, comic representation of Camorra power, Garrone's dwarf is entrapped within the system and treated with gravitas throughout.

³⁷ My reading is indebted to Ernest Hampson's discussion of *Lo zio di Brooklyn* and its construction of the mafiosi's 'withered or obese Sicilian bodies' as 'a race apart which the directors, with bitter humour, transform in to corporeal metaphors for the distortions and disfigurements paralysing their island'. 'Mocking the Mafia: Cipri and Maresco's Sicilian Apocalypse', in *The Seeing Century: Film, Vision and Identity*, ed. by Wendy Everett (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), pp. 88-97 (p. 93).

³⁸ *Into Paradiso* also shares with the 'mélodrame d'azione' variant of the 'Neapolitan Formula' films an insistence on 'the need for the individual to protect himself and his family from an external threat in the absence of a State or

Comic portrayal is not, however, limited to the *camorristi* but extends to the treatment of masculinity more generally to challenge the construction of ‘masculinity as a distinctive element of Italian national identity’ in cinematic representation.³⁹ Central to that task – an issue that has dominated the critical corpus to date – is the way in which the camera intercuts between Alfonso and Gayan and juxtaposes their similar actions in parallel situations so that the ‘marginalised or complicit’ Italian male identity represented by Alfonso ‘is constructed and negotiated by mirroring the comparably marginalised or complicit immigrant male identity of Gayan’.⁴⁰ In their different ways, Alfonso and Gayan recall the *inetto* figure of the *commedia all’italiana*, a figure ‘at odds with and out of place in a rapidly changing political, social and sexual environment’, but they also share much with the male protagonists of contemporary Italian comedies focused on male cohabitation in the wake of global economic crisis.⁴¹ Their psychological fragility, their naivety in the face of reality and their inability to navigate the alien culture in which they find themselves are the source of much of the film’s humour.

Gayan’s arrival in Naples marks his transition from nationally acclaimed cricket star to anonymous migrant worker.⁴² The star-struck reaction of a compatriot who recognises Gayan at the central train station in Naples and transports him to his cousin, Stanley, is testament to the acclaimed standing he enjoys in his homeland. That the elegant villa where he is deposited is not – as Gayan first assumes, relaxing into his sumptuous surroundings – Stanley’s residence but his place of employment as a domestic servant is revealed only as the two men arrive among the peeling walls, vivid colours and Sri Lankan music of Stanley’s true home: the communal space of the ‘fondaco Paradiso’. While the warmth of his compatriots’ welcome is equalled only by Gayan’s horror at the realisation of his diminished

institution capable of structuring society and aiding the individual’. Marlow-Mann, pp. 194-95. The two variants are discussed below, with reference to *Song ‘e Napule*.

³⁹ Enrico Carocci, ‘Migration, Masculinity and “Double Occupancy” in Paola Randi’s *Into Paradiso*’, *European Journal of Women’s Studies*, 23:4 (2016), 415-32 (p. 417).

⁴⁰ Gaoheng Zhang, ‘Comedy Film and Immigration to Italy: Reading 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 (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), pp. 263-79. Zhang’s construction (like Carocci’s) is indebted to Raewyn Connell’s typology of masculinity, according to which ‘men of complicit masculinity endorse the hegemonic masculine ideal by performing it studiously, and for the most part, successfully. However, those of marginalized masculinity achieve conformity to this ideal only very partially, from which they do not reap significant material or social benefits’. Zhang, p. 267; R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd edn., (Cambridge: Polity 2005), pp. 76-81.

⁴¹ On the former, see Jacqueline Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity and Italian Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), pp. xii; 2-17; on the latter, see Catherine O’Rawe, *Stars and Masculinity in Contemporary Italian Cinema* (New York: PalgraveMacmillan, 2014), pp. 69-93.

⁴² On the role played by cricket in defining masculinity as performance, and on the cricketer as symbol of courage and virility, see Carocci, p. 425.

social and economic status, his entry into the 'Paradiso' community strips him of the idealised masculinity associated with the figure of the cricketer in Sri Lankan society and envelopes him instead in the marginalised masculinity of the migrant worker in Italy. His enforced assumption of the subservient role of domestic care-giver to a manipulative and racist elderly woman reflects the racialized conventions of the Italian job market, premised upon the widespread colonial stereotype of the Asian male as effeminate.⁴³ The transition is not an easy one; only after the manipulative elderly woman in his charge feigns a fall in retribution for his victory over her at chess does Gayan begin to learn the rules of the game and adapt his behaviour accordingly. However, her insistence on his playing the role of Don Juan Pedro to her Donna Estrella, in imitation of the *Palpitazione d'amore* cult TV show of the 1980s, highlights the strictly performative quality of the migrant's submissive masculinity.⁴⁴

Italian masculinity, instead, is marked by lack or deficit, and epitomised by the figure of Alfonso. The casting of Gianfelice Imparato in the role of Alfonso draws on the actor's recent performance as a mafia courier in Garrone's *Gomorra* and takes up where that role left off, with Imparato nervously looking over his shoulder and anxious to escape the reach of organised crime. From the outset, and in ironic contrast to the Western-style soundtrack and typography of the opening credits,⁴⁵ Alfonso is constructed as an exaggeratedly meek character, overly attached to the memory of his dead mother, ill prepared for a competitive job market, and easily exploited by others. His inclination towards passivity, feminisation and the domestic are signalled by his unassertive demeanour, the blandness of his dress (the limp beige suit, un-ironed shirt and slip-on shoes of the middle-aged bachelor only occasionally relieved by the adoption of a woman's apron), and the casual manner in which he feeds and toilets the politician, Cacace, who has been held captive to prevent him betraying Alfonso's location to the Camorra.⁴⁶ Although the masculinity embodied by Alfonso is complex, as Carocci identifies, he consistently figures as a modern-day *inetto*, even when in possession of

⁴³ See Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). See also Carocci p. 245 on the historical factors contributing to the feminisation of the migrant worker in Italy.

⁴⁴ On the performative quality of Gayan's cousin Stanley's submissive migrant masculinity, see Carocci, p. 425.

⁴⁵ The soundtrack and typographical choice accord with Randi's preferred generic definition of the film as a 'metropolitan western'. Cited in Di Bianco, 'Interview with Paola Randi', p. 256.

⁴⁶ Cacace too is marked by lack – the lack of moral fibre and rhetorical vacuity associated with Berlusconi. His ready submission to Camorra power and his recurring refrain of 'in fondo, siamo tutti finiti' provide ample evidence of the moral resignation seen to characterise Italian politics, leading Randi to describe the politician as 'a typical product of Berlusconi's twenty-year term'. Cited in Di Bianco, 'Interview with Paola Randi', p. 256.

a gun.⁴⁷ This is perhaps best exemplified by the fact that only in the oneiric scenes heralded by his donning of earplugs does he gain any command of the world around him or imagine himself capable of winning over the object of his desire, Gayan's cousin Giacinta.

If, on the one hand, Alfonso's recourse to the non-rational mode of the daydream – his scientific training notwithstanding – serves to underline his embodiment of complicit or non-hegemonic masculinity, it also reinforces the parallel between Alfonso's and Gayan's predicaments and characters as, in a daydream scene of his own, Gayan will dream up the solution to the problem of how to remove Alfonso from the building. In his critique of *Into Paradiso*, Zhang observes a correspondence between the three oneiric scenes and that of US slapstick films of the 1930s. Drawing on Mark Winokur's observation that such films serve both to depict the physical dangers faced by immigrants and provide a 'fantasy method for avoiding that danger', Zhang compares Alfonso's use of the earplugs to detach himself from his physical environment to elucidate his problems with Charlie Chaplin's transformation of 'an alien, technological, industrial, politically amorphous world that governs the individual into a world that he administers'.⁴⁸ Such a reading posits Alfonso in the role of outsider or cultural ingénue, both in relation to the Sri Lankan community that surrounds him the third scene and, more markedly, in relation to the criminal world of the Camorra that awaits beyond the benign and convivial space of the *fondaco*.

The strong alignment between Alfonso and Gayan underpins the rich critical interrogation of *Into Paradiso*'s construction of the relationship between migration, masculinity and national identity. For Zhang, *Into Paradiso*'s interrogation of masculine models enables it to offer serious social commentary on the dark side of Italy and to encourage Italian audiences to reconsider the similarities and differences between Italians and migrant others.⁴⁹ Carocci, instead, views the film's delineation of a relational space in which identities can be renegotiated as pointing to the presence of a post-national consciousness which 'does not deny the national identity but questions it in the light of the new condition of

⁴⁷ Indeed, Alfonso's possession of the gun hints at a public 'performance of hyper-masculinity' designed to conceal and seal over an 'impotent, feminised' private self. See Reich, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Zhang, p. 275; Mark Winkour, *American Laughter: Immigrants, Ethnicity, and 1930s Hollywood Film Comedy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), pp. 47, 102.

⁴⁹ As Zhang identifies, germane to this discussion are the respective missions of the production companies: where the private entity, Acaba Produzioni, specializes in the depiction of Italy's dark side, including criminal organizations and migration, Cinecittà Luce – 'the national institutional company charged with the long-term mission of promoting economic growth, social engagement and environmental protection through film production' – funds films advancing a serious social commentary. Zhang, 'Comedy Film and Immigration to Italy', p. 276.

nation-states'.⁵⁰ He reads *Into Paradiso* in the light of Thomas Elsaesser's concept of 'double occupancy', a term intended to acknowledge the 'always already occupied' status of discursive and geopolitical territories and to denote the attitude of communities, subcultures and subnations 'who do not feel allegiance to the nation-state [...], and who live within their own diasporic communities and closed family or faith circles'.⁵¹ Uniting Elsaesser's theorization with discussion of Donald Pease's articulation of 'post-national narration', Carocci intimates that, in its aim to 'make visible the incoherence, contingency and transitoriness of national narratives' and in the 'position it takes against "national" narrations in relation to the categories of race, class and gender', *Into Paradiso* provides comic critical reflection on the stereotypes of masculinity and a corrective to the dominant cultural models of the Second Republic, prime among them Berlusconismo.⁵²

Striking in its absence from the critical literature is any discussion of the historical, political and cultural specificity of the film's Neapolitan setting, and how it might complicate arguments relating to Italian national identity. Although Carocci acknowledges that the condition of double occupancy 'significantly characterises both the Italian and the Sri Lankan protagonist', the understanding of the condition with respect to Italian identity remains vague and undefined.⁵³ The distinctive role played by Naples in the Italian culturally imaginary – where it has variously been constructed as the quintessence of Italian identity or, more often, its vilified Other, a thorn in the side of the modern nation-state – is entirely neglected. But if a crucial element of post-national narration is, as Carocci notes, that 'the integrity of the national identity is denaturalised and called into question, as the post-national narrations highlight the fissures of identity', it might readily be countered that Naples, in view of its complex historical relationship with Italy, is always already discursively occupied and inherently post-national.⁵⁴ Approached in that light, *Into Paradiso* must be seen simply to elide subnational fissures between Neapolitan and Italian identities in favour of post-national fissures of identity.

The absence of critical attention to the specificity of Naples' complex relationship with the Italian nation is entirely consonant with and symptomatic of *Into Paradiso*'s

⁵⁰ Thomas Elsaesser, *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 71. Cited in Carocci, p. 418.

⁵¹ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Real Location, Fantasy Space, Performative Place: Double Occupancy and Mutual Interference in European Cinema', in *European Film Theory*, ed. by Temenuga Trifanova (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 47-61 (pp. 50, 51).

⁵² Donald Pease, 'National Narratives, Post-National Narration', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 43.1 (1997), 1-23 (p. 7). Cited in Carocci, p. 418.

⁵³ Carocci, p. 428.

⁵⁴ Carocci, p. 419.

apparent lack of interest in Naples, Neapolitan cultural practices or Neapolitan identity per se.⁵⁵ In accordance with the director's observation that 'Naples represents the facts, contradictions, even the extraordinary aspects' of Italy in 'a more effective way',⁵⁶ Neapolitan culture and the Camorra are deterritorialised and dehistoricised in *Into Paradiso* in order to be nationalised and constructed, through contrast with the Sri Lankan community, as the exemplification of late-capitalist, post-industrial 'Italian vices'.⁵⁷ The portrait of the 'Paradiso' as a positive, communal space of hybrid vitality, collaborative family relations, harmoniously shared religious rituals, and warm welcome to strangers – and its contrast with the lifeless, anonymous spaces of the world beyond – deprives Naples of its traditional association with precisely the kind of relationality characterized here as Sri Lankan.⁵⁸ Every space beyond the *fondaco* and its immediate locality – from Alfonso's dreary apartment by the cemetery, to Vincenzo's squalid office, to the deserted shells of commercial buildings and the disused supermarket functioning as the Camorra headquarters – serves to align the city with a desolate post-industrial Italy characterized by a dearth of social relations and the threat of violence.⁵⁹ Thus, all that is traditionally associated with the culture of the city is repackaged as Sri Lankan, while all that is anonymous and dystopian is branded Italian.⁶⁰

The displacement of Naples and its cultural specificity is reflected in the choice of the rooftop setting of much of the film's action. [FIGURE 1] The appeal of the location is not, as we might expect, its provision of a panoptical perspective on the urban layout down below

⁵⁵ *Into Paradiso* is not alone among nationally produced films to display such an attitude to Naples; it shares with Roman director Francesca Comencini's *Lo spazio bianco* a similar disregard for the specificity of the Neapolitan cultural context that is so central to the novel from which it is adapted. See Claudia Karagoz, 'Motherhood Revisited in Francesca Comencini's *Lo spazio bianco*', in *Italian Women Filmmakers and the Gendered Screen*, pp. 103-19 (pp. 107-09).

⁵⁶ Randi, cited in De Luca, p. 382.

⁵⁷ The construction of Naples and the Italian south within the frame of a moralizing discourse and as a problematic of national moral character in the post-unification discourse of *meridionalismo* coincides with the construction of the Camorra as such an 'Italian vice' (Patriarca).

⁵⁸ The relationality of the Paradiso recalls Percy Allum's description of the historic centre in the 1970s as one in which apartment buildings function like micro-societies, operating autonomously and independently from the wider society. Percy Allum, *Politics and Society in Post-war Naples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 59.

⁵⁹ The contrast between the two models maps onto that between the *Gemeinschaft* (communal) and the *Gesellschaft* (associational) society identified by Ferdinand Tönnies in 1887 and applied to Naples in the 1970s by Allum, pp. 58-61. Allum's articulation of the psychological, social and economic effects of the imposition of *Gesellschaft* structures on an essentially *Gemeinschaft* society in post-Unification Italy is analysed in relation to the New Neapolitan Cinema by Marlow-Mann.

⁶⁰ In describing the 'Paradiso' as 'un mondo à se, distaccato da Napoli per tradizioni popolari ma vicino alla città per esuberanza di colori', Nicoletta Dose alerts us to the ambiguity underpinning the film's replacement of Neapolitan with Sri Lankan culture. 'Un gioiello che brilla nella luce vigorosa degli abitanti napoletani', <<http://www.mymovies.it/film/2010/intoparadiso/>> [accessed 02 March 2018]. The lack of relationality depicted here is also observed in other Camorra films and mediated through food practices, as discussed by Amy Boylan, 'Toxic Tables: The Representation of Food in Camorra Films', in 'Italy's other Mafias', *The Italianist*, 33.2 (2013), 210-13.

but the relief it affords from the noisy confusion of the street. In interview with Di Bianco, the director compared Naples with Guatemala, where only by shutting her ears could she could get some peace, and stated: ‘in Naples, on that roof, it was the same’.⁶¹ The escapist logic implicit in that statement mirrors the escapist impulse at work in Alfonso’s intermittent use of earplugs to detach himself from his physical environment and activate his imagination in search of a solution to his predicament. Two of the three oneiric scenes characterise Alfonso as ‘un cervello in fuga sui tetti che interpreta il crimine e le disfunzioni sociali’ and depict him engaged in intense logical recall, deploying imaginative visualization to better understand the risks he faces.⁶² The third, however, eschews logical recall in favour of an orientalist romantic fantasy. Earplugs in and oblivious to the *camorristi*’s invasion of the ‘Paradiso’, Alfonso envisages himself dressed as an Indian bridegroom, drinking champagne with his beloved Giacinta and lustfully ogling her in the highly performative mode of the Latin Lover. While the scene openly acknowledges its orientalist underpinnings through Giacinta’s querying of Alfonso’s Indian garb and ‘lampoons’ the fantasy of a harmonious intercultural mixing, as Zhang identifies, it also speaks to *Into Paradiso*’s broader rejection of realism and cultural specificity in favour of a fantastical projection of, and ideological investment in, a multicultural society immune to familiar Italian vices.⁶³

Despite leaving Naples and its people largely unrepresented, the film’s setting is not, I would argue, entirely incidental. Rather, the choice of Naples rests not only on its association with the Camorra but also on a stereotypical perception of the city as a site of cultural alterity, intercultural exchange and, more specifically, as ‘un luogo di alchimia dove non soltanto tutto sia possibile ma dove tutto per vie in un certo senso miracolose, trova una soluzione insperata e inaspettata’.⁶⁴ It is this final quality that comes to the fore in the showdown between Alfonso and Don Fefé at the film’s close. Renewing the terms of a familiar metaphor that conceptualizes the Camorra as a disease and a threat to the wellbeing of the national body, Alfonso explains that sometimes, in the process of migration, ‘certe cellule non ascoltano più, impazziscono’. He goes on to suggest that, if not corrected, those cells destroy all around them; his work as a scientist is to intervene and ‘dirgli di fare apoptosi,

⁶¹ A subsequent comparison with Morocco in the same interview suggests that a certain exoticism underpins Randi’s engagement with and interpretation of Naples as an alien and orientalist space. Di Bianco, ‘Interview with Paola Randi’, p. 258.

⁶² Alessandra Pagliacci, ‘Into Paradiso: Un film di Paola Randi’, <<http://www.puntodisvista.net/2011/02/into-paradiso-un-film-di-paola-randi>> [accessed 10 August 2016].

⁶³ See Zhang, pp. 275.

⁶⁴ Claudio Bondi, ‘Il nuovo cinema italiano racconta il Meridione: tra cronaca e storia’, *Annali d’italianistica* 30.2 (2012), 75-94 (p. 90).

cioè autodistruggersi per far campare tutte le altre'. While the sudden eruption of a shoot-out offers ready exemplification of Alfonso's point, Gayan's timely arrival in a Piaggio *Ape* wittily parodies the *deus ex machina* device and acknowledges the highly improbable, fantastical, even 'miraculous' nature of our heroes' escape.

Randi's admission that 'something magical happens when two individuals like Gayan and Alfonso are saved from the murderous hands of the Camorra – a situation where, in reality, they probably would have been victims' confirms *Into Paradiso*'s status as a work of cultural fantasy.⁶⁵ That fantasy – which sees intercultural collaboration as a potential cure for the pre-eminently Italian vice of organised crime – coincides with a common left-wing political construction of Italy's new migrant communities as having a 'funzione salvifica' for a degenerate and moribund Italy. If that fantasy 'puts an unreasonable moral burden on the most marginalised social agents', as Di Bianco has noted, it also rests on a romanticised and highly nostalgic understanding of the Camorra and its effects.⁶⁶ Eager to display its intercultural credits and post-national consciousness, it appears oblivious to subnational inflections of the same and prone to reiterate problematic historical discourses and stereotypes. Thus, while embracing the socio-political critique of the New Neapolitan Cinema in relation to the depiction of the Neapolitan hinterland, the orientalist underpinnings of *Into Paradiso*'s investment in the *centro storico* as a site of alterity functional to the salvation of the nation suggests that the national cinematic gaze on Naples, as represented by the film, remains somewhat short-sighted and rose-tinted.

***Song 'e Napule* and the Rehabilitation of Neapolitan Popular Culture**

If *Into Paradiso*'s approach to Naples and the Camorra augurs ill for the national cinematic gaze, the Manetti Bros.' *Song 'e Napule* provides an important corrective lens. The film, a hybrid musical comedy which anticipates the critical success of the directorial team's more recent follow-up, *Ammore e malavita* (2017), has been termed a 'curioso esperimento low budget di incrocio tra generi, dal mélo al poliziesco, dalla commedia all'action movie'.⁶⁷ Its melodramatic conception and romantic subplot, its formulaic structure and popular address signal its indebtedness less to Roberta Torre's pioneering *Tano da morire* (1997) than to the Neapolitan form of the *sceneggiata* – a staged work whose title and narrative derive from a

⁶⁵ De Luca, p. 385.

⁶⁶ Di Bianco, 'La funzione salvifica dell'immigrato', p. 258.

⁶⁷ Riccardo Lascialfari, '*Song 'e Napule* dei Manetti Bros.: Il metodo Manetti', *Cineforum*, 535 (June 2014), 36-38 (p. 36).

popular Neapolitan song.⁶⁸ As Marlow-Mann writes, ‘the song is literally “sceneggiata” (scripted) and the resulting narrative is then punctuated by a series of musical numbers culminating in the title song’.⁶⁹ As with that earlier tradition, the use of contemporary popular music in *Song ’e Napule* roots the film in its Neapolitan setting and augments the emotional resonance of the narrative.

In an updated rendition of the traditional form, *Song ’e Napule* tells the story of Paco Stillo (Alessandro Roja), a pompous, classically trained pianist whose political connections see him employed by the police, despite his apparent unsuitability for the role. A chance encounter with the hard-nosed detective, Cammorata (Paolo Sassanelli), results in an undercover role and Stillo’s transformation into ‘Pino Dinamite’, keyboard player for the band of neo-melodic star, Lollo Love (Giampaolo Morelli). The band has been hired to perform at a Camorra wedding which will be attended by Ciro Serracane, or ‘‘O fantasma’ (Peppe Servillo), the brutal and faceless killer Cammarota has been pursuing for years. Stillo thus finds himself, incongruously, on the frontline in the fight against organised crime. The narrative climaxes with the identification of Serracane, a thrilling car chase in an Alfa Romeo Giulia, the knife-point capture of Lollo and Pino’s heroism in saving his friend’s life, killing Serracane and sealing the love of Lollo’s sister, Marianna (Serena Rossi) in the process. The concluding scenes depict Pino’s resignation from the police force in order to continue his musical adventure with his new friends and, in accordance with the demands of the *sceneggiata* tradition, the film closes with the performance of the title song, ‘Song ’e Napule’.

Like *Into Paradiso*, *Song ’e Napule* displays a post-national consciousness, denaturalizing and calling into question the integrity of national identity, in the mode identified by Pease. In contrast to *Into Paradiso*, it does so not by eliding subnational fissures of identity but by highlighting them and ‘mak[ing] visible the incoherence, contingency and transitoriness’ of the discourse of *impegno* and its centrality to the hegemonic construction of Italian national culture. It also displays a deep investment in Naples and engages closely with Neapolitan identity and its popular culture from the outset. The opening credits, with their

⁶⁸ Loosely inspired by the real-life story of Sicilian butcher and mafioso, Tano Guarrasi, *Tano da morire* is billed as the first musical mafia comedy [about the mafia] and combines the use of flashback, grotesque tones, comic music and dance numbers with allusions to *Saturday Night Fever*, and musical styles from tammuriata and tango to rap and techno.

⁶⁹ Marlow-Mann, p. 43. For a more detailed discussion of the *sceneggiata*, its socio-cultural contextualization and its relationship with cinema, see *La Sceneggiata: rappresentazione di un genere popolare*, ed. by Pasquale Scialò, (Naples: Guida, 2010); Emiliano Morreale, ‘La sceneggiata e il filone napoletano’, in *Così piangevano: il cinema melò negli anni cinquanta* (Rome: Donzelli, 2011), pp. 109-25.

rapid montage of street scenes, place names, commercial shop fronts and cinematic postcards, are interwoven with rap artist Franco Ricciardi's performance of 'Si mo dicive primme' to generate a strong sense of place and cultural heritage and to establish contemporary Naples as a fast-paced, hyper-modern urban environment and a site of intense visual, gastronomic and musical pleasure.⁷⁰ The montage technique recurs over the course of the film, punctuating the count-down to the wedding day, and is complemented by liberal allusion to popular Neapolitan cultural forms, foremost among them the Malanapoli crime films of the 1970s and the *sceneggiata* tradition.⁷¹

In contrast to *Into Paradiso*, the humour of the film is directed not at the Camorra, which retains a threatening aura throughout, but at the effete and rarefied persona of Stillo, and at the yawning gap between the high national culture he represents and values and the popular culture of the world he inhabits but denigrates. Rather than challenging the cinematic representation of Italian national identity through comparison with migrant masculinity, *Song 'e Napule*'s construction of 'complicit masculinity' is deployed to deflate the sense of superiority underlying Stillo's discomfort with the distinctive image and culture of his native city.⁷² His initial appearance in interview with the Questore – one of two such scenes – presents Stillo as a caricature of the unworldly intellectual highbrow and serves to establish his alterity and unusually extreme moral rectitude. Sporting the scholarly glasses and floppy hair that will earn him his 'Harry Potter' nickname and exhibiting palpable embarrassment at his recourse to the *raccomandazione*, he responds warmly to the Questore's tirade against Italy as a 'paese di gnorri', wholeheartedly approving of his insistence on police impartiality and applauding his rare integrity in the fight against nepotism. The Questore's astonished response, hasty backtracking and eagerness to find a suitable placement for the politically connected pianist serves to demonstrate that nepotism is alive and well and to demonstrate that Stillo, rather than the Questore, is the true rarity.

⁷⁰ Ricciardi's work also features prominently in the second series of *Gomorra: La serie*, where his 'Uommene' is described by one critic as 'il sunto della trama'. For more detailed discussion of the *Song 'e Napule* soundtrack see, Massimo Privitera, 'Soundtrack: "Song'e Napule" di Pivio & Aldo De Scanzi', <<http://www.cinefile.biz/soundtrack-song-e-napule-di-pivio-aldo-de-scanzi>> [accessed 05 March 2018].

⁷¹ The term 'Malanapoli' denotes the variously named Camorra-focused films of the 1970s, situated at the intersection of the 'Neapolitan formula' and the *poliziottesco* genres. Firmly rooted in the urban fabric of city and exploiting its picturesque qualities and melodramatic tradition, the Malanapoli films were a highly commercial product predicated on the glamorization of the Camorra and of the lone lawman. See Enzo Grano, *Cent'anni di cinema napoletano e d'intorni* (Napoli: Bellini, 1996) pp. 99-109; Maria De Crescenzo, 'Dal "western alla napoletana" alla camorra organizzata', in De Crescenzo et al, pp. 64-68.

⁷² Connell, pp. 79-80.

Stillo's alterity and his farcical obsession with the letter of the law are liberally exploited to comic effect in the early stages of the film. His insistence on cycling around Naples, listening to classical music and holding up traffic by obeying red lights or bravely attempting to use the cycle lanes implausibly traced on the crowded footpaths, combines with his priggish outrage at his neighbours' failure to sort their recycling to suggest that he might be rather more at home, morally and temperamentally, in Bologna than in Naples.⁷³ His alignment with a Northern mentality that views itself as morally and culturally superior, and that disdains Naples and its popular culture, is made explicit in the course of his preparation for his undercover mission, the success of which will depend on his ability to pass as a plausible member of Lollo Love's ensemble. Challenged by Cammarota about his tell-tale foregoing of the local dialect, Stillo is reluctant to confirm his Neapolitan identity; his declaration 'E che dovrei essere orgoglioso? Questa città è la fogna d'Italia, un paradiso dell'illegalità' results in the charge that he is an 'amante di Bossi'. The episode underlines Stillo's outsider status and his internalisation of the anti-Neapolitan prejudice prevalent in the racist discourse of the Northern League and in the longer history of the Southern Question.⁷⁴ It also brings to the light-hearted treatment of such discourses in contemporary film comedies – most notably Luca Miniero's hugely popular *Benvenuti al sud* (2010) – an overtly political interpretation.⁷⁵

Stillo's equally disdainful attitude towards Neapolitan popular culture is evidenced in his dismissal of the neomelodic form as 'musica per minorati' and his embarrassed attempt to hide his purchase of Lollo Love's back catalogue beneath a Rachmaninov CD. Teased for his 'gusti differenziati' by the beautiful cashier he will later discover to be Lollo's sister Marianna, Stillo's insistence that the CDs are not for him and that Lollo's music 'fa proprio cacare' heightens the implied gulf between classical and neomelodic music. It also resounds

⁷³ Rather than conflicting with the Manetti Bros.' declared intention to 'mettere due napoletanità a confronto: quella di via dei Mille o Posillipo, con quella più popolare dei quartieri', my reading of Stillo's embodiment of Italian national culture implies a direct alignment between the upper-middle-class world of Naples' Via dei Mille and national culture. Cited in Lascialfari, p. 37.

⁷⁴ On the legacy of the conflation between Naples and the South in the nineteenth-century Italian imaginary in the discourse of the Northern League, see John Dickie, 'The South as Other: from Liberal Italy to the Lega Nord', *Culture and Society in Southern Italy*, ed. by Anna Bull and Adalgisa Giorgio, Supplement to *The Italianist*, 14 (1994), 124-40. On southern Italians' internalisation of negative views of the south, see Gabriella Gribaudo, 'Images of the South: The "Mezzogiorno" as Seen by Insiders and Outsiders', in *The New History of the Italian South*, ed. by Robert Lumley and Johnathan Morris (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1997), pp. 83-111 (p. 109).

⁷⁵ Like *Song 'e Napule*, *Benvenuti al sud* deploys a host of negative stereotypes about the South to comic effect and in order to posit its lifestyle and culture as an idyllic and socially harmonious antidote to the perceived isolation and bleakness of a more capitalist North. That the film's recuperation of Southern culture is premised on a highly unrealistic portrayal unaffected by economic concerns and on the disavowal of the presence of organised crime signals the ongoing investment in the South as a space of alterity uncontaminated by modernity.

with the characteristic disparagement educated Italians can convey with respect to popular cultural forms.⁷⁶ The film's broader depiction of the neomelodic scene both plays on and counters the industry's reputed association with the Camorra.⁷⁷ The casting of rapper Franco Ricciardi in the role of the boss, Scornaienco, and that of Ciro Petrone – the skinny, Y-fronted AK-47-brandishing poster boy for Garrone's *Gomorra* – in the role of Lollo's guarded and vaguely hostile right-hand man, Pastetta, provides an air of threat to the construction of the band and the neomelodic industry more generally. That more negative construction is alleviated by the casting of Giampaolo Morelli in the role of Lollo; as the title character of *L'Ispettore Coliandro*, the tongue-in-cheek television cop show also directed by the Manetti Bros., Morelli is associated not only with the struggle against crime but also with the kind of popular appeal, haplessness and thwarted ambition that underpins the characterisation of Lollo.⁷⁸ Over the course of the narrative, the revelation of Lollo's distance from the Camorra, the demonstration of his bravery, loyalty and friendship, and the disclosure of his contractual entrapment by an exploitative manager all serve to redeem the artists and music – if not the managerial regime – of the neomelodic industry.⁷⁹

Stillo's undercover journey into the heart of Neapolitan culture serves to demonstrate that his prejudicial hostility towards his own city and its popular classes is both unfounded and untenable. It is in the second interview of the film – in which he appears in the guise of Pino Dinamite to audition as keyboard player for Lollo Love – that Stillo finally and convincingly demonstrates his *napoletanità* and begins the journey towards appreciation, even love for Naples and its culture. The interview takes place in a bar over table football and centres not on the candidate's musical ability but his emotional aptitude; what Lollo is looking for is the 'passione, sentimento, cuore' underpinning the neomelodic genre. Derided for his defence in purest Italian of the need for knowledge of musical grammar and branded a

⁷⁶ For discussion of that attitude in relation to cinema, see Alan O'Leary's interrogation of the *cinepanettone* and the survey of responses by Italians who shun the phenomenon in *Fenomenologia del cinepanettone* (Soveria Manelli: Rubettino, 2013).

⁷⁷ On the association between the neomelodic industry and the Camorra, see Jason Pine, *The Art of Making Do in Naples* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Vincenzo Perna, 'Killer Melodies: The Musica Neomelodica Debate', in *Made in Italy: Studies in Popular Music*, ed. by Franco Fabbri and Goffredo Plastino (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 194-206; and Roberto Saviano, 'Canzone criminale: La musica di Gomorra', *La Repubblica*, 12 February 2012. <http://www.repubblica.it/spettacoli-e-cultura/2012/02/12/news/saviano_neomelodici-29737271/> [accessed 6 March 2018].

⁷⁸ The *L'ispettore Coliandro* series (2006-) is a RAI Fiction production inspired by the character developed by Carlo Lucarelli in varied media including short story, novel and comic strip.

⁷⁹ *Song 'e Napule* thus follows in the wake of the New Neapolitan Cinema's *Pianese Nunzio*, 14 anni a maggio, dir. by Antonio Capuano (1996) but goes further to convey the separation of the music from the Camorra's putative hold over the industry. Through the protagonist's capitulation to pressure to 'cantare per noi', *Pianese Nunzio* implies the impossibility of participating in the neomelodic and evading Camorra power.

‘straniero’ from Milan, Stillo quickly recovers himself to reclaim his Neapolitan identity with the words: ‘Ma quale Milano? Song ’e Napule. Song nato a Napule, figlie ’e genitori napoletani... e pure ’o re ro’ bigliardinò!’. The quick recourse to Neapolitan dialect, the deployment of the appropriate accent and the allusion to popular culture all serve as a guarantor of Stillo’s authentic *napoletanità* and his ability to display the necessary ‘cuore’ associated with the world of neomelodic music and, by extension, Neapolitan popular culture more generally.

Stillo’s reclaiming of his Neapolitan identity reflects the film’s wider strategy of recuperating Naples, its popular music and cinematic culture, on the part of the anti-Camorra resistance. The opening credits montage and its subsequent segue into a 1970s cop show aesthetic establishes the narrative and stylistic construction of contemporary Naples as a site of both visual pleasure and lawlessness and signals the film’s debt to the ‘Malanapoli’ tradition of the 1970s. The *Malanapoli* cycle is firmly rooted in the urban fabric of the city, exploiting its picturesque setting to full effect. Its commercial thrust is predicated on the seductive emotional appeal of its formulaic narratives and on the picturesque and melodramatic qualities associated with the history of the cinematic treatment of *napoletanità*.⁸⁰ *Song ’e Napule* draws directly on that tradition but also updates it in the light of the post-national realities of contemporary Italian society by citing the iconic image of a kneeling Maurizio Merli with a golden bullet exploding from his gun on the poster for Umberto Lenzi’s *Napoli violenta* (1976) in a slow-motion sequence culminating in a freeze-frame shot of a black female officer similarly positioned and poised to shoot. [FIGURE 2] The reworking of the original format continues in *Song ’e Napule*’s innovative conflation of two distinct variants that can be identified within the 1970s genre – the nostalgic and musical ‘melò d’azione’ associated with the figure of Mario Merola and premised upon a conflict between an older style ‘guappo buono’ and a new, more ruthless criminal; and the ‘western alla napoletana’, premised upon a more up-to-date cop show format structured around a conflict between violent Camorristi and the noble lawmen protecting the city.⁸¹ That conflation of the two variants in *Song ’e Napule*’s melodramatic cop musical facilitates a celebration and rehabilitation of Naples and its culture without any hint of the nostalgia or

⁸⁰ Roberto Curti, ‘Crime Naples Style: The Guapparia Movie’, *Offscreen*, 11.11 (2007) <http://offscreen.com/view/naples_style> [accessed 14 March 2018]

⁸¹ On the ‘western alla napoletana’, see De Crescenzo, pp. 64-68; A. Papa, ‘Una stagione alla napoletana’, *La voce della Campania*, a6.20 (November 1978), p. 54. On the figure and films of Mario Merola, see Marcello Ravveduto, *Napoli... serenata calibro 9: Storia e immagini della camorra tra cinema, sceneggiata e neomelodici* (Naples: Liguori, 2006), pp. 22-37.

sympathy for an old-style Camorra presented in the ‘melò d’azione’ variant.⁸² The film’s simultaneous appropriation of the neomelodic music conventionally associated with the Camorra on the part of the anti-Camorra resistance bridges the implied divide between a Neapolitan audience versed in the popular cultural traditions of the city and a national audience versed in the language of cinematic *impegno* and the associated category of ‘cinema civile’.⁸³

Rather than the ‘double occupancy’ discussed by Carocci in relation to *Into Paradiso*, *Song ’e Napule* may be seen to display the ‘double consciousness’ and ‘dual address’ characteristic of accented cinema, as outlined by Hamid Naficy.⁸⁴ Naficy uses the concept of accent to describe the relationship between the cinema of exiled, diasporic or postcolonial directors and the supposedly neutral or value-free dominant cinema produced by a given society’s reigning mode of production. I would suggest, however, that the concept might also be applied to the relationship between what we might term local or regional cinematic production in Italy and national cinematic practices, values, discourses and tropes. *Song ’e Napule* shares with accented cinema an ‘interstitial status [...] resonating against the prevailing cinematic production practices at the same time as benefiting from them’.⁸⁵ Just as ‘many exilically accented films are intensely place-bound, and their narratives are driven by a desire either to recapture the homeland or to return to it’, so too *Song ’e Napule* displays a desire to rehabilitate Naples and recuperate its popular culture.⁸⁶ The film shares with Naficy’s understanding of accented cinema a tendency to ‘emphasize visual fetishes of homeland and the past (landscape, monuments, photographs, souvenirs, letters), as well as visual markers of difference and belonging (posture, look, style of dress and behaviour) [while also stressing] the oral, the vocal, and the musical – that is, accents, intonations, voices, music, and songs that also demarcate individual and collective identities’.⁸⁷ And, like accented cinema, at the core of *Song ’e Napule* is a journey that sees old identities being shed and new ones fashioned.

⁸² For Grano, the combination between nostalgic portrayal and popular culture represented a particularly intense ideological and moral threat: ‘Quel che francamente è da censurare è il pericolosissimo intruglio di cultura popolare e cultura delinquenziale, secondo i dettami romantici della guapparia’. Grano, p. 108.

⁸³ Minuz characterises ‘cinema civile’ as ‘cinema per smuovere le coscienze, sensibilizzare, denunciare’. Minuz, ‘Il nostro far west’.

⁸⁴ Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁸⁵ Naficy, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Naficy, p. 27.

⁸⁷ Naficy, pp. 24-5.

The upshot of *Song 'e Napule* is that, just as neomelodic music is constructed in the film as ‘cosa sacra da salvar’ – something too good to be left to the Camorra, as it were – so too Naples and Neapolitan culture are shown to merit a similar reassessment. By the end of the film, Stillo has come to a new appreciation of himself and of Naples, saying:

da quando vi conosco, vedo le cose in maniera diversa, più con il cuore e meno con la testa. Ed è un po’ come Napoli, no? Pensiamo a tutte le porcherie che succedono tutti i giorni, e dimentichiamo di quanto è bella. Come si fa a non amare una città come questa?

Exemplified here is a shift from a cognitive to an affective mode of understanding that accords with Iain Chambers’ theorization of Naples as a city that ‘proposes a diverse sense of “understanding”, one that requires us to supplement a taxonomic cartography with an atlas of emotion’.⁸⁸ In gaining that greater sense of understanding, Stillo becomes a better man and gains a new affection and appreciation for his city and its culture. If the former is demonstrated by the bravery Stillo shows in saving Lollo’s life, the latter is exemplified by his accomplishment of an unspecified bending of the rules, ‘una cosa cento per cento napoletano’, to liberate Lollo from his exploitative contract; it is further sealed by his decision to leave the police force and continue his musical adventure with the band.

Song 'e Napule’s easy and formulaic resolution is, of course, steeped in the Sciascian ‘alluvione di retorica’ identified by Minuz as the staple of the contemporary anti-mafia film.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the film provides a novel and welcome approach to Naples, in the resolution it provides between the city’s popular culture and the national discourse of *impegno*, which has become a yardstick of moral and aesthetic value against which cultural production is measured. In its dual address to popular and cultured audiences, in its celebration of the visual pleasures of the city centre and its historic heritage, and in its recuperation of popular music and culture on the part of the anti-Camorra struggle, *Song 'e Napule* advances what we might think of as a mode of accented cinema that amounts to an accented mode of *impegno*. Whether such cinema can indeed promote ‘la sensibilizzazione

⁸⁸ Iain Chambers, ‘Naples: A Porous Modernity’, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 92.

⁸⁹ Minuz, ‘Il nostro far west’; Leonardo Sciascia controversially denounced the ‘attuale consapevolezza [...] alluvionata di retorica’ which simplified the problem of mafia power and established guilt by association as a racially prejudiced and crude instrument of power putting democracy at risk. ‘I professionisti dell’Antimafia’, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 10 January 1987.

della coscienza, la cultura della legalità' of 'cinema civile' remains to be seen.⁹⁰ However, as *Song 'e Napule* challenges *cultura impegnata* to review its traditional disdain for popular audience and cultures, to expand beyond its usual constituency and to reach out to audiences whose potential participation in anti-mafia struggles is often discounted at the outset. Underpinning that challenge is the anticipation that both parties will be enriched by the encounter and the anti-Camorra struggle augmented.

Conclusion:

Returning to the question of national cinema and its construction of Naples, the fact that Stillo's articulation of his new appreciation for his native city and its culture is structured around the gaze – 'da quando vi conosco, vedo le cose in maniera diversa' – serves to remind us of the indivisible connection between vision and understanding.⁹¹ If, as Franco Cassano suggests, in relation to the politics of cartography, 'very few things are more powerful than gazes; very few things naturalize and neutralize hierarchies more than they do', a comparative study of *Into Paradiso*'s and *Song 'e Napule*'s respective approaches to Naples enables us to distinguish between a national cinematic gaze that naturalizes and neutralizes existing cultural hierarchies, in the manner foreseen by Cassano, and one that overtly challenges the very presumption of such a hierarchical dynamic.⁹² The former may be seen in *Into Paradiso*'s implicit but unquestioning understanding of Naples as a site of cultural alterity; blind to subnational inflections, the narrative naturalizes and neutralizes problematic historical discourses and stereotypes relating to Naples and the Italian south while parading its intercultural sensibility and post-national consciousness with respect to current realities. It thus misses an opportunity to expose the myth of Italian homogeneity and to articulate a more pluralistic understanding of identity capable of embracing diverse migrant identities alongside diverse subnational Italian identities. In contrast, *Song 'e Napule*'s explicit engagement with Neapolitan cultural practices encourages us to reconceptualise cultural alterity in terms of accent and cultural distinctiveness. Its celebration of Neapolitan popular culture, in tandem with the deployment of the 'national' cultural discourse of *impegno* with specific reference to the anti-Camorra struggle, encourages a broader reframing of the

⁹⁰ Minuz, 'Il nostro far west'.

⁹¹ For a detailed discussion of the role played by the gaze in critical theory constructions of Naples, see Ruth Glynn, 'Porosity and its Discontents: Approaching Naples in Critical Theory', *Cultural Critique* (forthcoming 2019).

⁹² Franco Cassano, *Southern Thought and Other Essays on the Mediterranean* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), p. xlv.

discussion of Italian national culture in the terms of differently accented practices, discourses and interpretations that need not be structured as a hierarchy and that might provide a more nuanced and pacific understanding of the relationship between the national and the local, wherever that may be.

With respect to the role played by comedy in communicating an anti-Camorra message, it is fruitful to return to the dualistic critical appreciation of comedy posited in the introduction to this article. As I noted there, for some scholars, the ‘comedic turn’ in mafia film represents an attempt to undercut the dangerous mythology that surrounds mafia power by subjecting it to ridicule. Such is the contention of anti-mafia magistrate, Antonio Ingroia, who declared that ‘we can and must laugh at the Mafia in order to destabilize it’.⁹³ For others, alert to the fact that ‘artistic forms of “denuncia” have become ineffectual and quixotic, failing to stir widespread collective indignation or awareness’,⁹⁴ and to the fact that ‘committed films dealing with ongoing issues do not attract the general public, which by far prefers comedies’,⁹⁵ the turn to comedy might be seen as an attempt to reach out beyond the established constituency of political cinema in order to engage and educate a new generation of filmgoers. If, as Dickie and Saviano have argued in different contexts, the mafia has fed off cinematic representation, both modelling and validating itself in relation to screen and other cultural images,⁹⁶ it follows that placing the anti-mafia struggle at the heart of cinematic texts may provide an equally ‘seductive emotional script’ for anti-Camorra identification and enable audience members to validate themselves in relation to that stance.⁹⁷ While *Into Paradiso* alone seeks to deflate the mythology of Camorra power through grotesque depiction and overt denunciation of its socially destructive force, it shares with *Song 'e Napule* an ambition to render the anti-Camorra struggle more immediate and familiar. Both films reject the gravitas of political cinema, traditionally conceived, and its prevailing tendency to monumentalize the lone figure of the anti-mafia hero; they turn, instead, to entertainment, laughter and collaboration to promote a more mundane and proximate understanding of anti-Camorra resistance. In presenting examples of ordinary people, with all too risible human flaws, who emerge from their encounters with the Camorra not only

⁹³ Cited by De Luca, p. 379.

⁹⁴ Pierpaolo Antonello, ‘The Ambiguity of Realism and its Posts: A Response to Millicent Marcus’, *The Italianist*, 30 (2010), 258-62 (p. 261).

⁹⁵ Pierre Sorlin, ‘Italian Cinema at the Outset of the 21st Century: Business, Spectacle, Innovation’, in *Annali d’Italianistica*, 30.2 (2012), 51-60 (p. 57).

⁹⁶ Dickie, *Mafia Republic*, pp. 20-33; Saviano, *Gomorra*, pp. 266-82. See also John Dickie, ‘Historicizing Italy’s Other Mafias: Some Considerations’, in ‘Italy’s other Mafias’, *The Italianist*, 33.2 (2013), 201-04.

⁹⁷ Dickie, *Mafia Republic*, p. 223.

unharmful but strengthened and enriched by the friendship and collaboration that enables them to triumph, *Into Paradiso* and *Song 'e Napule* 'incoraggia[no] lo spettatore di capire che si può partecipare più attivamente alla lotta senza essere personaggi sovranaturali'.⁹⁸

Viewed in this light, the cultural fantasy that is the contemporary Camorra comedy may be seen to advance a new understanding of anti-Camorra resistance not as a political act and a public good but as something at once more intimate and personal and intricately related to the social sphere.

⁹⁸ Anna Paparcone, 'Cinema e televisione, da conflitto a sinergia: *La mafia uccide solo d'estate* di Pier Francesco Diliberto', *Forum Italicum*, 51.3 (2017), 683-702 (p. 690).