AT THE CROSSROADS OF IDENTITY: MIGRATION CINEMA OF THE TRIVENETO

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ABSTRACT

Daniela Cunico Dal Pra: At the Crossroads of Identity: Migration Cinema of the Triveneto. (Under the direction of Professor Federico Luisetti)

The study analyzes how the films Occidente and La lingua del santo (2000), La giusta distanza and Riparo (2007), Cose dell’altro mondo and Io sono Li (2011), La prima neve (2013) and Piccola Patria (2014) reproduce the conditions in which immigrant and Italian native identities are negotiated, perceived, and constructed in the Nordest culture. Each film engages a complex structuring of identity and reproduces the “reality” of the space between self / other in the receiving country. This space is the Triveneto region of Italy, a space which is uniquely center and periphery, local and global, rural and urban. The construction of identity echoes this space: cinematic native and migrant identities are multifarious and oscillate between old constructions of national identity and the need to see identity as fluid.

The space of the Triveneto is central to the experience of natives and immigrants. A disconnection with the land is a common theme among the films, as exemplified by devastating social effects in Piccola Patria, Occidente, La lingua del santo, Riparo and La giusta distanza. By contrast, La prima neve suggests that integration is possible when immigrant and native turn to the land and “root” identity. These films imply that material interests are interwoven with divisive rhetoric, and suggest that the ideologies of discrimination are rooted in economic interests. The films offer no answers; several of the films end abruptly, leaving the drama open-ended, and in this way mirroring reality.
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INTRODUCTION

“Vàrdate intorno...Vàrdate intorno...Vàrdate intorno: le strade no gà più l’ombria, le piazze xè posti de pena. Nei pra’ no se trova più i fiori, i boschi gà perso la pace...e l’acqua... e l’acqua...l’acqua la xè morta”. ¹

The voice-over of Bepi De Marzi’s Crodaioli Choir lends a powerful effect to the opening scene of the 2013 film, Piccola patria, by Alessandro Rossetto, as an aerial shot exposes a landscape devastated by a conglomerate of grey industrial buildings. The words conveying destruction blend perfectly with the bird's-eye view of an overbuilt countryside and is quite suggestive: Indeed, the land is cut up - and cut off - by an intricate set of superimposing roads that no longer lead to the village squares. The natural light of Piccola patria’s aerial opening scene then cuts dramatically to a suffocating and dark interior; this abrupt juxtaposition will signal the larger, societal tension of the Italian region Nordest, also referred to as Triveneto.² The exploitative content of this darkly hued interior sequence, accompanied and emphasized by the soundtrack song, reveals a physical violation of a woman that corresponds and expounds upon the opening aerial view of the film. The sexual exploitation of the female character echoes the violence done to the land: Indeed, recent industrialization denaturalized and violated this rural

¹ “Look around yourself. The roads no longer have (the trees’) shadow; the squares have become places of sorrow. In the meadows there are no longer flowers, the forests lost their peace…and the water, the water is dead.” L’acqua xè morta. 2009, song by Bepi De Marzi, composer and director of I Crodaioli Alpine Choir.

² The geographic zone also known as Le Tre Venezie, corresponds, by extended definition, to the administrative regions Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The actual concept of Nordest itself is the object of a lively debate promoted by authors Claudio Magris and Paolo Rumiz, sociologist Ilvo Diamanti and journalist Gianantonio Stella.
region with an indiscriminate “cementificazione”.\(^3\) This rapacious depiction contrasts with the collective memory that carries the image of this countryside’s bucolic past, which was traditionally characterized by the harmonious coexistence of green land, fertile wheat fields, and rich vineyards patiently farmed over hundreds of years by the farmers’ skilled hands. It seems incongruous to recall that not too long ago, this was the region of the renowned civilization of Ville Venete.\(^4\) The use of the local Venetian dialect for the lyrical voiceover underscores at the same time the symptomatic tension in this region between a globalization that brings epochal changes, and its traditional identity. This contrast creates nostalgia for a lost and perhaps idealized past.\(^5\) The aerial view of this deteriorated and corrupted landscape will soon be the site of an extreme case of intolerance towards immigrants.\(^6\)

The Triveneto is a very interesting region, because it presents simultaneously a constant, oppositional tension between openness and restriction, centrality and marginality, local and global vocation. For instance, the Adriatic Sea is a unifying presence as it connects Venice with other Mediterranean civilizations, but its Lagoon acts as a natural barrier and warning against further development;\(^7\) the Alps are boundaries for strategic defense, but their valleys are also

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\(^3\) Overbuilding or “cementificazione.”

\(^4\) The cultivated land was very productive thanks to the combination of a structured development of water channeling, and the work of skilled farmers gravitating around the villas in organized rural communities.

\(^5\) Indeed, the farmers’ living conditions were not ideal, since they were treated as servants by the aristocratic land owners. However, for centuries this mainland region was the main food reservoir of the Venice Serenissima Repubblica.

\(^6\) In French literature of the 1800s, the correspondence between landscape and sentiments is exemplified by author and poet Charles Baudelaire; the cinematic transposition of this type of representation is realized starting from the 1960s by director Michelangelo Antonioni.

\(^7\) Indeed, historically the first foundation of the Venetian civilization happens when mainland people flee from the attacks of Barbarian invasions and find refuge in the protected area of the Lagoon. Over time, the populace that was established there was protected from invasions.
ideal road connectors to the northern European countries. In the past the region has been a significant crossroads traversed by different cultures; each of them brought relevant influences which would contribute to the region’s eventful and lively evolution, economy and progress. But at the same time, these places were vulnerable, prone to foreign invasion and domination.

In recent times, starting from the 1960s, the region experienced an incredible industrial boom; by contrast, its cultural evolution came at a slower pace. In addition, the flourishing manufacturing development in the Triveneto and the exceptionally favorable economic conditions made this region an important land of opportunities for employment. In the last thirty years these circumstances attracted progressively growing waves of immigrants from other regions of the world. The phenomenon of immigration might have evolved into a new society based on diversity. However, this did not happen for several reasons: one being that local and national institutions were not prepared to face this occurrence and did not come up with a strategy for acceptance and integration of the newcomers; and another reason was the subtending xenophobic, anti-immigrant attitude promoted by racist people, which was supported for instance by the political party Lega del Nord.\(^8\) There was also the controversy surrounding the attribution of residency to immigrants and citizenship to their children based on *ius sanguinis* versus *ius soli* which inevitably contributed to creating a barrier to social integration.\(^9\)

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\(^8\) The argument used by Lega del Nord representatives, such as politician (and as of 2017 member of the European Parliament) Matteo Salvini is that immigrants are often criminals, terrorists and they steal locals’ jobs.

\(^9\) The reform of the Citizenship law is a controversial subject. A proposal for a new law modifying the requirements for citizenship has been submitted for discussion since 2015. It consists of giving the citizenship to the second generation of immigrants based on *ius soli* (right given by the birth place), instead of on *ius sanguinis* (right given by the blood). This proposal as 2017 has not been approved as of yet. See: [http://www.camera.it/leg17/465?tema=integrazione_cittadinanza](http://www.camera.it/leg17/465?tema=integrazione_cittadinanza)
The present work analyzes the contemporary culture and territory of the Nordest, which is traversed by the most recent migrations, through contemporary cinema production set in the region. The methodology is inspired by Franco Moretti’s theory of literature. In the introduction to his Atlante del romanzo europeo: 1800-1900, Franco Moretti declares the necessity and the opportunity to relate geography to literature. The expression “geografia della letteratura” indicates two approaches: “lo studio dello spazio nella letteratura; oppure, della letteratura nello spazio.” In the first case, the subject of the research is imaginary; in the second, it is historical real space.

This observation could be extended and applied also to a cinematic production delimited by chronology, geography and subject; the geography of contemporary cinema of the Nordest on migration could thus indicate either the study of spaces, places, and settings represented in the fiction of films, and/or the study of cinema in the real space of the Triveneto. Therefore, this study’s objective is the investigation of the subject of the imaginary Nordest depicted in films produced between 2000 and 2013, in order to visualize the region’s characteristics. In fact, the recent cinema production depicts, illustrates and sometimes denounces all the peculiarities and contrasts characterizing this space, perceived by the external observers, those migrants traversing the region, who have become the new “invaders”. We will study the contemporary Nordest through the lenses of several film directors (some of them, like Carlo Mazzacurati, Andrea Segre, and Alessandro Rossetto are native from the region; the others are not), and from the point of view of immigrants.

10 Franco Moretti, Atlante del romanzo europeo: 1800-1900 (Torino: Einaudi, 1997) 5. Translation: “geography of literature could indicate two things: the study of space in literature; or, of literature in the space”.

11 They are differentiated from the invaders of old, because they do not come from military conquest but from economic or political survival.
Since this type of evaluation involves geography, history and geopolitics, the ideal approach will be Bertrand Westphal’s *Geocriticism*.\(^{12}\) *Geocriticism* is a process that introduces real interactions among disciplines such as literary and cinematic studies, geography, urbanism, sociology and anthropology. *Geocriticism* is a “geo-centric” approach, focused on a global depiction of a space, in this case the macro-region *Triveneto*. *Geocriticism* does not privilege one point of view; on the contrary, many points of view converge on one object (the *Triveneto*) in three ways: endogenous, exogenous, and allogeneic. This “multi-focus” tends to relativize the *otherness* and identify the stereotypes of a place.\(^{13}\)

The first chapter will localize, define and consider the region *Triveneto* or *Tre Venezie* as a constant crossroad of migrations and a specific and differentiated space of continuous tension. We will use an etymological, historic and geographic approach and perspective.\(^{14}\) Throughout the centuries, the *Nordest* region has been traversed by a long series of armies sent by leaders to invade, conquer, and dominate this rich territory. The region has also been intersected by periodical migrations. The *Tre Venezie* constitutes a border on the Alps and on the Adriatic Sea, but is at the same time a crossroad. In fact, it connects Northern to Southern Europe via Verona.

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\(^{14}\) The toponymal *Tre Venezie* indicates the geographical area formed by the historical territories of *Venezia Tridentina*, *Venezia Euganea* and *Venezia Giulia*. These three regions are generally known as *Triveneto*. Nowadays, *Triveneto* is the common term to indicate three administrative regions Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia (excluding the territories of Venezia Giulia that now belong to Slovenia and Croatia). This term appeared in the mid-1800s in several cultural clubs, right after the Second Independence War. The neologism has invented in 1863 by Graziadio Isaia Ascoli, a linguist from Gorizia. His intent was to mark the cultural “Italianness” of the territories of Venezia Tridentina and Venezia Giulia, at the time part of the Austrian Empire, and therefore under the Habsburgs’ domination. From 1867, the same regions were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. These territories will be annexed to the Italian Kingdom only after World War I.

The original denomination of *Tre Venezie* comes from the territory subdivision at the time of the Roman Emperor August (7 CE): the *X Regio Augusti*, Venetia et Histria.
and Trieste. The *Tre Venezie* also links Venice to the Balkans, Greece and the Near East (not to mention Middle East and China, if the legendary travels of Venetian Marco Polo are true).\(^\text{15}\)

This general overview of the *Triveneto* serves as an introduction of the setting of the study and a geopolitical background to explain the environmental *circum-stances* found by the newly arrived immigrants. The first chapter also includes a brief plot summary of the selected films as the majority of the movies are neither specifically famous, nor easily accessible. In particular, one of them, *Occidente* (2000) by Corso Salani, was not even available to the general audience, although some cinema scholars such as Gianni Canova and Luisella Farinotti consider it paramount to the cinematic analysis of Italian cinema and immigration; a copy of this movie was obtained by the gracious concession of Mrs. Margherita Salani, the director’s widow.\(^\text{16}\)

Some other films, such as *Cose dell’altro mondo* (2011) and *Piccola patria* (2013), although presented to national and international film festivals, were considered controversial within the *Triveneto*’s society, thus never reaching mainstream distribution, neither in Italy nor in the US.\(^\text{17}\)

The second chapter is a socio-anthropological exploration of the evolution and intergenerational changes going on in the *Nordest* within some important social institutions, such as *pater familias*, marriage, and friendship, as perceived by the incoming immigrants. In fact, in the last sixty years, the *Triveneto*’s society evolved dramatically; the epochal change caused by historic and economic forces is investigated and analyzed, in order to explain the fast social evolution. The immigrants’ perspective is interesting for many reasons: they have a pristine and

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\(^{15}\) Francis Wood, *Did Marco Polo go to China?* Westwood Press, Boulder CO, 1996.

\(^{16}\) Director Corso Salani died in 2010; his widow, Mrs. Margherita Salani, created the Foundation *Associazione Corso Salani*, to preserve her husband’s memory, and to support and promote independent films. [http://www.corsosalani.it/](http://www.corsosalani.it/)

\(^{17}\) *Cose dell’altro mondo* (2011), by Francesco Patierno, and *Piccola patria* (2013), by Alessandro Rossetto.
genuine (because external) point of view. Sometimes, the foreigners come from social backgrounds similar to the Triveneto’s of the 1950s, and thus they are experiencing and facing a new social development in their daily life. Other times, the migrant come from very different cultures, traditions and habits than the ones they find in the Nordest. All these contingencies contribute to the multi-focused depiction of the region’s social transformation.

The third chapter will consider communication. The focus will be on the analysis of languages, dialects, gestures and proxemics characterizing the region, and impacting the immigrants’ integration and inclusion. The Triveneto presents an exceptional variety of languages and dialects locally and concurrently spoken. The majority of them have Neo-Latin common origins, with fascinating French, Spanish and Greek influences, resulting from the past dominations and the traditional economic relations. Some others have German (specifically Austrian) or Old-German roots; among the latter type, special attention is dedicated to almost extinct languages, such as Cimbro (commonly spoken in Veneto and Trentino, as lingua franca within Prealps until World War, I and currently used only in peripheral and isolated locations like Lessinia, Luserna, Lavarone, and Folgaria) and Mòcheno (still spoken only in Trentino-Alto Adige, in the Mòcheni Valley).18 Other forms of communication, such as gestures and proxemics common among the locals, can constitute a barrier for the immigrants – and this is precisely why they are an object of investigation in this chapter.

The fourth chapter will examine the “symbolic landscapes” of the territory as perceived by the immigrants: natural backgrounds, such as the Alps, Lagoon, Adriatic Sea, rivers, countryside; artificial settings, like the non-places such as the Aviano’s U.S. Airforce Base, and

the Hotel Antares; weather conditions such as the fog and the snow that characterize the Nordest. These sceneries are cinematic reflections; they constitute a visual projection which works to amplify the “mind’s landscapes” of the films’ protagonists in a poetic manner.

Venetian actor-author Marco Paolini summarizes the postmodern Triveneto: “Ma non lo senti com’è stretto il cielo tra la galassia pedemontana e la laguna mondo? […]E io non so più se sono in un Piccolo mondo antico che muore o in una Los Angeles che nasce, popolata da una razza di antichi umani tavernicoli, da bestie domestiche, da computer e nuove specie aliene immigrate. Bestiario di creature dove gli animali, gli umani e gli alieni non si parlano tra loro; lo sguardo degli animali e degli aliens pesa, ci fa: ma siu sicuri? Sio sicuri, seo sicuri? Si sicuri? Are you sure?”19

In taking a careful look at the Triveneto macro-region, that is, the area between the piedmont foothills (with its galaxy of small industries) and the Lagoon (open to the rest of the world since the times of La Serenissima Repubblica of Venice), I will consider: How did this territory change with regards to its plurality of languages and traditions? How do portrayals of this region reflect its transformation throughout its multilayered and complex history, from the economic boom, to the subsequent period of delocalization and the current crisis? What do immigrants—the newcomers, the aliens “invading” this space—find in this place?

The result of this multifocal analysis is a portrait of the recent Triveneto.

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19 “Can’t you hear how narrow is the sky between the foothill galaxy and the world lagoon? […] I no longer know if I am in a dying Small ancient world, or in a newborn Los Angeles, populated with a race of ancient human tavernicoli (world pun for “primitive inhabitants of the caverns-taverns”), domestic beasts, computers and new alien immigrated species. A bestiary of creatures where animals, humans and aliens do not intercommunicate; the glance of the animals and the aliens is serious and says to us: are you sure? (in three Venetian dialects and in English) ”. In: Marco Paolini, Bestiario veneto. Parole mate. Pordenone: Biblioteca dell’immagine, 2014.
CHAPTER 1

THE NORDEST: A CROSSROADS MACRO-REGION

What exactly is the Nordest? The answer to this interrogation is crucial to introducing the present work. This neologism comes from Friulian author Carlo Sgorlon. Sgorlon coined the term Nordest in his collection of short novels published in 1976; the name initially referred to the geographical region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Yet, during the 1990s, in an article of Il Messaggero, the author expanded the idea of the Nordest also to the regions of Veneto and Trentino-Alto Adige.

These areas became the center of a lively debate between influential Italian intellectuals and the ideologues of the political party Lega Nord (Northern League). On the one hand,

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20 Sgorlon, Carlo in an article in: Il Messaggero Veneto, (17 maggio 1998) says: «La parola Nord-Est fu inventata da me, per indicare il Friuli, che in effetti è il Nord-Est più Nord-Est che ci sia.». Sgorlon declares that he mentioned for the first time the word Nordest in his anthology called Racconti di Nordest (Gremese, 1976).


22 Lega Nord, whose complete name is Lega Nord per l’indipendenza della Padania is a political Party advocating the independence or secession of northern Italy, or Padania.
authors from Trieste, like Claudio Magris and Paolo Rumiz, the Venetian philosopher Massimo Cacciari, the sociologist Ilvo Diamanti, and the journalist Gianantonio Stella from Vicenza, among others, identify Nordest as the culture of the geographic area of the macro-region Triveneto, which is composed of the administrative regions of Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. On the other hand, the founder and long-standing former leader of Lega Nord, Umberto Bossi, claimed the exclusive right to use the term to identify his acolytes’ idea of Padania. This dispute is just one component of a broader discourse about the Nordest. The nature of this quarrel and lively debate surrounding the macro-region of Veneto, Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia highlights the fact that this is a diversified space. Perhaps the lively debate has something to do with the heterogeneous quality of this territory in terms of its landscape, demography, culture, politics, and economy.

Regarding the aspect of landscape, let us recall that the setting of the macro-region Triveneto is physically varied; in addition, it reveals a massive presence of industries, whereas until sixty years ago the area was predominantly rural and demonstrated an agricultural vocation. The overbuilding proliferated despite the fact that any notion of overdevelopment in this area is in direct conflict with the notable and traditional use of the rich soil and fertile land; the result is an evident, profound and irreversible transformation of the landscape.

Geographically speaking, the physical position of this area made it a strategic connector between the Mediterranean Sea, Northern Europe, and the Balkans; therefore, the region has

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23 Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia are two of the five regions of Italy that benefit from an autonomous administrative statute.

24 Padania is an alternative name for the Po Valley, the major plain in the north of Italy. The term was used sparingly until the early 1990s, when Lega Nord, a federalist and, at times, separatist political party in Italy, proposed Padania as a possible name for an independent state in Northern Italy. This state would comprehend the following regions: Piedmont, Lombardy, Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia! Leghisti contend that the Nordest embodies their ideological principles.
been the crossroads of cultures coming from the north, south, east, and west for many centuries, from the antiquity to modern times. However, especially in the last forty years and nowadays, continuous migration flows traverse this space mainly from the south and from the east. Incoming people from foreign lands brought with them their culture, and in this way have contributed to modifying the traversed territory. For centuries, the region has been the theater of a continuous intersection of different cultures that have left their permanent legacy, either through a temporary political occupation of the territory, or by leaving behind their influence after their passage. The complexity of this space, rich with human experiences, and ripe with environmental issues, now deserves to be investigated and mapped from a glocal perspective. Given its diversities, philosophers Deleuze and Guattari would define the Triveneto as a smooth and striated space. Immigration is the newest form of cultural intersection happening in this territory.

In a socio-geographic context, the last few decades have seen the concerns surrounding immigration move throughout Europe, and particularly within Italy, and seen these questions progressively reach the center of a large, controversial political debate. Why a survey and an investigation on immigration specifically in the Triveneto? The cinematic and literary works on immigration throughout the Italian peninsula have become copious; by contrast, while there have been numerous sociological, anthropological, political, and economic studies on the impact of immigration on the Nordest, before the turn of the century the Triveneto region had only been used very rarely as a setting and location for films. This is odd, because the phenomenon of

As defined by sociologist Roland Robertson and early adopted by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.


Among them: Il disco volante—The Flying Saucer-- (1964), by Tinto Brass and Tutto a posto e niente in ordine – All Screwed up--(1974), by Lina Wertmüller.
migration from the South to other areas of Italy and other continents can be mapped out in cinema from the 1940s.\textsuperscript{28} Although from the 1980s the flow of immigration had a tremendous impact on the Triveneto, films specifically set in the Nordest and addressing the topic of immigration appeared only after 2000.

This last clarification explains this spatial-temporal choice: certainly, the Nordest and the first fifteen years of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century seem to be a narrow limit for my investigation, because the timeframe and the geographic boundaries are very much restricted; however, the Triveneto presents an interesting oscillatory position in its historical, economic and sociopolitical space. Indeed, when we consider the spatial component, the Nordest is a smooth and a striated space, since it alternates between being center and periphery, local and global, rural and urban altogether. Moreover, in this place, the contrast between the concurrence of folklore and loss of identity of the area’s inhabitants during the last decades is undoubtedly peculiar, and emerges powerfully in both cinema and literature, even though I intend to focus mainly on cinematic works.\textsuperscript{29}

Additionally, in a mere vertical historical analysis, the Triveneto region has been for long time an “in-between space”: at the same time an important crossroads between Mittel-European (Middle Europe, Northern Europe) and Medi-terranean (in the Middle of Lands) civilization.\textsuperscript{30}

\textsuperscript{28} Some examples are Guido Brignone, Passaporto rosso (1934); Aldo Fabrizi, Emigrantes (1948); Carlo Borghesio, Come scopersi l’America (1949); Raffaello Matarazzo, Catene (1949); Luchino Visconti, Rocco e i suoi fratelli (1960); Mario Monicelli, La ragazza con la pistola (1968); Giuliano Montaldo, Sacco e Vanzetti (1971); Luigi Zampa, Bello onesto, emigrato in Australia sposerebbe compaesana illibata (1971); Lina Wertmuller, Mimi metallurgico ferito nell’onore (1972); Paolo and Vittorio Taviani, Good morning Babilonia (1987); Gianni Amelio, Così ridevano (1998); Marco Tullio Giordana, Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti (2005); Emanuele Crialese, Nuovomondo (2006); Pupi Avati, Con il sole negli occhi (2015).


This outlook generates the idea of a land open to receive many cultures, and the crossroads of constant passages. Recently, the Triveneto also became a stopping-off point of different movements: many immigrants come, stay or just pass by for personal, economic, and political reasons and opportunities. According to author Claudio Magris, the Nordest has been for centuries a center where several civilizations have been passing through, and this continuous passageway can be documented. In the past, cities and centers of the Triveneto such as Venice and Trieste were important ports, cosmopolitan and active centers, in which hospitality and acceptance were customary to all people passing by or establishing in. By contrast, this is changing dramatically in recent years: film director Andrea Segre, in his homonymous 2012 documentary, calls the Mediterranean a “Closed Sea”—in Italian Mare Chiuso, signifying what this sea became. Indeed, Paolo Rumiz confirms that for a long time this sea was the “unifier”, while today it commonly perceived as the “divider”. Acceptance and hospitality became a socio-political and economic problem in Italy in the last two decades. Integration and inclusion are a process and we are still at the beginning. I hope to shed light on this problematic as I investigate the contradictory idiosyncrasies and occurrences that make the Nordest an emblematic site for considering questions surrounding inclusion/exclusion. In this way, I hope to show how the Triveneto is such a unique and palpable lens for considering issues surrounding migration. Thanks to cinematic representations, we can visually appreciate the meaning of the


32 See, for instance: in Venice the presence of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, and dei Turchi, the Jewish Ghetto, and the Armenian quarter. Similar is the situation of Trieste, being a Porto Franco.

33 Segre, Andrea and Liberti, Stefano. Mare Chiuso. Documentary of 2012 about the refoulement or rejection back to Libya—in Italian: respingimento—of more than 2000 African Immigrants by Italian Government between 2009 and 2010. This was an agreement between Silvio Berlusconi, the Italian Prime Minister, and Libyan Dictator Muammar Gheddafi.

challenges, distresses, and changes that migrants bring to the area and that they themselves also face.

One last observation is crucial: how is the Nordest historically important? Indeed, History had a tremendous impact in this very area for many centuries: happenings, circumstances, and recurrences shaped the present day conditions of this space, and they reverberate in the films I intend to analyze. The macro-region has been the site of a sequence of significant events even just in this last century. Especially during the twentieth century—“the Short Twentieth Century”—countless changes have dramatically impacted this area; in particular, two World Wars transformed this territory forever.35 Indeed, during the Great War (1915-1918 in Italy), part of the region was at the border with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and became the site of major, destructive, brutal, and decisive battlefields; among others, Mount Ortigara (June 10-17, 1917) in Asiago Plateau, Caporetto (October 25-November 12, 1017), Isonzo (twelve battles, between 1915-1917) and Piave Rivers, and Vittorio Veneto (October 24-November 4, 1918) are some of the sites of critical, crucial, and bloody fights. Thus, during World War I, the Triveneto was symbolically a center and a border. Cities like Trento and Trieste were even geographic objects of contention on stakes. In addition, because of the war, numerous civilians were forcibly evacuated from the areas, and forced to migrate towards areas less affected by the combats; the evacuees were especially women, elderly and children. Countless refugees, probably one million in 1917 after the Caporetto defeat, fled from these mountains, borders and battles’ locations. After the war, some refugees came back to their destroyed villages, and reconstituted their communities; many people settled in the piedmont areas, or emigrated towards northern

European countries, where work became available. According to historian Silvana Battistello, the majority of the refugees during those times were illiterate and thus documents about these migrations are scarce. We thus rely mainly on family oral narratives that have been passed along.

However, I would assert that another reason that explains the lack of documents is because the evacuees of the Prealps often were different language speakers. The spoken languages of the area were Cimbro (in Asiago Plateau), Ladin-Dolomitic (in Friuli-Venezia Giulia), and South-Tyrolean German and Mòcheno in Trentino; therefore, it is possible that language too has been a barrier for acceptance and integration of these refugees, who experienced difficulties finding hospitality in the piedmont areas. A limited amount of documentaries, doctoral theses and films show, cite or briefly describe these migrations too, but they are not the central focus of discussion. Many opponents of the recent flows of immigrants due to wars seem to forget that only 100 years ago their ancestors were World War I refugees!

36 Paolo Malni, Storie di profugi, in L.Fabi (a cura di), La gente e la guerra, vol.1, Saggi, Il Campo, Udine 1990.


38 Author from Asiago Mario Rigoni Stern, recovers and documents the oral tradition of Cimbri, their civilization and language. For instance: Segni lontani, in Mario Rigoni Stern, Sentieri sotto la neve, Einaudi, Torino, 2006, pp. 83–88: under Nevi, he lists and describes the different names that snow takes in cimbro.

39 Andrea Segre mentions the Mòcheni and their traditions in his film La Prima Neve. Journalist Lilli Gruber in her novel Tempesta (2014) illustrates the struggles of the South Tyrolean and the Mocheni communities in 1939: they were forcibly moved from their land to Moravia and become part of the Nazi Empire. Eventually, after the end of the War, they came back.

40 Among them, the film by Mario Monicelli La Grande Guerra (1959) shows in one-scene a group of refugees leaving their houses on a carriage right before the big battle described next will take place; Emilio Lussu, in Un anno sull’Altopiano (1938), describes the war in the Asiago Plateau, and in particular he illustrates the dramatic evacuation of civil citizens; author Ernest Hemingway, in A Farewell to Arms, displays in the background the evacuation of the civils before Caporetto, and the destruction after this bloody defeat; Mario Rigoni Stern, in La storia di Tönle. L’anno della vittoria (1978), narrates the experience of a family of evacuees during World War I, and their struggles to survive upon they return to their devastated village.
Just recently, during the commemorations of the Centenary of the Great War, new studies became available, and public recognition to the war refugees finally began taking place.  

Then, during the 1940s, the Triveneto region was again a crucial site of conflicts: the territory was heavily devastated during World War II; eventually, the movement of the Resistance for the Liberation from the Fascist Regime and Nazi Occupation had a strong impact on the society. Once again, many refugees fled from the areas marked by the war. At the end of the war, many veterans emigrated from Italy seeking a better life, first to Germany, Austria, Belgium, France and Switzerland; then, towards transoceanic destinations, like South America, Brazil, Canada and Australia.

The postwar reconstruction and new republican system brought a transformation in this territory. The region turned out to be part of the “West of the East”; it became the occidental adjacent limit to the Iron Curtain: on one side, Italy was under the influence of the United States, representing Western Power and Capitalism; on the opposite side, the Soviet Union and Communism dominated the Balkans, and North-Eastern Europe. Whereas in some places in Europe the process of decolonization started after World War II, in others —and among them

41 Italian President Mr. Mattarella on May 24, 2016 visited the location of Monte Ortigara. In this occasion he publicly commemorated also all the thousands of refugees of the Asiago’s Plateau.


43 Among them, I remind the 1940s exodus of Italians from Dalmatia, Fiume, and Pola, Yugoslavia. Another occurrence was the escape of criminals of war, and people compromised with crimes committed in the name of the Fascist Regime. Many escaped especially to Latin America.


45 The opposition and separation generated consequences that are still the object of socio-economic and cultural studies. This is not the place to discuss about this subject, but in this period, migrations and non-migrations had an interesting impact in culture.
Italy (and in particular the Triveneto)— a process of Neo-colonization and subsequently a modification of the society causing deterritorialization began with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949.\textsuperscript{46} The Atlantic Alliance gave economic assistance to the new government established in the Italian peninsula; one counterpoint or downside is that since then Italian political choices have been heavily influenced by the United States.\textsuperscript{47}

The 1960s represent a social and economic turnaround in the Triveneto; the region experienced a series of events that were very compressed in time, with amazing consequences: the most evident change is the unprecedented industrial development that generated the phenomenon known as *boom economico*, the economic boom;\textsuperscript{48} this positive occurrence brought the area to international levels of economic growth; yet, it also triggered other irreversible processes, the consequences of which are more controversial.\textsuperscript{49} The first permanent effect commenced with the end of the Conflict: the Allied Countries, which technically contributed to the Liberation of Italy from the Fascist regime and the Nazi occupation, would begin to

\textsuperscript{46} North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), stipulated on April 4, 1949. The organization constituted originally a system of collective defense. It states that members agree to mutual defend in response to an attack by any external party. The counterpart response was the Warsaw Pact (formally, the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance, sometimes, informally WarPac, akin in format to NATO). The WarPac was a collective defense treaty among eight communist states of Central and Eastern Europe in existence during the Cold War.

\textsuperscript{47} The Marshall Plan (officially the European Recovery Program, ERP) was an American initiative to aid Western Europe, in economic support to help rebuild Western European economies after the end of World War II. In exchange, the United States had the permission to build NATO military bases throughout the peninsula. Important for this study are the bases of Aviano and Vicenza.

\textsuperscript{48} The concept of “compressed time-space” has been articulated by David Harvey in 1989 in *The Condition of Postmodernity: an enquiry into the origins of cultural changes* and refers to any phenomenon that alters the qualities of a relationship between space and time.

increasingly use their influence over the next few decades in order to colonize the Peninsula economically, eventually pushing it into cultural globalization.\(^{50}\)

The second effect of the economic boom began in the 1960s. Indeed, a direct consequence of the economic boom and of globalization would be a wave of immigrants, ultimately exploding in the late 1980s. Previously, Italy had a long history of emigration.\(^{51}\) Therefore, for the first time this country experienced a “reversed” form of migratory movement: the massive arrival of immigrants in the peninsula. Sociologist Ilvo Diamanti states that the Triveneto in 2008 had the “record of the fastest immigration in Europe” (p.50). Statistical records reveal that between 1990 and 2004, the region surpassed all the other European countries where the process has been happening gradually since World War II.\(^{52}\) Immigration caused increasing demographic and sociological change; however, immigrants contributed without a doubt to the high productivity of the small enterprises that developed from the economic boom in the Nordest.

While industrial and technological advancements brought improvements, they also brought about symptoms of universalizing tendencies: industrial and technological progress was taking place at a faster rate than the actual evolution of the local culture and habits.\(^{53}\)


\(^{51}\) Between 1860 and 1880 right after the Unification, 10 million people emigrated from Italy to Western countries and North Africa. Between 1876 and 1900, the regions Piedmont, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia provided 47% of the entire immigrant quota. There are two main flows of emigration: the first, also called Great Emigration, is between 1880s and 1930s, towards the Americas; the second, from 1950s, towards Northern Italy and European wealthier countries.


\(^{53}\) The author Carlo Sgorlon in his literary work describes the peasants’ life in contrast with the changes brought by the progress. Sgorlon is also the first author using the word *Nordest* to define Triveneto.
consequences have been fascinating but also disorienting what with the gradual abandonment of traditions, signifying the triumph of the phenomenon of globalization. This was followed by another outcome: glocalization.54 An evident impact on the landscape of this occurrence has been the progressive loss of traditional behaviors, and the proliferation of non-places, for example the development of commercial malls, supermarkets, and megastores, replacing the social functions of the squares and of the local markets.55 An additional consequence of this phenomenon is social displacement, which caused the spaesamento of the local people – that is, a deep sense of unfamiliarity or foreignness in the place they call home. They have lost traditional cultural reference points.56 Some political movements—La Lega Nord, among others— took advantage of this sense of bewilderment and proclaimed their intent of preserving the local ancestors’ legacy. However, these political parties would collapse the notion of local preservation onto the notion of protecting the local identity against others. This slippage allowed for a platform from which they could promote the idea of a political secession from the central national government of Rome.57 Furthermore, feigning to be motivated by the mission to maintain a pristine local culture, they launched a rhetoric which inferred that the new immigrants were responsible for bringing micro- and organized- criminality into society in the Nordest. On August 1991, following the fall of the Enver Hoxha regime in Albania, 27,000 Albanians refugees disembarked in Bari at once, creating a political crisis in Italy: this massive immigration

54 The neologism has been coined in 1997 by the sociologist Roland Robertson at the conference: “Globalization and Indigenous Culture.” The word Glocalization is a combination of globalization and localization: it is the adaptation of a product or service specifically to each locality or culture in which it is sold. By extension: homogenization of the culture.


56 The word spaesamento is the translation of Sigmund Freud’s Das Unheimliche. 1919.

was perceived by the public as a real invasion. The subsequent debate of intellectuals and politicians is still lively within the European Union, also because the influx of migrations from other areas of hardship has not yet stopped.58

However, the development of industrialization soon evolved: The end of the Cold War in 1989 modified once more the center of this region, by starting a trend of economy projected towards Eastern Europe. During the 1990s, many Italian entrepreneurs seeking better profits began a deep and irreversible process of dislocation of their farms to eastern European countries, where the cost of work and workers was cheaper, the law more flexible, and taxation lower and more competitive compared to the Italian tax system.59 This sequence of events in the region caused further decentralization, and in the same area where the rate of occupation between the 1960s and the 1980s was close to 100%60 now saw a progressive rise of unemployment.

In the beginning of 1990s, another external conjuncture of historical events affecting many countries surrounding the Mediterranean Sea created an unprecedented and uncontrollable migration flow of refugees from Albania and the former to the Italian peninsula.61 Many Italian films depict stories about those events.62

58 The topic is well illustrated in the dramatic film Lamerica (1994) by Gianni Amelio, and in the documentary La nave dolce (2012) by Daniele Vicari.

59 In the early 1990s, for example, companies Marzotto and Lanerossi moved progressively their production to the Czech Republic and to Romania, respectively. In the towns of Valdagno and Schio, in which these companies were established, the unemployment rate increased dramatically.

60 Giusti, Mauro. L’esperienza italiana di delocalizzazione produttiva all’estero tra incentivi e dissuasioni. (tesi)

61 Among them, relevant are the Yugoslavia Wars were ethnic conflicts fought from 1991 to 2001 inside the territory of the former Yugoslavia. These wars accompanied and/or facilitated the breakup of the country, causing a diaspora of refugees; last, but not least, the Albanian crisis in 1997.

62 Films, among others, on the events in Kosovo and Albania from an Italian perspective are: Sergio Castellitto’s Venuto al mondo (2012), an adaptation of the homonymous novel published in 2008 by Margaret Mazzantini. Castellitto describes the events of Sarajevo’s war and its aftermaths; Gianni Amelio’s Lamerica (1995), which discusses the displacement of Italian enterprises in Albania in the 1990s. On the “biblical” disembarkation in Bari of
Along with the social and cultural displacement that began in the aftermath of World War II and continued after the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the Balkans Wars (1991), the economic crisis of 2008—the worst worldwide since 1929—aggravated the already existing social unbalance of the region. Many more people, both in the public and private spheres, blamed immigration for the dramatic rise of unemployment, the increase of micro- and macro-criminality in the territory, and what is perceived as an attempt to undermine the integrity of the local identity. Immediately following the economic crisis of 2008, the phenomenon of immigration changed its configuration in Italy and in Triveneto: since this economic instability presented itself, many immigrants prefer to migrate to Northern European Countries as they are wealthier nations with more tolerance demonstrated towards immigrants. Consequently, Northern Italy is now becoming a crossing point, a temporary stop for a significant number of immigrants. Today, the situation is still evolving due to the changing policies of hospitality adopted by the receiving countries.

Therefore, in Triveneto, the stream of people is like the tides of the sea, or better, of the Lagoon, as one character of Segre’s film Io sono Lì (Shun Li and the Poet) says in a poetic

the ship Vlora, carrying thousands of Albanians in Italy in 1991: Italian Director Daniele Vicari’s 2012 documentary La Nave Dolce, and Albanian Director Roland Sejko’s documentary Anija.


65 A crowd-funded docu-film of 2014 that describes this new tendency is Io sto con la sposa, by directors Gabriele Del Grande, Antonio Augugliaro, Khaled Soliman Al Nassiry. The film is about a Palestinian poet and an Italian journalist meeting five Palestinians and Syrians clandestine refugees. They decide to help them complete their journey to Sweden, and hopefully avoid getting themselves arrested as traffickers, by faking a wedding procession.

66 Between March and April 2016, the Austrian Right Party menaces to build a wall in order to block the migration’s flow, and many immigrants prefer to come back to Italy, where the law is more tolerant (or bureaucracy is slower).
sequence: “…a flow of water from the tide leaves and a new flow comes back, and only part of the water comes back to the sea; some is trapped by the Lagoon.” Not only are these newcomers arriving as regularly as clandestine refugees from other countries, but now again there are many from the Nordest moving away from Italy to other regions seeking a better life. The continuation of such migrations seem inevitable, as they are part of the spatial-temporal process that now characterizes the region, and like the tides that leave a cultural patrimony.

While many studies analyze all these occurrences from multidisciplinary points of view and perspectives, my analysis will investigate how cinematic production illustrates these societal changes. This geopolitical, historical and sociological introduction is necessary to establish the concept that Italy has had a long history of emigration since the 1900s, for different motivations, with the following peaks: before World War I, after World War II and since 2008. The destinations of these exoduses for work and better life were the Americas (towards the rich promised lands of the United States, South America, and Canada), Africa (during the Imperialistic Colonization), Australia, Northern Europe (especially Germany, France and Belgium for mines and steel industry after WWII), and Northern Italy (from the south, for industry especially from the 1960s). Literature, films and music described stories of emigration.

67 Andrea Segre, Io sono Li (2013). Furthermore, authors Claudio Magris and Paolo Rumiz in their works emphasize the symbolic role of “water roads” in the Nordest.

68 Deleuze and Guattari, ibidem.


Some films of emigration of Italians to the United States in 1900: Giuseppe Tornatore, La Leggenda del pianista sull’oceano (1997), and Emanuele Crialese Nuovomondo (2011); emigration of Italians from Southern to Northern Italy or Northern Europe, between the 1950s and 1970s: Pietro Germi, Il cammino della speranza (1950), Luchino Visconti, Rocco e i suoi fratelli (1960), Franco Brusati, Pane e cioccolata (1974).
Immigration tells a different story. A quantitative investigation shows that production of films dealing with immigration in Italy arise only at the end of the 1980s; during the following decade, the frequency of this topic’s representation is still sporadic and not relevant. From the 2000s, the cinematic production in which immigrants appear grows exponentially. Novels and movies can offer a perspective of individuals’ stories, and experiences; in addition, they take place in delimited spaces, places and time. Literary texts and film images entail the narration of plausible and yet possible situations of the real. Nonetheless, at this time, the stories of individual immigrants are never the direct narrations by the protagonists: mainly Italian writers, scholars, documentarists and filmmakers seem aware and intrigued by this sudden occurrence in their country, and thus hone in specifically on the problematic of depicting of immigration. Typically, the stories told therein are about the journey of the protagonists from their homeland to the elected destination. Rather than describing the impact of new surroundings, new language, and a new culture upon the immigrants, the filmmakers focus on the difficulties in the process of inclusion and integration.

Cinematic historian Diego Della Via points out that, whereas since the 1940s there was a large production of films about Italian migrations from either the south to the north of the peninsula or towards foreign countries, the topic of immigration in Italy appeared in Italian cinema very recently, and it has been unfolding and developing slowly. In particular, Della Via


finds that during the early 1990s the immigrants manifest themselves only in the backgrounds of the narrations, especially in marginalized and downgraded environments, and usually in relation to crime; gradually, they became more visible, but they are always situated in surroundings of social degeneration. Eventually, they reached the roles of protagonists only by the end of the twentieth century; few depictions show them in a positive role. In addition, these films are set in a limited number of Italian regions, especially in Sicily, Lazio, and Campania, some in Emilia Romagna, others in Northern Italy, but overall mainly in large urban centers such as Palermo, Naples, Rome, Bologna, Turin, and Milan. The Triveneto does not have any metropolis, but even though this region is traditionally intersected by constant streams of migration, there are only a few films on the topic of immigration set in this area. Nevertheless, this macro-region presents a series of attention-grabbing elements that uncover a realistic texture of actual society. The fact that the Triveneto is contains a limited number of cities, and is primarily characterized by small to medium-sized towns and many peripheral villages. How to describe this specific zone and its modifications? How to illustrate the impact that migrants/immigrants have in this space? I intend to use the approaches of Italian film directors within their cinematic works to give a visual construct.

Cinema, as all the mimetic arts, is a mirror of reality, an imago societatis. Specifically, movies have visual and aural components to render behaviors as well as proxemics, and to relate experiences. Also, literary works illustrate stories and spaces, but from another perspective, and with different effects: the written text has the additional constituent of the reader’s imagination, and could therefore be considered complementary to the cinematic perception and viewpoint of

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74 Director and screenwriter Ferzan Özpetek’s (born 3 February 1959, Turkey) Le fate ignoranti (His Secret Life), in 2001; and La finestra di fronte (Facing Windows), in 2003, show as a secondary topic an integration between immigrants and low-class locals. The impression is that the director demonstrates that there can be compassion and solidarity only among the outcasts.
reality. The question is what reality and what society? While it is not possible to take an exhaustive approach to cinematic and literary representations of immigration; however, I take up a multifocal approach in order to give a geocritical perspective to this study. I thus develop my analysis somewhere in between the geography of the “real” and the geography of the “imaginary.” The approach will be thematic, and I will concentrate on films set in Triveneto between 2000 and 2014, whose directors and screenwriters are Italian and whose unifying thread is the foresto (foreigner in Venetian dialect): as we shall see, immigrants and nomadic movements characterize all the stories in various degrees.75

The texts of my study are recent, and not widely distributed outside Italy; moreover since their availability is restricted, critical literature is also limited. Therefore, in many cases my analysis will be the first critical application of these theories. The films I will analyze are Occidente, by Corso Salani (2000); La lingua del Santo, by Carlo Mazzacurati (2000); La giusta distanza, by Carlo Mazzacurati (2007); Il riparo, by Marco Simon Puccioni (2007); Cose dell’altro mondo, by Francesco Patierno (2011); Io sono Li, by Andrea Segre (2011); La prima neve, by Andrea Segre (2013); Piccola Patria, by Alessandro Rossetto (2014).

This is a brief overview of these cinematic works, based on their chronological order of publication. Occidente (West), is a film of 2000 by director Corso Salani (September 9, 1961-June 16, 2010). It describes the impossible integration and the artificial interactions of both the protagonist—a girl who fled from Romania right after the 1989 Revolution76—and all the inhabitants of the marginalized territory of Aviano, a small town in Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

75 In Italian forestiero, from Latin fŏris, meaning “out”; in Venetian dialect foresto means foreign. I would like to take the Latin root of the word forestiero in its component fore, as future infinitive of sum, (to be) to render my conceptualization of a society where the future lays in the presence of people in dialectic motion.

76 On 22 December 1989, Romania's communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu was overthrown in a violent revolution and fled from the capital, Bucharest. Three days later, he and his wife Elena were executed by firing squad. It was the last of the popular uprisings against communist rule in Eastern Europe that year.
Region. Soldiers and officers of the American Army know this place, because it gravitates entirely around one of the most important NATO American Air force bases overseas. Built in 1911, it has been in use from 1954 to the present as a tactical outpost for the United States during wartime, especially during the Cold War and the Balkans Conflict.\(^7\) The construction of this fortress greatly modified and altered the local territory due to its imposing dimension; its presence dominates the space as it is visible from all the angles of the town. Seventy years after the end of World War II, the base may seem anachronistic and strategically obsolete, but the economy, the infrastructures, and all the services of this town depend upon the foreign community living and working there for the military.

In this film, the story takes place in a series of non-places, in a *glocal* space. This is the ultimate and emblematic example of disorienting displacement of space, people, cultures and languages. For all these reasons, the film *Occidente* presents a series of extreme issues. First, the deterritorialization generates an unbalanced society composed more by soldiers than civilians. Subsequently, integration with the local inhabitants becomes problematic. Additionally, the imposition of a global culture generates a situation in which everything – food, language, malls, and bars – adapts to foreign standards. Finally, the sum of these circumstances causes the total disappearance of the natives’ identity. In the end, no one is at home. In this film, immigration coincides with social marginalization.

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\(^7\) Cold War: The state of political hostility that existed between the Soviet bloc countries and the US-led Western powers from 1945 to 1990. Balkans War: The Yugoslav Wars were ethnic conflicts fought from 1991 to 2001 inside the territory of the former Yugoslavia. These wars accompanied and/or facilitated the breakup of the country, when its constituent republics declared independence, but the issues of ethnic minorities in the new countries (chiefly Serbs in central parts and Albanians in the southeast) were still unresolved at the time that the republics were recognized internationally.
Director and screenwriter Carlo Mazzacurati’s two films, *La lingua del santo* (2000), and *La giusta distanza* (2007), are also crucial to my analyses. Mazzacurati (March 2, 1956 – January 22, 2014) has been one of the most significant filmmakers from Veneto, and is especially well-known for his incisive illustrations of Veneto’s society. These two films are particularly interesting in this study due to their specific location, their depiction of the stereotypes and prejudices typical of some of the inhabitants of this region, the marginalized presence of immigrants, and the period of their settings.\(^{78}\)

*La lingua del santo* (Holy Tongue) is a surreal comedy with roots in social satire and drama. It takes place amongst the rich industrialized territory of the Padua Province, the rural hilly environment of Euganean Hills, and the melancholic Venetian Lagoon. The main characters are two marginalized, inept men in their late forties. These two “losers” have been professionally left behind by the technological progress of the last twenty years: the two are incompetent, and completely unable to prepare for the rapid transformation of the economic boom and industrial development of the territory. They have been excluded and demoted by the new society in which *even* the immigrants and the gypsy community have found their social assimilation (visible in the background). In addition, Antonio, one of the two protagonists, being originally from Southern Italy, is himself an immigrant of second generation: this will constitute a further element of investigation about the problem of integration in the *Triveneto*.

The two misfit characters have another limiting peculiarity in a space where everything seems moving: they are pure sedentary locals, who neither have the intellectual curiosity nor take the chance to explore the world beyond their own region. The only experience of tourism they

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\(^{78}\) Mazzacurati directed also *Vesna va veloce* in 1996, in which the protagonist Vesna is a Czech clandestine immigrant prostitute in Italy.
can afford, and therefore their only way to interrelate with different cultures, is through what they call “sexual tours” with foreign prostitutes. The two underachievers decide to improvise a new role for themselves as thieves; they become the most unlikely and nonprofessional of thieves and steal the most sacred relic of Triveneto, the tongue of Saint Anthony—the Patron of Padua—from one of the most internationally revered places of Catholic devotion: the Basilica del Santo.79 This film weaves together contradictory anthropological, cultural and territorial elements – elements which, as we shall see, are treated in the literary works of authors Carlotto and Rumiz; of special interest to this study will be the thematic of the common, limited, and provincial mentality of the protagonists towards foreigners.80

The other film by Mazzacurati under examination is the drama La giusta distanza (The Right Distance), set and filmed in 2007. The movie illustrates the belated redemption of an innocent immigrant who was accused of murder. Un-coincidentally, the plot takes place in the fictional village of Concadalbero, near Rovigo, the most marginalized and economically depressed province of Veneto.81 The Tunisian Hassan is the protagonist of this story. He lives an apparently integrated life by honestly working in his mechanical workshop. He falls in love with Mara, a young Italian elementary teacher from Tuscany, who is new in town. The community perceives Mara as an immigrant, although an “internal” immigrant.82 Mara plans to stay

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80 Massimo Carlotto, in the crime story Nordest (2005), narrating the homicide of a young lawyer, describes the traffic of toxic waste in the hands of unscrupulous delinquents from Romania; Paolo Rumiz, in Morimondo (2013), denounces the foreign smugglers using undisturbed for their traffics the river Po, totally uncontrolled by the police.

81 This province has a history of emigration towards richer areas of the peninsula.

82 “Internal immigration” is a definition by Rumiz, Paolo. La secessione leggera. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001. Everybody but the locals are aliens according to the natives in these closed communities!
temporarily in Concadalbero, because she is waiting for the authorization to move to Brazil in order to work for an NGO. Hassan’s antagonist is the tobacco seller Amos, who finds his Romanian wife in an online catalogue; because he married a foreigner, he claims to be open-minded. The two opposing characters, Hassan and Amos, inevitably alter and garble the coordinates of the sociological change happening in this space of the bassa padana, however, they both represent the incarnation of stereotypical characters: Hassan is the perfect victim of prejudices, and Amos is the ignorant and arrogant local who thinks that money—schei—can buy everything. In Mazzacurati’s film, the immigrants are no longer secondary characters, but become instead the protagonists of the story. In addition, the values of globalization superimpose and contrast greatly with the traditional values of this society, and the resistance to globalization is clearly illustrated by the director.

Giuseppe Tornatore’s La Sconosciuta (The Unknown Woman) is a 2006 psychological thriller mystery, set in Trieste, Friuli-Venezia Giulia. The protagonist is an immigrant, the Ukrainian prostitute Irena, who is haunted by a horrible past, and who is in search of a lost daughter. She calculatedly inserts herself as a nanny in the home of a rich Italian family. Director Tornatore raises and explores the issues of human trafficking, prostitution, and criminal organizations exploiting immigrants. However, the space in which the story takes place is a

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83 Bassa Padana is the region around the River Po basin, between Pavia and Comacchio Valley.

84 Schei means “money” in Venetian dialect. Journalist Gianantonio Stella in his book Schei (Milano: Mondadori, 2000), illustrates and criticizes the narrow-minded mentality of that part of Venetian people convinced that money is synonymous with power.
claustrophobic “non-place,” an apartment that could be anywhere, and thus transmits the notion that immigrants are victims of abuses everywhere.\(^{85}\)

Marco Simon Pucchini’s *Riparo* (Shelter Me), filmed in 2007, is a drama that develops in an unspecified location (between Udine and Coseano) in the province of Udine, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and portrays the difficult and controversial relationship among three protagonists. They are: the rich young entrepreneur Anna, her lover and employee Mara, and the young Moroccan refugee, Anis. Anna and Mara, returning by ferryboat from a vacation in Tunisia, find Anis hidden in their car in the hopes of crossing the border into Italy. Anna then decides to take him with them, and tries to help him integrate into the new society. She hosts him in her house, and finds him a job. Eventually, they have to face the consequences of Anna’s decision: they must learn to deal with their alleged and preconceived cultural differences, and with the provincial society where they live dominated by prejudices.

*Cose dell’altro mondo* (Things of another World) is a controversial “if-comedy” by Francesco Patierno, inspired by Sergio Arau’s *A Day without a Mexican*\(^ {86}\). Patierno’s film is set in 2010 between the town Bassano Del Grappa, and the province of Treviso, in Veneto. It stages a hypothetical question: What would happen if suddenly the immigrants – that is, all the farms and the factory workers, caregivers for the elderly, garbage collectors, domestic workers, prostitutes, and students – would suddenly disappear from the region? This film contains and

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\(^{85}\) Tornatore made other two films dealing indirectly with immigration: in 1988, the drama *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso*, in which the protagonist is a filmmaker who emigrates in the sixties from Sicily to Rome to pursue his vocation; in 1998, the drama *The Legend of 1900* (*La leggenda del pianista sull’oceano*). The story takes place in a ship that brings immigrants from Europe to New York at the beginning of the 20th century. *Novecento*, a theatrical monologue by Alessandro Baricco published in 1994, inspired the film.

\(^{86}\) Sergio Arau, *A Day without a Mexican*. 2004. The film is a satirical description of what could happen if all the Mexicans living in the state of California suddenly disappeared; a mysterious “pink fog” surrounds the state impeding communications with the “outside world.” The story emphasizes the impact of Mexicans on California's economy, law enforcement, education systems, and the consequent social turmoil.
reflects all the racist stereotypes characterizing a certain type of Venetian contemporary sub-culture, which justifies the social exploitation of immigrants while hiding behind a hypocritical façade of tolerance and benevolence. This cinematic work has been particularly criticized for political reasons, because of the ridiculed portrait of unscrupulous entrepreneurs, members and the supporters of the Lega Nord Party. However, for this specific analysis, we will focus on the portrayal of stereotyped Venetian characters and racist attitudes towards immigrants.

The next two films are two fiction works by the famous documentarist, travel author and sociologist Andrea Segre: Io sono Li (Shun Li and the Poet) and La prima neve (The First Snowfall). The first, Io sono Li, takes place in Chioggia, a small city-island in the Veneto Lagoon; it describes the gentle friendship between a young Chinese woman and a fisherman who migrated to Italy from Yugoslavia thirty years earlier. Therefore, the two protagonists are both foresti. They have many things in common, first of all a shared love of the sea—seen as a unifying element—and they are both victims of circumstance: the Chinese woman is overburdened by the obligations imposed by her work conditions, and the fisherman is subjected to the locals’ prejudices.\textsuperscript{87} This cinematic work offers an ecocritical perspective, thanks to its poetic rendering of the landscapes. In addition, it offers a poignant representation of the ancient Adriatic traditions and identity that still exists and persists on the island of Chioggia.\textsuperscript{88}

The second fiction film by Segre, La prima neve (2013), is a delicate and intimate portrayal of the vicissitudes and discomforts that a young refugee from Togo endures on his journey to the breathtaking location of Italy’s high Alps. With remarkable symmetry and drama,
the story parallels the angst of Dani, the soul-shaken African protagonist who cannot bring up his infant daughter with the sorrow of Michele, a towheaded local boy who has lost his father. The film is set in Trentino-Alto Adige Region, precisely in Pergine, at the foot of Mòcheni Valley, in the Northeast town of Trento.\textsuperscript{89} The setting is the most “authentic” and traditional among all the cinematic works I have selected, because it appears untouched by progress and globalization. Racism is never mentioned, as if a pristine bucolic state were the condition for not developing prejudices. Moreover, the film is worthy of note given the linguistic variety that distinguishes all the characters, the symbolic representation of local traditions, the ancient social patriarchal structure based on wisdom, and the poetic correspondence between the protagonists’ emotions and the natural surroundings. Director and sociologist Segre states that both his films are “a space where nature becomes theater. The film is constructed around the dialogue between documentary and fiction, the direct relationship with reality and the choice of more intimate moments, handled with attention to the details of the \textit{mise-en-scène}.”\textsuperscript{90} Furthermore, this film in particular connects with the literary work of the highlander author Mauro Corona, and with the Venetian traditions described by of Maestros Luigi Meneghello and Mario Rigoni Stern.

Chronologically, the most recent movie is \textit{Piccola patria} (Small Homeland) by Alessandro Rossetto, set and filmed in 2013. This is a dark movie, set in a deterritorialized province of Veneto, in a rural area disfigured by recent industrialization. The territory is altered to the point in which the location is no longer recognizable: the location is distinguishable only

\textsuperscript{89} The Mòcheni Valley is a “linguistic island”, because the spoken language is “bersntoler sproch”, a medieval-German idiom. The word “mòcheno” would derive from the variation of pronunciation of the German verb \textit{machen} (to make), characterizing the “mòcheni people” as hard workers; more specifically, the phrase “\textit{mache ich}” (make I), which in the dialect is translated \textit{mòcheni}.

\textsuperscript{90} The official web site of the film is: \url{https://www.festivalscope.com/film/the-first-snowfall}
by the dialect spoken by the protagonists and by the soundtrack.\textsuperscript{91} It is the depiction of a love-story, one which is fiercely complicated due to the lack of values of the protagonists, as well as the prejudices, ignorance and racism of the society in which they live. \textit{Piccola patria} mixes together the characteristics of documentary and fiction to describe a reality that is in fact tightly woven into this territory. The three main characters, two local young women and an Albanian man of the same age, are integrated in the society; but the girls dream of traveling away from their small town, while the young Albanian just wants to live a normal life. This is a \textit{docu-film},\textsuperscript{92} inspired by a real-life story set in a real space. It sets the various hopes of the youth against a backdrop of multiple deceipts and blackmail between youth and adults, fathers and sons, friends and lovers, and the community in which they all live. The society disintegrates, and everything rotates around the Hotel Antares, the non-place which constitutes the fulcrum of the entire story. This film is unpleasant and disturbing, but unfortunately reflects an undeniably realistic deterioration of values and territory. This film recalls Carlotto’s \textit{Nordest} and Covacich’s novels as they too bemoan the loss of morals which happens when the last generation of a poor society becomes rich too fast, and in the end abandons and forgets their traditions.\textsuperscript{93}

All the aforementioned films have the following in common: the geographic location of the settings, diverse in landscape and degrees of globalization; the presence of immigrants in the

\textsuperscript{91} The soundtrack is performed part by a Venetian band, and part by the famous composer and “Alpine” choir director Bepi De Marzi, author of \textit{L’acqua xe morta}, the emblematic soundtrack describing the “death of water”, performed by Crodaioli.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Docu-film} is an Italian neologism to define a cinematic genre which falls between documentary and traditional film.

\textsuperscript{93} Mauro Covacich, in \textit{L’amore contro} (2001), describes the \textit{Nordest} in a hyper-realistic way as he portrays the morbid and squalid relationship between the elephantine outcast Sergio, and Ester, an abused immigrant prostitute; in \textit{A perdifiato} (2003), he narrates the infatuation of a man for the Hungarian teenager Agota, and his difficulties connected to the process for the adoption of the Haitian young girl Fiona (protagonist of the homonymous 2005 novel). All these novels take place in the \textit{Triveneto}. 
local society now displaced; the variety of spoken local dialects in contrast with a multicultural society; and the presence of mountains and water (rivers, canals, lagoon, sea), as unifying or dividing elements for the protagonists. The environmental characteristics are essential vital elements constitutive of this territory, now subject to the rules of industrialization and overbuilding. Against these commonalities, the migrant experience is foregrounded and examined, revealing and illuminating how this wave of newcomers must contend with being, quite literally, strangers in the land.
CHAPTER 2

NARRATIVES OF IMMIGRATION. THE CHANGE AND EVOLUTION OF THE SOCIETAL INSTITUTIONS: PATER FAMILIAS, MARRIAGE, INTERGENERATIONAL ROLES, AND FRIENDSHIP.

In the past, in the macro-region Triveneto, the established social and moral principles and the cultural values were considered foundational to maintain the tradition; therefore, for generations they were generally unquestioned and universally accepted. Tenets and social institutions, such as family, marriage and intergenerational roles, were believed unalterable and timeless. Normally the evolution of moral principles is expected, desirable, and even unavoidable; everything changes in time, and transformation is in the nature of all costumes; nevertheless, it is evident that the durability of the aforementioned institutions recently has been undermined, because of their internal conflicts in relation to the compressed space-time generated by progress and globalization. As stated in the previous chapter of this study, the economic change of vocation of the Nordest from rural into industrial, and from a locally connoted community to a multiform settlement, universally connected into a “Global Village”, contributed dramatically in determining customs’ and habits’ changes in the provincial and sometimes hidebound Triveneto’s communities.

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94 Paolo Rumiz. *La secessione leggera*.

95 Term introduced by the book *War and Peace in the Global Village* (1968) by Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore.

96 Ilvo Diamanti, ib.
These alterations generated, especially in the last twenty years, new practices and norms; as a consequence, the interrelations’ values and dynamics transformed quickly and deeply. Although cultural and societal evolution brought both favorable and dysfunctional outcomes everywhere, the *Nordest* once again seems a paradigmatic case. Compared to the lifestyle of the generation prior to World War II, many native people who grew up and spent their entire life in these changing spaces welcomed the advancement of progress, in the name of the economic prosperity, an improved public school system universally accessible, and the technology comforts, now universally available. However, people did not always thoroughly realize that, along with their upgraded quality of life, their lifestyle too has been forcibly and permanently altered. Or maybe they passively accepted it as part of the game? The fact is that some customary relations characterizing the Italian northeastern villagers’ way of living, e.g. a rural patriarchal family system, were deeply altered and modified forever in the mid-sixties. These changes affected and modified the archetypical roles of social entities, such as the *pater familias*, marriage, intergenerational relations, and friendship. In this chapter I will highlight these alterations, as they are delineated in the films.

The process of transformation became evident in the *Triveneto* starting from the late 1950s, in coincidence also with a social “internal” migration; specifically, when peasants began to move *en masse* from the rural areas into the recently formed urban industrialized locations to work in factories, leaving the paternal household established for generations in the countryside; or else, as simultaneously many rural settings were swallowed up into the inexorably expanding industrialized metropolitan surroundings.\(^{97}\) Not only many communities were altered, and

\(^{97}\) Migration from the South to the industrialized North is described in many films, among which: Luchino Visconti’s *Rocco e i suoi fratelli* (1960), and Gianni Amelio’s *Così ridevano* (1998), but migration from the country to the industrialized Northern towns are not as many. Two examples: Vittorio De Sica’s Neorealism fable *Miracolo*
sometimes dispersed and therefore disintegrated, but also the relevance of the family’s role based on the seniority of its members, was progressively disregarded to the point in which the whole familiar structure changed. In the industrial environment, the traditional patriarchal system progressively has been replaced by the modern nuclear household, in which the grandparents have lost their primary place and authority, and both parents work far from home. Now the majority of the founders of a patriarchal family no longer live with their descendants in a clan structure, nor are regarded as the wise family’s point of reference for advising and taking decisions; moreover, the elderly no longer are the primary source for the transmission of principles and basic education to their grand-children while their parents are absent at work. As a result, the adult offspring and their children no longer take care of the elderly at home once they are aging and becoming inactive: the old parents are put in retirement homes or entrusted to private caregivers, the majority of whom are typically foreign immigrants. A dramatic consequence of this change is the progressive loss of oral tradition, and familiar storytelling, usually perpetrated by the elderly.

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98 Visual examples of patriarchal traditional family structure in Northern Italy between the late 1800s and until the 1940s are well illustrated in three films: Novecento by Bernardo Bertolucci (1976), L’albero degli zoccoli by Ermanno Olmi (1978), and L'uomo che verrà by Giorgio Diritti (2009).

99 Ilvo Diamanti, ibid.

100 Filò is the name of an important activity typical in the Triveneto, during the long evenings in winter time in countryside communities. It consisted of the gathering of families, neighbors and friends at the same stable; the pretext was to save firewood, by taking advantage of the animal heat. People were performing winter activities, such as repairing tools, and making baskets, while praying or telling stories, and news for entertainment and preservation of oral history. Filò is well illustrated in the following films: Bernardo Bertolucci’s Novecento (1976), Ermanno Olmi’s L'albero degli zoccoli (1978), Giorgio Diritti’s L'uomo che verrà (2009). With the advent of improved standards of life and the diffusion of television (in Italy in 1954) this tradition completely disappeared.
This sociological evidence is not the object of the present analysis, but all the representations, the implications and consequences of this social transformation are illustrated and evident in the selected films on immigration set in the *Triveneto* between 2000 and 2017.\textsuperscript{101} It is interesting to observe that by contrast, in this modified space where traditions have been undermined and outmoded, immigrants arriving since the late 1980s have brought their own mores and traditional culture; ironically, they came from places in which the old-fashioned institutions discussed above are still respected and revered. Therefore, foreign immigrants and refugees are often paradoxically the ones who can perceive clearly the generational gap, as I intend to show in my analysis of the films.

For example, let us first consider the role of the *pater familias* and how it highlights the preexisting values of a Tunisian immigrant, Hassan, in Mazzacurati’s *La giusta distanza*. As Hassan, the story’s protagonist, explains to Mara, he migrated from his native country of Tunisia to Italy following the death of his father. Hassan is very clear that his role is to take care of the family now that his father cannot do this. As the first-born in his family, he fully understands that his mother and siblings expect him to provide economic support; without his father, they would no longer have the means to live. However, Hassan is unable to find a job opportunity in his homeland to sustain them, and is thus forced to move elsewhere. In Italy, he settled in the fictional small town of Concadalbero, in the province of Rovigo, Veneto.\textsuperscript{102} In this new, foreign setting, he shows himself to be capable, motivated and talented. He thus improves his skills

\textsuperscript{101} In this chapter, I present a very detailed discussion of plots and characterization to facilitate the reader’s understanding of criticism and analysis. Subsequent chapters will build upon the details presented here.

\textsuperscript{102} This area has been for long time economically depressed. From the Rovigo’s province, also known as Polesine — the Po River Delta region— seasonal emigration to Germany and Austro-Hungarian Empire started during the 1800s. By the end of the century, and after World War I and II, people from the area emigrated to Brazil and Argentina. In the 1950s, because of the Po’s periodic floods, many migrated to the industrial triangle Torino, Milano, Genova (210, Emilio Franzina).
while working diligently over years, and eventually is able to establish and operate his own workshop as an honest mechanic. He employs Frusta, a local, and continues to be an upstanding member of the community, demonstrating entrepreneurial ability, trustworthiness, and integration in this Nordest town.

After Hassan establishes his economic stability, he assumes his status of the head of the family by facilitating other relatives to move and join him in the same area, the resettlement of extended families of immigrants being quite common. Hassan’s sister, Jamila, and her Moroccan husband, Mohammad, open their own pizzeria, thus reflecting a flexibility to adapt and respond to their new country’s customs and food preferences. We gather that Hassan values his role of pater familias of his clan beyond helping them resettle in Italy. He understands the need for integration and inclusion, as he continues to care, worry, and feel responsible for his nephews’ and niece’s assimilation to Italian culture. He brings them gifts, and constantly advises them (and their parents) to value education and its potential to help them experience integration and eventual inclusion in Italian society. Only when he feels reassured about his family’s absorption in what their new homeland does Hassan take the “luxury” to fall in love with Mara. The priority that Hassan gives to his family’s wellbeing is notable: His response to his father’s death and his strong sense of responsibility towards his family correspond perfectly with what one could have expected under the Triveneto’s patriarchal system in the generations preceding in World War II.

Hassan is very cautious, reserved, and serious about his relationship with Mara; his aim is to marry and start a new family with her, because he feels the ancestral duty of his inherited role. However, Mara is a real daughter of her generation: she is an economically independent young woman; she is educated and a working woman, employed temporarily as a substitute teacher at the local elementary school. Additionally, she lives by herself while her parents reside elsewhere.
in Tuscany. This freedom from her family is unusual since she is not married; indeed, it seems too modern to the provincial inhabitants of Concadalbero who are not used to seeing single independent women. As a result, several local males find Mara attractive and try to approach her with the excuse of being helpful while she is settling in her new house. Conversely, women such as Galjia (Amos’ Romanian wife) gossip about Mara’s non-orthodox and abnormal choice in lifestyle. At first, Mara seems oblivious to all the commentary and reactions that her presence arouses in the small, narrow-minded town – or perhaps she simply cannot be bothered. Later, we see that she is amused by this and talks about the males’ attentions with her friend Eva by phone and via email.

Mara does not seem to hold any ethnic stereotypes of Hassan. Initially, she refuses Hassan’s special courtesies, although she is attracted to his fascinating and mysterious personality. Soon, she consents to what she considers an occasional relationship with him. She has no expectation of a serious relationship with him, let alone marriage, as her more open and free mentality does not feel the need of any obligation. Also, she plans to leave Concadalbero soon, since she accepted a position as a teacher to work with a humanitarian organization in Brazil that helps orphaned children; from her point of view, she should not commit to Hassan. Thus, there is no racial prejudice towards the Tunisian man, but just a cultural difference of intents and plans for life. For Hassan the attainment of the archetypical family is the logic goal in a man-woman relationship; he cannot understand why Mara’s priority is not to start a new family with him since they like each other; to him, it is even inconceivable that her objective in life is to take care of other people’s children. Unfortunately, Mara’s refusal of Hassan’s marriage proposal will later give investigators an alleged pretext for accusing him of this woman’s rape and murder.
While circumstances are against Hassan, in this case it is the investigators’ racial prejudice that ultimately motivates a very superficial inquiry and rushed conclusion of the case. Ironically, Tunisian Hassan incarnates the traditional, Catholic model of the ideal head of family expected in the Nordest until 50 years ago: this immigrant sought to do what an adult man should do: court and marry a woman, and start a family with her. According to Catholic tradition, sexual intercourse should not come before marriage. In this case then, it would be Mara who represents a difference, morally speaking, in the conventional society of Concadalbero – not Hassan. Ultimately, the prejudices that prevail against the outsider in this town subvert and undermine the traditional pater familias role that Hassan had played.

Interestingly enough, La giusta distanza offers a counterpoint to consider pater familias and its role in society – only this time, it is to show how one can undermine the tradition. In this case, the head of the family is Italian native Amos, Hassan’s antagonist. Amos is the village’s tobacco shop owner. We learn that he grew rich by organizing and conducting deep-sea fishing excursions with his speedboat, though he has no official license to do so. Despite the fact that he pays no taxes on the income brought in by these excursions, Amos sincerely believes he is a respectable citizen. In fact, he epitomizes the prototype of the arrogant and uncouth nouveau riche of the Nordest. The nouveau riche are generally not accepted right away into the upper social class: The juxtaposition between the two classes shows the societal difference between the two social groups and has led to many stereotypes of the “uncultured” nouveau riche, who are

103 Evading taxes is considered a right for many small entrepreneurs of the Nordest. This is another of the main arguments of Lega Nord Party’s propaganda. It is a quite common belief among many Venetian entrepreneurs to have the right to evade taxes. Actually, the economic boom of the small and medium enterprises during the 1980s has been funded on the systematic faking of tax returns (Paolo Rumiz, La Secessione leggera. Dove nasce la rabbia del profondo Nord).

104 In Venetian dialect “arricchio” is the word to define the nouveau riche.
assumed to lack the moral superiority of those with “Old Family” ties. Other examples of the *nouveau riche* characterization can be found in the following films: Dottor Ronchitelli, Patrizia’s lover in *La lingua del Santo*, the entrepreneur Mariso Golfetto in *Cose dell’altro mondo*, and the smuggler Denis in *Io sono Li*.105

Amos’ tobacco shop is a stable ordinary business, but his side business remains lucrative, allowing him to buy a large, modern house, a luxurious car, a magnificent speedboat and…a beautiful Romanian wife. He considers himself hospitable and tolerant towards immigrants, since he married one. His viewpoint and logic is that money can buy anything, including a wife. Consequently, he chose his Romanian wife Galjia through an online catalog. He finds this system quite normal and “technologically up-to-date”,106 moreover, he is proud of it, because he is convinced that he saved the life of a poor immigrant otherwise destined to become a prostitute somewhere else in Europe, or a wretched woman in her native country. This attitude reveals Amos’ sly racism, his idea of superiority, and his male chauvinist outlook. He takes a distorted and utilitarian form of deference for women, and ultimately for immigrants. Incidentally, Amos’ moral lack of scruples is on the verge of touching another awkward issue: the exploitation of immigrant women for prostitution (which is more evident in *Cose dell’ altro mondo*, with the character of Cicia, and in *La Sconosciuta*, in the character of Irena).107 Furthermore, Amos’

105 Typically these small entrepreneurs are arrogant because of their acquired monetary power; they are dishonest, evade the taxes, and usually neither have nor value education.

106 In Venetian dialect: “vanti coi tempi”.

107 Foreign prostitution, as Della Via observes, is depicted progressively in the Italian films on immigration. This is proven in the selected series of films in the present work: foreign prostitutes are in the background in *La lingua del Santo*, when Antonio and Willi do their “putàn-tour” (Euphemistic neologism in Venetian dialect for a type of “tourism” consisting on going around in different known places looking for prostitutes), and in *Piccola Patria*, in their squalid dark environment; in secondary roles, for instance in *Cose dell’altro mondo*, where protagonist Golfetto has a relationship with a Nigerian prostitute; as a protagonist, as in the film *La Sconosciuta*, in which Russian Irena, is a former prostitute who became a caregiver for a disabled child.
conduct shows how the abuse of technology combined with consumerism has a negative effect on social relations, the very basis of social structure.\textsuperscript{108}

Amos tries to impress the small community of Concadalbero. He believes he will achieve social respectability and recognition by his outward display of status symbols. These symbols are based on the commercial model of western contemporary society. He is so wrapped up in himself and insistent upon conquering all with his accumulated objects that he attempts to dazzle Mara in a furious crescendo, first with a ride in his luxury SUV, later by offering her a tour with his speedboat, and finally by inviting her to a cruise to the Tropics (while his wife is visiting her family in Romania). He might be respected by and within his provincial community, but this character is limited by his superficial set of personal values. He clearly shows a lack of basic moral values: He has no respect for his wife or for Mara – and by extension, one can say he respects neither immigrants nor women – and he does not intend to uphold the institution of marriage. His conception of \textit{pater familias} is thus distorted: He is a sexist dominator gratified by his position and social status. Given this demeanor, the audience will wrongly suspect Amos of Mara’s assassination; however, Amos is not an assassin, simply because he wouldn’t waste his energy when he could (and does) move on to another woman he could easily buy. Nevertheless, when his wife becomes pregnant, Amos organizes a celebration inviting the entire town of Concadalbero, because finally he has a family and an heir, but his behavior is just another occasion to brag, and does not embody the traditional role of \textit{pater familias}.

In a second cinematic consideration of \textit{pater familias}, there is the old-fashioned and ideal model, the elderly Pietro in Segre’s film, \textit{La prima neve}. Pietro Fongher is a carpenter and

beekeeper who lives in the non-fictional village of Pergine, in the Mòcheni Valley of Trentino-Alto Adige. Pietro is the wise grandfather of protagonist Michele;\textsuperscript{109} he is a sensible and hardworking mountaineer. This character represents a living model for the people closest to him. Indeed, he is the stable fatherly figure for all the members of his family, and extended family: most especially for his young grandchild Michele, the child’s widowed mother Elisa, his nephew Fabio, and Togolese refugee Dani. Pietro represents the gravitational center of his family and community.\textsuperscript{110}

In the movie \textit{La prima neve}, eleven-year-old Michele is the orphan of Pietro’s son, Luca Fongher, who died in a landslide during an excursion in the mountain; when the child has a recurrent nightmare about the accident in which his father died, he seeks shelter and consolation at his grandfather’s home. Only Pietro seems to be able to console Michele and to give the child the comfort and protection that he needs. Michele cannot find comfort from his mother, with whom he has a conflicted relationship: Michele openly accuses his mother of her inability to save his father, and he blames her for his death. In fact, the young widow Elisa feels guilty for not having been able to save her husband Luca. She appears insecure; one perceives the sorrow at the loss of her husband, her need for a male companion, and her challenge to carry the weight of responsibility in raising her child by herself. Her weakness contrasts with the strength of Pietro, who is seen as all the more dependable as he gives support to Elisa. She trusts him as her father, and relies on his help and advice to assist her while she is doing her best to raise her

\textsuperscript{109} \url{http://www.laprimaneve.com/en}
\textsuperscript{110} \url{http://ilreferendum.it/2013/10/25/la-prima-neve-di-andrea-segre-e-la-delicata-trama-dellintegrazione/}

\textsuperscript{110} Pietro is the one character in this study whose influence on others is completely positive.
rebellious child. Pietro knows how to deal with Michele’s problematic personality at every turn, and successfully mediates the conflicts between Michele and his mother.

Conversely, Fabio, Pietro’s nephew and Michele’s full-grown cousin, tries to engage with the child as an adult male in the family; however, he seems unable to interact in a constructive way and communicate with the boy, because he acts in an immature and irresponsible way himself. In fact, Fabio just plays videogames with the boy, and influences him to neglect school rather than encouraging him to perform better for his education and future. Ironically, Fabio will repeat something that Michele’s father used to say – “A scuola si va solo quando se ne ha voglia” – but he misunderstands the intent behind this phrase and misses that it was meant to motivate the desire for education.\textsuperscript{111} Regarding his relationship with his uncle Pietro, Fabio refuses to follow in his footsteps and train as carpenter and beekeeper. While he lacks any clear goals or realistic prospects for his future in Pergine, he does not dare to leave the native and provincial village to migrate elsewhere, as his uncle’s family did in the past. He talks with his friend Gus about a rather nebulous plan to migrate to Madagascar in the near future in order to build and to work in a tourist resort. Only later will he admit that this is just a passing desire (like Luisa and Renata’s plan to go to China in Piccola Patria, or Malvina’s dream to work in the American hospital of Aviano in Occidente). Perhaps it is age and wisdom that allows Pietro to be patient with Fabio. While Pietro neither discourages nor encourages Fabio’s project, it is evident that these two characters are operating across a generational divide, and with two opposite personalities and conceptions of reality.

\textsuperscript{111} “You should go to school when you want it.” Luca meant that the student should go to school with the right attitude, if he really wants to learn.
This is reflected in their different attitude towards Togolese refugee Dani: while Fabio seems to accept Dani’s presence, he approaches him through stereotypical commonplaces while instead Pietro interacts with Dani naturally, and without any preconception. As Dani and Pietro’s relationship develops, Dani progressively seems to rely on Pietro’s wisdom and advice. In fact, seeking advice from the elderly member of the community was practice that was common to both Togo and to the traditional culture of Triveneto. While Dani is waiting for his entry permit to travel and work within the European Union, Italian authorities temporarily assign him to work under Pietro’s supervision in Pergine. The ultimate intention of Dani is to tag along with an African companion and friend and move to Paris as soon as he obtains his visa. When Dani originally left his native Togo with his young wife, Layla, his intention was to reach France where they would have more opportunities. However, she died from the hardship, and he feels responsible for her death. Presently, Dani neglects his baby daughter Fatou: He ignores her, and does not include her in his new life project. The audience learns that Dani cannot bear Fatou’s eyes, because they remind him of her mother Layla, who died of deprivation giving birth to her during the crossing of the Mediterranean Sea. Dani feels guilty for Layla’s death, just as Elisa does for her husband Luca’s death.

Not only does Pietro give an occupation to Dani, but he also helps him and acts patiently towards the Togolese man by setting an example for him: He teaches him how to make stacks of

112 For instance, when Fabio brings Dani a bicycle, the African man looks hesitant. Fabio asks him: “Avresti preferito un cammello?” (“Would you have preferred a camel instead?”).

113 This process is regulated by the Schengen Visa process: A Schengen Visa is the document issued by the appropriate authorities to the interested party for visiting/travelling to and within the Schengen Area. http://www.schengenvisainfo.com/

114 In all these films the immigrants’ stories are never illustrated: the focus is always on their current occurrences, not the circumstances that brought them to Italy and to the Nordest. On the contrary the migrants’ journeys are described in recent novels, such as: Fabio Geda, *Nel mare ci sono i coccodrilli* (2010), Amani El Sanif-Cristina Obbi, *Siria mon amour* (2013), and Giuseppe Catozzella, *Non dirmi che hai paura* (2014).
wood, take care of the bees, and select which trees to cut in the forest. Pietro teaches Dani that life must follow Nature’s cycle and rhythm. While they work together, Pietro uses proverbs and metaphors related to nature to communicate with Dani. As he says to both Michele and Dani: “La legna che fai tu, ti riscalda tre volte: quando la tagli, quando la porti a casa e quando la bruci.” Pietro always employs the mountaineer wisdom that refers to nature to connect with and to heal the interior wounds of both, Michele and Dani. Pietro is very thoughtful and sensible. He has suffered the loss of his wife and son and been challenged by life events: However, he found his own balance – a quality that is expected of the head of the household. He accepts and fully embraces the traditional role of *pater familias*. He has learned the wisdom of managing his own pain and suffering; this this may be partly due to his personality, it is also likely that Pietro learned this wisdom from observing life and all that it brings. He has taken the lessons of life to heart as his ancestors did for generations, emulating the patience, adaptation, and harmony of the natural environment of his native town. This is why the only time he dissents with Dani is when Dani intends to leave for Paris and leave his daughter Fatou behind. Pietro says: “Lo vedi da te cosa succede in una famiglia dove non c’è più un padre.”

Pietro has a further reason for his insisting upon the responsibility of a father. He is a returned emigrant, and maybe this is why he is particularly sensitive towards Dani, and makes continual efforts to stay close to the Togolese man. In a conversation with Dani, Pietro says that he once left the Mòcheni Valley to migrate to Germany; eventually he returned to his mountains after long years. The details and circumstances of Pietro’s migration adventure and return are not

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115 Pietro says the following words in Mòcheno’s dialect, and Michele translates them to Dani: “The wood that you reap heats you three times: when you cut it, when you bring it home, and when you burn it.” Pietro means that people are responsible for all their actions and their consequences.

116 Pietro says “You could see what happens to a family left without a father,” when Dani communicates his intention to leave Pergine without Fatou.
specified; however, it is reasonable, given his age and the geo-political and historical events, to assume that he migrated as a young boy with his family during the Nazi Regime. Such a phenomenon is a long time neglected chapter of local history. Historian Paolo Cova studied what happened between the 1930s and the 1940s to the German-speaking minorities established for centuries in small communities in the Alpine north-eastern part of the Italian peninsula. Cova reports that on June 1939 the Nazi German and the Fascist Italian Governments made an agreement in order to solve the problem of identity of the German-speaking minorities living on the borders between Italy and Austria. The territory where these ethnic groups lived had been annexed to Italy, by virtue of the Pact of London, after World War I. These minorities never identified, nor integrated with the Italian nation because of their different language, customs and traditions. In addition, during the Fascist Regime, they were forced to speak Italian, obliterate their culture and give up their habits.

In 1939 the German and Italian governments agreed to give them the option to become citizens of the Reich. The South Tyrolians constituted the most relevant minority in that area. They were offered to leave the land they inhabited for generations, and to move to the German territory, in order to populate rural and underpopulated areas. Upon voting for the option to move to Germany, the members of these minorities were transferred to inhabit other deprived countryside areas of the Reich, including Poland, occupied by the Nazis as of September 1939.

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117 The Pact or Treaty of London was a secret pact between the Triple Entente and the Kingdom of Italy. It was signed in London on 26 April 1915 by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the French Third Republic, the Russian Empire, and the Kingdom of Italy. Its intent was to gain the alliance of Italy against its former allies, including Germany. According to the pact, Italy was to leave the Triple Alliance and join Triple Entente; Italy was to declare war against Germany and Austria-Hungary within a month (this happened against Austria-Hungary within a month, but not until 1916 against Germany). Assuming victory against Germany and its allies, the Triple Entente promised Italy some territorial gains at the end of the war. Among them, are South Tyrol, Trento, and Trieste.

118 The whole operation was called Opzione.
German authorities promised to compensate the South Tyrolians with an equivalent value property compared to the assets that they were leaving behind in Italy, or with a decent job.\textsuperscript{119} The option was offered also to other minorities, such as the Môcheni, Luserni and Fassàni of Trentino. These minorities were mostly poor people, but in some cases, as journalist Lilli Gruber, a descendent of South Tyrolians, describes in the history of her family, they were ordinary people who believed they would have more political and social recognition from the Reich, since the Fascist Regime despised them.\textsuperscript{120} This was a historic deception as both Cova’s and Gruber’s studies document. The lands assigned to families who chose to move to Germany and Poland were in no way equivalent to the assets they left behind in south Tyrol and Trentino. This deception did further damage as it distributed and dispersed people in different areas, scattering their communities forevermore. Their sense of identity is still strongly associated with a homeland that is no longer home in this diaspora. After the end of World War II, many of those emigrants returned to their homeland, either as poor as they were prior to leaving, or having lost all their property.

The Môcheno character Pietro in the movie \textit{La Prima Neve} is reasonably one of the returned \textit{Opzionisti}. He came back to his \textit{Heimat},\textsuperscript{121} and re-established his roots, values and role within his family and his native community. Director Segre does not specify the events, but it is Pietro’s plausible story. Many Italians from the South or from the North of the Peninsula

\textsuperscript{119} Paolo Cova. \textit{Un grande imbroglio. Il dramma dell’Opzione nelle isole linguistiche del Trentino.} \url{https://www.cultura.trentino.it/Appprofondimenti/L-Opzione-dimenticata-di-mocheni-e-luserni2}

\textsuperscript{120} Lilli Gruber, \textit{Tempesta.}

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Heimat}, Fatherland in German.
migrated to Switzerland, Belgium, France and Germany between the 1960s and 1970s.\textsuperscript{122} In all the series of films in this analysis Pietro seems the only character not tormented by his personal past and who demonstrates a unique attention and connection to his ancestors’ roots. “\textit{Le cose che hanno lo stesso odore devono stare insieme},”\textsuperscript{123} says Pietro, talking about wood and honey. However, we gradually understand that this simple idea applies to him, to his native land, to traditions, and to his regard for all the members of his family: For Michele and his mother, Elisa, for Dani and his neglected baby daughter, Fatou. Pietro loves his \textit{Heimat}, and his modest job; he doesn’t seem to miss, regret or blame anything, neither from the past nor for the present. Even the bear that plundered and destroyed his beehives is accepted and faced as part of this natural world. Pietro’s attitude is that things can be mended. With deep determination and perseverance, Pietro rebuilds the apiaries, and tries to fix Michele’s conflict between the boy and his mother and facilitate their reconciliation; he patiently tolerates his nephew’s Fabio alleged plans of migration, and avoids any interference; he doesn’t even ask him for help in his job. Pietro works with Dani in the forest and with the bees; he understands Dani’s loneliness and pain, since he was a migrant too. The only thing that he cannot support is Dani’s intention to leave behind his daughter. Pietro understands and appreciates nature’s universal language, and adopts it by showing Dani how it is possible to start over in life by creating balance and living in harmony with nature and its rhythms. Indeed, nature seems to be the only setting where a dialogue between different cultures and a reciprocal understanding are still possible. Therefore, the role of

\textsuperscript{122} Some films on this topic are: Francesco Rosi, \textit{I magliari} (1959); Franco Brusati, \textit{Pane e cioccolata} (1973); Nino Jacusso, \textit{Emigration} (1978); Rolf Lyssy, \textit{I fabbricasvizzeri} (1978); Hans Andreas Guttner, \textit{Alamanja Alamanja} (1979); Claudio Cupellini, \textit{Una vita tranquilla} (2010); Toni Trupia, \textit{Itaker-Vietato agli italiani} (2012).

\textsuperscript{123} “Things with the same smell should stay together”.

the *pater familias* is inextricably interwoven with an appreciation of Mother Nature in Segre’s movie *La prima neve*.

Conversely, the fourth example of *pater familias* is the dysfunctional model impersonated by Franco, Luisa’s father in Rossetto’s tragic film, *Piccola Patria*. Franco arrogantly claims to embody his role of head of his family, yet his ignorance of the supportive aspects of this role is evident as he tends only to want to control and dominate his household and his relatives. He is an abusive and drunkard father and husband. Franco’s recourse to authority is based on a twisted notion of a masculine power running the household, though he does nothing to earn the respect of his family. His need to dominate others seems to stem from his own inability to achieve economic power: He is a frustrated worker who lives in Veneto, in an unspecified village of Treviso’s province. Franco was laid off when the factory he worked for relocated to Eastern Europe. The province of Treviso was mainly rural before the end of World War II, and then became highly industrialized between the 1960s and 1990s. The manufacturing companies who once flourished are now in decline due to the relocation of many factories, which became widespread in this area with the new millennium.124

As Venetian composer Bepi De Marzi’s choir sings in a refrain of the film’s soundtrack, in this area: “*L’acqua la xé morta.*”125 This phrase signifies that the flow of life, of productivity, came to a halt in this region. However, Franco does not recognize that the economic crisis in his hometown is the result of a general decline in factories and the job opportunities they once

124 Paolo Rumiz, *La secessione leggera*, and Gianantonio Stella, *Schei: dal boom alla rivolta: il mitico Nordest*. This is a very common choice and practice of Italian entrepreneurs starting from 1989, at the end of the Soviet Union, and of all the countries that were subject to the Russian political and economic influence.

125 In Venetian dialect: “The water is dead.” Rossetto uses Bepi De Marzi’s Choir in this film with the same function of the Chorus in the ancient Greek tragedies.
offered. Lacking the resourcefulness to train for another kind of profession,\textsuperscript{126} he prefers to blame the foreign immigrants who “*viens qua a rubarne el lavoro e anca ‘e done.*”\textsuperscript{127} This is a pretext that secessionist acolytes of *Lega Nord* Party used demagogically for at least two decades as an instrument to foment locals’ intolerance towards immigrants. The contrary is true, as Rumiz and Diamanti demonstrate; between the 1980s and the 1990s the small and medium-sized industries of the *Triveneto* prospered in two ways: The first is by subcontracting jobs to at home-enterprises, which pushed *lavoro nero* to the local people; the second, by massively employing immigrant workers.\textsuperscript{128} The latter practice thrived especially once locals no longer accepted to work “dirty jobs” and thus immigrants were hired instead.\textsuperscript{129} Nevertheless, by the end of the 1990s, the reckless practices of the entrepreneurs adopted a third utilitarian abuse: the practice of relocating the industry of the *Triveneto* in underdeveloped places where taxation and labor cost less than in the industrialized Italy.\textsuperscript{130} As a consequence, the unemployment of local workers skyrocketed. However, the common belief that became ingrained in the territory is that it is the immigrants’ fault if the industry of the *Nordest* is dying. Thus, in *Piccola Patria*, Franco incarnates the stereotyped xenophobic character of a loafer who spends his days hanging around,

\textsuperscript{126} Which is the case of Antonio and Willy in Mazzacurati’s film *La lingua del Santo*.

\textsuperscript{127} “Immigrants are stealing everything, locals’ work and women”.

\textsuperscript{128} *Lavoro nero* means work non-regulated by the law. People accepting a *lavoro nero* pay neither their contributions to the welfare nor taxes; they are underpaid and they have no insurance benefits.

\textsuperscript{129} Paolo Rumiz, in *La Secessione leggera*, describes the widespread practice in the *Triveneto* to commit subcontracted underpaid labor, performed especially by women, working in small laboratories or from home; then he emphasizes the capital role of immigrant workers for the boom of tannery industry in Chiampo Valley, Arzignano from the late-1980s to the mid-1990s.

\textsuperscript{130} Here are few examples for all: woolen and cotton mills Lanerossi from Schio (Vicenza) gradually relocated their plants in Romania; Marzotto textile industry from Valdagno (Vicenza), relocated its production in the Czech Republic, in the years immediately after the Fall of Berlin’s Wall in 1989. The same destiny happened to other important industries, such as the fashion brand Benetton from Treviso.
domineering at home and railing against immigrants with other idlers at the local bar. At home, he lives with his wife Anna and his daughter Luisa. Anna is a still young but has prematurely grown old and faded; she struggles to offer to the community the appearance of normality of her family by hiding the fact that her husband beats her and abuses their daughter Luisa.

Despite Franco and Anna’s problems and downbeat personalities, their young daughter Luisa has an apparently sunny disposition. Her parents are not aware of the fact that she has a relationship with Albanian Bilal, who takes care of the horses of the riding school next to the Hotel Antares where Luisa works as a housekeeper along with her friend Renata. As opposed to Luisa’s nature and personality, Renata is very irritable and untrustworthy. Luisa and Renata’s workplace is an aseptic alien island-fortress dominating the village; we actually never see its customers, and this lends to the hotel’s interior the aspect of a menacing non-place.

Conversely, the hotel seems to constitute the main economic resource left in a village that is no longer a rural community, but now industrial and desolate. This hotel / non-place also functions as a forlorn cultural center, as many of the locals’ activities gravitate around its strangely absent and invisible clients. Luisa seems somehow open-minded or at least curious about the different cultures she encounters: by interacting with a Chinese clerk at the shoes shop, having a relationship with Albanian Bilal, and later entertaining a casual conversation with a Turkish truck driver; she also tries to learn Mandarin language through an online course. Interestingly

The traditional bar is the typical meeting place for men in the Nordest. See in: La Lingua del Santo, La Giusta Distanza, Io sono Li, and Piccola Patria.

When her mother calls, Anna responds that everything is fine, while she is looking dejectedly at her husband, slouched on an armchair inside the house, passive in front of the television.

This place is very similar for isolation to the NATO Base of Aviano in Occidente, always seen from the exterior, inaccessible, and always apparently deserted. The feeling perceived is desolation, and inaccessibility in both cases.
enough, the only time she speaks Chinese, she does it to her father to express her frustration of being unable to communicate with him. Director Rossetto conveys the idea of the intergenerational gap between Luisa and xenophobe-racist Franco through this metaphoric representation.

The co-protagonist of Piccola Patria, Luisa’s friend Renata, has been repeatedly abused by an older, perverted, and sexually impotent man named Dino Menon. Menon pays her, and she is angry towards him as she finds herself continually subjugated by him. On the one hand, her desire for money prevails over the distaste of having sexual encounters/intercourses with Menon; on the other hand, she desires revenge. She persuades Luisa to use her relationship with young Albanian Bilal to extort money from Menon, with the excuse of funding their trip to China; as a personal pay back to her abuser, and perhaps because she wants to spoil her friend’s genuine and normal relationship. Renata’s plot is to take Menon to spy on Luisa and Bilal while the couple is having sexual intercourse. Her camera ready, Renata then takes pictures of Menon watching them in order to later blackmail the voyeur. When Luisa learns of Renata’s scheme, her dismissive acceptance of the risks involved make her appear quite superficial and irresponsible: she seems utterly oblivious of the fact that she is exploiting Bilal’s love for her, and she does not realize that her friend Renata is manipulating her as a puppet.

While in La prima neve nature functions as a facilitator and mediator of the interrelationship between different cultures, in Piccola patria money motivates and taints the majority of the human relations we see, such that any positive interaction seems impossible. Nevertheless, there are two scenes in which we see Luisa finding a much-needed moment of
peace and lightheartedness by taking refuge in nature. This innocent quality of nature finds a correspondence with that of this optimistic young girl. Director Rossetto thus emphasizes the correspondence between landscape and young women by illustrating an evident parallelism between what is left of the once unbound and bucolic countryside of the *Nordest* and the two mistreated young women: The viewer has the sense that both have been violated by the overbuilding of the industrialization.

Menon, like Luisa’s father Franco, is perversely animated by frustration, prejudice, a desire of revenge, and xenophobia; he convinces his fellow countrymen at the bar that immigrants are invading the territory by “stealing” jobs from the locals, and by introducing their barbarian foods, religions, costumes, and habits to the area. After he has been blackmailed several times by Renata, one day Menon recognizes Bilal, and he wrongly assumes that the Albanian is aware of and playing an active role in the plot against him. When Franco’s car has been stolen and left on the road destroyed by thieves, Menon blames the Albanians. In this way, he is able to coerce others to help exact his revenge on the innocent and unknowing Bilal. By calling upon the exacerbated and racist sentiments of Franco, Menon convinces him that the foreigner Bilal is the robber and the discriminatory tension escalates. When Luisa finally realizes that she spoiled the relationship with Bilal, she rushes to his trailer house for an *in extremis* apology. It is too late, though, because in the last scene of the film, a furious Franco appears with an armed weapon heading to the same place, intending to attack and kill; at the end of this drama we see only the terrified glances of Bilal, his cousin and Luisa, in the instant when Franco breaks

134 It happens twice: when she rides and falls asleep in the hay wagon, and when she runs happily through the fields followed by Bilal.
into the trailer, while Bepi De Marzi’s choir-chorus refrains “L’acqua la xé morta tuti lo saveva.”

All the characters in this film are more or less tragic victims of circumstances, ignorance and prejudices. However, the ultimate prey and the victim of this miserable and despicable chain of bad and distorted relations is the unaware immigrant Bilal, who was only asking for a humble but honest job and a relationship with the girl he sincerely loved. The tragic sequence of events interrupts Luisa’s pristine openness towards the foreigners, which was initially genuine in the story. Rossetto shows that all relations are irredeemably corrupted. There is no possible communication between father and daughter, there is no space left for a friendship, for a positive interaction, integration and inclusion between locals and immigrants in this place and at this time.

These three films La giusta distanza, La prima neve and Piccola Patria take up the pressing issues of how to grapple with the dramatic shifts of place, culture and people in the Triveneto in the twenty first century. Each film illustrates how the local culture is divided on how to deal with the introduction of other peoples’ traditions and beliefs. These films show how the Triveneto grapples with a population that is very clearly becoming more diverse than in the past, while La giusta distanza and Piccola Patria express the tension and impact of such abrupt changes by also emphasizing how deeply affected nature, landscape, and a sense of place are by industrialization. In the face of all these dynamic changes, the films allow the viewer to consider the fear of diversity that permeates the region by highlighting the resistance it creates for the newcomers. The refusal to accept and help integrate the new, the foreign, and the other materializes in new barriers and boundaries.
In the era of the European Union and globalization, it would seem walls would not be useful or effectuated. However, an analysis of these films reveals that the equilibrium in the established society was already fragile and illusory long before the recent migration flux. An understanding of these recent films gives an appreciation for how easily the stability of the Triveneto has been compromised by changing the intersections of some terms and conditions. Viewers of *La giusta distanza* have the sense of perceiving a society that seems to foster foreigners’ integration at a first glance, only to then see that assimilation was only superficial. In *Piccola Patria* we see that the arrival of different people was perceived as a progressive invasion especially as the locals’ unemployment became more relevant. Only with *La prima neve* do viewers have the sense that that integration is not only possible, but can become customary.

The three respective characters of immigrants and anti-immigrants Hassan, Pietro and Franco incarnate different and paradigmatic cases illustrating the role of *pater familias*. In two cases (Hassan and Franco) this role is overwhelmingly destroyed or removed from its traditional position in contemporary social hierarchy. The third case, Pietro’s, seems to rely on a purely bucolic setting and is thus perhaps out of date: in fact, the story takes place in a space and a site in which the lifestyle is not affected by modern interferences. The silent forest has the power of facilitating the sedimentation of the relationships. Director Segre, in an interview, says that he wanted to narrate a case of common “normality”; Mazzacurati describes a case of injustice and

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135 See for instance the documentary of 2006 *La nave dolce* by Daniele Vicari. The film gathers information about the memorable massive migration of people from Albania to Bari with the ship Vlorà, on August 8, 1991. This episode would later be considered the beginning of the “migration emergency” in Italy.

superficial integration in an immovable and inhospitable community; Rossetto depicts an extreme and squalid situation of resignation to intolerance. All of the above representations are possible, in so describing a range of portraits of the reality.

Along with the role of pater familias, marriage is another institution that appears particularly problematic in the contemporary Triveneto, as seen in the films. Here, all marital relationships are defined by a lack – whether of happiness, because the couple is experiencing a crisis, or because one of the spouses is deceased. The disfunctionality of the couple happens either to locals or to foreigners, and there are four paradigmatic cases in: La lingua del Santo, Cose dell’altro mondo, and Io sono Li. The first two examples regard two couples of locals: Willy and Patrizia, in La lingua del Santo by Mazzacurati, and Mariso Golfetto and Marta, in Cose dell’altro mondo by Patierno.

Willy, along with Antonio, is one of the two inept protagonists in Mazzacurati’s La lingua del Santo. Willy’s wife, Patrizia, has left him to be with Ronchitelli, a wealthy businessman who gives her the economic stability that Willy can no longer provide since he became unemployed. Ronchitelli buys the store where Patrizia works to help her, and the couple conducts an upscale lifestyle. Indeed, Ronchitelli accommodated all his previous lovers by buying a store for them. On her side, Patrizia does not seem to be in love with him, but rather with his money—Schei. Schei often times appear to become the propeller of this Nordest society. A very similar situation is sadly illustrated in the relationship between entrepreneur Mariso Golfetto and Marta, his boorish, bitter and angry wife in Patierno’s Cose dell’altro mondo. The

couple incarnates the stereotype of *nouveau riches* without class and education. Marta still lives together with Mariso, but only to maintain social appearances, and the acquired comfortable lifestyle. She seems aware of Mariso’s affair with a Nigerian prostitute; however, she appears more disappointed by having to do household chores by herself when their Philippine domestics suddenly disappear, than by her dysfunctional and unhappy marriage. Yet, she never contemplates the idea of leaving Mariso, primarily because appearances are a priority in this bigoted society; thus, the idea that a divorce would not be appropriate for a catholic couple prevails.\(^{139}\)

The third case of doomed relationship between locals is illustrated in Segre’s *Io sono Li*: the bossy smuggler Denis appears incapable of interacting with the fishermen of the community, with the immigrant Shun Li, and with his family. His wife actually seeks him out at the bar, because she needs him to take care of their first-born son while she brings their second son to the doctor’s office; she screams at him, then she leaves the child at the bar as if he were just a package. But Denis, disregarding his wife’s request, abandons the child for hours in the *osteria*;\(^{140}\) here, the fishermen customers and the bartender Shun Li take care of the child, while the irresponsible father has fun in the speedboat that he uses for his smuggling activity. When eventually Denis comes back to the *osteria*, he instructs the boy to tell his mother that father and son spent their afternoon playing together. In another sequence, in a conversation with his smuggler friend and accomplice, Denis describes his plans for the evening: a massage session, sex with a prostitute, and a double pizza as a finale. The above are Denis’ “principles”, and

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\(^{139}\) A law regulating divorce was introduced in Italy in 1970, with the opposition of the majority Party *Democrazia Cristiana*, representing also the position of Catholic Church. Although this law was in force from the 1970s, the debate was very hot, and the application not so common until the 1990s.

\(^{140}\) *Osteria* is the traditional name for *tavern* in Italian; to be more precise, in Venetian dialect the original name would be *bàcherio*.  

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disloyalty to his wife is among them. It is obvious that the behavior of these measly and narrow-minded Northeastern couples does not represent universally the status of marriage in the Triveneto; however, these cases can be used to contrast the stereotyped accusation of “corruption of the traditional local healthy principles” brought by the immigrants with their “barbaric” mores. The filmmakers consciously use this ironic juxtaposition to highlight the hypocrisy in this society. In the aforementioned rapid geopolitical changes in the region, it seems that Schei, as journalist Gianantonio Stella states, replaced other moral principles traditionally regulating the world of the Nordest.

The traditionally rural Nordest society quickly changed with the intense industrialization of the region. Its values were replaced by a subculture based solely on profit, Schei. This shift of principles generated a loss of the inherited identity and sense of community; as a consequence, society was left richer economically, but with a form of alienation stemming from the absence of all the reasonable objectives and perspectives for building a meaningful future for the next generations. This situation exploded in the 2008 global financial crisis, because this disaster deflated the miraculous economic bubble exposing the fragile nerves of this vulnerable society. The financial collapse created the perfect circumstance for using the immigrant population as a scapegoat. The native population is revealed to be oblivious of its own past as economic migrants and lapses into ignorance, malaise, fragmentation, and greed. Therefore, dysfunctional relationships happen also for cultural contrasts. When these situations occur, they may involve a misunderstanding between “emancipated” locals and “old-style” immigrants. This is evident in four films: La giusta distanza, Cose dell’altro mondo, Riparo and Piccola Patria.

In Cose dell’altro mondo, young teacher Laura gets pregnant with her boyfriend Nadim, one of her father Mariso’s African employees; when one day Laura goes to the factory in order
to pick up her partner from work, Nadim responds that he has to stay and work longer hours from now on because they are expecting, and he feels that from now on he should work harder “...perché i matrimoni costano”. Laura looks staggered, then she falters, and does not reply; she even seems surprised, as if suddenly, and for the first time, she was facing this reality. Eventually, after the “cursed” storm which causes Nadim’s sudden disappearance along with all the other immigrants, Laura feels guilty; she assumes that he left her because of her previous evident hesitation. As we saw with Hassan in *La giusta distanza*, the traditional institution of marriage is conceived of differently by the immigrant than by the Italian northeastern woman. Laura and Nadim’s relationship is further aggravated by the inference that Laura unintentionally used Nadim for various reasons: her curiosity about an exotic relationship, her inability to maintain a stable liaison with police agent Ariele, and her intention to upset her racist father Mariso Golfetto.

In *Riparo* by Marco Simon Puccioni, viewers see another example of a cultural misunderstanding between two lovers. Anna is the gravitational center of the whole story. She is a rich professional woman, who works in her family’s shoe factory in the province of Udine, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Anna has a lesbian relationship with one of her employees, the younger worker Mara. This liaison is opposed by both Anna’s right-thinking bourgeois relatives, and Mara’s proletarian ill father, for different reasons. Enter the young Moroccan clandestine immigrant Anis, a stowaway rescued by Anna as she is returning from a summer vacation with

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141 “...Because weddings are expensive”.

142 It occurs to me that Ariele in Hebrew means *lion of God*; in the apocryphal Jew-Christian tradition Ariel is one of the archangels, the *messengers* of God; Nadim in Arabic means *friend*. Also Anis means as well *friend* in Arabic. It is possible the choice of these names is not casual, but possibly symbolic.

143 Anna’s relatives are bigots; Mara’s father is convinced that his daughter shouldn’t intermingle with her boss.
Mara in Tunisia. When Anna decides to shelter and protect Anis (perhaps expressing her maternal desire), the fragile balance of her relationship with Mara is irreparably compromised. On the one hand, Mara thinks that Anna’s choice to help the illegal Anis is the whim of a spoiled rich woman, and she seems jealous of the brittle friendship between Anna and Anis. On the other hand, the young Moroccan misunderstands Anna’s attentions and intentions, and he wonders why she refuses his eventual sexual advances. Moreover, he does not accept the lesbian relationship between Anna and Mara: he wonders why Anna does not feel the need to have a heterosexual relationship, and naively offers to marry her in order to normalize her status as a woman. He feels that he could give her all what she needs to make her happy.\textsuperscript{144} A lesbian relationship is not socially and culturally admitted and accepted in his traditional world.

However, the girls’ relatives also openly disapprove their liaison, because the society of the Triveneto while changing is still very conservative; homosexual relationships are the subject of an active debate, often opposed, and frequently not tolerated. Anna’s family is aware of the liaison, and while they seem to tolerate it, on the occasion of a relatives’ wedding, they do not welcome Mara as their guest. Thus, at the end, the arrival of the alien-immigrant becomes again a pretext for breaking an already fragile equilibrium.\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{144} \url{http://www.repubblica.it/2008/01/sezioni/spettacoli_e_cultura/riparo/riparo/riparo.html} \url{http://www.cinemecum.it/newsite/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=755:riparo-sanna&catid=102&Itemid=217} \url{http://www.telerama.fr/cinema/films/riparo.319850.php}

\textsuperscript{145} Of course, the homosexual relationship would be another interesting topic to explore. The combination of the two themes, immigrants and homosexuality, is widely analyzed in the majority of the films by the Italian-Turkish director and screenwriter residing in Rome, Ferzan Özpetek, in particular \textit{His Secret Life-Le fate ignoranti}, 2001.
Finally, the third dysfunctional relationship between local and immigrant is in the noir film, *Piccola Patria*, which is really a Modern Greek tragedy.\(^{146}\) Honest and naïf immigrant Bilal leaves Albania with one dream in mind: He will be satisfied only if he can live a normal life. He does not care to make easy money like his close compatriots – who are either drug pusher relatives or human trafficker friends who work for a criminal organization that brings clandestine immigrants to Italy.\(^{147}\) Bilal is content to nurture and breed horses in the farm where he is employed, and imagines that the logical consequence of his spontaneous and happy relationship with Luisa will be marrying and having children with her. Unfortunately in Luisa’s mind the relationship is only casual: she just follows her friend Renata’s awkward and disturbing plan of making the money necessary to go to China, without considering the consequences of her actions. Renata ignores and disregards the fact that she is not only destroying her friendship with Luisa, but also the relationship between the irresponsible Luisa and her unaware, passionate boyfriend Bilal.\(^{148}\) Luisa’s superficiality will bring the couple to the inescapably tragic and fatal conclusion. Her self-centered mirage to earn money results in the loss of self-respect, love, and ultimately life.

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\(^{146}\) This movie could be considered a post-modern filmic transposition of a *Verismo* novel by Giovanni Verga, for the strong realism of location, analysis of low class, dialogues in dialect, inevitability of the fate, according to a deterministic sociological positivism of the nineteenth century, theorized by French philosopher Taine (*race, milieu, moment*). The title of this film *Piccola Patria* echoes with the 1895 novel *Piccolo mondo antico* by author from Vicenza Antonio Fogazzaro; there was a film adaptation for the television by Silverio Blasi in 1957, and two remakes in 1983 and 2001. The reminiscence is not casual: in both cases the stories are tragic, and describe two cases of the same immobility of provincial tradition in a changing world.

\(^{147}\) Of course, this is another stereotype, which will inexorably condemn Bilal to his ineluctable destiny.

[http://www.close-up.it/IMG/article_PDF/Piccola-Patria-Intervista-ad-Alessandro-Rossetto_a8933.pdf](http://www.close-up.it/IMG/article_PDF/Piccola-Patria-Intervista-ad-Alessandro-Rossetto_a8933.pdf)
The three “mixed” relationships, Laura and Nadim, Anna and Anis, and Luisa and Bilal illustrate a range of three types of common cultural misunderstandings that progressively could turn into a drama. The cohabitation of locals and immigrants in this territory is already uneasy due to pre-existing cultural prejudices, and now when Ariele in Cose dell’ altro mondo discovers that Laura is pregnant by African Nadim, he comments bitterly that the immigrants are becoming the main spring of demographic growth in Italy. Indeed, according to the annual report of ISTAT for 2014, this character’s dismissive comment is based not on a misperception but on fact, on a basis of +0.5% demographic growth nationwide in 2013. This data is commonly perceived by many as a significant cause of loss of identity rather than a positive contribution to the Italian decrease of birth and population. Similarly, in Puccioni’s Riparo, Anna is not welcome to participate in her relatives’ wedding by bringing her partner Mara, because Anna’s conservative thinking family disapproves of her sexual orientation, and would rather keep it secret. Finally, Luisa and Bilal in Piccola patria will be killed by Luisa’s father at the conclusion of the film because his racism prevails even on familial bonds. This extreme instance reminds one of real cases that have happened in the Nordest in recent years, and are reported in the news, or described in recently published books: Immigrants who forcefully prevented their daughter’s relationship with a westerner, and break the Italian law by segregating or killing them. People living in the region still have to deal with the stress and struggle of adapting to the changing society. The reality reflected in the films is that a big part of the Triveneto’s inhabitants are quite intolerant, xenophobic and homophobic.

149 ISTAT (Italian Institute of National Statistics), Annual Report 2014-The State of the Nation

150 Amani El Nasif-Cristina Obber, Siria mon amour.
The consideration above introduces another commonplace stereotyped argument used by anti-immigrants’ advocates: foreigners would do anything to gain the Italian citizenship which would allow them to live in Italy, and thus automatically within the whole European Union.\textsuperscript{151} The most direct way to obtain the citizenship right would be through marriage with a native Italian. In Italy citizenship is otherwise granted \textit{iure sanguinis}.\textsuperscript{152} The majority of the relationships between natives and immigrants described in the film, at a superficial glance, may give the impression that the intention of foreigners like Hassan, Nadim, Anis and Bilal is to marry the native characters (Mara, Laura, Anna and Luisa) and thereby gain the citizenship right that would give them a more stable position in Italian society. On the contrary, all these men are taking their responsibilities seriously, and have sincere intentions towards the Italian women. The stereotype is verbalized clearly in \textit{Io sono Li} by Bepi’s fishermen friends: they whisper that Shun Li aims to marry him to acquire the Italian citizenship; furthermore, Denis feels entitled to openly assume Shun Li’s intention and to state this opinion as if it were fact as he takes it upon himself to warn Bepi. The result will be a violent fight between Denis and Bepi, and because of that Shun Li will be removed from Chioggia and sent elsewhere by the Chinese Organization that employs her. Director Segre’s conclusion is that the \textit{Chioggiotta} society is not ready yet for a real integration; likewise, the Chinese community is not interested in encouraging their inclusion, because locals should be considered only customers.\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{151} By virtue of the Schengen Agreement abolished many of the EU’s internal borders, enabling passport-free movement across most of the bloc. It takes its name from the town of Schengen in Luxembourg, where the agreement was signed in 1985. It took effect in 1995.

\textsuperscript{152} \textit{ius sanguinis} is the right of blood, in contrast with the typical American \textit{ius soli}, the right acquired by people born in the land.

\textsuperscript{153} Lian will state that in a conversation with Shun Li when trying to warn her about the possible consequences of Shun Li and Bepi’s friendship.
Conversely, Galjia, Amos’ Romanian wife in *La giusta distanza*, and Nigerian prostitute “Cicia”, entrepreneur Golfetto’s lover in *Cose dell’ altro mondo*, seem to confirm the common stereotype of immigrants aiming to marry native Italians to gain fast their citizenship. It is evident that Galjia’s marriage to Amos is one of convenience, but it is also true that she was a convenient purchase for him; Amos is used to buying everything, and is incapable of courting a woman; he chooses his wife in an online catalog, as he would choose a car. On her side, after all, Galjia seems content with her improved life conditions, and she is pleased to flaunt luxury items of dubious taste. Her only apparent concern is her inability to become pregnant. For this problem she consults charlatan “Professor” Tiresia, the self-styled psychic seer, who seems to take advantage of Amos’s gullibility; in fact, it is inferred that Tiresia is Galjia’s lover.

The second case of personal interest is the relationship between entrepreneur Mariso Golfetto and “Cicia” — the nickname he uses to call her — the Nigerian prostitute that he considers his lover; racist Golfetto is truly affectionate to her, because she listens patiently to him when he needs someone to talk with, and is also obedient and submissive. But the viewer perceives that Golfetto has a superficial respect for her since he doesn’t even call her by her own name. “Cicia” incarnates and reproduces the female docility that Golfetto would expect from his wife Patrizia and daughter Laura. On the contrary, they are constantly questioning his pretended authority. “Cicia” and Golfetto’s relationship is distorted and unbalanced, because it is based on *schei* and self-interest. In fact, he is her sponsor for the legal resident visa. These depictions are illustrated with humor, and in a comedic way, but unlike Shun Li and Bepi who sincerely care for each other, Golfetto and “Cicia” are mutually exploiting each other and breaking the law in
the process. He is no less a racist for his sponsorhip of her. He is merely nicer than shadowy human trafficking organizations which exploit young immigrant women.\textsuperscript{154}

Among the altered relationships found in the society of the Nordest, the intergenerational gap presents another aspect. This is expressed in a dramatic progression in Io sono Li, La prima neve, Cose dell’altro mondo, and Piccola Patria. In Io sono Li, the bloated smuggler Denis proudly buys anything with the schei earned with his fraudulent yet lucrative activity. Denis actually verbalizes his disdain towards the honest hardworking fishermen, and he deems them losers. These two generations are animated by very different values and métiers: the manual labor of the fishermen versus the relatively easy smugglers’ activity; simple minded, modest, but honest men versus the ignorant, vicious and knavish representative of next age bracket.\textsuperscript{155} In Io sono Li, Segre creates a positive model: immigrant character Shun Li works very hard in order to repay the Chinese organization that will eventually bring her child, who she was forced to leave in China with her father, to Italy. Shun Li respects her fisherman father, unlike local Denis’ attitude towards his elders. Shun Li misses her father, appreciates his work, and is grateful because he is taking care of her son on her behalf until he eventually joins her in Italy for a better life.

The second representation of a generational gap is Fabio, Pietro’s nephew, in La prima neve. Fabio is not a bad person per se, but he has a superficial, passive, inept and immature personality. He seems unable to become an adult and manage his own life. He has no real ambitions in life, and does not seek better opportunities. When asked, he helps Pietro with the

\textsuperscript{154} An example of human trafficking organizations is in 2006 film La Sconosciuta by Tornatore the pimp of Ukrainian prostitute Irena forces her to become pregnant so he can sell her children for adoption in Italy; she escapes to Italy to try to find her children, but tragically she is unable to.

\textsuperscript{155} A similar parallel is the generational gap between beekeeper Pietro and his nephew Fabio in La prima neve.
daily activities in the family maso (farmstead), just because he is there. He fixes a bicycle for Dani, because Pietro entrusts him to do so, but makes no effort to communicate with the immigrant. He has a true affection for Michele, but he is able to express this sentiment only by playing videogames as a peer with the boy and his friends, and by covering for Michele when the child decides to skip a school day. Fabio vaguely dreams of migrating to Madagascar with his friend Gus to make their fortune, but does nothing to make it happen. Fabio is Pietro’s opposite: he simply lets his life go, either oblivious of or resigned to the fact that he is wasting it. He neither stays in Pergine, accepting the mountaineer lifestyle, nor follows his plan that ultimately is just a fantasy. Political expert Giorgio Galli would define Fabio’s types as “Generazione senza sogni.”

The third and extreme example of generational gap, without remedy, is the relation between Luisa and her father Franco, in Piccola Patria. Luisa can neither bear nor tolerate the presence of her father, and there is no space for a civil communication between the two. In an aggravating situation of non-communication, Luisa dramatically screams in Chinese to her father, in doing so emphasizing the impassable barrier of disagreement that divides them. Conversely, her mother Anna tries to be protective and sympathetic with her daughter, but she seems subdued and resigned towards her husband’s brutal behavior and dominant authority. Luisa doesn’t want to end like her mother, and aims to leave her family’s home as soon as possible with Renata. The two girls have the vague dream to go together to China. Luisa doesn’t have her father’s preconception and intolerance towards the immigrants; in fact, she has a relationship with Bilal, and she interacts with all the immigrants she meets with a spontaneous and curious attitude. For instance, once she tries to speak Chinese with the shoe-store sales clerk;

156 http://www.postpopuli.it/24122-generazione-senza-sogni-le-partenze/
another time she asks the Turkish truck-driver she met at the non-place of Marghera’s parking lot to tell her about his country, music and family. Luisa seems somehow naturally open minded, despite the limited world in which she grew up, but her father tragically won’t let her be.157

The above described relationships demonstrate three cases respectively of aggressive, passive and extremely dramatic intergenerational gap: from dismissive scorn, to flaccid resignation, to total refusal. Denis’ mere despising of traditional values without a reasonably valid and constructive replacement; Fabio’s resignation as an inept man, incapable of following even a dream, (maybe also because the real opportunities are in decline); Luisa’s refusal of a tyrannical and xenophobic authority, which eventually and tragically prevails with the violence: all these attitudes express the emptiness of a generation that appears unmoored.

Finally, friendship is the last type of challenged relationship displayed in all the films. In some cases it’s between immigrants, in particular: Malvina and Alina in Occidente; Slavic fisherman Bepi and Chinese Shun Li, and the two Chinese girls Shun Li and Lian in Io sono Li; and Albanian Bilal and his relatives in Piccola Patria. In other cases friendship is between locals and immigrants: Bepi and Coppe, one of the fishermen from Chioggia in Io sono Li; the boy Michele and Togolese Dani, and Pietro and Dani in La prima neve. Finally, friendship can be between locals, for example Willy and Antonio in La Lingua del Santo; Mara and her girlfriend Eva in La giusta distanza.

157 In an interview, actor Mirko Artuso, Franco character’s interpreter, says: “Director Rossetto’s work is very close to Dürrenmatt’s, who uncovered the romantic vision of the perfect and clean Switzerland: he did exactly the same. Let’s stop with this victorious Triveneto. Rossetto set the film in the ugliest, unwatchable, turbid and muddy part of the region.”
https://www.indie-eye.it/cinema/covercinema/piccola-patria-di-alessandro-rossetto-la-recensione.html
The most interesting cases of friendship are between immigrants. With the only exception of *Occidente*, immigrants never talk extensively about their lives before arriving in Italy; therefore, friendship is illustrated only as a new relation in the new territory. In *Occidente* the amity between Romanian Malvina and her girlfriend Alina is exemplary. The two young women are linked by a deep friendship since they were in Romania, eleven years earlier; in fact, they fought together for their people’s freedom during the revolution that eventually overthrew Ceausescu’s dictatorial regime in 1989. During the insurrection, some of their comrades died in combat; therefore, the two girls share memories of those perilous days. After the revolution, they both left Romania, and apparently moved together to Aviano. Although their bond in the past has been very strong, and consolidated thanks to the common experience, once in Italy Malvina seems to avoid the occasions to encounter Alina. When finally they meet, Alina appears to be completely integrated in what she considers her ideal of *West*: she found the love of her life, and married an Italian entrepreneur; Alina has professional recognition, since she has an active role as a partner in her husband’s business. Together, the couple conducts a comfortable and serene life.

Alina is indubitably happy and integrated: she does not regret having left her country, and she feels grateful for her present life, because this is what she dreamt of when she left her troubled fatherland. She is convinced that in 1989 she and Malvina did for their country all that they could, and if eventually nothing really changed in Romania, this is not their fault. She feels sorry, but not remorseful for the sacrifice of their companions who died; she has a positive attitude, and tries to encourage Malvina to overcome her grief and sorrow for the casualties they left behind in the old days. Alina even reconciled with her country, by going back periodically, while Malvina never returned to see her family. Alina reacted in a positive way, by honestly
trying to live her best life; she attempts to persuade Malvina to do the same. On her side, Malvina seems totally incapable of turning the page and creating a new life by adapting to the new world that she once longed for. Furthermore, she seems to punish herself by engaging in promiscuous and humiliating sexual behavior with the men that she casually encounters. Although Alina is a true friend, and patiently tries to give all her support to Malvina, Malvina gives the impression of being impermeable, impassible and immovable. Apparently, friendship alone is not enough to warm up Malvina: her past and her sense of guilt still dominate her present life.

The second example of friendship between migrants is the one of Bepi and Shun Li in *Shun Li and the Poet*. They are both lonely immigrants in Chioggia, an ancient traditional fishermen’s island-village near Venice. Bepi, *the Poet*, is a fisherman who migrated to Chioggia from his native Yugoslavia thirty years before. After all this time, Bepi’s fishermen friends and colleagues consider him as an Italian. He himself does not consider himself to be Italian, because he lost both his most important bonds: his *chioggiotta* wife and his fatherland as he knew it, the (now) former Yugoslavia. When he meets for the first time the Chinese girl Shun Li at the *osteria*, their encounter becomes a poetic escape from their loneliness, a silent dialogue between two cultures that are indeed different but not as much as they think. In reality, they have very much in common: both come from fishermen’s villages, both miss their absent relatives, both have a perception of the sea as if it were a unifying and physical presence in their lives. The quiet Venetian lagoon is the fusing element, mother and cradle of mobile identities. However, Shun Li and Bepi’s friendship upsets the two communities, the Chinese and the local, which will interfere

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158 [http://www.spietati.it/z_scheda_dett_film.asp?idFilm=3900](http://www.spietati.it/z_scheda_dett_film.asp?idFilm=3900) [http://filmup.leonardo.it/iosonoli.htm](http://filmup.leonardo.it/iosonoli.htm) [http://www.municipio.re.it/cinema/catfilm.nsf/7e0b9e3aba1ed91ac12574ac0033d2f6/6a571a43227ca36be1257910003ad864?OpenDocument]
with and prevent this bond, because they are not ready yet for accepting such relationships. On the one hand, the Chinese organization discourages any relationship with the locals, considering them customers; on the other hand, the locals think that Shun Li aims only to marry Bepi just to seize his properties.

In the same film, another interesting friendship involving migrants is between the Chinese girls Shun Li and Lian. They both work for the Chinese organization that financed their trip to Italy from China, and they share the same bedroom provided by the organization in Chioggia. The two young women apparently have a bond that initially seems more dictated by convenience, rather than a deep friendship: they show each other their pictures, and they sometimes talk before sleeping. However, they spend their first day off after months of uninterrupted work, together at the beach. Lian guides Shun-Li to the Alberoni beach in the island of Venice Lido, where they both can feel purified by the sea water. Their conversations usually are basic, yet often poetic and metaphoric. Lian is the first person who warns Shun Li that her friendship with Bepi could cause her trouble. At the same time, she once tells Shun Li that “not all the water that enters the lagoon stays in the lagoon: some returns to the sea”. Only later will it be clear what she meant. Shun Li will be momentarily forced to interrupt her friendship with Bepi, and will be transferred somewhere else; after a while, the ransom for Shun Li’s son is paid, and eventually she reunites with her child. Shun Li immediately thinks that Bepi paid off the balance, and as soon as she can, she goes back to Chioggia to thank Bepi. Here she learns that Bepi died, and finds out that Lian disappeared from the dormitory where they used to live. It is really Lian who redeemed Shun Li’s debt making possible her reunion with her boy.

Finally, Bepi fisherman’s friend Coppe gives to Shun Li Bepi’s letter in which he asks her to

159 Their dialogues are in Chinese.
give him a funeral as the Chinese Poet. Shun Li and Coppe will fulfill this request by setting fire to the Cason, the fisherman’s hut in the water that belonged to Bepi, and which he considered as his real and only home.

The friendships between immigrants are genuine and show a common solidarity with peers in an adverse, sometimes hostile, or only diverse, thus intimidating, terrain. This steadfast loyalty is probably the most spontaneous and human social attitude. Among the friendships between local and immigrant, the most meaningful, because it is open to hope, is the one between the boy Michele and Togolese Dani in La prima neve. This relationship is defined by journalist Arianna Finos as “amicizia salvifica.” The friendship’s background and unifying element is the immense and lonely forest. Indeed the forest, with the alternation of light and shadow, fullness and emptiness, is the only possible space-theater where the two meet, initially repel each other, and gradually get to know each other. This relation, for its symmetry, is perfect and open to a possible future of integration and normality. Both Michele and Dani are in grief: Michele lost his father, Dani his wife Layla. The boy refuses to be his mother Elisa’s son and wrongly accuses her for his father’s death. Dani rejects his role as father by not accepting his baby daughter Fatou, wrongly accusing her of being responsible for her mother’s death, and guilty of having Layla’s eyes.

Both Michele and Dani are experiencing an identity crisis: Michele is scared to enter in the new phase of his life, adulthood — see the creepy scene of the Krampus, and the dream

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161 Krampus is a horned, anthropomorphic folklore figure described as "half-goat, half-demon", who, during the Christmas season, punishes children who have misbehaved, in contrast with Saint Nicholas, who rewards the well-behaved with gifts. Krampus is one of the companions of Saint Nicholas in Austria, Bavaria, Croatia, Czech
with the bear becoming Fabio and the lion becoming Dani—while Dani is unable to get through the death of Layla and face a new life without her. Michele cannot return to the trail that brings him to the place where his father lost his life. He will do it only in the morning of Dani’s departure. That morning when the Togolese is finally leaving Pergine without saying goodbye, “la prima neve”\textsuperscript{162}, with the power of covering all grief and sorrow, starts falling. Michele asks Dani to walk with him; he takes Dani’s hand, and finally he brings his friend to see where his father died. A new life is now possible for both. The finale of the film is suspended. Will Dani stay, finally accepting his role of father for his daughter and paternal friendship with Michele?

Andrea Segre, in an interview says “Il dolore condiviso diventa un’occasione di rinascita.” \textsuperscript{163}

Conclusion

In the space-time of the \textit{Nordest} in the last fifteen years, the alteration and evolution of societal institutions such as \textit{pater familias}, marriage, intergenerational roles, and friendship are evident. The rapid industrialization and globalization apparently devastated the rural landscapes invading them with non-places; at the same time, this process seems to have replaced the old values with the vain cult of money, and a mentality of vulgar xenophobic populism. Often it looks that the intersection of different people is bringing an imbalance in the established societal relationships. However, this crossing is characterized by frequent miscommunication, and misunderstanding, but it frequently happens in a place where incommunicability is already a fact.

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\textsuperscript{162} “The first snowfall”, from the film’s title.

In some cases, it seems that these changes are without remedy; in others the integration, inclusion, and assimilation are not only possible, but already normality.
CHAPTER 3
COMMUNICATION: LANGUAGES, DIALECTS, NON-VERBAL LANGUAGES, GESTURES, AND PROXEMICS OF IMMIGRANTS TRAVERSING THE NORDEST

One astonishing characteristic of Italian culture is the variety of languages actively spoken in the peninsula. Although in Italy the official language is Standard Italian, originating from the evolution of the medieval Tuscan—Dante Alighieri’s idiom—other minorities’ languages are legitimately recognized by the Italian Constitution. In addition, a plethora of dialects constitutes the vernacular tongues currently and locally spoken by the majority of native Italians, as mother language, generally for informal conversations. Additionally, a complex set of non-verbal languages, such as gestures and proxemics, creates other interesting ways to communicate that vary from region to region. All Romance and non-Romance varieties spoken in Italy are generally defined as “dialects”, or “vernaculars”. However, the use of the term “dialect” referring to the languages of Italy erroneously implies that the languages spoken in Italy are actual “dialects” in the prevailing linguistic sense of “varieties or variations of a language”. In reality, all those dialects have the dignity of languages, even though they are not consistently supported by written literature. Also, non-verbal means of communication—such as gestures and proxemics— are locally characterized and well differentiated.

164 Law number 482 of 15 December 1999, recognizes the following minority languages as “historical language minorities”: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovene, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan, and Sardinian (Legge 15 Dicembre 1999, n. 482, Art. 2, comma 1). The law also makes a distinction between those who are considered minority groups (Albanians, Catalans, Germanic peoples indigenous to Italy, Greeks, Slovenes and Croats) and those who are not (all the others).
This variety of communication exists in the Triveneto, where people speak different languages, use various dialects, and employ specific and local gestures to interconnect. While in the past the vernaculars prevailed as communicative vehicles, literature in dialect of the Nordest is not so copious, even though it is well represented and dignified.\textsuperscript{165} Traditionally, movies use these languages to distinguish the setting, typify the provenance of the characters, and epitomize their culture.\textsuperscript{166} In Italy in particular, immigrants arrive into a linguistically characterized and differentiated space, and must find their way. Locally spoken languages, dialects, gestures and proxemics illustrated by the contemporary films set in the Nordest will be the subject of the

\begin{itemize}
\item Some authors: playwrights Angelo Beolco and Carlo Goldoni, author Luigi Meneghello, and poet Andrea Zanzotto.
\end{itemize}

Angelo Beolco (1502 – March 17, 1542). Known as el Ruzante, he was an actor and playwright. He is famous for his rustic comedies in the Pavan language of Padua, closely related to the Venetian language, featuring a peasant called "Ruzzante". Those plays, for instance La moscheta (1527-31) paint a vivid picture of Paduan country life in the 16th century.

Carlo Goldoni (February 25, 1707 –February 6, 1793) was an Italian playwright and librettist from the Republic of Venice. His plays, for instance Le baruffe chiozzote (1762), described his contemporaries’ images of themselves, often dramatizing the lives, values, and conflicts of the then emerging middle classes. Although he wrote in French and Italian, many of his plays make rich use also of the Venetian language, regional vernacular, and colloquialisms.

Luigi Meneghello (Malo, Vicenza February 16, 1922 – June 26, 2007) was an Italian contemporary writer and scholar. His production, for example the novel Libera nos a Malo (1963), depicts the local traditions in the dialect of Malo, Vicenza.

Andrea Zanzotto (Pieve di Soligo, October 6, 1921 – Conegliano, October 18, 2011) was a poet. In his collection of lyrics Filò (1976), he writes in Venetian dialect.

It is interesting to observe that, with the exception of Ruzzante, all the other aforementioned authors migrated during their lifetime.

\begin{itemize}
\item Some examples of films in which the Nordest dialects are used to identify their protagonists: Mario Monicelli, I soliti ignoti (1958). The seventeen year old actress Carla Gravina interprets Nicoletta, a Venetian handmaid. The character speaks only Venetian dialect in order to emphasize her identification as naïve peasant girl prone to be seduced by the protagonist.
\item Tinto Brass, Il disco volante (1964). All locals interviewed in this village of Veneto of the province, speak dialect to be ridiculed.
\item Vittorio Cottafavi, Maria Zef (1981), a tragic film that illustrates the archaic world of the Carnic-Friulian region, at the beginning of 1900s. The protagonists are poor peasants: Barbe Zef is the uncle drunkard and sexual abuser of Mariute, a young orphan girl. The story represents a stereotyped case of domestic violence, and incest, with a vivid realism emphasized by the protagonists’ use of local dialect.
\end{itemize}
present chapter. These components are fundamental cultural aspects that can be intentionally used in films to lend a unique texture to the portrayal of the Triveneto territory, inasmuch as they identify, pinpoint and differentiate the native people from the aliens, and might have a critical impact on incoming immigrants. Foreign people and immigrants traversing this territory must indeed face this factor of communication that sometimes becomes an actual barrier, an obstacle to the reciprocal understanding and ability to intercommunicate.

In all the films under analysis, languages of minorities and local dialects are profusely used, with diverse purposes and effects. Although all the films selected contain dialogues in Italian, frequent interchanges between standard language(s) and local dialects occur. In other cases, natives are characterized because they speak Italian with a very strong local inflection, accent and/or with marked intercalary dialectal expressions. The result is that immigrants who interact with the natives face a double obstacle for communicating: they should learn not only the Standard Italian, but also the local vernacular. Sometimes immigrants acquire and use the indigenous dialect, even before the Standard Italian. Scholar Camilla De Rossi of Venice University, in a study on dialect in cinema, explores and analyzes the subject of using local dialects in cinema. She observes that between 1929 and 1934 the use of linguistic regionalism represented a cultural choice; between 1935 and 1939, the radical Fascist Regime’s nationalism promoted the use of an aseptic and pure Standard Italian for didactic purposes;

167 For instance: Willy in La lingua del santo; the entrepreneur Mariso Gol fetto, and the taxi driver in Cose dell’altro mondo.

168 See, for instance, Slavic fisherman Bepi and Chinese bartender Shun Li in Segre’s Shun Li and the Poet.


170 The prototype film on journey through Italian dialects is the 1934 film 1860 by Alessandro Blasetti: the dialogues are in dialects from Sicily, Piedmont, Liguria, Tuscany, and Veneto. Another important example is Roberto Rossellini’s Paisan, 1946: the protagonists of the six episodes taking place in different regions and locations are identified by the use of their regional languages, with a purpose of realism.
between 1940 and 1945, regional dialects were used rarely, and typically as caricature.\textsuperscript{171} It is only with the cinematic movement of Neorealism that dialects obtained the same dignity as Standard Italian language, and cinema became the “mirror of languages”.\textsuperscript{172} De Rossi adopts Sergio Raffaelli’s system of classification: analyzing dialect in films, he distinguishes among four ways to use dialect, or dialettalità: “dialettalità imitativa, dialettalità stereotipata, dialettalità espressiva and riflessa”.\textsuperscript{173}

The dialettalità imitativa is exemplified in the films Sciùisià (1946) and Ladri di biciclette (1948), both by Vittorio De Sica. These films are characterized by the mimetic adoption of a repertory of codes. The most extreme example of dialettalità imitativa is Luchino Visconti’s La terra trema (1948), in which the interpreters, non-professional actors, speak authentic Sicilian dialect in direct sound recording. Visconti’s choice of dialect is ideological, esthetic, more expressive than documentarist, and more expressionistic than naturalistic.\textsuperscript{174}

The second type of use of dialect, classified as dialettalità stereotipata is represented in the production between 1952 and 1962, in films of the so called “neorealismo rosa”, and “commedia all’Italiana”; in these cases dialects are used for caricature, to characterize a background, a social niveau, a type, a character, a métier. This dialect is probable, realistic, but is no longer a real

\textsuperscript{171} For example in Ore 9: lezione di chimica, 1941 by Mario Màttoli: the industrial from Veneto, in a dialogue with the school director regarding his daughter’s scarce scholastic performance, he speaks in dialect. The director’s intent is to emphasize the speaker’s ignorance. Also in two adaptations from Antonio Fogazzaro’s novels, such as Piccolo mondo antico and Malombra of 1941 by Mario Soldati, the protagonists use a dialect from Lombardy.

\textsuperscript{172} De Rossi, ibid. The didactic use of Standard Italian will be inherited in 1954 by the national television.


The use of dialect becomes symbolic, hybrid, stereotyped, and most of the time conveys commonplaces and prejudices. The use of *dialettalità espressiva* becomes standard between the 1960s and the 1980s. An example for all is Lina Wertmüller’s *Tutto a posto e niente in ordine* (1974), in which the dialogues in meridional dialects happening in a Milanese “hospitable house” are deformed and incomprehensible to the southern Italian audience. Finally, the *dialettalità riflessa*, is represented by dialects in extinction: for example, the dialect from rural Bergamo of the 1800s in *L'albero degli zoccoli* (1978), by Ermanno Olmi and the mix of mountaineer Friulian languages in *Maria Zef* (1981), by Vittorio Cottafavi.

Although the above classification of *dialettalità* refers mainly to the film production between 1940s and 1980s, also all the films of the present study can be linguistically categorized following the same parameters and criteria. A form of *dialettalità imitativa* equivalent to the one adopted for *La terra trema*, is evident, once again, in the most extreme film of the series, *Piccola Patria*: the protagonists’ dialogues happen in an authentic dialect, because the actors are non-professional natives of the region. Also, when the dialogues require them to speak *Standard Italian*, they naturally maintain their strong inflexion. In this specific film, the use of the vernacular is not forced. Conversely, forced vernacular appears in the following example: the employ of *dialettalità stereotipata* of the “neorealismo rosa” is manifest for instance in *La Lingua del Santo* (by the gypsy headman and by the ignorant bigot industrialist Mr. Maritan), in

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175 An example is *Pane amore e fantasia* (1953) by Luigi Comencini, in which the protagonists, the marshal of Carabinieri, the young Carabiniere and the orphan girl speak a stereotyped dialect. The source is the traditional theater (from the *Commedia dell’ Arte*, through the Comedy by Goldoni, to the *opera buffa*) in which the person obsessed by sex is from Sicily, the gullible is from Bergamo, Veneto or Ciociaria, the stubborn is from Sardinia, the social climber and careerist is from Milan, the maid is from Veneto or Abruzzi, the trickster is from Naples, the prostitute is from Bologna, and so on.
Cose dell’altro mondo (by the xenophobe tycoon Mariso Golfetto, and the racist taxi driver), and in Il riparo (Anna’s brother, unprejudiced young entrepreneur).  

Two examples of dialettalità espressiva are in Segre’s Shun Li and the Poet and La prima neve. The actors involved are all professional, (except for the boy Michele, who is a native, in the second film), and speak in the local dialects; their reproduction is clearly coached by native speakers. In the first film all the fishermen adopt the current local dialect from Chioggia; even Chinese Shun Li must learn it to communicate with them. Finally, La prima neve contains also a perfect example of dialettalità riflessa: mountaineer Pietro uses expressions in the almost extinct Mòcheno language, manifesting the still existing oral tradition.

In addition to the diverse dialettalità classified above, in the selected films vernaculars are employed for other purposes. Sometimes dialect simply identifies and localizes the native characters; in other cases, it contributes, as a complementary element, to define stereotypes. The assumption is that generally dialect is used by less educated people. Sometimes, the use of vernacular simply distinguishes and differentiates the locals from the aliens coming from other Italian regions, which can create a cultural barrier. In other cases, dialect is employed to emphasize the contrast between natives and foreigners in a context of deterritorialization, and globalization. In general, vernacular as the natural spoken language is a crucial component for realistic depictions of scenes. Nevertheless, occasionally dialect is employed as an element to

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176 Incidentally, in both cases, the taxi driver and Anna’s brother in the two different films are interpreted by the same actor, Vitaliano Trevisan (Sandrigo, province of Vicenza, 1960) is a writer, actor, playwright, theater director, librettist, screenwriter and essayist.

177 “Denis-ha-un-ciòdo”, in Chioggietto dialect, has a debt pending.

178 The realism has been a basilar component in the Italian literature of the 1800s (see: Alessandro Manzoni, Giovanni Verga, Francesco Capuana), and cinema of the 1940s (see: Neorealism by Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rossellini, and Vittorio De Sica).
ridicule, and emphasize caricatured aspects of locals: for comic or humorous effects, but usually not for social critique.\textsuperscript{179} The films selected depict all the above cases; furthermore, in some case they even contribute to creating awareness for general audiences of the existence and potential extinction of certain languages.\textsuperscript{180}

In particular, among the more recent cinematic works set in the Nordest, two —inter alia— employ the dialects in order to emphasize a specific aspect of the characters’ depiction: the loss of identity. The first example appears in Corso Salani’s Occidente (2000), and the second is in Alessandro Rossetto’s Piccola Patria (2013), chronologically and symbolically the first and the last of the films in analysis. This occurrence is meaningful, because both movies, as stated previously, portray the most extreme examples of the Nordest as a “no-man’s land” in many aspects, including cultural and linguistic.\textsuperscript{181} In these films, local dialect is employed with the specific intent of creating a contrast between past and present in order to further stress the region’s palpable loss of identity in a glocalized context, and to emphasize the separation between locals and foreigners.

\textsuperscript{179} This follows the tradition of the 1500s Teatro dell’ Arte, in which the masks represent a type (in Veneto: Pantalone, Colombina, Papà del Gnoco, Zinghenèsta; in Trentino: Matoci, Schnappviechern, Egetmann Hansl; in Friuli-Venezia Giulia: babaci or kukaci, Scheintena schembln, and Scheana schembln. Also the cinematic genre of Commedia all’Italiana reiterates the stereotype. See: Mario Monicelli’s La Grande Guerra (1958), Pietro Germi’s Divorce Italian Style (1961), Luciano Salce’s Il Federale (1961), Alberto Lattuada’s Il Mafioso (1962), Tinto Brass’, Il disco volante (1964). In all these movies, the characters that speak dialect are typified, identified and generally ridiculed.

\textsuperscript{180} This is the case of the language of the Mòcheni, as described in the film by Andrea Segre La Prima Neve.

Regarding the Cimbri’s case, it would be interesting a cinematic representation, after their recent appearance in literature. Author from Padua Umberto Matino published three novels on Cimbrì’s culture, the thrillers La valle dell’orco. Forlì: Foschi, 2011; L’ultima anguàna. Forlì: Foschi, 2011; and Tutto è notte nera. Pordenone: Biblioteca delle immagini, 2015. In these three novels, Cimbri’s oral tradition is used, as I know, for the first time. It would be intriguing to have an adaptation of these novels’ subjects for the first cinematic appearance of Cimbri.

\textsuperscript{181} It is furthermore somehow ironic the fact that Occidente means west: the concept is culturally and geographically relative; in this case west coincides with the Nordest.
In Salani’s movie *Occidente*, everyone is a stranger in the deterritorialized town and area near Aviano. The actual name of the site where the story takes place is mentioned for the first time only in the third scene of the film, in a conversation at the “local-American-bar”: four high school substitute teachers ask each other whether they plan to stay in town for the upcoming weekend, or to go back home. Up to this point in the film, the spoken languages were Romanian and American English. Until this moment, there is not even a specific indication that the story is taking place in Italy. In addition, from the fragment of conversation among the four bar customers happening in *Standard Italian*, it is immediately clear that none of them is either native to Aviano or permanently resides in this town. In this “local-American-bar” the protagonist Malvina works as a waitress. Malvina is a Romanian immigrant; in the very first segment of the film that shows real footage of 1989 Romania, she speaks Romanian in the voice-over. The female narrator’s voice, with evident perturbation and distress, describes the dramatic events that happened to her and to her friends during the revolution which would overthrow the dictator Ceausescu. During the film she will use her native tongue only once again: with her mother and her brother in a phone conversation.

Malvina and her coworkers customarily address the bar customers first in English; they will use Italian only after the customer qualifies as Italian. However, Malvina speaks in *Standard Italian* —and without a specific accent— to her young colleagues, while the girls respond to her and intercommunicate only in the local dialect. English, not Italian, is the first language spoken at the bar, because the main activity and economic resource of Aviano’s community consists in providing civil services to the U.S. Military base inhabitants. All existing business gravitates around this base, although it is totally inaccessible to the locals, as if it were a fortress in a separated world. This place is to all intents and purposes a disjointed territorial enclave in the
heart of the Triveneto—specifically in Friuli-Venezia Giulia—surrounded, like a separated citadel, by an Italian community. It is as if the inaccessible fort irradiates and imposes its own culture, because Aviano’s community appears totally “Americanized”.¹⁸² When the protagonists walk about the streets of Aviano, all the store signs are in English, and follow the American style.¹⁸³

All American-bar waitresses, except for Malvina, have relationships with American soldiers. However, they never spend time with them in Aviano: their families do not approve of their liaisons with the alien, strangers / soldiers.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the soldiers drive their cars with the native girls somewhere else, preferably in non-places, such as the cheap motels located nearby the highway.¹⁸⁵ Although these relationships look different from Malvina’s occasional, very promiscuous and casual encounters, they remain quite superficial: the girls always simply refer to “il mio” —mine— never mentioning their boy friends’ name. These relationships are clearly transitory, probably more physical, and not necessarily based on real communication and shared values, since the soldiers are only stationed there temporarily.¹⁸⁶


¹⁸³ Aviano is not the only NATO base in the Nordest: Vicenza is home of another one, the Caserma Ederle. The same imposition of American standards is evident also in Piccola Patria, for instance when Luisa and Bilal enter in the kitchen furniture superstore.

¹⁸⁴ Probably this is because it is customary that soldiers station in there temporarily. During the Cold War, Friuli-Venezia Giulia was at the border with Yugoslavia, politically aligned with the URSS; therefore, the region was strategically studded also by Italian military stations. The local population dealt with a dense concentration of soldiers, both Italian and American.

¹⁸⁵ “You can rent for six hours a motel bedroom with the luxury of hydro-massage and Tele+,” says one of Malvina’s colleagues. Not only has this indicated the girls’ low standard of comforts appreciation, but also the choice of a non-place for non-long term relationships.

¹⁸⁶ These girls’ behavior for sure does not describe women’s emancipation; it is instead the opposite of the idealized relationship between the protagonists of the American drama-romance An Officer a Gentleman (1982) by Taylor Hackford. Indeed Salani depicts superficial and depersonalized relationships without a future, as they are the expressions of a deterritorialized culture.
All these girls speak their local dialect, even to Malvina, although she always responds in Italian; this process creates separation, and emphasizes the cultural distance between the girls and the immigrant. Notwithstanding, they always naturally include Malvina in their conversations, and they invite her to participate in their after-work initiatives. Conversely, all Malvina’s colleagues tease the bar owner Paolo, because he is from Trieste: according to them, he speaks another version of their idiom. This secondary scene—which constitutes a siparietto, a theatrical rendering of an archetypal behavior — illustrates an aspect of a typically local-Italian conduct, known as campanilismo.\(^{187}\) This situation epitomizes the region’s linguistic multiplicity. In fact, the distance between Aviano and Trieste is only 120 kilometers, approximately 74 miles; therefore, while for a foreigner it might appear ridiculous to note that people can make identity distinctions in such small distances, for locals this difference is significant. At the same time the occurrence exemplifies the evident variety of local dialects not only in this very area, but also for the whole Triveneto region.\(^{188}\)

On the contrary, the use of English to describe the local deterritorialization of Aviano is exemplified in Occidente in the following situation. While working at the bar, Malvina attends a pre-med class at the nursing school of Udine’s hospital; her ultimate dream is to become a nurse in the American base’s clinic. This is why she always tunes into the American radio station, and listens exclusively to programs in English.\(^{189}\) At this point it is clear that Malvina’s ideal of

\(^{187}\) Campanilismo is a very important aspect of life in Italy symbolizing a sense of identity, of pride, and of belonging to the place of your birth, a feeling which is usually much stronger to an Italian than any sense of national identity.

\(^{188}\) One extreme case is Venice: the administration of the Lagoon city is divided in six sestieri (quarters or districts); Venetians could identify the sestiere of locals’ provenance by listening to them speaking their dialect.

\(^{189}\) Malvina at the phone tells to her mother that it is very difficult to succeed with this project, but she really hopes to make it, because it is a well-paid job. In fact, even her salary would be in American Dollars, currency that at the time was considered the most valuable in the world.
Occidente has never been Aviano, but somewhere else, inside the enclave, in the base, a place that technically is American territory, but which paradoxically is not.\(^{190}\) In order to pursue her goal as an immigrant, Malvina faces extreme linguistic challenges. She must become first fluent in English for her actual work at the bar and for her future profession as nurse; secondly, she must use Italian at the nursing school to communicate with her teacher and classmates; furthermore, she must be familiar with the local dialect in order to interact with her bar colleagues. She will never be integrated in the local community, if she chooses the language of the non-place, which is the American Base.

The use of vernacular to emphasize the contrast between traditional lifestyle and values and the actual loss of identity of the region’s inhabitants is displayed in the hospital’s nursing school. The students, Malvina’s classmates, speak variations of the local dialect which are different from those of Malvina’s colleagues’ because they come from different towns and provinces of the Nordest, such as Udine and Spilimbergo (Friuli), and Conegliano and Belluno (Veneto). When they organize a pizzata, a get together in a pizzeria, they decide to go to Maniago, a location in Pordenone’s province, convenient for all of them because they can easily reach it directly through the highway. Therefore, the restaurant’s choice is dictated by its proximity to the highway, the fastest connector. At the pizzeria, the conversation is in dialect, and the topic is on dream travel vacations; one couple desires to go for their honeymoon to Disneyland; others plan a funny trip to Gardaland.\(^{191}\) All these people yearn to be elsewhere, and

\(^{190}\) Not America, not Italy: the ultimate non-place.

\(^{191}\) Gardaland is an amusement complex-park located in Castelnuovo del Garda, in Verona’s province, North-Eastern Italy. Opened on July 19, 1975, it is adjacent to Lake Garda, but does not actually face the water; therefore, technically the lake’s name Garda does not indicate the actual location, but just its idea of its proximity to the Lake. On the other hand, ultimately the location of a non-place like an amusement complex-park is not relevant, but the name is ironic. Finally, it is clear that its name is in homage to – or imitation of – Disneyland.
to travel to destinations far from where they actually are; paradoxically, they do not wish to travel to actual cultural sites, but to amusement parks, which can be considered to be typical non-places. There is a disorienting contrast between the traditional lifestyle, culture and identity emphasized by the use of dialect, and the aspirations of these individuals for “exotic” places that are staging fictitious realities. For Malvina the idealized West is the NATO Military Base of Aviano, while for her friends it is Disneyland/Gardaland.\(^{192}\)

The characters seem to be under a spell that shows them the illusion of an unrealistic and idealized American culture, and makes them ignore the legacy of their native civilization. The real historical places existing in their proximity are neglected in favor of artificial and fabricated non-places recognizable globally: the amusement park Gardaland is a glocalized version of Disneyland.\(^{193}\) Forgetting or disregarding the local culture in favor of new global models affects all the people in this film. The above exemplified tendency brings the persons to a loss of identity; even more striking is the fact that there is nothing to replace the old values with new values, and this is a disorienting side-effect aspect of the glocalization.

In *Piccola Patria*, the deteriorated countryside of the *Nordest* is amplified by the soundtrack in dialect as a powerful medium. Bepi De Marzi’s song accompanies the opening scene from a bird’s eye perspective, revealing a landscape devastated by the industrial over-construction, and traversed by roads swarming with cars and trucks. The song, *L’acqua xè morta*,

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\(^{192}\) This is “the American dream”. Director Emanuele Crialese, in his 2006 film *Nuovomondo* (Golden door) shows the migrants’ dreams about the land of opportunity where giant vegetables are grown, people can swim in milk, and coins fall from the sky. This gives the viewer insight into the unrealistic expectations that many immigrants held about America.

\(^{193}\) According to Zygmunt Bauman, *Glocalization* is a combination of the words "globalization" and "localization". This neologism is used to describe a product or service that is developed and distributed globally, but is also fashioned to accommodate the user or consumer in a local market. As a consequence, the product or service may be tailored to conform to local laws, customs or consumer preferences.
is performed by the *Coro Alpino* Crodaioi in a dialect of Vicenza.\(^{194}\) The *Coro Alpino* is a choir for male voices only that performs local traditional songs in dialect. Typically, the repertoire consists of popular songs from World War I, World War II, and the *Partisan Resistance*. As previously mentioned, the *Nordest*, specifically its Alpine region, was notoriously embroiled in battlefield conflicts and their aftermath. These songs characteristically speak of war events and battles, soldiers’ daily life, ordinary people’s life, all taking place in the mountains and in the countryside of the *Triveneto*.\(^{195}\) Through the years, director Bepi De Marzi and his Choir contributed to preserving this traditional patrimony, and the Maestro expanded their repertoire. *L’acqua xè morta* is a 2009 composition, inspired by the tangible water pollution emergency recently affecting the region. In *Piccola Patria* this very song represents a metaphor of the irreparable death of the *Triveneto*’s culture.

The prefatory sequence of *Piccola Patria* displays a story of moral corruption in a dark, enclosed room, that right after opens to its correspondent exterior: the aerial view — accompanied by *L’acqua xè morta* — shows how the recent industrialization violated an area characterized by a preexisting agricultural vocation. This outlook contrasts with the collective memory that carries the image of this countryside’s bucolic past, once recognized by its harmonious composition of green land, patiently cultivated fields, rich vineyards, and worldwide famous *Ville Venete*. The dialect of the song accentuates the loss of identity of the present time, and expresses a nostalgia for a lost, but perhaps idealized past.

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\(^{194}\) This Choir was founded in 1958, with official location in Arzignano, in the province of Vicenza, Veneto. Arzignano’s industrial boom from the 1960s, its cultural, sociological and environmental consequences are profusely analyzed by author Paolo Rumiz in *La secessione leggera. Dove nasce la rabbia del profondo Nord*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2001.

\(^{195}\) For instance, during the film, another popular song of World War II and Resistance performed by the Crodaioi is *Joska la Rossa*. These songs are a very popular expression of regional folklore.
The director consciously makes a film that truly collects the Italian Neorealism’s legacy: all the settings, both exteriors and interiors, are authentic; the story takes place in present time; the protagonists are ordinary people; the actors are non-professional, and they are locals from the Treviso province; probably they even use their own clothes as costumes. In addition, all the local characters speak either their vernacular or Italian with strong Venetian inflexion. Luisa and Renata, the sex abuser Dino Menon and his friends at the bar, Luisa’s parents, Menon and his sister, Renata, and Franco, Luisa’s father: all speak authentic dialect. When Luisa and Renata are at the Chinese store, or when Luisa talks to Albanian Bilal, they speak stiltedly in formal Italian with a strong accent and intercalated by dialectal expressions, as if they were constrained by the *lingua franca*.\textsuperscript{196}

Conversely, at the local *sagra*\textsuperscript{197} —the patron’s celebration— which becomes the pretext for the *Lega del Nord* populist festival, the speaker that admonishes the audience against the immigrants is proud of speaking dialect in public; he claims that dialect should become the official language in the territory. This scene reflects the actual debate promoted constantly for years by the acolytes of the political party. The party’s representatives cyclically propose to introduce the official use and the teaching of local dialects within the public school system, in order to avoid losing the local popular culture’s legacy.\textsuperscript{198} However, behind the somewhat

\textsuperscript{196}This fact tells that the protagonists do not master the *Standard Italian* despite being nominally Italians. If those born in the country struggle speaking Italian as their own second language, how will the immigrants deal with learning two languages in order to integrate?

\textsuperscript{197}*Asagra* is a rural festival, usually celebrating the village’s Saint Patron, held in the open air with folk music, dancing and games. Many *sagre* are based around one or more culinary local specialties, which can usually be sampled in booths, and served under a gazebo on long common tables. These festivals normally take place during the summer months.

legitimate purpose of preserving an important cultural aspect of the region’s identity, the real
goal of the advocates of this project is to promote discrimination against foreigners.199

In the same way, dialect is employed to pinpoint the degree of education of a character.
This is the case of La lingua del Santo’s protagonist, Willy. He speaks almost all the time in
Standard Italian, although always with a strong Venetian inflexion, and sometimes Italianizing
dialectal expressions. He is supposed to be a well-mannered traveling salesman; therefore,
director Mazzacurati emphasizes at the same time Willy’s Venetian origin, and the fact that he
was in the past an elegant and distinguished person, who just recently became unemployed.
Willy speaks in dialect only once, in the brief conversation from the public phone post, to the
businessman Mr. Maritan, the middleman who is taking care of the relic’s restitution. Maritan
says roughly “Faccia prestino che no go tempo da perdere”, and Willy responds instinctively,
revealing his Venetian origins “Gnanca mi”.200

As Diego Dalla Via pinpoints in his analysis on the progression of the immigrant
presence in the films, in this movie the actual foreigners’ identification is recognizable, not only
through their distinctive accents, but also through their physical stereotype, and profession of the
foreign characters. The first case is the Slavic receiver to whom Willy and Antonio sell the stolen
goods resulting from their pilferages; the audience can easily identify this person through a


Davide Lessi, L’ultima sfida del Veneto: “Dialetto anche a scuola e posti riservati nel pubblico”. In: La Stampa.
December 8, 2016. http://www.lastampa.it/2016/12/08/italia/politica/ultima-sfida-del-veneto-dialetto-anche-a-
scuola-e-posti-riservati-nel-pubblico-LKCRdD40F7NPUxsx0pVj8qK/pagina.html

199 Franco Brevini, ibid.

200 Both in dialect, Maritan says: “Let’s do it quickly, because I have no time to waste”. Willy responds: “Me
neither.”
stereotype: indeed, he has a Balkan aspect—dark complexion, pronounced cheekbones, dark, long, curly hair and moustache—and he is unpleasant, creepy, sly and cynical. These features, combined with a Slavic accent (characterized by the absence of the use of definite articles, and the lack of emphasis on the pronunciation of the double consonants), immediately convey the stereotype that identifies Slavic immigrants with the practice of petty crime. This idea is reinforced later, after Antonio’s theft of the Reliquary from Saint Anthony Basilica, when he tries to sell a precious ruby that he just removed from the Shrine. The same Slavic receiver is the mediator who introduces Antonio to his fratello di sangue, the head of the Zingari of Padua, as the gypsy community is called. The headman of this Zingari’s tribe is another stereotyped character: dark complexion, big nose, wrinkles on his thin face, big black moustache, front golden tooth, long dark hair, unshaved beard, earrings, hat on his head, shirt open on his (hairy) chest, exhibiting a heavy golden chain. Also his accent is Balkan, but he mixes Italian with Romani words; for instance, he asks to Antonio “Dài makàli!” Then he himself translates his request into Italian “Dammi la pietra”. This is the only sentence in Romani language translated. The Zingaro, right after the examination of the stone, realizes its provenance, and sets his community after Antonio, who is forced to run away to avoid to being lynched. The audience

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201 This stereotype reflects perfectly the study made by Diego Della Via, as discussed in Chapter1. Another film where a similar stereotyped character appears is Pane e Tulipani (Bread and Tulips) by Silvio Soldini (2000). This “Mazzacurati’s style” film takes place in Venice. The minor, but well defined character in question is a Slavic man who runs an illegal hotel. He owns a run-down boat adapted into a cheap hostel moored in a secondary canal of Venice. The situation shows in an extreme way how Venice became a tourist resort in the hands of foreigners.

202 “Brother of blood”.

203 The Romani or Rom is a traditionally nomadic ethnic group, living mostly in Europe and the Americas and originating from the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent. The Romani are defined by the exonym “Gypsies” (or “Gipsies”), which some people consider pejorative due to its connotations of illegality and irregularity. Romani, Zingari in Italian, and Singani in Venetian dialect, are dispersed; their populations are concentrated in “tribes” or communities in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe including Italy, Turkey, Spain and Southern France.

204 “Gimme the stone.”
cannot comprehend the words he screams in his language, but can understand the general meaning of them, because he clearly pronounces the name “Sant’ Antonio”.  

The Gypsies or Rom communities are an established presence in the entire Triveneto region. Although they are not often represented in Nordest literature and film because they are considered outsiders, they are also the object of a political controversy. The expert Giovanna Baer says that the linguistic minorities existing in the Italian territory are protected by the Italian Constitution of 1948 as follows: art.2 guaranties inviolable human rights; art.3 states equal social dignity to all citizens without distinction by sex, race, language, religion, political opinion, personal and social conditions; art.6 ensures protection for linguistic minorities. In addition, the law n.482 (December 15, 1999) recognizes and protects all the historical cultural-linguistic specificities present in Italy. The minorities classified, based on four criteria (ethnic, linguistic, historic, and localization) are twelve: Albanian, Catalan, German, Greek, Slovenian, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian. In the law’s original proposal the Rom were included among the aforementioned historical minorities; these communities have been present in the peninsula for six centuries (historic criterion), have an ethnical origin (ethnic principle), and they have a specific language (denominated Romanés) officially recognized by international organizations and linguists as “minority language” (linguistic norm). However, the Rom did not fulfill the fourth requirement—localization—because they are nomadic. Therefore, another law specifically designed for these communities was proposed, but never ratified. This is why the Roms are not included in the Italian regulations. This fact makes them real outcasts.

205 This occurrence reveals two facts: first, the Gypsy community is devoted to Saint Anthony; the second is that the Gypsies are already outcast, because they are considered thieves, and in this case they want to avoid involvement in or association with this robbery.

http://www.rivistapaginauno.it/tempidifficili0910.php
within the Italian society. In the film, Mazzacurati represents the *Rom* community in the stereotyped way that would ironically justify this cultural rift; however, he emphasizes the *Roms*’ traditional devotion to Saint Anthony. They refuse to buy the stolen stone from Antonio, and they chase him from their camp, because for them he has committed a blasphemy. Later the media will show the *Rom* Chief collaborating with the authorities by denouncing the thieves.

The use of regional dialects in Italian films is instrumental to identify, to realistically depict, and to emphasize extreme traits of a character, as we have seen with Luisa, Willy and the *Rom* Chief. The sound and use of the dialect has an immediate impact on the audience, with indirect effects. One such effect is limiting the movie’s fruition. For example, dialect in a film would be understood by a limited audience; the non-speaker spectators are expected to make the “additional effort” of reading the subtitles. This supplementary complication might affect the marketing component of a film, when it is intended as entertainment. As a consequence, it is necessary to make some considerations regarding the quantitative use of dialect in films. For this reason, generally, dialogues in local dialect seldom prevail over the ones in Italian language in these films. Two interesting exceptions are in Andrea Segre’s *Io sono Li* and *La prima neve*.

In *Io sono Li*, the two spoken languages are Venetian and Chinese. In the second, the variety of languages used is multifarious: in fact, dialogues are in standard Italian and French, Trentino and Môcheno dialects, and one of the two protagonists expresses his thoughts in his

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207 Nonetheless, later the audience will notice that a Gipsy woman wears a jewel with the red stone that Antonio left in the camp while escaping.

208 In Italian literature there are many examples of the creation of innovative and mixed languages: from Giovanni Verga, to Carlo Emilio Gadda. In recent times the most famous example is author Andrea Camilleri in his Montalbano’s series (which became a very popular TV series). Camilleri adopted a language containing Sicilian words distributed within a text in Italian; otherwise his readers would be only Sicilians. Actually, many studies have been made on “Camilleri’s language”, and on the consequent problems related to the rendering of this “new” language when translated.
dialect from Togo. In the film *Io sono Li* the amount of dialogue in Venetian is almost equivalent to the extent of the total use of Chinese; the result is that non-Venetian and non-Chinese viewers (e.g. practically everyone) will need to read subtitles for the entire length of the film. The actors speak the language of the characters they interpret, not only to serve the director’s documentarist intent of a realistic rendering, but also in order to emphasize symbolically the existing barrier between the two worlds, the *Chioggiotto* and the Chinese. In the first film’s sequence, the Chinese men playing their domino game speak their own idiom; the only word pronounced in Italian by one of them is *fancùlo*, to express his disappointment for losing the game. The first word in dialect that protagonist Shun Li will learn upon her arrival in Chioggia is *ciòdo*, pending debt, because she is expected to recuperate the dues that the customers did not pay to Maria, the previous bar owner.

These two segments of conversation give an immediate idea of their deeper meaning: the first indicates that the members of the Chinese organization are not considering the Italian culture as a value; the second shows directly what Shun Li is required to do with her new job. In both cases it is clear that language acquisition does not function to facilitate social integration: the vulgar expression is not functional to developing a friendly relationship, while the second merely expresses a financial request. It soon becomes evident in the film that the two communities cannot communicate, either because they do not want to, or because they are not prepared. On the one hand, the members of the organization will tell Shun Li later that Italians are just customers and cannot be treated as friends; on the other hand, the fishermen misunderstand Bepi’s sincere friendship with Shun Li, eventually causing his fatal fight with

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209 “*Fancùlo*” means f**k off.

210 *Ciòdo* means nail; in the past the habit was that the debts were noted as a reminder on a piece of paper posted on the wall behind the bartender.
Denis. Despite the prejudices and cliché, Bepi attempts to create a communicative bond with Shun Li at the osteria from his first encounter with her: he demonstrates to her his sensibility, maybe because he is a foreigner, and he knows what is like being a foresto. Therefore, he asks Shun Li how she would say a few words in Chinese, such as prugna, and pensione, and later he will repeat her simply poetry while they are fishing together in Bepi’s small boat.211 Conversely, it is quite disorienting to see that in the first day of work, the Chinese woman who teaches her the basics of her new job, speaks directly in Venetian dialect with Shun Li with a natural accent: the viewer will presume that this Chinese woman was either born or grew up and went to school in Chioggia, and so became a “second generation native speaker”; 212 Shun Li is confused, because she cannot yet understand the Venetian language. Indeed, dialect will be necessary for her to communicate in this traditional village of Chioggia, but she will learn it by using the Venetian dialect’s key-words combined with the standard Italian she learned while living in Rome (and this facilitates the non-Venetian speakers’ comprehension).

Shun-Li’s young male Chinese co-worker does the same. For example, when he goes to the local fish market to purchase the crustaceans for the osteria’s customers; he asks the seller for canòce, mantis shrimp; he astutely understands that if he would ask for “cicale di mare” he would not be understood. By the end, Shun Li learned enough chioggiotto to understand not only the basic orders at the osteria, but also other general communicative locutions. For instance, when she will return to Chioggia to find out who paid her debt to the Chinese organization, the

211 Prugna is the liquor distilled from prunes, Pensione means retirement, and the little poem is about catching little fish; probably Shun Li pronounces these words inspired by the movement of the boat in the waves, while she is moving the fishing line in the water.

212 This is a recent phenomenon: Italy is already experiencing the new interaction with second generation immigrants, in the films represented by, respectively Shun Li’s son in Io sono Li, and by Dani’s daughter Fatou in La prima neve. These children will grow up in the Italian society. The issue of rights of citizenship for immigrants’ children is very prickly.
expression that fisherman Coppe uses to let her know that Bepi died, is the euphemism “el xè ‘ndà”, and Shun Li comprehends immediately. She keeps her promise and gives him a funeral like the Poet’s: Thus, Shun Li and Coppe will set fire to Bepi’s Casòn in the Laguna. This seen symbolizes the hope of a connection between Chinese and Mediterranean cultures despite their inability to communicate.

The problem of learning to speak the local language could constitute an intimidating challenge for immigrants. Yet, in all the films there is only one case in which an immigrant expresses openly his preoccupation regarding the difficulty of learning the local language: it is Shun Li’s son, right after arriving from China, who shares his concern with his mother. It is meaningful that the query is expressed by a child. The boy will grow up in the Nordest; somehow, the hope for a full integration and inclusion is consigned to him: he will go to school, will grow up in the new country, and will become a citizen of Europe. Learning the locally spoken language is one of the primary problems that an immigrant must face, because language is necessary in all the phases of daily life: from the procedure of obtaining legal residency authorization to the attainment of a job. Initially, this process would be facilitated by either interpreters or social workers until the immigrant becomes more proficient in the language.

The aspect of the language’s challenge is quite evident in the second film by Andrea Segre, *La prima neve*. Here, the range of languages will have other interesting connotations for the main characters. In fact, Elisa, her son Michele, her father-in-law Pietro, and her brother-in-law Fabio

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213 In Italian it would be “è morto”, both meaning “He is gone”.

214 *Cason* is a wooden storage building on a platform in the water that the Chioggiotti fishermen use.

communicate with Togolese Dani in *Standard Italian*; since Dani is a foreigner, they all use the official language with him, and consequently he responds in Italian. Therefore, *Standard Italian* is the vehicular language for the communication with the foreigner(s). However, Dani speaks French with his immigrant African friend in Pergine, and by phone with his relative Jacques, who periodically calls him from Paris. From his conversations with these two persons, it is clear that Dani’s objective is to stay only temporarily in Trentino: eventually he intends to go to France, where he has not only his relationships, but also where he feels more comfortable because of the language. For Dani, French is a familiar and much more practical language of communication.

Finally, Dani talks to himself in his dialect from Togo. It happens four times during the film. The first time is at the beginning of the story when his baby daughter Fatou cries on the floor; his response is to ignore her, and leave the house. While the audience wonders about this father’s dreadful indifference, he thinks to himself in his mother tongue: “Before you learn to walk, you better decide where to go. But I do not know where to go, Layla. Also the wood of my sculptures can’t speak anymore. It looks at me and I do not feel anything. Everything is so hard: choose what clothes to wear, walk, and cut my nails…”

He is expressing his bewilderment and his difficulties in facing life since Layla, his wife and companion, died. The second time, it happens while he relives his painful memory of the sea crossing with Layla: “Do not fall asleep. We must stay awake. Look at me Layla. What should I do? You have to help me, Layla. How can I forget? Tell me please.” His agony is caused by his sense of guilt for having no choice but to take his pregnant wife with him across the Mediterranean Sea. Their venture was for the

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216 From the film subtitles.
purpose of building their future together, but now that she is dead, Dani is lost, and cannot find
the words to express his despair except in his dialect.

Later, sitting next to their sleeping baby daughter, he is sketching the wooden portrait of his
wife, and thinks in his dialect from Togo: “Layla, look at me! You must help me. I can’t manage
any longer. How can I still stay here with her? Give me an answer, Layla: it is time to choose.”
Dani is convinced that his only chance to build a new life is to leave, abandoning Fatou. Whereas
this is an inhuman decision, he is determined. In reality, he is speaking to himself, and he is
trying to find a justification for his resolution. His dialect from Togo is thus the language of
Dani’s most authentic emotions.

Dani’s fourth interior monologue occurs as Fatou sleeps. He intends to go to Paris to start
his new life alone. He silently addresses his daughter for the first time: “Your mother had your
eyes. My life ended when she died, the same day in which you were born.” He leaves Layla’s
polished portrait near Fatou’s crib, and adds: “Here is where I love you; it will be easier for you.
I know that one day you will understand.” Togo’s dialect becomes the mother and father’s
language, the language of intimacy, and the language of the deepest feelings. The four passages
above contain all of Dani’s anguish and pain; he feels guilty for his wife’s death, alone in this
world, and unable to face the responsibility of being a good father for Fatou.

Conversely, Michele’s mom Elisa speaks mainly Italian. This is not only because she is not from
the Mòcheni Valley, but also because she is cultural mediator for an NGO supporting the
immigrants in the little town of Pergine. However, her use of language reveals also the barrier
and distance existing between her and her son; Michele speaks the Trentino dialect with his
grandfather Pietro, his uncle Fabio, and his peers, showing that he is a real native. His ‘mother
language’ is his father’s dialect. In using the dialect as his language, Michele identifies with the territory, instead of with his mother.

Interestingly, Pietro uses several languages to speak to Dani. Generally, he uses Italian; however, once in a while, he speaks Mòcheno when he wants to transmit his identity and his traditional culture. Michele translates his grand-father’s sayings for Dani; this implies also that the grandfather transferred the fathers’ language and ancestors’ wisdom to his grandson. Mòcheno represents for Pietro what his Togolese dialect represents for Dani, the intimate mother language. But then, there is another vehicle of communication that Pietro uses, with both Dani and Michele: the language of nature. He always makes his examples from nature, for instance when he says: “Le cose che hanno lo stesso odore devono stare insieme”. Therefore, the metaphorical language of nature becomes universal and unifying in the film. Every single transition from one scene to the next is a brief picture of the natural landscape, in different times of the day, marking the time, visualizing the changing seasons, and reflecting the protagonist’s mood. Near the end of the movie the director chooses to use falling snow as “Flake by flake, [it is] healing and hiding/ the scar of [their] deep-plunged woe.” Lowell’s poem about mourning a lost child captures the grief that both Michele and Dani feel. But snow also represents the tabula rasa upon which they can restart their lives. By covering over their mourning, Michele

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217 Mòcheno is the ancient Germanic dialect spoken in this Valley until roughly the 1940s. The Trentino dialect is layered on top of the Mòcheno, and the Standard Italian on top of that, much like layers of rock are stratified over time. See Chapter 1 for more about Mòcheni.

218 For instance: “the wood you cut heats you up three times: when you cut it, when you bring it home, and when you burn it.”

219 “Things that have the same scent must stay together”. He refers to honey and wood. Later it will be clear that he refers to Michele and his mother, and to Dani and his daughter.

220 James Russell Lowell’s “The first snowfall”, L. 31-32.
can finally face the process of growing up with his mother, and Dani can reconsider his life with his daughter. The open ending leaves the audience wondering whether the friendship between Dani and Michele will make the immigrant stay for longer in the Mòcheni valley, or if it just started a process of growth and acceptance of life for both. For all the languages spoken in the film, nature offers the only “words” of healing.

As we have seen from this analysis, the impact of different tongues and dialects on communication and integration is extensive and rich in meaning. However, another interesting perspective to consider given the visual component of films is proxemics: the study and observation of human use of space and the effects that population density has on behavior, communication, and social interaction.\(^{221}\) Among the films under examination, two cases are exemplary and diametrically opposed in the proxemics’ rendering of two relationships: the one between Malvina and Alberto in *Occidente*, and the other between Michele and Dani in *La prima neve*. In the first case, Malvina and Alberto share a mutual attraction, but they are unable to find their way to cope. She is Romanian, thus technically a foreigner, but she speaks the two vehicular languages in Aviano, Italian and English; Alberto, is also in principle a foreigner in Aviano, but he is native Italian; moreover, he is an English teacher. Despite the fact that they could potentially have the tools for proper verbal communication, their approach is illustrated mainly through non-verbal gestures, and proxemics. Throughout the majority of the film, their interactions are limited to a “close phase public distance” to a “close phase personal distance”. In noticing Alberto’s non-verbal and awkward approach to Malvina, the viewer may wonder

\(^{221}\) Edward T. Hall, in: *The Hidden Dimension* (1963), studies the impact of proxemics behavior, or the use of space, on inter-personal communication. According to Hall, the study of proxemics is valuable in evaluating the way in which people interact with others in everyday life, but also "the organization of space in their houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of their towns". *Proxemics* is a hidden component of interpersonal communication that can be detected through observation, is strongly influenced by culture, and for this reason is variable.
whether he is simply extremely shy or a sociopath. His attitude might look disturbing to a
general audience, because Alberto seems more a stalker than a man falling in love with a woman.
Indeed, at the beginning, as a bar customer, he first notices and observes her while she is serving
the other clients at the bar; only once do they have eye contact, and this is when she is waiting
for an order to be placed by two undecided clients: she winks at him, looking for approval, and
smiles, eloquently communicating that her job requires patience with slow customers. When he
is leaving, he asks her if she is American. She smiles again, but does not respond.

The next time, Alberto and his friends go to the bar, but it is almost closing time: Alberto
would like to talk to her, but he is incapable; therefore, he waits for her outside the bar at the end
of her shift, and —unseen— he follows her home in the dark. The next morning, he is still
waiting for her when she goes out, but she does not notice him, because she goes in the opposite
direction. Unnoticed, he follows her through her errands. Then, a strange sort of “common dis-
connection” happens to both of them one evening at the bar: being invited, but almost forced by
them, she is sitting for a few minutes at her schoolmates’ table, while Alberto is with his
colleagues at another table. Both Malvina and Alberto seem distracted, oblivious, and not
interested or involved in the conversations. It is evident that they would rather be elsewhere,
maybe with someone else. This sequence shows that both feel like strangers, and are unable to
integrate with their groups. One day he calls her; she lets the phone ring for a while, but when
she picks up, neither of them speaks. Another time, Malvina goes bowling with her colleagues;
when she goes to the bar after the game, Alberto pops up next to her, but again he is unable to
speak; she waits patiently for a word, but then leaves.
Her unintended pregnancy resulting from a ‘one-night stand’ leaves her desperate; she takes a train and goes to the sea. Also in this occasion Alberto follows her, but again he does not speak to her, even when he sits in the same train compartment in the way back. He never speaks directly to her. However, Malvina does not seem to consider him a stalker, and somehow she feels attracted by this silent man. \(^{222}\) For Malvina, Alberto is a strange presence: he represents the concrete chance for both to build together a “normal” life, but they are unable to take this opportunity since communication is impossible. At this point the audience is in suspense, waiting for something to happen to close this space. Proxemics emphasizes the insurmountable distance between the two. Nonetheless, Alberto keeps following her; but still, he does not dare talk to her. Only at the last minute before leaving Aviano does Alberto decide to pass by Malvina’s house one last time; and suddenly and inexplicably he decides to break in Malvina’s apartment, jumping straight from a “public” to an “intimate distance”\(^ {223}\). This in extremis act shows that Alberto finally is able to rebel against the limiting distance parameters imposed by the new conventions of the deterritorialized space where he lives. However, the film’s “open ending” does not let us anticipate whether he will make it on time to save her from committing suicide by hanging herself.

The important visual message that Salani conveys is the difficulty, and perhaps the impossibility, of establishing a normal relationship in this deteriorated and inhospitable territory where identity does not matter; the deterritorialized context to which these people are relegated

\(^{222}\) She verbalizes her feeling with her Romanian old friend once, and this is the first time that Malvina confides her authentic feeling to someone.

\(^{223}\) According to Hall, the two intermediate and gradual passages would be social and personal distance. He describes four zones of interpersonal space and how to use them effectively. The intimate zone is within touching distance, from actually touching to about two feet; the personal zone is from two to four feet; the social zone is four to twelve feet apart; the public zone is more than twelve feet.
makes any communication that could be salvific impossible. Director Corso Salani is very sharp, severe and critical regarding Aviano’s extreme case of deterritorialization, and lucidly illustrates in this film just how much the *Occidente*’s culture could be eroded, and that the cost is the loss of relations – if not of life. There is literally *no place* for Malvina and Alberto to be together or alone. On the contrary, the proxemics approach to analyze Michele and Dani’s friendship is more gradual, less traumatic, and decisive for both. The first time that Dani sees Michele, it is from a close distance. Right after a verbal fight with his mother, the boy storms out from his house, running in front of Pietro’s workshop; Dani sees him passing by, but does not speak with him. Pietro explains to Dani that for Michele it is a difficult time, but that eventually he will be okay. However, Dani had the opportunity to notice Michele’s temperament up close.

Next time, the audience sees the two together; they are with Pietro and Fabio in the forest cutting a tree. Even though they are together, Michele and Dani do not speak to each other, but they share the same space and work closely. Upon their arrival back home, Elisa calls Michele in for his homework. Michele does not obey. At this moment, Dani talks to him for the first time, suggesting that Elisa is right: studying is important. Michele reacts badly to Dani, responding: “Forse io e te non ci siamo capiti.” On a Sunday, after church, Pietro asks Michele to go to the forest to cut wood; he convinces the boy that Dani could help him with the task. Therefore, Pietro creates the occasion of a closer encounter of the two. They go. When Michele indicates a young tree that could make a perfect sled, Dani asks if they are going to cut it now. Michele responds: “La prossima volta”, next time, implying naturally that they will come back together. Dani lights up a cigarette pretending to do it with his sole finger, and smiles; they walk back together whistling: a bond is created, and the distance between the two is reduced. Indeed, later

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224 “Perhaps we did not understand each other”, in other words: “mind your business”.

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they return to the woods and Michele shows Dani his raft, and invites him to join him onboard. Dani refuses, confesses that he cannot swim, and then tells Michele some details about his fearful navigation across cold and dark Mediterranean in a sinking boat: it is the first time he describes his trip out loud. Coming back from the forest, they approach a sign indicating a trail; Michele abruptly changes direction and mood, but he does not explain why.

Another time, Michele and Dani play soccer with a pinecone; then, Dani carries Michele on his shoulders, “come un cammello”: this is the closest contact so far, and indicates that a reciprocal confidence has happened. When Dani observes that everything in the forest is so green, Michele responds that soon it will be all white covered with snow. Dani responds that he might be gone by then. The boy suddenly asks to go home, because it is going to rain, and here we have a split. At the end, early in the morning in which it is snowing, Dani is leaving for good: Pietro is supposed to accompany him to Trento. Michele wakes up while they are hopping in the car; he stops Dani because he wants to show him something before he leaves. Dani reluctantly accepts: they hike together to the trail that Michele had previously avoided and arrive at the place where Michele’s father died. Finally, Michele tells Dani about his father’s accident. At this point the proxemics of close contact coincides with the recognition of their friendship based on opening up and sharing a mutual confidence. In the first film communication between local and immigrant cannot happen because of the deterritorialization of the region. Neither language nor proxemics facilitates connection. On the contrary, in the second film the space of Nature allows both language and proxemics to create an understanding between the locals and the migrants. The connection generated allows a potential integration.
CHAPTER 4

EMOTIONAL ATLAS: THE TERRITORY SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE OF THE MIND

Thus far, the present study has analyzed the historical and economic events that shaped the contemporary Triveneto; then, it has investigated how these happenings affected and modified the macro-region’s social structure; further on, it has explored the linguistic variety that characterizes the culture of the Nordest, but also contributes to creating communicative barriers. The study now continues on how the landscape reflects the interior emotions of the people traversing the region’s territory: from a geo-political analysis of the Triveneto territory to its interior mapping, from the point of view of people migrating and traversing this space.

The cinematic portrayal of the Nordest landscape is complex; the ideal structure for this task is the Atlas. An Atlas “neither does operate a definitive classification, an exhaustive inventory, nor does create once and for all a catalogue—like a dictionary, an archive or an encyclopedia—. It is rather used to gather fragments, to discompose the world respecting its multiplicity and heterogeneity, and at the same time making readable the subterranean relations among the parts.”

Luisella Farinotti, professor of Esthetics of Cinema at the University of Milan, states: “L’Atlante costruisce una geografia di dissonanze temporali […] , è uno strumento


Besides, the Atlas seeks not always evident links and bonds. The resulting map describes in a systematic order the territory, but the portrayed landscape takes its shape thanks to the space crossings presences. The outcome is a possible route. The limits chosen in the present study have, as stated before, a double boundary, geographical and chronological: the macro-region Triveneto, with its territory made by physical —natural, artificial and sociological— landscapes, and the first fifteen years of the twenty-first century. The perspective is bifocal: through the lenses of the cinematic production of eight films, and from the point of view of the migrants, the people now traversing this territory. The objective is to reconstruct not only the geographic and social transformation of this territory, but also the emotional impact that this space has on these people.

In all the stories narrated in the selected films, the territory is recognizable for the visual depiction of its landscapes; therefore, the space becomes a significant element of identification of the location and its inhabitants. Additionally, the physical changes (the overbuilding and the deterrioralization) of the Triveneto that happened in the last decades are clearly observable; at the same time, the recent transformations caused the contemporary alteration of the society (from rural to industrial, from local to global). Last but not least, the region has been modified because of external contingencies, among which: general political instability, the postcolonial re-

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228 Farinotti, ibid.

229 Chapter 1.

230 Chapter 2.
organization of Africa, the disintegration of the Soviet Union’s Eastern Bloc, the conflicts and the instability in the Middle East. All these situations created the conditions for an intense migratory flux towards Europe, and in particular in Italy because its geographical boundaries placed it in proximity to all of the events. The Italian peninsula changed from a land of emigration into a land of immigration; but instead of opening to the new, the tendency was (and still is) to be suspicious towards the aliens. In front of the epochal change of the social texture, authorities are not well prepared, as French Author Daniel Pennac says in a recent interview, “Some political parties of all Europe manipulate this trend, making people believe that the migrants are the ultimate scapegoat to justify the society’s incapability to face the now inevitable modifications”. This is happening now in Western Civilization, and the Triveneto is in no way exempt.

The Triveneto’s Atlas: the frontier

As stated previously, the Nordest represents the peninsula’s extreme oriental border, a passageway subject to a crossing, often illegal, of migrants and refugees. Through the breaches of the legal and illegal immigration, the ‘aliens’ enter this territory in assorted ways. Though the listed films are not about the narration of the immigrants’ journeys, they tell the stories of their encounters with the locals in the region. In the films, immigrants are embodied by many characters, among whom: Malvina, the Romanian bar waitress in Occidente; Hassan, the Tunisian mechanic technician and Galja, the Romanian wife of the tobacco seller Amos in La giusta distanza; the Slavic and Gipsy community in La lingua del Santo; ‘Cicia’, the Nigerian prostitute and Ida, the Moldavian caregiver for elderly people in Cose dell’altro mondo; Anis, 231 Daniel Pennac. Interview: “Che tempo che fa” of May 7, 2017. http://www.raiplay.it/video/2017/05/Daniel-Pennac-del-07052017-9f35cf64-fe40-43e6-a262-121e5774beb2.html
the clandestine Moroccan young man in *Il Riparo*; Shun Li, the Chinese bar tender/worker, and Bepi, the Yugoslavian fisherman in *Io sono Li*; Dani, the Togolese refugee in *La prima neve*; and Bilal, the Albanian horse stableman in *Piccola Patria*.

All these ‘aliens’ traverse the *Nordest* region between 2000 and 2014 coming from different countries and ways, and the *Triveneto* is never their first stop. Indeed, for its strategic geo-political position the macro-region is a crossing space, and simultaneously is a center and a border. From this point of view, this constant dichotomy makes this place extraordinary. In the majority of this series of films taking place in the *Triveneto*, the idea of *terra di confine*—borderland—is given mainly by the recurrent presence of foreigner characters and immigrants. Only *Occidente* focuses specifically on the spatial dimension of the *frontiera*—frontier. As Farinotti rightly states, “Director Salani captures the borderline and elusive geography of this location; Aviano indeed epitomizes the intersection of itineraries influenced by the bodies’ traversing trajectories. The result is a visual map contaminated by departures, breaks, stops, separations, passages, and route changes.”

232 The Friuli-Venezia Giulia represented in *Occidente* exposes the current problem of the migratory fluxes through this area, and the political discussion on delimiting its borders. 233 This peculiar situation generates a problem that influences the perception of space. The film location’s choice, Aviano—hosting an important American military base, airport, and community—is apt to portray the physiognomy of a marginal-landscape, and the director creates a clear correspondence between the liminal territory and the film’s social borderline characters.

232 Luisella Farinotti, ibid.

233 In particular, the historical events for the annexation of Trieste and its neighboring territory to Italy, at stake since before World War I, were solved only in 1954.
The first scenes are set in exteriors, with long shootings that follow the characters’ route, and end on a close-up focusing on their bodies: the surrounding space is treated as a deserted transit area, where people appear as meteoric and transitory presences, like in Giorgio De Chirico’s surreal paintings’ series *Piazze d’Italia*. However, the *Piazze d’Italia* series depict empty squares with their typical historic and monumental architectures, almost entirely void of human presence. Here, the broader and circular sequences around the ubiquitous Military base reveal something else: the protagonists traverse hybrid landscapes characterized by the predominance of signs of American civilization – a civilization which seems to drown out the preexisting Italian village, making it secondary. This is an extreme depiction of a globalization and it happens to be a globalization that coincides with ‘Americanization’. Every aspect of culture has adapted to the American lifestyle standards: from the Baptist Church, to the laundromat, to the stores.

Aviano seems to host only alienated foreigners: the American community, the substitute teachers, and even the local workers (with their cow-girls uniforms, and speaking only English). All these people traverse the town in their own manner, and seize the space by multiplying the border lines and reflecting different ways to conceive the frontier. In the end, they themselves are the frontiers. The American soldiers stay isolated within their rigid borders; they are either closed inside the inaccessible base, in the jeeps, in the airplanes, or in the microcosm represented by the American bar. They live in a sort of a surrogate fatherland; therefore, they do not even feel the need to learn Italian, because everybody can speak in English; they go to the bar dressed as cow-boys, dance and listen to country music, drink beer and eat American food. The pub reproduces visually their world: on the walls there are pictures and prints of the Conquest of the...

234 1915-1954.
West. The Conquest of the West epitomizes all the epics of moving the frontiers. But in this specific case, this is also an implicit metaphor of the American geopolitical colonization of Italy.

However, the base is a physical American enclave surrounded by barriers; it is a sort of reserve in which the reconstruction of an artificial world reflects at the same time proximity (to the American Civilization) and distance (this is not America). At the border of the enclave, on the other side, there remain the natives, now practically as a cultural and linguistic minority. They adapt the local businesses to the needs of the American community; however, the community of Italians, the locals, is kept outside. Furthermore, on the one hand, the locals lost the topographic coordinates that could allow them to relate with what is beyond the base border; on the other hand, they are unable to relate as well with their natural surroundings. They seem to be accustomed to go only to locations connected by the highways, such as motels and restaurants, or dream about artificial non-places such as Disneyland or its glocal surrogate version Gardaland. For the teachers, Aviano is only a work place. They must face the difficulty of integration daily, and they perpetually feel like foreigners, to the point in which they consider the option to work in Aviano or to teach in an Italian school in Uruguay equivalent. They seem to simply traverse the spaces as meteors, without leaving track of their presence: they are always in aseptic classrooms and gyms, deserted roads and empty soccer fields. Aviano is a transitory place, a disintegrated società senza soci.\(^\text{235}\)

The Romanian protagonist Malvina embodies and symbolizes all these lonely microcosms gravitating in this space: she feels guilty since she abandoned her country and friends during the 1989 revolution, therefore she punishes herself by traversing a temporary

\(^{235}\) A society without any associates.
space of transitory, occasional and promiscuous relationships; she forbids to herself to return to home in Romania, because that is no longer her home; she seems to deny her identity, since she speaks Italian language even with her conterranea friend Alina.\textsuperscript{236} The aural space through which Malvina moves is also hybrid and disorienting, because of the Babel of spoken languages and dialects, and the church bells’ chime mixed with the military airplanes’ engines’ clamor. For Malvina, as Farinelli says, “the border is not a precise demarcation line, but an indefinite and foggy zone, between the past familiar habitats of her origin and the new, undetermined and still unknown space where she now lives.”\textsuperscript{237} The only space where her authentic self is manifest and where she appears at ease is in her apartment, where her true identity is expressed through the map and flag of Romania on the walls, her friends’ old postcards and framed family pictures on her desk. Therefore, the film title \textit{Occidente}, —West—is allusive to the vague idea of what Italy, and specifically the Nordest, could represent for immigrants coming from the Eastern Europe (in terms of illusions, expectations and disillusions), and to the uncertain crossing of a \textit{no man’s land} that all the Conquests of the West entail.\textsuperscript{238}

In addition to its symbolic geopolitical liminal position above described, the Triveneto region presents a geographic assortment of natural landscapes, and reveals complex orographic and hydrographic systems: mountains, hills, piedmont areas, sea, lagoon, marsh, lake, and rivers. The natural environment reflects the characters’ feelings. For example, in \textit{Occidente}, whenever a broader view of the landscape appears, it amplifies the protagonists’ emotional state: the base is a non-place surrounded by fortified boundary walls; what is inside is never visible, and it is

\textsuperscript{236} Who by the way seems to be the only integrated person in the film; this is because she decided to forget and abandon her past, and look at the future.

\textsuperscript{237} Farinelli, ibid.

\textsuperscript{238} Farinelli, ibid.
inaccessible to the non-Americans. Malvina walks around these walls in a circular way every time she does her errands; similarly, the group of teachers observes, by sitting on the other side of the walls and fences, the continuous take-off of the military airplanes from the open spaces of the airport, and their trajectory always beyond the mountains. The Alps here represent the visual boundary that blocks the protagonists’ view to another possible, but unsurmountable, world, just as the military walls are barriers to Malvina and the Italian locals. However, on the other side, the situation is not different: the teachers face the traffic passing by the highway; this two-direction flow of vehicles never stops, and the entrance of the road is never visible; therefore, the highway is another visual limit-border that symbolizes the exclusion of the protagonists, and the impossibility of going anywhere. They are completely surrounded by overwhelming frontiers: the mountains, the highway and the base, like a trap. This explains why, when Malvina discovers she is pregnant, she instinctively takes a train to the sea, to the port of Trieste. Trieste was the last frontier before the East-European border at that time, so probably unconsciously she is trying to go back. The sea is rich in symbolism of comfort and refuge for Malvina: for her it may signify a possible escape route, a place where can find purification in cleansing waters, or the metaphor of the protective maternal womb. While the sea brings her temporary relief, it is also a border that she cannot cross (again). Eventually, Malvina returns to Aviano, to her apartment, to the only place where she can be herself; here, she attempts to hang herself. Hopefully, Alberto will arrive right on time to stop her from committing suicide: ultimately, only true love can provide a space for redemption and be the point where both characters will find their salvation. However, the sudden film interruption right before Alberto breaks in leaves the audience in suspension: it is not possible to know if this is going to happen, or if they are both inexorably
condemned. The director has thus moved the audience to an emotional limbo without providing catharsis, and this conveys the non-place where his characters are.

The *Triveneto’s* Atlas: the province

Aviano is a small town, and the film *Occidente* presents the extreme globalization and deterritorialization that cause the inhabitants’ loss of identity, their dis-placing, and their social dis-integration. This site has something in common with all the locations of the other films in analysis: its small dimensions. In fact, all the *Triveneto* is occupied by settlements of people organized in provincial towns and villages, ranging from medium to very small inhabited centers, or communities. We see this dimension in the village of Concadalbero in *La giusta distanza*; the town Bassano del Grappa in *Cose dell’altro mondo*; and the coastal town Chioggia in *Io sono Li*.

According to scholar Rocco Moccagatta, Director Carlo Mazzacurati in many ways could be considered the interpreter of the contemporary cinematic narrative of the provincial *Nordest*; he portrays the *Triveneto*’s province that seems to create a genre of his own.\(^{239}\) His film *La lingua del Santo* is the visual *summa* of a series of negative features already denounced during the 90s by journalistic reportages, inquiries and theatrical pieces.\(^{240}\) The characterizing hallmarks are: “high density of small factories, typically established in the new suburbs of small towns or in the rural areas in place of the family farms; these factories are led by arrogant entrepreneurs recalcitrant towards the central government; enriched uneducated manufacturers, for whom *schei*


\(^{240}\) Paolo Rumiz’s *Nordest*, and Gian Antonio Stella’s *Schei*, cited in Chapter 1; Marco Paolini’s “Civil Theater” is another contribution to the depiction of the contemporary *Nordest*; see, among others works: *Il Milione. Quaderno Veneziano di Marco Paolini, I Bestiari veneti*. Marco Paolini acts also in Segre’s film *Io sono Li*. 

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is the most important value; local people hostile to the aliens (e.g. immigrants, tramps and gypsies); nouveau riches’ ostentation of status symbols (e.g. branded clothes, luxury cars and villas), and their false devotion to Catholic principles; the proliferation of local television channels broadcasting farmer’s common sense and vulgar pomp.”

But, in addition to this non-flattering illustration of the Nordest, there is another distinctive feature that is patent in the film narration: the non-conforming individual’s escape from the provincial town; for instance, the town of Padua is portrayed as nocturnal, cold, and distant: a menacing, intimidating and dominating presence; by contrast, the nature nearby has a magical and soothing virtue for Willy’s soul. In other words, Mazzacurati illustrates the antagonism between a personification of the new society, incarnated by Padua, and the film’s protagonists: during the day, the monumental and industrialized town excludes and rejects them since they are unemployed; conversely, during the night, they can traverse its territory in the dark and abuse it for their squalid pilferages. Also, the immigrants are marginalized: the prostitutes practice on the roads or at the gas stations; the immigrants work in caves in the country growing mushrooms; and the gypsy community is segregated at the city limits.

Protagonists Willy and Antonio are “[…] nati onesti, cresciuti onesti, ma arrivati a quarant’anni senza sapere niente di inglese, niente di computer, niente di niente”. They are two losers in their forties that were unable to improve their skills to adapt to the social progress brought by the economic boom and globalization of the 1990s. Therefore, the two become misfits and comically inept criminals. By chance, they steal the priceless Saint Anthony’s Reliquary, and they escape to the countryside; initially they find refuge and a temporary shelter

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241 Rocco Moccagatta, L’invenzione narrativa del Nordest ovvero, la provincia come genere. Ibid.

242 “They were born and raised as honest people, but at the age of forty [they cannot have access to a job because] they are unable to speak English and use the computer.”
in the Euganean hills.\textsuperscript{243} At first, Willy and Antonio give the impression that they are lost here as well, because they seem unable to confront and adapt to the natural environment; but soon they seem to gradually regenerate, and resume their ability to move about strategically by hiding like animals in the countryside. Apparently, the two rogues can find their congenial space within the natural surroundings which seem to welcome and protect them. In particular, Willy seems to gradually become able to think more clearly and function, but only once he immerses himself into the Lagoon’s region.

The \textit{Triveneto’s Atlas: the water (Lagoon, River, Sea)}

Indeed, water is a recurrent symbolic element in almost all of these films. Willy narrates in a diegetic way how the Lagoon is his ideal habitat.\textsuperscript{244} This place could be very inhospitable and bewildering for people who are not familiar with its labyrinthine qualities; but for Willy this is the only place where he feels at ease: he used to come here with Patrizia, and even before that he would knowingly navigate these waters that prove insidious for most people. Not only does he know how to orientate himself and traverse this space, but this also is the only place where he feels calm and in harmony with his inner self. This is because he perceives the Lagoon as an organism, with its own intuitive, regular, and reassuring vital functions. In fact, the tides are consistent: every six hours, regular, predictable, like the calm breath of the earth. Here, Willy feels at home, because he knows the rules, and because he feels protected as in a maternal womb.\textsuperscript{245} Therefore, for Willy, the Lagoon is the ideal friendly place, while the town of Padua is

\textsuperscript{243} The Euganean hills group is situated on the southern area between the provinces of Padua and Venice.

\textsuperscript{244} “Solo la Laguna poteva calmarmi.”

\textsuperscript{245} Obviously for Willy the Lagoon represents a real accessible place, whereas for Malvina the water is a border she cannot cross. This underscores the two directors’ different approaches of territorialization in their films.
the personification of a deceitful enemy. Eventually, Willy and Antonio will be able to escape from the police chase through the Lagoon. “Adesso avevo il coraggio. Qualunque cosa fosse avvenuta sarei stato pronto. Avevamo rubato una barca [...] alla radio avevamo sentito che ci cercavano dappertutto. Per farcela dovevo portarli sul mio terreno, nel posto che conoscevo meglio. In Laguna, come sempre, la testa mi era tornata chiara. Ero tranquillo. Sei ore saliva e sei ore scendeva: come il respiro del mondo.”

However, after the successful escape, when it is time to jump beyond the fence of Venice Airport, Willy finally understands that he cannot run away for the rest of his life. Therefore, he exhorts Antonio to keep on by himself, and he decides to surrender to the Law. But he is happy, because finally he knows what is right: “Questa volta Antonio andava finalmente in vacanza, e io avevo capito che ognuno è fatto come è fatto. E non ci si deve mai lamentare. Bisogna accettarsi. Le cose cambiano sempre, anche noi. Ma dentro si rimane se stessi. [...] L’importante non è come ti giudicano gli altri, è come ti senti tu. E ho trovato le mie parole. Saprò cosa dire a Patrizia, se vorrà ascoltarmi.”

For Mazzacurati, the Lagoon is a place that represents the Triveneto’s constant double tension. Simultaneously, it denotes and symbolizes openness and closure. Openness, because it is a place in transition between the mainland and the sea; closure, because it is not easily accessible or navigable. This place is a labyrinth for most people, but

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246 “I finally found the courage. Whatever would happen now I am ready. We stole a boat [...] the radio said that they are looking for us everywhere. In order to succeed I should bring them on my terrain, in the place I know best. In the Lagoon, as usual, everything is clear. I am calm. Every six hours (the tide) rises, every six hours (it) goes down, like the breath of the world.”

247 “This time Antonio was going on vacation for real, and I finally understood that everybody is as he is, and we cannot complain: we should accept ourselves. Things always change, also us. But inside we remain the same. [...] The important thing is not how the others judge you, it is how you feel. And I found my words. I know what to say to Patrizia, if she will listen to me.”

248 The Lagoon of Venice is the most important survivor of a vaster system of estuarine lagoons that in Roman times extended from Ravenna, up north to Trieste. In the sixth century, the Lagoon gave security to the Romanized people fleeing from the Barbarian invasions; therefore, technically the first inhabitants of the Lagoon were immigrant
not for Willy: for him, this is congruous with a peaceful, inner place. Here, Willy is able to take stock at a crossroad; here he can open his mind; here he can finally decide the direction that he wants to take in his life. He has two options: either to leave, and prepare for the new risks and consequences of running away; or stay, surrender to justice, take responsibility, and finally accept the reasons why Patrizia left him. He opts to stay. The Lagoon seems motionless, but is not, as Willy’s interior space. Willy has now changed, because he did understand and accept himself. The Lagoon will reappear in another film of the series, in Segre’s Io sono Li, with a different symbolic valence; the topic will be treated along with the Sea, later in this chapter.

The River as a metaphor of life

In La Giusta distanza, Carlo Mazzacurati highlights another element of the landscape: the Po River. Mazzacurati treats the river much like a supporting actor in the story. In fact, the river is omnipresent in all the most important scenes of this film. Scholar Maria Buratti defines the incipit of this film “[…] un percorso di avvicinamento dalla quinta naturale del paesaggio [al protagonista-narratore Giovanni], ma la durata […] delle inquadrature sul Po e sui boschi del Polesine, in cui solo alla fine di un lentissimo zoom si scorge il furgoncino su cui viaggia il giovane protagonista Giovanni, segna da subito il ruolo preponderante del paesaggio. […] è la...
The landscape is characterized by the large and placid (at least in this film) River Po, the flat lush region near the Delta outlet where the river’s fresh waters mix with the sea waters of the Adriatic, the riverbanks, the fog, and the regularly geometric profile of the poplars woods of the flatland. The waterway and its surroundings are indeed a dominant presence: They define the region where the story is set; they keep time in all the seasons and at all the hours of the day of the film’s duration. Moreover, this environment reflects the protagonists’ emotions, and symbolically relates the meaning and the morale of the story.

For instance, both the opening and the closing scenes of the movie show two sequences with the same exact view, in a circular recurrence, to reiterate the emphasis on the river’s central role. In fact, the first and the last shots are a bird’s eye view on the Delta’s region: in the opening scene, the sequence starts on the sunny countryside, from an area between a marsh and the open and calm flow of the large river stream; right after, the view opens slowly on the right of the riverside, where a parallel and narrow asphalt road runs. On this other minor ‘stream’ goes a corriera, an extra-urban blue public bus directed to the fictional village Concadalbero, in the Rovigo’s Province. As the camera approaches to a closer view, in correspondence with a metallic bridge, the corriera crosses an Ape-car driven by the shy farmer Bolla, riding with the young Maria Buratti, Borghi e sobborghi. Il paesaggio extraurbano tra stereotipia e perduta d’identità. In: Canova-Farinotti, Atlante del cinema italiano. Ibid. “…a trajectory of a gradual approach from the natural background to the character, but the length of the shot on the Po River and the Polesine poplar woods, in which only at the end in a slow and long zoom the protagonist’s vehicle appears, indicates the landscape predominant role. […] the thriller plot becomes almost pretext for the observation of the location and its environmental characteristics.”

The poplar trees of these woods did not grow naturally: they have been planted for the industrial production of paper.
would-be journalist and narrator of the story, Giovanni. The chronicle of schoolteacher Mara and Tunisian mechanic Hassan’s love story is diegetic, from Giovanni’s point of view.

Conversely, the film’s closing scene, presents an analogous sequence, but with some relevant visual and auditory differences. At the film’s conclusion, Giovanni is a passenger of the corriera, and is leaving Concadalbero for good and heading to Milan to follow his dream of working for an important national newspaper; his friend Bolla follows him for a while, beeping the Ape-car and waving his goodbye to Giovanni, before disappearing in the fog. The different atmosphere, and changed attitude of Giovanni from the first to the last scene is reinforced by two external elements, one has to deal with the ambience, the other with the surroundings: the weather and the soundtrack. In the opening scene, both the sky and the river are illuminated by a shining brilliant and transparent oblique light; in the closing shot, all the surroundings are foggy and fading in an opaque milky lightless and quasi-grey background. In the incipit sequence, the acoustic guitar sound that accompanies this aerial view evokes a peaceful, poetic journey of a soul, or simply a bucolic viewpoint of the river. In the film’s last segment, the slow, puzzling, and joyless sound of a violin evokes a quasi-requiem. Definitely, the first and last scenes mirror the narrator’s emotions: at the beginning, the beautiful and peaceful aerial view reveals a promising, uneventful, serene and provincial location where nothing bad could happen, reflecting Giovanni’s disposition; on the contrary, the closing scene designates a sinister place, where the

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252 Ape-car is a three-wheeled light commercial vehicle produced since 1948 by Piaggio, very popular in the whole Peninsula’s countryside.

253 It is performed by the American group Tin Hat. It reminds of Ry Cooder’s first song of the soundtrack for Wim Wender’s film Paris, Texas (1986). The song moves at a pretty, slow pace, in which Cooder plucks his guitar’s strings and lets that sound vibrate into the air. In his case the music accompanied the view of the desert; in Mazzacurati’s film, the sound follows the slow pace of the river in a hot summer.
recent happenings and involvements should be left behind; the fog symbolically submerges and covers them.

The riverbanks surrounding the group of houses where both Hassan and Giovanni live have a symbolic meaning. They indicate the temporary protection from the river and from possible bad events; at the same time they constitute a barrier that limits the views of the community where the two live, thus recalling a prison. These watersides are also the locations of an interlocked series of eerie events. From the beginning, the noir story unfolds in a crescendo. The watersides are the theater where a series of disturbing facts happen; they represent a boundary beyond which lie madness and violence. An example is the periodical finding of dead dogs brutally killed.

One of the interconnected circumstances that will end on the riverbanks is the village sagra celebrating Amos’s “miraculous fishing” of a giant yellow-fin tuna fish; this event is the pretext for an apparently innocuous occasion that becomes a symbolic ritual. All the inhabitants are gathered in the village’s main square to celebrate and together eat this fish, which is an alien species in the northern Adriatic Sea. This occurrence seems to celebrate the idea of community, but in reality it antedates and symbolizes the immolation of another victim, another alien: the immigrant Hassan. To reinforce the allegory of the sagra celebrating the

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254 Like the restrictive “[…] siepe, che da tanta parte/dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude” of the poem by Giacomo Leopardi L’Infinito (1819).

255 This scene reminds another ‘miraculous fishing’ of classic Italian cinema: the one at the end of Federico Fellini’s La dolce vita (1960). The group of ‘night owls’, after a night of revelry, go to see the dawn on the seashore and they linger observing the fish-monster that the fishermen just caught. This scene makes the audience wonder who is the real monster, this dead fish, or the group of debauched people watching it. Similarly, the giant yellow-fin tuna fish caught by Amos, seen as a monster by the villagers, in reality represents the alien victim of this monstrous community.

256 Hassan is accused and later is condemned for Mara’s killing. The accusation is based on prejudicial presumptions, which influence even his defense attorney. Since Hassan is innocent, he later commits suicide in jail.
“miraculous fishing”, Mazzacurati adds another creepy, yet meaningful occurrence: from the top of the banks, later in the same night, the community observes in dismay the illuminated “ghost ferryboat”—because it is without a pilot—passing by. It slowly floats, transported by the dark river waters, carrying another alien, the old village’s school teacher that was earlier declared insane, and thus ousted by the community. Therefore, the riverbanks clearly symbolize the edge that separates rational common sense from the insanity of the crowd who remains intent on excluding the perceived alien. Furthermore, the audience can recognize the loss of a guide and of moral values in the symbolic valence of the boat without a pilot.257

Another meaningful element of the region’s landscape is represented in this film by the poplar woods.258 The poplar trees find an ideal habitat in humid regions like the riversides, and they are used as raw material for the industrial production and transformation of cellulose into paper. They are rationally planted at the same time in a regular geometric layout for this purpose along the flatlands of the Po River. The result is that the trees are all the same size, and all at the same distance one to the other. Therefore, they do not look like the wild and spontaneous woods.

The young and beautiful substitute schoolteacher Mara lives temporarily in Concordalbero, in an isolated rented house in close proximity to one of these ‘artificial’ forests. The villagers consider her choice daring and unusual for a woman, because she stays there alone. It is from the poplar plantation that Hassan secretly observes the girl in the evenings, even when it rains, and falls in love with her. It is here that the local population will seek her when she

Giovanni, upon Hassan’s sister’s request, will re-examine the case, and posthumously find evidences of the Tunisian’s innocence.

257 People are staggered, because this old teacher has been the community’s schoolteacher for generations. It seems that the loss of this guide leaves them incapacitated.

258 The poplar woods, as opposed to the wild forest. See later in this chapter in La Prima Neve.
suddenly disappears. These trees systematically planted in this territory, visually represent the organized society in which all the members look alike, as opposed from the schoolteacher, who is different and isolated. All the villagers are involved in a systematic search for Mara by traversing these woods; the audience sees the local residents emerging simultaneously from the regular same-size plantation when scouring for her. However, the girl will be found dead in the riverbank. Apparently the assassin, after killing her, tied her up with a heavy stone and sank the body in the watercourse, but after a couple of days the water stream returned the corpse. Once again, the river is a relevant actor in the story.

In the conclusion of the film, after all the dramatic events, the Po is still the protagonist: ‘panta rei’, “everything flows” (and keeps flowing) for the concept in the philosophy of Heraclitus. Mara and Hassan passed; Giovanni is leaving for a new life; only the river stays in the same place, but it will be never the same water.

Water and tradition

In Io sono Li by Andrea Segre the water of Canals, Rivers, Lagoon and Sea has a central role. Water evokes possible encounters with different cultures as it reflects and amplifies the protagonists’ personalities and their emotions. The film begins with an introductory frame presenting the Ancient Poet Qu Yuan, who is celebrated in China by floating candles and lanterns through the rivers “to protect his soul which still lives in these waters”. The first scene of the film shows two Chinese young women in the dark of an apartment bathroom, celebrating Qu Yuan by floating their votive candles in a bathtub full of water. They recite the poet’s verses; in so doing, they reproduce a timid and discreet surrogate form of the traditional ritual that they

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259 This is the introductory frame in Chinese, translated into English subtitles.
can no longer perform on the rivers of China, because they are now in Italy. Suddenly, a roommate man storms in the bathroom, and interrupts the girls’ secret ceremony. Disrespectfully he pees, blows the smoke of his cigarette on the girls’ faces, and makes fun of them: “Are you nuts? We are in Italy now. Why give a shit?” The girls are mortified, but do not say a word in response. The audience is introduced in this brutal way to a world where the Chinese immigrants are ruled by the organizations that bring them to this Western part of the planet. The meaning of this scene is double: first, the millenary traditions of Chinese culture, carried by some immigrants, can still resist even if minimized in the limits of a bathtub; second, for many immigrants their original identity is no longer important.

After this prologue, the story unfolds. One of the two girls is the protagonist Shun Li, a laborer in a Chinese dressmaker’s place near Rome; she routinely works hard to pay for her son’s trip to Italy to join her. Suddenly, she receives notice that the organization decided that in two weeks she will go to Chioggia, a fishermen’s village near Venice she has never heard about, to do a job she has never done: be a barista in an osteria. Li must go, because the organization controls her time, work and commitment. Therefore, on a foggy, rainy day, she rides a minibus going north towards an unknown destination. Her emotions are shrouded as is the landscape. However, her senses seem to suddenly wake up as soon as she sees the Lagoon illuminated by the sun through the wet bus’s window. Only then, she smiles. After a few days, in which she gets to know her new job and faces frustration because of the problematic relations with the local customers, she writes a letter to her son, trying to be positive. She wants to tell him a story, but only the audience can hear her voice, while seeing the depiction of the lagoon from different

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260 In Chinese, from the English subtitles.

261 The audience will learn later that she grew up in Fuzhou, on the sea. Therefore, it is obvious that she is going to feel more comfortable just being near a familiar environment.
angles and aspects. This letter is a poignant reminder of her dislocation from her son. In the backlight, we see the silhouette of a person rowing a small boat in the lagoon, flat as a sheet; the sky and the water have the same glaucous color. Then, a series of calm images of the inlet from different outlooks show the aquatic landscape and the fishermen’s activities and accompany her words: “The Sea here is very beautiful. I don’t know why, but it seems smaller than ours. Maybe because it has two names: one is Sea, the other is Lagoon. Whether [it] is called Sea or Lagoon depends on the distance. In Italian [language] lagoon is female, calm and mysterious; the sea though is male. It never rest[s], always at the mercy of the wind and waves. I like the wind because it brings me to you, my son.” Through Shun Li’s eyes the audience not only visualizes, but also has a perception of the sea and of the lagoon as a physical incarnation of the Chinese philosophical conception of yin and yang. Shun Li recognizes and loves both of them, but poetically she identifies with the immaterial wind that their combination generates. This identification with the natural elements gives the sensation of her empathy with nature.

The film continues with a series of sequences of realism in which the water is at the center; these scenes illustrate the ordinary and old-fashioned daily hard life of the fishermen, as in a documentarist form. However, the fishermen’s epopee has its poetry too: times change, but their lives are always rigidly regulated by the seasons, the weather, the rhythm and the ‘mood’ of the sea. This tough métier totally absorbs their lives, to the point in which, when they

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262 In Chinese, translated into English subtitles.

263 The Sea and the Lagoon seem to incarnate the yin and yang. In Chinese philosophy, the yin and yang describe how seemingly opposite or contrary forces may actually be complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world, and how they may give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

264 Andrea Segre, who actually lived in Chioggia, started his cinematic career as a documentarist. Here, he pays homage to Sicilian Vittorio De Seta’s documentarian tradition, for instance _Lu tempu di li pisci spata_ (1954). See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETSDeV0-XaA
age and retire, like Coppe and Avvocato, they no longer have an idea of how to spend their
days.\textsuperscript{265} The sea dominates the existence of the fishermen. They follow its rules, with the
exception of Davis and his friend, who are smugglers and openly despise the fishermen’s
lifestyle. There is a parallelism: on one side, the Chinese girls in the first scene are respectful of
their traditions, as is the old generation of fishermen; on the other side, the Chinese girls’ co-
workers ignore and disrespect the values of their origins, like the Venetian smugglers do. The
latter group has lost the deep and symbolic meaning of water as source of life, and focuses their
attention exclusively on money.

Water and identity

\textit{Appartenenza} or “identity belonging” is another water-related theme. In a conversation
on things they might have in common, Bepi narrates to Shun Li that he too is an immigrant. He
comes from the former Yugoslavia;\textsuperscript{266} he explains that under Tito’s regime, Yugoslavia was a
communist country, as was China under Mao Tse Tung’s dictatorship. However, there is another
facet related to the name of his native country and Bepi’s Mediterranean \textit{appartenenza}: the name
Yugoslavia, or Jugoslavia, indicates both South (Yugoslavia meaning land of the people of the
South) and the wind Jugo, \textit{Scirocco} in Italian.\textsuperscript{267} Therefore, nature could explain once more the

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{265} There is a conversation between these two fishermen after the party at the osteria to celebrate Coppe, who is
retiring after 35 years of work. “Cossa farisistu doman se no te gavessi gnente da fàr?” asks Coppe (“what would
you do tomorrow if you had nothing to do?”). “Fuochi d’artificio, faville”, responds laconically the Avvocato. Also
Bepi cannot imagine his life, without fishing, in the mainland of Mestre where his son Sandro insistently asks him to
retire in order to live with more comforts.

\textsuperscript{266} Former since 1990.

\textsuperscript{267} Sirocco, scirocco, jogo. (Catalan: Xaloc, Greek: Σορόκος, Spanish: Siroco, Occitan: Siròc,
Eisseròc, Croatian jogo, literally southerly, Libyan Arabic: Ghibli, Egypt: khamsin, Tunisia: ch’hilli) is
a Mediterranean wind that comes from the Sahara and can reach hurricane speeds in North Africa and Southern
Europe, especially during the summer. Jugo is a moist wind, typically accompanied by dark clouds and rain-filled
storms. It blows in from the south, coming over the islands and onto shore. It is said to cause depression, body

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affinity between the two foreign immigrants: Shun Li in her letter to her son says that she loves the wind, because she imagines that it brings her to him; Bepi’s melancholic personality seems to incarnate this wind, and also reveals his Mediterranean belonging. Similarly, Shun Li says that her village in China is near the sea, and that her ancestors were fishermen for generations; therefore, she feels comfortable in Chioggia. Bepi avoids talking about his father, but he says that he feels at home only in his casòn (fish-hut) on the sea, in so declaring his appartenenza to the Adriatic Sea (which is part of the Mediterranean basin).

Furthermore, while they are sitting outside Coppe’s casòn, facing Chioggia’s coastline, in an intense illuminated close up on the profiles of the two elderly fishermen watching the sea, Bepi asks Coppe what his father’s job was. Coppe responds exactly as Li did earlier, “Mio padre era un pescatore, mio nonno era un pescatore, e il nonno di mio nonno […]” Bepi says that he does not know what his father did, because he never met or saw him, not even in a picture: Bepi has no roots and no land. This is why he belongs to the sea, this sea.

One evening, after closing time, Bepi goes to the osteria, and Shun Li shows him some of her pictures from China, her appartenenza: her father with his nets, his boat, and her smiling eight year old son. At this point Bepi realizes that Shun Li is melancholic because she has a son who lives in China with his grandfather. The last picture she shows to him depicts the floating votive lanterns mentioned in the first scene of the film. Shun Li clarifies the meaning of this picture: the candles on the river are for the Poet Qu Yuan’s Festival. Bepi’s nickname is Poeta, Poet, because he likes improvising rhymes; therefore, they find another connection.

aches, pains and grumpiness. In this unique part of the world, jugo is always an acceptable excuse for this melancholic behavior.

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268 “My father was a fisherman, and his father, and the father of his father…”
During that night it rains, and so the day after. It is fall. The next scene shows Shun Li walking towards the osteria, in the rain under a red umbrella and wearing rubber boots, on a fondamenta (the canal walkway, typical in Venice and Chioggia) invaded by the water: it is the worldwide known phenomenon of acqua alta. The audience sees a sequence of the daily life of the Chioggiotti when acqua alta occurs. The sea water quietly invades all, including the osteria space, where the customers sit normally at the tables, with their feet soaking. Bepi arrives at the bar, with a smile and lights up a small votive candle, and floats it on the water that covers the floor in front of the bar counter. Bepi communicates with Shun Li their connection through the water: this simple gesture is a touching encounter between two cultures. But the two communities interpret superficially this unifying gesture of friendship. The day after Bepi and Coppe are positioning the fishing nets in the shallow, grey, and cold water; Coppe expresses his concern for his friend Bepi; he asks him what is happening between him and Li. Bepi tells the truth: they just speak because they are both strangers. When Coppe tries to add something about this relationship, Bepi abruptly interrupts the conversation and moves farther in the pearl grey monochrome waters; the communication is suspended and blocked physically as well, because Bepi starts placing the nets as a fence between himself and Coppe. The water, along with the nets, sets a substantial distance, and speaks for Bepi.

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269 *Acqua alta* (Italian for “high water”) is the term used in Veneto for the exceptional tide peaks that occur periodically in the northern Adriatic Sea. The peaks reach their maximum in the Venetian Lagoon, where they cause partial flooding of Venice and Chioggia. The phenomenon appears mainly between fall and spring, when the astronomical tides are reinforced by the prevailing seasonal winds that hamper the usual reflux. The main winds involved are the sirocco, which blows northbound along the Adriatic Sea, and the bora, which has a specific local effect due to the shape and location of the Venetian lagoon.

270 Segre lingers on another aspect regarding the presence and acceptance of water as a natural phenomenon of Chioggia’s inhabitants.
Purifying water

The following day, early in the morning, Shun Li and her roommate Lian take a ferryboat from Chioggia. It is the first day off from work Li has had since she arrived in Chioggia. It is foggy, but Lian reassures Li that the sun will come out later. Lian stops at the Murazzi of Alberoni, in the island of Lido.271 This short sequence in which Lian descends from the ferryboat is seen from Shun Li’s point of view; the viewer sees her from the back while she is walking past a pier towards the solid barrier of the Murazzi that blocks the water and the view beyond. Neither the character nor the viewer knows that this image foreshadows the words Lian will say to Li in their bedroom towards the end of the film, and represents Lian’s ultimate decision disclosed at the film conclusion.272 Right after, in front of the sea, Lian performs her morning Tai Chi, while in the ferryboat Li continues to the Lido. Later, Shun Li also arrives at the shore: she smiles while entering in the sea water. She whispers in Chinese, watching the blue sea in the breeze: “Dad, a friend asked me how people fish in China, so I showed him your picture. It’s my first free day since I began working here, so I went to the sea. Walking in the water, my skin feels softer, and I feel lighter.”273 Evidently, the sea is performing a purifying and regenerating therapy for both women. At the same time, Bepi is seen relaxing in the sea wind and sun after work in his casòn. For him as well, the sea is the right place to be.

271 The Murazzi (in Venetian, for big walls) are an imposing Istrian Stone dam built by the Republic of Venice to defend the lagoon from the sea’s erosion. They went to replace the previous paladas, piles filled with stones, whose length was very short.

272 Lian said in Chinese: “Have you ever seen what water does? It goes from the sea to the lagoon and comes back. But not all of it returns to the sea. Some of the water can’t go out again and is trapped in the Lagoon”.

273 In Chinese, translated into English in the subtitles.
In the following scene, it is Sunday and while the whole community is at church, Bepi accompanies Shun Li to his apartment to call her father and son. He then brings her in his small boat to fish; when she chants in Chinese, Bepi repeats the sound of her words after her, and they are both serene. After this excursion, from the coast Bepi shows his casòn to Li “Vedi quella? È l’unica casa che ho”\(^{274}\) In an extreme long shot, the audience then can see an example of magnificent cinematography showing the landscape rendered in two equal horizontal portions: below we see the blue sea, and above we see a breathtaking image of the Dolomites covered by the snow; Bepi’s small boat is silhouetted below and off to the right, and to the left is the fisherman’s casòn. This representation of Sea and Mountains shows the harmonic encounter between yin and yang of this region, and the Triveneto’s ambivalent nature: here the mountains and the sea meet and are two components of a whole. Here is the place where the immigrants Shun Li and Bepi can feel at home. Here the aliens feel safe and integrated with the nature.

That evening Li tells Lian about her beautiful day, and Lian warns her: she should be careful, because the organization does not like their employees to fraternize with the natives, who should be considered as customers. Li responds that she will be careful. One evening, after the bar closure, Bepi gives Shun Li a poem he wrote for her: “Tutti i fiumi scorrono verso il mare senza poterlo riempire. C’è un vento freddo, ma scalda il cuore. Fa sorridere Li come un piccolo fiore.”\(^{275}\) They walk together towards Li’s lodging, and they separate. On her way upstairs, in the dark, Li’s boss watches her passing by. Behind him, the audience can see an illuminated aquarium; the fish swimming in it represent the state in which Li is: trapped. In fact, he orders her to stop meeting with Bepi; otherwise, she must restart paying the organization.

\(^{274}\) “See that one? It is my only home.” From the English subtitles.

\(^{275}\) The English subtitles translate: “All rivers to the sea flow but cannot fill it. There is a wind that is cold but it warms the soul. Takes away Li’s gloom and makes her heart bloom.”
Similarly, the next sequence shows Bepi observing from the top of a bridge an excavator that is digging in an empty canal. This is an operation of periodical cleaning maintenance of the canals (which are the main streets in Venice and Chioggia). For a superficial viewer, this sequence can be perceived as a documentarist description of Chioggia’s routine life; however, from the perspective of the water, this temporarily dry canal symbolizes the forthcoming inevitable interruption of the friendship between Bepi and Li.

The night of the celebration of the Poet Qu Yuan, Shun Li floats her votive lanterns without Bepi. She recites in Chinese: “Can a square make a circle? Can different roads come together? Acute is the remorse for the last way in the faltering steps of my return. Reluctant, my cart turns back. Muddled among the errors was the way.” 276 Li’s choice of verses referring to muddled roads that impede her way is eloquent and insightful.

In the meantime, Bepi is involved in a fight with Denis. 277 Consequently, both friends are hindered by their respective communities – the Chinese and local. That evening Lian says to the disconsolate Li: “Have you ever seen what water does? It goes from the sea to the lagoon and comes back. But not all of it returns to the sea. Some of the water can’t go out again and is trapped in the Lagoon”. These words conjure up the earlier image of Lian walking towards the Murazzi.

The day after, Shun Li is transported back to Rome, to the same place where she was working before going to Chioggia. Time passes. One day, unexpectedly, Li’s son arrives. Shun Li is told that someone paid in advance for her debt. She is convinced that it was Bepi (and the

276 From the subtitles in English.

277 Denis insinuated that Li aimed to marry Bepi to steal his possessions, and offended her. Bepi reacted, and Li is immediately sent back to Rome.
audience, too). Therefore, she decides to go back to Chioggia to thank him. Once there, she discovers that it was Lian, before disappearing. Finally, the sequence of Lian in front of the Murazzi’s barrier and her words regarding the sea water make sense: indeed some water is trapped, but some goes back to the big sea.

Li learns from Coppe that Bepi is dead. He left a letter for her in which he asks for a funeral like the one of the Poet Qu Yuan. Then, with the help of Coppe, she burns Bepi’s casòn. Not only does she show to the communities that she never aimed to acquire Bepi’s possessions, but also she gives him a symbolic funeral in the only place he considered home. The circle closes: the Chinese immigrant that at the beginning of the film could not perform her traditional ritual celebrating her Poet, does it now with Bepi, the local Poet.

The Triveneto’s Atlas: the mountains

The mountains are an imposing presence in the Triveneto’s territory. The chain of the Alps of the Nordest is geographically divided into Alpi Retiche, Carniche and Giulie. The mountainous region is the less inhabited, less urbanized and developed, and therefore the most preserved natural environment of this territory. Human life in the mountains has always been hard, for the impervious characteristics of the area and its inclement weather. As mentioned previously, during World War I, the Eastern Alps were borders and battlefields; during World War II, they became the theater of Resistenza Partigiana against the Fascist Regine and Nazi Occupation. The mountains were widely affected by those events: during the first conflict, by massive deforestations, extensive construction of trenches and devastating bombardments;

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278 In fact, the organization does not accept money from locals.
during the second, by fires, bombs and destruction of villages.\textsuperscript{279} Right after the conflict, these mountains became gradually depopulated: massive migration flows characterized this territory, considered inhospitable for agriculture and manufacturing.\textsuperscript{280} The tourism industry gradually modified this situation in the last fifty years, but not everywhere. Indeed, tourism developed in locations such as Asiago and Cortina, which are renowned for winter sports and summer trekking and hiking. But overall, the mountains are still underdeveloped in terms of infrastructures. The communities are generally small, or very small; their populations vary according to the season. Recent analysis shows that these small communities seem to be the most apt for developing a natural coexistence between locals and immigrants. The majority of documented cases of hospitality and acceptance for this type of integration are indeed found especially in alpine villages, specifically in the province of Belluno (Veneto), in Trentino-Alto Adige, and in Friuli-Venezia Giulia: the \textit{Nordest}.\textsuperscript{281}

The mountains take different valences in the presented films, depending on the point of view. For instance, seen from afar, they symbolize an impassable barrier in \textit{Occidente}. Conversely, portrayed in the landscape as a complement of the sea, they represent the \textit{Nordest}'s double tension of openness and closure that characterizes the region in \textit{Io sono Li}.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{280} Emilio Franzina, \textit{Una patria espatriata. Lealtà nazionale e caratteri regionali nell’immigrazione italiana all’estero (secoli XIX e XX)}, [Kindle Edition]. On the role and development of the Comunità Montane, see for instance: http://www.giancarlobortoli.it/pdf/articoli/LE%20COMUNITA’%20MONTANE%20E%20I%207%20CO MUNI.pdf
\item \textsuperscript{281} http://www.panorama.it/news/cronaca/immigrazione-integrazione-funziona/
http://www.gruppoeuropa.net/it/news/progetto-pilota-a-belluno-per-integrazione-migranti/
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The second film by Andrea Segre, *La prima neve*, is set entirely on the mountains of the Trentino, specifically in Pergine and in the Môcheni Valley. These highlands are a dominant and constant presence, as a supporting actor, or better a main character, a protagonist. In *Io sono Li* the dialogues in the film are set half in Chinese and half in Venetian dialect to emphasize the cultural tension; in *La prima neve* the dialogues happen between nature and people.

Indeed, the story unfolds with the majestic cinematography of the natural views of the Trentino Alps sometimes alternating, at other times introducing, and then intertwining with the actual scenes populated by the human protagonists. Essentially, it seems that the mountains speak with and for the actors. Furthermore, they indicate the alternation of the seasons, the elapsing time of the day, and the days passing. Therefore, time is literally depicted through the mountains’ landscape and colors. In the last scene of the film, the rapprochement between Michele the local and Dani the immigrant takes place on top of the mountains, in the woods, in the first snow of the season. Michele shows Dani where his father died. Then they contemplate the wide view of the mountains. Michele observes “*Hai visto che bello qui? […] Un giorno ci portiamo Fatou?*” And Dani, who intended to leave without his daughter, nods. Thus the conclusion gives the hope that Michele finally accepts his father’s loss, and Dani accepts his role as a father.

Andrea Segre, in his Director’s notes, discloses the role of the nature, and specifically of the mountains and the forest:

“*La luce entra nel bosco insieme alle ombre. Si alternano, si incrociano, giocano come vuoti e pieni, come spazi di vita tra silenzio e rumore. Gli alberi sembrano voler scappare dal bosco.*”

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282 The director of photography is Luca Bigazzi.

283 “Have you seen how beautiful it is here? Are we going to bring here also Fatou one day?”
Ma non possono. Crescono a cercare la luce, si allungano per superare gli altri, ma rimangono tutti ancorati lì, uno affianco all’altro, in file regolari che segnano le prospettive. È il bosco il luogo centrale dell’incontro tra Dani e Michele; è in quello spazio che i due si seguono, si cercano, si respingono, si conoscono. È uno spazio in cui la natura diventa teatro. Dove la realtà diventa luogo dell’anima e ospita significati e metafore che la trascendono. Pronta a diventare sogno.”

In these words, there is the ultimate essence of this film, but also of the present analysis. The metaphor of the woods and the mountains finds a poignant resonance with mankind. This is the space where the integration is possible. This is the space where acceptance, inclusion and assimilation are plausible. This space is the counterpoint of the desperate deterritorialization found and described in the areas of the Triveneto as described in Occidente, and Piccola Patria. This is the other side of the sordid and distressed caricature of certain people found in Riparo and Cose dell’ altro mondo. This is the space of hope glimpsed by Mazzacurati in the lagoon of La lingua del Santo, and the river of La giusta distanza.

Openness and closure distinguish the geographical and geological conformation of the Triveneto region, in a never-ending tension. The sea could be open or close; the lagoon could protect or trap; the mountains as well could welcome or reject. Migration fluxes are a reality, and like the tides of the sea cannot be stopped, because they are part of this double tension. Similarly, the forests indicate that there is space for all, and we all tend —having the same right— towards the common light, source of life. All the films capture the current alienation that occurs with

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“The light enters in the forest along with the shadows. They alternate, they intersect, they play with solid and empty [spaces], as spaces of life between silence and noise. The trees seem to intend to flee from the forest. But they cannot. They grow up [towards the sky], competing for the light, they stretch downside up to surpass each other, but they all remain stuck there, one on the side of the other, in regular rows that mark the perspectives. The wood is the central space of the encounter between Dani and Michele; it is in that space that they follow, look to repel each other, and [learn how] to know each other. It is a space where nature becomes the theater. Here the reality becomes the place of the soul and gives hospitality to meanings and metaphors which transcend it. The reality is ready to become a dream.”
migration and globalization using the *Triveneto* as a paradigm. They suggest that when both locals and migrants lose their tradition, language and identity integration and inclusion is not possible. Only when the connection with tradition and nature is maintained, but not rigidly used as a barrier, can a space be created for co-existence. When the sense of place is remembered and engaged with, both the locals and the immigrants can experience moments of transformation and mutual recognition. None of these films offer resolution, only possibilities and cautionary tales against greed, prejudice, and denaturalization of both landscape and people. Bleakness is contrasted with beauty as characters attempt to arrive at a place they can together call a home.
CONCLUSION

Many readers will find notes of distress and angst in the burgeoning number of headlines, debates, and political rallies that surround the question of immigration in Europe. While modern-day headlines pinpoint the issues surrounding immigration – tragedies of dangerous crossings from war-torn and economically devastated countries in the Global South into Italy, politicians promising reform, questions of lawfulness, intellectual discussions deconstructing the rhetoric of fear and xenophobia, economic concerns, nationalism, and political debates which continue to polarize opinions – it would be naïve to consider this topic a novelty. Inevitably, in many moments of history and in varied regions of the world, the dichotomy of self/other has shaped the world as we know it, and brought with it unavoidable clashes and sometimes more well-reasoned opportunities for discovery.

With many cultures residing on its shores, the Mediterranean has geographically enabled cultural migrations, crossings, and mixing since Ancient times. The modern-day Nordest region of Italy is in particular an excellent example and microcosm of the realities of immigration today. We see the drama plays out at a cultural level: whether thru societal relationships, perceptions and misperceptions, or language and communication, as the present study of cinema from this region has shown. We see it play out linguistically as the use of dialects in films has perhaps as many facets of self-expression, tradition, poeticism, and symbolism as it does in real life. Dialect is the code by which one gains inclusion or is judged, and thus has a lot to do with how we see various characters in the films. Similarly, gestures and proxemics can indicate in a film whether
someone “belongs” to the culture or does not. Surely, such encounters between immigrant and native cause distress; yet they can also create opportunities for meaningful relationships. In contemporary films set in the Triveneto we find that there are further serious crises and stressors that run parallel to issues of immigration: economic problems, unemployment, overdevelopment and environmental destruction. How the representation of these problems is interwoven into the representation of immigration in contemporary films set in the Nordest demonstrates the multiples stressors on the region – and by extension, in Europe. Where many point to immigration as the root of problems, this is too facile a response.

Humanity is wrapped up in the question of identity, and oftentimes a people or nation will define itself against the identities of others. The question then becomes: How do we adapt to one another in the pressure cooker of a globalizing world? In focusing on the cinematic representation of immigrants in the Nordest region of Italy, this study reveals that the nuances of globalization (or Americanization) itself take on particular forms depending on the culture of a territory; regardless, the effects are seen in its squares, its businesses, its landscape – while the peoples’ relation to language, nature, and community also shift exponentially. Perhaps the powerlessness to identify those responsible, the inability to point the finger at the invisible taskmaster of globalization or of a widespread economic crisis results in general frustration (as there is little satisfaction that can be taken when no one will take responsibility). Inevitably, the negative effects of globalization have led many to seek a scapegoat for the growing inequalities it has perpetuated. Unfortunately, the presence of immigrants and migrants in one’s town is an obvious change that people can easily identify – “those” people do not look or sound or live like “us.” Yet the recent arrival of waves upon waves of immigrants in Italy coincides with socio-historical issues that preexisted their entry: The Triveneto region in particular has seen many
influential political and social upheavals, as we have discussed, and with it a decline in public services and funds, a rise in crime, a disconnection from nature due to overdevelopment, and disorganized city planning.

Does the visibility of the migrants justify silencing or blaming them for present-day discontents? Cities and towns are changing face due to many forces in today’s world – economic crises, industrialization, and globalization. The negative outcomes of globalization are felt everywhere: Environmental degradation, social inequality, loss of local identity and tradition, progressive limitation of national sovereignty, and a severe decline of the local economy.²⁸⁵ It is easy for racists or political parties such as La Lega Nord to blame immigrants for the problem. As can be seen in this study’s review of the past fifty years and their effects on the Triveneto area, the problems commonly attributed to the results of immigration are in fact brought on by other forces. If the 1960s brought about the boom economico,²⁸⁶ this boost in economic growth would advance global capitalism (and one could argue that the result of this miracolo economico was immigration)²⁸⁷. Indeed, when workers in Europe were scarce, Europe recruited workers from former colonies. Europe had to face the result of their policies when they realized that these workers had brought their families in the hopes of settling in Europe – they had no intention of returning to where they had come from even when migrant work ran out – and thus transient labor became the settlement of non-white, non-Christian, non-European peoples in Europe. At


²⁸⁷ Globalization started right after World War II, when the Allies gradually started the political and economic colonization of Italy. Immigration is a direct consequence of globalization: people from areas experiencing economic or political issues, or natural disasters, move to places where normal life and jobs are available.
first, the notion of globalization, or of a *global village*, seemed so optimistic. However, multinational organizations, enterprises, and banks took advantage of the opening frontiers to gain access to the world’s economy, and their greed played a role in the economic crisis that came to a head in 2008. Add to this situation the large influx of immigrants – and it is easy to think the newcomers to be the wolves.

Might conscious viewership of these films teach us about questions of immigration? Visualizing the stories of the lives of culturally diverse characters such as Bilal, Malvina, Shun Li, Hassan, Nadim, Anis, and Dani allows for a greater outlook – a bird’s-eye view if you will – on the inclusions/exclusion of migrants. The films in this study astutely weave immigrant characters into the storyline. They are one thread of the many. They do not isolate the immigrant in society as the problem, as that would be an unrealistic perspective of reality. Instead, the films realistically show the immigrant living – and struggling – amongst these problems along with the native. The films effectively contextualize other factors – such as overdevelopment, ignorance, or the closing of factories – that contribute to a real *malaise* in society. One of the most disconcerting preexisting issues raised in the films is the disconnection between people and land, as seen especially in *Occidente* and *Piccola Patria*. For centuries, natives of the *Nordest* lived off a true connection to the rural surroundings, as the fertile land, clean waters, and fair climate offered beauty, harmony, and food. The metaphorical language of nature in *La prima neve*, *Io sono Li*, and *La giusta distanza* demonstrates perfectly how nature can help heal the scars brought on by manmade problems. Without this connection, we have the desolation of an overbuilt territory where the individual’s notion of an escape is distorted and perverted by commercialism itself, as we saw in *Occidente* when the character’s dream lacks inspiration and prefers an amusement park as a moment of rest. With this connection to the land, both immigrant
(Dani) and native (Pietro) can share the wisdom it teaches and build a bridge towards meaningful cohabitation. *La prima neve* demonstrates how sharing nature and life narratives can bring people like Dani and Pietro together, and proposes that the integration of the immigrant is a solution to the ills of a disconnected society.

The films under analysis give the impression that the context of the meeting of the self and other may have as much influence on the outcome of the meeting of cultural others as do the personalities of the characters in the films. There will always be those who are able to lend receptivity to the other, and there will always be reasons, whether legitimate or not, to reject the other. There will always be opportunities to make assumptions and use stereotypes to incite unjust violence, as we see with the racism of Menon and Franco and the murder of the innocent Bilal. There will always be problems of intercommunication between natives and incomers – yet we also see poetic friendships evolve between Dani and Michele and between Shun Li and Bepi; and there will always be sacrifices made as people cross dangerous seas and borders as we see with the death of Layla, who died attempting to bring her newborn daughter to a safer place.

The films aptly point to attitudes that both exacerbate the issue of immigration and cause a more fragmented sense of identity (whether for the nation, the natives, or the immigrant). From deterritorialization to individual attitudes, fears become stereotypes and resentments; next, the so-called problem of the foreign immigrant is a scapegoat for a host of sociological, historical, economic, and political issues. Yet the films also clearly demonstrate attitudes and situations that assuage the tension and foster instead the notion of connection. Perhaps integration is more possible and in occurrence than politicians may lead citizens to believe. Movies allow the viewer to consider other scenarios and factors to re-imagine one’s own response, especially when films
like *Occidente*, *La prima neve*, and *Piccola Patria* end abruptly in an open-ending and leave the viewer to imagine the outcome. Engaged spectators may extrapolate on the consequences of characters’ attitudes – or they may insert their own strategic thinking of how a problem posed in the film can resolve itself. Most importantly, in every film we have analyzed, we find that human emotions and actual lives are at the root of the characters; and the message is that it is humanity that is in crisis and at stake.

To portray their changing society, directors like Segre, Mazzacurati, and Rossetto bring to the table representations of immigrant characters and their experiences of being rejected, blamed, killed, judged, befriended, encouraged, or misunderstood in the towns of the *Nordest*. The directors seem to command the art form of film to turn the camera upon the audience. They thus reinvest citizens and individuals with the power to determine the outcome. The directors aptly replay the inhospitality, the intolerance, and the victimization experienced by the immigrants. Across these films, there is a broad range of reactions to the foreigners: And the choice in attitudes, resourcefulness, or relations can either be positive or negative. We see in *Piccola patria* and *La giusta distanza* that ignorance and racism lead to violence against immigrants. General audiences would concur that violence is not a human value – and in this way, the film exposes the ugliness behind attitudes – and ensuing acts – of ignorance and racism. The realism of this problematic in the *Triveneto* region is palpable thanks to the cinematography of the landscape, which directors will either showcase as beautiful when left untouched or as desolate when ravaged by industrialization. Then, there is the palpability of the sleazy depictions of various characters – neither native nor immigrant is exempt. There is the hypocrisy and erosion of moral values and marital relationships in *Cose dell’altro mondo*, *La Lingua del Santo*,

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Riparo, and *Io sono li*. No one is without fault, yet everyone is constricted to this area to pass by one another – and to live together.

The films pointedly open the lens upon the representation of others living among the natives. By extension, we see that the question of integration versus anger and fear of immigrants is a question of representation itself. In the case of the immigrant who is wrongly accused of murder, in the case of the loneliness of the migrant worker, there is empathy. In the case of anger against unemployment, there are immigrants and natives who struggle. In the case of interpersonal relationships gone awry by a disconnection to language, land, or tradition, there are lessons to glean. In the melting pot of the *Triveneto*, begrudging the immigrant who passes through or resettles there does little to remedy the preexisting societal ills. It is in how one chooses to represent the other that will lead either to violence or a healthy bridge to communicate and integrate. These films reveal a necessary call to re-examine the current-day, age-old problematic of the dichotomy of self/other. Above all, they show that material interests are interwoven with divisive rhetoric, and suggest that the ideologies of discrimination are deeply and historically rooted in economic interests. The films mirror current reality and offer no answers, but leave the drama open-ended, just as current reality does. Both art and the world are facing us, the viewers, to ask which views we will adopt.
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