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**European Cinema after the Wall**

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Chapter Three

**Vesna Run Faster!**

*East European Actresses and  
Contemporary Italian Cinema*

Massimo Locatelli and Francesco Pitassio

*Un dì, felice, eterea,  
Mi balenaste innante,  
E da quel dì tremante  
Vissi d'ignoto amor.*

One happy day  
You flashed lightly into my life;  
And since then I've lived  
In tremulous possession.

—Giuseppe Verdi, *La Traviata*, Act 1, *Un dì, felice, eterea*

Can the mere image of an unknown, ephemeral love stand for a wide-ranging, epochal change in the history of a nation? The aim of this chapter is to relate contemporary migration to the politics of their representation in Italian films and television.<sup>1</sup> One particular figure, the young East European female beauty, will offer us a clue. Italy has been a country of emigration for a long time, with deep ties to diaspora communities largely influencing the development of the national imagination, and a few clumsy attempts to create colonial prestige back in the pre-Fascist and Fascist decades. By 1980 the number of non-Italian residents in Italy scarcely reached two hundred thousand, compared to an overall population of more than sixty million.

During the 1980s, Italy began to face up to the immigration question. The first census of non-Italian residents was held in 1981, the first decree regularizing illegal migrants in 1984, and the first laws ensuring labor rights for

non-Italian residents in 1986. The fall of the Berlin Wall caused a widely shared trauma to which Italy responded with a policy limiting immigration, known as the Martelli law in 1990, revised in 1998 as the Turco-Napolitano law, and again revised in 2002 as the Bossi-Fini law, the current legislation. Nonetheless, at the beginning of the new century the number of regular non-Italian residents reached 1.4 million, which has now increased to 4.5 million or roughly 7.5 percent of the population. Within this percentage, a good half have Eastern European origins.

It is important to stress that public debates in Italy, due to this nonhomogeneous history, have referred to migratory phenomena in different terms depending on geographical and geopolitical characteristics. On the one hand, the older immigration flows from Arab-Mediterranean and Andean countries could be interpreted in classical postcolonial terms as sites of labor exploitation and/or of cultural clashes; on the other hand, Italian commentators could never clearly define the sudden influx of Eastern Europeans in terms of power relations, since their countries shared with Italy, from the end of the nineteenth century onward, a history of migration to North and South America and subsequently a reversed positioning within Cold War politics and semiotics.<sup>2</sup> Even more ambivalent is the attitude toward the Albanian, Romanian, and Romani populations.

The relationship of Italy to its inhabitants of East European origin can thus only partly be described as postcolonial, at least not within the frame of reference as defined by Edward Said and as applied by scholars such as Dina Jordanova to post-1989 Europe.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, film and television narratives refer to a stereotyping and “orientalizing” economy that can be traced back to Eastern Europe, as observed by various scholars in the case of East Germany. Paul Cooke points to power dynamics similar to what Said identifies in the construction of the East as the “weak partner” of the West, particularly in how “gender-inflected terms permeated discourses surrounding the events of unification.”<sup>4</sup> Ingrid Sharp suggests: “The [German] union had strong fairy tale elements; [. . .] Cinderella rescued from servitude and exploitation by the handsome Prince.”<sup>5</sup> Femininity and gender roles thus became metaphors of historical change that could be traced also in Italian public debates on foreign policy and immigration policy.<sup>6</sup> As the politics of representation expresses the need to assign meaning to groups, their social practices, and events, and to social and ecological conditions such as migration,<sup>7</sup> it is useful to reconsider mainstream film and television productions as a basic part of political discourse. In the following sections, we will investigate a widespread commonplace of contemporary Italian film and television fiction: the young East European female beauty, a gendered metaphor that is likely to embody the ambivalent attitude of Italian public opinion toward European migrants—as narrative figure, acting persona, and performer.

## POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION

To start with, we need to sketch two recurring narrative structures in Italian cinema and television fiction. The first one refers to an old cultural commonplace that is still very effective: the *casta meretrix* / holy whore archetype, which in popular culture has widely and for a long time been represented as a romantic prostitute, a fallen woman, who needs to be rescued and loved. Isabel Santaolalla notes that in Italian cinema “the East European woman [. . .] is conventionally identified with marginality, sexual trafficking and prostitution: a number of Italian films also highlight the limited options available to the underprivileged East European female immigrant. This is the case, for instance, in Armando Manni’s *Elvis e Merilijn/Elvis and Marilyn* (Italy, 1998), Carlo Mazzacurati’s *Vesna va veloce/Vesna Runs Fast* (Italy/France, 1996), Francesco Munzi’s *Saimir* (Italy, 2005) and Marco Tullio Giordana’s *Quando sei nato non puoi più nasconderti/Once You’re Born You Can No Longer Hide* (Italy/France/UK, 2005).”<sup>8</sup>

Trivializing the social challenges posed by growing immigration rates from Eastern European countries, Italian national cinema insisted, from the early 1990s at least starting with Carlo Mazzacurati’s *Un'altra vita/Another Life* (Italy, 1992), on a ready-made narrative formula clearly indebted to operatic structures: A beautiful girl in search of a better destiny is led to poverty and/or prostitution and forced to sacrifice her morals, but meets an Italian middle-class fellow who takes pity on her, redeems her, and subsequently persuades her to fight for her freedom. It is definitely a male idealiza-



Figure 3.1. *Inspector Montalbano*, “The Wings of the Sphinx” episode (2008)

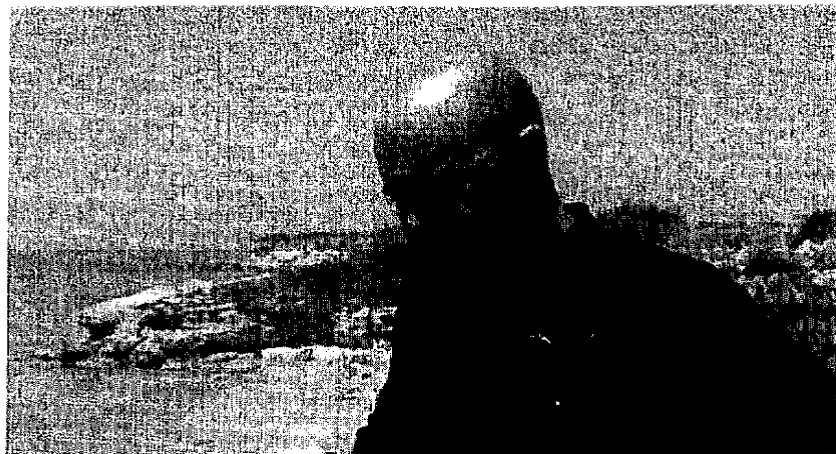


Figure 3.2. *Inspector Montalbano*, “The Wings of the Sphinx” episode (2008)

tion that has been repeated since in many television productions, if not as a love story, then at least with ambiguous paternalistic traits, as in the most successful Italian crime series of the last decade, *Il commissario Montalbano/Inspector Montalbano*, written by Andrea Camilleri. In the episode “*Le ali della sfinge*”/“The Wings of the Sphinx” (seventh season, Alberto Sironi, Italy, 2008), Inspector Montalbano deals with the homicide of a young Russian prostitute and needs to save another Russian girl. The discovery of the corpse at the beginning of the episode shows that the narrative impulse is given by the classical commonplace of paternal piety, but the point-of-view shot reveals an equally evident gendered, voyeuristic gaze.

Femininity is first exposed as disposable (the nude corpse) and later defined as fragile (the second prostitute), needing to be rescued by the male hero, Inspector Montalbano. The relationship with the threatened witness is secured in a stable, objective, and institutional frame, a location where a good-hearted priest provides the girl with a refuge and the policeman can show how serious he is. “You will see, this man will get them,” comments the priest. The final reestablishing shot in this sequence literally grants stability, both in regard to the narrative—the girl will be free with the help of her chaperones—and to the moral concern—Montalbano was just doing his duty, his masculinity reinforced with no suggestion of ambiguity.

During the 1990s, and notably in the new century, a different narrative structure has gradually emerged in Italian cinema and television: Italian male protagonists can no longer establish a balanced relationship with the Eastern European women to whom they are attracted. The latter is not depicted in

financial straits, and consequently does not depend on her body to survive. The physiognomy and proxemics of the “holy whore” stereotype—a cold tone of voice, a laconic and detached attitude, a strong individualistic sense of independence, provocative poses and clothes—are now linked with new narrative agency and cognitive superiority. These new characters display male-gendered action skills, like martial arts or riding motorcycles; what is more, the heroines overcome the role limits and solve the mission of their partner, clearing up a crime in a detective story, or the riddles of interpersonal relationships in other genres.

*L'ispettore Coliandro/Inspector Coliandro*, a series based on a comic figure written by Carlo Lucarelli, shows this change in the episode “*Anomalia 21*”/“Anomaly 21” (fourth season, Antonio and Marco Manetti, Italy, 2010) through a slapstick scene. Coliandro and Jelena, whom he knows since the first season of the series, are trapped by Neapolitan gangsters searching for the girl, but the two wait in ambush and counterattack. Inspector Coliandro is easily defeated in a rough and nonetheless ludicrous fight and Jelena is shown to be more virile, skilled in martial arts, and athletically trained, as her biker look repeatedly confirms during the episode. The roles are reversed, as she finally rides him out of trouble on the back of her motorcycle. The only thing left to do is to hug her tight. . . .

In his recent *Hai paura del buio/Afraid of the Dark* (Italy, 2010), director Massimo Coppola describes this change as a generational shift: young Romanian girl Eva comes to Italy to search for her mother, and finds her tied to a



Figure 3.3. *Inspector Coliandro*, “Anomaly 21” episode (2009)



Figure 3.4. *Inspector Coliandro*, “Anomaly 21” episode (2009)

common criminal who forces her to sell her body. Eva will turn out to be stronger than her mother.

This second, less stereotypical model of the feminine Eastern European character offers a way to elaborate different gender relations in Italian national cinema and television fiction. Still, one might wonder whether the displacement of any kind of feminine agency to non-Italian protagonists should be read as a sign of the establishment of modern gender relations, or rather as its delay, another sign of resistance. As a matter of fact, Jelena and Eva are not represented as transmigrant subjects, as anthropologists like Schiller, Basch, and Blanc define them;<sup>9</sup> the girls have no ties to any kind of community, neither in Italy nor in their countries of origin. We do not see them at home at all: Mazzacurati’s Vesna, at the beginning of the 1990s, occasionally writes letters to a pen pal; Lucarelli’s Jelena phones home from time to time; Camilleri’s Russian girls are in hiding, but without any connection with the outer world; and, in the opening sequence of Coppola’s *Afraid of the Dark*, when Eva decides to sell the old Cold War-era furniture of her mother and leave, we see their home as an alienating space to be abandoned. Eastern Europe remains a blind spot.

The actual migrant experience is obliterated and substituted with stereotypes where any national or ethnic, cultural or professional, gender or generational identity is reduced to a simple female character. This could be interpreted, as most Italian critics have, as a pop cultural means to come to terms with social and historical traumas. However, it may well be that it only shows the symbolic inability of the Italian national culture to reflect on

contemporary social processes and foresee possible future outcomes. The effect on the wider national audience is to neutralize the actual reality of migration, presenting it once again in the form of a dream of love and redemption.

Etienne Balibar describes contemporary immigration politics as forms of apartheid: the immigrant worker is considered to be just a more or less integrated nonnational—an alien, he states.<sup>10</sup> A recent film by graphic novel author Gipi (Gian Alfonso Pacinotti), *L'ultimo terrestre/The Last Man on Earth* (Italy, 2011), sets its science-fiction plot, an alien invasion, in the contemporary northeastern Venetian region, commonly believed to be an important site of political and cultural encounters with Eastern Europe because this rich, industrial region is located on the border between Italy and the East (Slovenia) and consequently gives hospitality to a large immigrant community from those countries. The metaphor is clear: the alien encounters stand here for the invasion of Eastern European caregivers working in many Venetian families (more than sixty thousand domestic workers, mainly from Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine, are employed in this region; almost 80 percent of them are women). But, again, also in *The Last Man on Earth* we are confronted with a gendered representation. The father of the male protagonist, Luca, an old farmer living alone and grieving over his wife’s death, discovers an alien left alone and exhausted in his fields, and hides it at home. The alien recovers, surprisingly shows itself to be tender and affectionate, and begins to take care of the derelict household, revealing, in spite of its sexless appearance, feminine and quite maternal traits, literally taking the place of the departed wife in the farmer’s bed and kitchen. The dreamlike, melodramatic metaphor of a solicitous, disposable, easily seduced unknown girl reaches here its climax, finally and completely cancelling the presence of transnational migrants under the reassuring representation of a nonnational she-alien.

Things are changing rapidly. The immigration increase has recently posed new questions concerning the citizenship of second-generation non-Italian residents: at present, the number of non-Italian residents under eighteen years of age has reached one million, half a million of them born in Italy. But even if left-wing parties are campaigning to accord them the right to Italian citizenship, after their eighteenth birthday they are left alone and without rights. The perpetual political indecisiveness notwithstanding, film, television, and most of all advertising have begun casting regularly non-Italian professionals and—more recently—so-called new Italians. Perhaps soon, the professional skills and qualities of a new wave of first- and second-generation Italians with Eastern European origins will have to sustain the old, shaky Italian cinema and television industry, as a mass of Ukrainian and Moldovan caregivers already do for millions of retired Italian filmgoers.

### AMBIGUOUS PRESENCES, UNCERTAIN ATTITUDES

The recent harsh debate on migration in Italian politics reveals the contradictory attitude toward the Eastern European presence in Italy as seen through the plot changes in current fiction films and television series. The last government of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (2008–2011) strongly countered the illegal landings on southern Italy's coasts, as boats loaded with migrants coming mostly from Africa and the Middle East attempted to enter the country. And yet sources in the Ministry of the Interior proved that most of the illegal immigrants were coming in over Italy's northeastern borders. Nevertheless, on a symbolic level, the dramatization of Mediterranean immigration was instrumental to a discourse rooted in cultural, religious, and gender fears. The arrival of migrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa and from the Middle East has been gendered in overall media discourse, as noted by Giovanna Campani:

Until 1990 the migrant is portrayed as a nomadic character, traveling around the country: it is not clear whether he (or she, but it is usually a he) will stay in Italy or not. [ . . . ] The migrant has a black face, is male, and comes from Africa. The image changes in 1991. The migrant is no longer solely African but also originates from a large, ill-defined territory to the East—East Europe or the Balkans. The migrant is an Albanian or a Slav, sometimes even a Slavonic Albanian (*sic!*).<sup>11</sup>

Media often associate the East European migration with crime;<sup>12</sup> usually such association is centered on male criminals. However, fictional audiovisual narratives mostly concentrate on female characters. In our opinion, this choice answers to three needs. First of all, it solves the problematic issue of national ethnic origin, by privileging an association with European “white” migration, instead of Mediterranean migration, to secure an easier audience identification. Second, by choosing characters coming from regions perceived as similar, instead of figures with different religious and cultural backgrounds, potential culture gaps are avoided, and shared values are thus enhanced. In Italy, recent political discussions concerning the inclusion within the European Constitution of common Christian values resonate with the issue. Third, it enables male characters to desire foreign Others, avoiding the risks of miscegenation. Throughout the twentieth century, Italian culture tried to establish a racial and ethnic purity, through clumsy and yet infamous theories, mostly during the African and Albanian colonization period (1911/1912–1943), and at the time of the racial laws. To create “pure” somatic examples, racial discourse on the one hand rejected Mediterranean features that were later perceived as those mostly characterizing Italian beauty; on the other hand, it turned to Germanic or Slavonic traits to typify national bodies.<sup>13</sup> It is then no surprise that sentimental relationships with North African

or sub-Saharan migrants are almost completely absent in Italian cinema.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, East European female migrants figure as what Katarzyna Marciniak aptly termed “palatable foreignness.”<sup>15</sup> Deprived of its masculine counterpart, the East European migration is thus reduced to its feminine component, depicted through those victimizing narratives mentioned earlier. Still, narratives trace a marginal space for this presence: their Italian masculine counterparts are social dropouts, as in *Vesna Runs Fast* or in the recent *Scialla! Don't Bother!* (Francesco Bruni, 2011); sociopaths, as in *Tartarughe sul dorso/Turtles on Their Back* (Stefano Pasetto, 2004) or *La doppia ora/The Double Hour* (Giuseppe Capotondi, 2009); or middle-class men driven to perdition, as in *Another Life or Ecco fatto/That's It!* (Gabriele Muccino, 1998). This social danger is eventually transmitted to narratives where Eastern European actresses embody Italian characters, as is the case of *Anche libero va bene/Along the Ridge* (Kim Rossi Stuart, 2006), where the Slovak Barbora Bobulová plays the role of an unfaithful wife. As a matter of fact, the character of Stefania she embodies is ethnically defined as Italian. Nevertheless, she is distinct from her husband Renato, as he (Kim Rossi Stuart) is defined as explicitly Italian and Roman, and strongly connected to family values, whereas Stefania is deprived of any accent, somehow foreign to a national audience, as she is to her children, and unfit to belong to a domestic existence.

Eastern European actresses within Italian post-1989 cinema realize such “palatable foreignness” through two main paths. On the one hand, as alluring feminine ideals, as is the case of the Polish top model and actress Kasia



Figure 3.5. *Along the Ridge: Unfaithful wives*

Smutniak. Her casting as a local medieval heroine in a movie strongly supported by the Lega Nord party—*Barbarossa/Barbarossa: Siege Lord* (Renzo Martinelli, 2009) in which she represents a somatic ideal of the Northern Italian population—is not surprising. In some massively distributed advertisements she already embodied a refined young woman, belonging to national and social experience, and ready to fall into the arms of a lucky Italian passerby. Such a dull plotline is repeated in a film like *Caos calmo/Quiet Chaos* (Antonello Grimaldi, 2009). In this production a middle-aged wealthy manager, embodied by the well-known director Nanni Moretti, falls into a depression after the loss of his wife, and spends his days sitting on a park bench, struggling to find some meaning in his mourning. His personal and moral quest ends as he finally finds peace at the end of the story: in the middle of the now snow-covered park he has been sitting in for weeks, he meets a beautiful young girl (Kasia Smutniak), whom he had barely looked at before. Her enchanting charm is an epiphany: the promise of a new start.

On the other hand, East European performers perpetuate a cultural stereotype established in critical discourse concerning the cinema of former popular democracies. During earlier decades, critics assigned a set of aesthetic features to films produced in East Europe: something well built, dramatic, socially conscious, and, at the same time, erotic.<sup>16</sup>

From this standpoint, East European actresses are frequently built up through critical discourse as competent performers, trained in theater academies, averse to media exposure, and eager to experiment with complex roles in *auteur* cinema. These accomplishments are finally acknowledged through national and international awards, as is the case of the David di Donatello, or the Coppa Volpi at the Venice Film Festival. Such is largely the case with the Russian-born Ksenija Rapoport or Barbora Bobulová, but it can also be



Figure 3.6. *Barbarossa*: Palatable foreignness

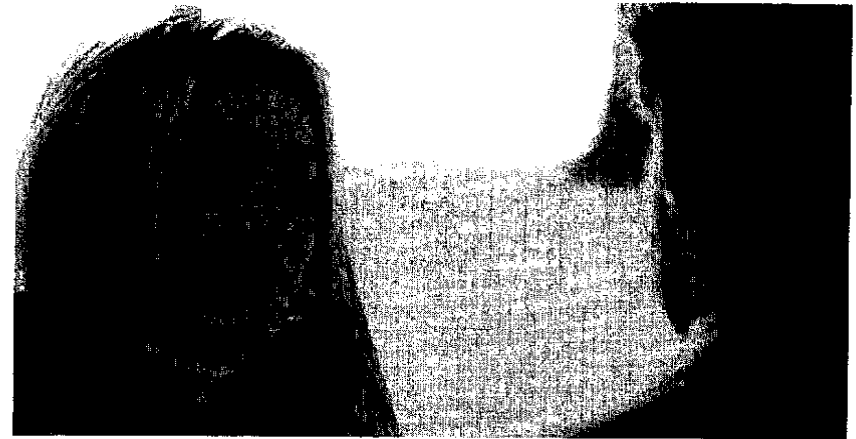


Figure 3.7. *Quiet Chaos*: Palatable foreignness

applied to the less well-known Romanian actress Alina Nedelea. Despite such acknowledgment, this “palatable foreignness” remains alien. Furthermore, it is subject to diachronic transformation. In the early 1990s, East European actresses frequently embodied migrants, serving as a mirror for Italian society, as conceived by Abdelmalek Sayad.<sup>17</sup> This is the case of Polish actress Adrianna Biedrzyńska who, in *Another Life*, reveals to a mediocre dentist the true nature of the Roman underworld. A similar part is played by the Czech Tereza Zajíčková in *Vesna Runs Fast*. This purpose is stressed through the camera’s eye directed at the actress, reflecting the viewer’s gaze in a direct address.

More recently, female Eastern European performers have embodied ambiguous characters that, beneath stunning surface appearances, conceal dark pasts and/or feelings, as for example the major parts played by Bobulová in *La spettatrice /The Spectator* (Paolo Franchi, 2004) and *Cuore sacro/Holy Heart* (Ferzan Özpetek, 2005). Such characters are linked to complex temporal structures, as in *Turtles on Their Back* or *La sconosciuta/The Unknown Woman* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 2005), or question the same reality, as in *The Double Hour* and *That’s It!*

To establish the paradigm underlying the typecasting of Eastern European actresses, we now turn to a television production. *Il sangue dei vinti/Blood of the Defeated* (Michele Soavi, 2009) is set in the most dramatic phase of twentieth-century Italian history: the civil war at the end of the Second World War. Barbora Bobulová plays a double role, embodying twin sisters: Anna, a vain starlet, associating with Fascist officers; and Costantina, a com-

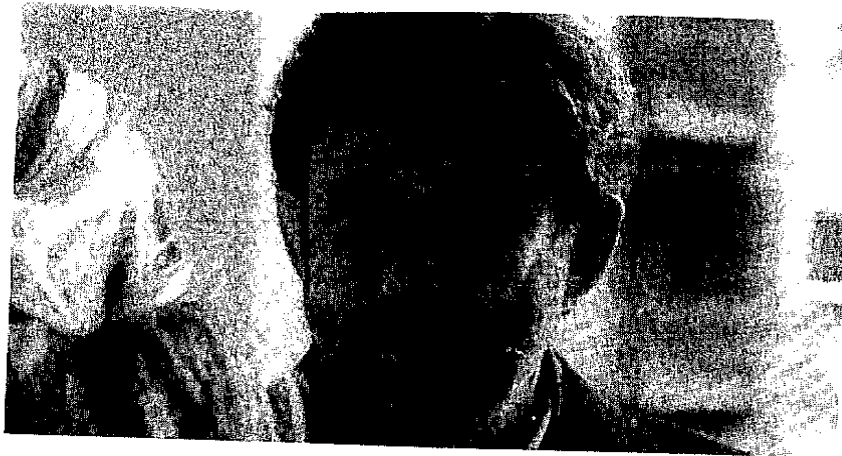


Figure 3.8. *Quiet Chaos*: Palatable foreignness

minist militant disguised as a prostitute. In order to protect the Resistance, Costantina unhesitatingly kills her fatuous sister, cooperates with the Resistance's bloody revenge against Fascists, and escapes further police prosecution in postwar Italy by assuming her sister's identity. Thus, a Slovak actress embodies the ambiguous character of a communist militant, annihilating a national attitude and establishing a nation-state based on political crime. As a matter of fact, the double role implies a set of underlying references. First, the Slovak actress is herself duplicitous, by taking on two different roles. Second, one of the two roles (Costantina) is also twofold, by assuming her twin's identity and disguising her true self. Third, this character refers to communism as the actress's political and national identity. Fourth, communism secretly ruled Italy throughout the early postwar and civil war era, bringing about a new nation through the criminal sacrifice of its own principles. Thus, the Slovak actress implies a political legacy in the Italian post-totalitarian state through her own body and national origin.

#### ONE-SIDED TRANSNATIONALISM

Through such narratives, firmly rooted racial and political paradigms circulate anew. In recent years, scholars have described the progressive fading of such notions as national cinema, art-house discourse, and the *auteur* as one of the key trends in European audiovisual production; these keywords were replaced by new phenomena and strategies: coproductions, transnational themes, styles and mobility, globalization and glocalization of networks and

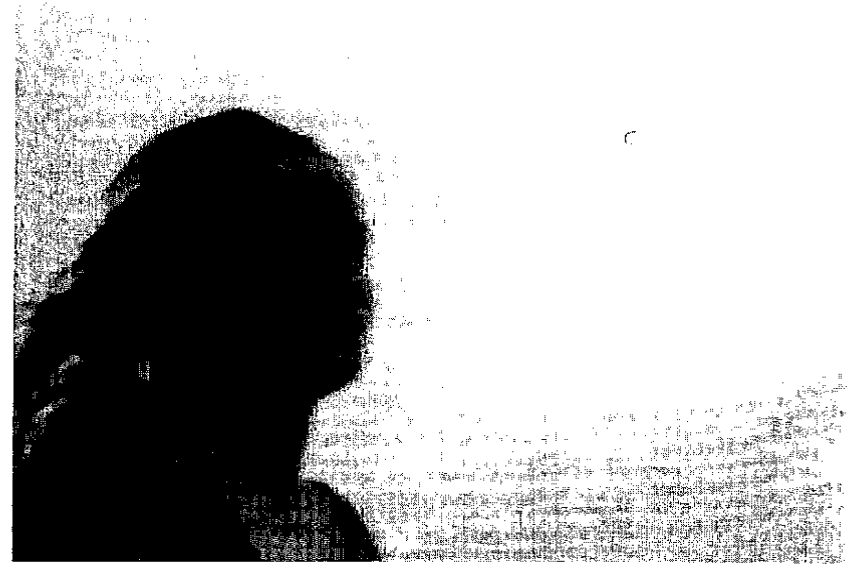


Figure 3.9. *Another Life*: Mirroring Italian society

subjects.<sup>18</sup> From this standpoint, we certainly agree with Dina Iordanova's suggestion: to look at migrant and diasporic cinema from a transnational perspective.<sup>19</sup> We are not particularly fond of maintaining a national perspective, but some additional factors should be taken into account.

Post-1989 cinema in Italy counts only a very limited number of coproductions. For instance, in 2006–2009 less than 20 percent of the overall film output benefited from a coproduction budget, including minority coproductions like Alain Resnais's *Coeurs/Private Fears in Public Places* (France/Italy, 2006) that were barely identified as Italian. Moreover, the Italian presence within the festival network, so relevant for world cinema dynamics, is scarce: less than 40 percent of the total output in the period observed has been selected for festivals. The figures are even more dramatic when considering the export strategies: international sales companies displayed in their catalogs less than 50 percent of the Italian production during 2006–2008, and just 10 percent was scheduled at international film markets.<sup>20</sup> Italian film production barely finds its way to the international market, is rarely conceived as an international joint venture, and hardly belongs to a transnational set of practices and discourses such as film festivals. We might assume that very often Italian film productions are meant to circulate mostly in the domestic market. However these figures show some improvement when com-





Figure 3.10. *Vesna Runs Fast*: Mirroring Italian society

pared to the preceding decades, when migration began to affect the Italian cinema, on the screen and behind it. Therefore, the transnational transformations, typical for the European migrant and diaspora cinema, are barely present in Italian cinema. First, instead of a “cinema of the metropolitan multicultural margin” as described by Jordanova,<sup>21</sup> narratives are set in such provincial cities as Trieste or Turin, barely perceived as fully national; as a consequence, plotlines implying the Otherness are dislocated from the areas identified with the heart of the nation, somehow pushed to its margins. Second, instead of a respectful account of the identities depicted, there is a state of confusion in which somebody from the Italian border is almost a stranger (*The Spectator*), a Polish actor can easily embody a Russian, and a Slovak can turn into a Croatian (*Turtles on Their Back*). Thus, the cinema does nothing but compound the blameworthy media’s ignorance, confusing Romani and Romanian identities. Italian film production’s scarce interest in international markets and transnational discourse is reflected in its narratives: other national identities are marginalized, and their specificity becomes interchangeable.

### CONCLUSION

It was fifteen years ago that David Morley and Kevin Robins, in their seminal study *Spaces of Identity*, asked an urgent question:



Figure 3.11. *Blood of the Defeated*: Uncertain identities

Rather than concern ourselves with the “Europeanisation” or “transnationalisation” of the culture in the abstract, we need to ask more concrete questions. For which particular groups, in which types of place is this prospect becoming a reality? [. . .] This, of course, returns us to the question of the terms in which European culture is, even if only for particular groups within our societies, being transnationalised. And those terms, are, of course, literally, English—or anglophone.<sup>22</sup>

If we examine the limited involvement of Italian cinema in transnational production and discourse, the scarce relevance of diaspora audiovisual production, the attention paid to migration in Italian cinema, and the related narratives and the roles that Eastern European performers embody, we notice the exclusion of Italian audiovisual production from some major trends in Europe.

At the end of *Vesna Runs Fast*, after a car accident, the young protagonist races through the countryside. The fate of the heroine is not certain: Did she die in the crash, or did she escape? The limited role assigned to Eastern European actresses—not to mention non-Italian performers, the formulaic narratives which frame their work, the underlying ideological framework, and the need for a deep transformation in Italian culture in terms of both gender and audiovisual production policies—leads us to wish her and the present Italian cinema to run a good deal faster.

### NOTES

1. The following contribution was jointly drafted by the two authors. Massimo Locatelli wrote the first part (on the politics of representation), while Francesco Pitassio authored the second part (on the typecasting of Eastern European actresses).

2. See for example the many contributions in the outstanding research on this topic: Olivieri Forti, Franco Pittau, and Antonio Ricci, eds., *Europa: allargamento a Est e immigrazione*.
3. Dina Iordanova, "Migration and Cinematic Process in Post-Cold War Europe." Iordanova follows David Chioni Moore, "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique."
4. Paul Cooke, *Representing East Germany Since Unification: From Colonization to Nostalgia*, 12.
5. Ingrid Sharp, "Male Privilege and Female Virtue: Gendered Representations of the Two Germanies," 90.
6. On the use of a theory of conceptual metaphors in foreign policy after the Cold War, see Paul Chilton and George Lakoff, "Foreign Policy by Metaphor."
7. Critical discourse analysts refer to a tension between "a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" on the one hand, and on the other "the practices and institutions a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, power, liberty and the like." Paul Chilton and Christina Schäffner, "Introduction: Themes and Principles in the Analysis of Political Discourse," 5.
8. Isabel Santaolalla, "Body Matters: Immigrants in Recent Spanish, Italian and Greek Cinemas," 165.
9. "Transmigrants are immigrants whose daily lives depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation-state." Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, "Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration," 48.
10. "Whereas the colonial subject, at the cost of some acrobatics in the references to the founding texts of the republican philosophy of the rights of man, was considered as a 'national' who did not enjoy the plenitude of the rights of the citizen, the immigrant worker is considered to be a nonnational (an *alien*, as we say in English) more or less integrated into French society, and partially incorporated on this account into the system of the rights and duties of citizenship, but in some sense kept in a status of legal tutelage. In exchange for his work he can receive a formation and a protection that assimilate him with the citizen, but only on the condition of respecting the terms of a 'contract' whose terms he can never negotiate for himself." Etienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, 40.
11. Giovanna Campani, "Migrants and Media: The Italian Case," in *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*, 46.
12. Quite shocking figures reveal the attitude in Italian media toward overall migration. According to one recent survey, in 2008 just 5.5 percent of Italian news depicted migrants within a positive frame. See "Il tempo della rivolta" (20 July 2010), Osservatorio CARTA, Roma.
13. For a historical survey of national beauty, see Stephen Gundle, *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy*.
14. There are just a few exceptions, such as *Pummarò* (Michele Placido, 1989), *Sud Side Story/South Side Story* (R. Torre, 1999), *La giusta distanza/The Right Distance* (Carlo Mazzacurati, 2007), and *Good Morning, Aman* (Claudio Noce, 2009). On Placido's movie, see Peter Forgacs, "African Immigration on Film: *Pummarò* and the Limits of Vicarious Representation," in *Media and Migration: Constructions of Mobility and Difference*. For a detailed discussion of Torre's movie and for an overall account of the representation of migrant prostitution in Italian cinema, see Áine O'Healy, "Border Traffic: Reimagining the Voyage to Italy," in *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media*. Recent movies framing the contradictory and ambiguous feelings of the Italian population to Mediterranean migration are respectively *Il villaggio di cartone/The Paper Village* (Ermanno Olmi, 2011) and *Terraferma* (Emanuele Crialesa 2011)
15. Katarzyna Marciniak, "Palatable Foreignness."
16. For a survey of the critical reception of Czech and Slovak cinema in Italy, see Francesco Pitassio, "For the Peace, For a New Man, For a Better World! Italian Leftist Culture and Czechoslovak Cinema, 1945-1968."
17. Abdelmalek Sayad, *L'Immigration, ou les paradoxes de l'altérité*.
18. Thomas Elsaesser, "European Cinema as World Cinema."

19. See Iordanova, "Migration and Cinematic Process."
20. All these figures are derived from ANICA, "L'export di cinema italiano," a report presented at the Venice Film Festival, 6 September 2010.
21. Iordanova, "Migration and Cinematic Process," 51.
22. David Morley and Kevin Robins, *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*, 62.

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## Chapter Four

# The Panic over Motherhood

*Transnational Labor Migrants in Films by Haneke, Ciulei, and Koguashvili*

Helga Druxes

Globalized economic deregulation and decentralization processes shift all participants, but especially those most vulnerable—invisible transnational workers on the move—into a state of permanent uncertainty. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman aptly names the resulting mood an “atmosphere of ambient fear.”<sup>1</sup> The controversial political issues of globalized labor, transnational migrancy, and illegality become emotionalized and their political implications blunted as soon as these exploitive scenarios are viewed through the lens of motherhood. Three films under discussion all present the highly charged relationship between migrancy and motherhood: Michael Haneke’s feature, *Code inconnu: Récit incomplet de divers voyages/Code Unknown: Incomplete Tales of Several Journeys* (France/Germany/Romania, 2000) and two more recent documentaries: German-Romanian filmmaker Thomas Ciulei’s *Podul de flori/The Flower Bridge* (Germany/Romania, 2008), and Georgian filmmaker Levan Koguashvili’s *Women from Georgia* (Georgia/USA, 2010). All three films are highly distinctive for addressing the conundrum of maternal absence, of women who leave home in order to support the family.

The three films focus on maternal absence as the factor that either obscures or reveals the exploitive dynamics inherent in the use of a roaming, disposable, and largely invisible labor force. While the aggregate of undocumented workers and bonded labor prop up the consumer economies of the West from the inside, the situation of female domestic labor inside the bourgeois home is rendered especially difficult for being twice removed from public scrutiny. Haneke critiques late capitalist exchange processes and the