

## FOREIGN EDUCATION AND CIVILIZATION HISTORY OF MIGRATIONS: A TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TIMES

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**Abstract:** *Italy is strongly connected to the Western culture, to Europe's history and to Mediterranean civilizations as well; due to its international vocation, Italy is robustly open to multi-cultural dialogue. At present, there is a wealth of studies on the vigorous bonds between education and foreign civilizations. Evidence of the above is supported by current international humanitarian agreements, and inter-school cooperation initiatives, where innovative laboratory classes yield stronger integrations. In the world of academia, an increasing number of foreign students take diverse majors on these subjects, and literature encounters the movie industry to place higher stakes on the educational role of "frontier cinema". Essentially, we are witnessing the creation of an authentic cultural track, where sound relationships play a key role in boosting cooperation. This work aims at researching the profound historical layers entwining educational progress with migrations across Southern Italy – the Mezzogiorno – over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.*

**Keywords:** *education; foreigners; school; cooperation*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In past societies, migrations played a fundamental role, as migrating was a choice, or rather a necessity, in the case of the Jews and the exodus from Egypt towards the Promised Land; migrations were also due to calamities, such as the plague, or wars, or religious persecutions forcing people "to be in contact with new realities" (Da Molin & Carbone, 2016:145).

### 2. MIGRATION STORIES

Statistical research highlights stimulating hints relevant to migrations, with regard to the motivations behind historical Diasporas. There is a wealth of sources on this topic, as in the studies by Giovanna Da Molin on migration statistics, namely the particularly significant instance of the Italian migrations to the United States of America, the clearest example of a population in search of new and more favorable solutions to improve their lives. The arrival at Ellis Island, New York, is described by the author with the utmost precision and critical sight, through the point of view of each single immigrant (Da Molin & Carbone, 2016:152-154). As chronicles (1881-1924) report, there was intolerance towards aliens, and suspicious

immigration inspectors, with the aid of interpreters ... asked immigrants about their age, occupation, marital status... (Da Molin & Carbone, 2016:154),

in other words, historical recurrences repeat themselves in modern times.

Currently, people migrate not only in search of labor, but also because of religious and economic wars: entire families leave poor countries towards richer destinations. Over the last decades, migration flows across the Mediterranean originated from African countries, or Albania, while in most recent times the radius of migration from disrupted areas has greatly increased. It is therefore safe to assert that migrations is a recurring phenomenon across the history of all populations: it is an ancient and modern problem at the same time, increasingly becoming a critical factor for mankind and contemporary societies, thus leading to painstaking experiences, marked by conflicts and sometimes violent miscalculations.

### 3. MEETING THE FOREIGNER IN THE "SCHOOL"

Our society has gone multi-cultural, but is also bound to accept and learn from different cultures, often characterized by contrasting customs and

manners; it is therefore necessary to educate our fellow citizens to acknowledge cultural differences as a way to enhance our personal cultural track. The first place where this cultural transfer occurs is school, ever committed to creating cohabitation between diverse cultural expressions, thereby promoting dialogue across cultures and facilitating a peaceful society.

The above cultural pathway goes through stages, discovering multi-culturalism inside one's own living context, thereby overcoming prejudice in order to live and work together, to educate oneself "through the other" in view of a worldwide citizenship. Promoting the encounter among different citizens helps comprehend each other, but should not constitute a resignation to one's own identity.

In this perspective, the concept of inter-culturalism entails a moral order, whose inner and substantial value is, most of all, the individual. Stemming from this fundamental acknowledgement, people coming from diverse cultural universes may overcome their initial rupture by starting to compare and match cultural diversities, by interpreting them as a wealth to be understood, as the basic expressions of a fundamental unity throughout mankind,

Dialogue is very important for one's own maturity, because facing the other, experiencing new cultures and new religions enhances our growth, we thus grow up and evolve. [...] This is dialogue, this is what peace is made of,

stated Pope Francis I. Within the educational world, made by schools and universities, inter-cultural dialogue is a necessity rather than a choice, because it is instrumental to respond accurately to different interpretations of our society, and our political environment. From a pedagogic standpoint, accounting for such a committing topic requires the audacity to be aware of reality's multi-cultural complexity.

In particular, there is the need to resume and deepen its inner discourse through broader research, sharing a common educational path towards inter-cultural dialogue. Education is meant as an individual's route to attain identity, by way of dialogue and continuous mutual learning. Through their educational tracks, students must interact with diverse cultures, therefore needing the necessary tools to comprehend and connect a foreign culture with one's own. Therefore, the schooling system bears the great responsibility of inter-cultural education, opening to other cultures in order to allow individuals to develop their own cultural traditions.

**3.1 Meeting the foreigner in the "frontier cinema".** Resuming the concept of outbound dialogue – based on respect, comprehension and mutual service – schools nowadays constitute the primary terrain where integration is cultivated, but schools are first and foremost educational vectors, delivering all basic elements to future generations in order to face immigration phenomena, providing awareness and keeping clichés at bay.

However, it must be avowed that there also exist different means and places where diverse cultures find mutual paths. That's why it is fundamental for our students to follow the local movie retrospective on migrations. We refer to the "frontier cinema". The "Migration Cinema" review offers a wide choice of films and documentaries on migration phenomena, allowing to reflect in light of new perspectives.

Movie theaters host human stories, tales of arrivals and departures, of hospitality and refusal, marginalization and integration, all inspired by real facts and our society's self-contradictory attitude. Poignant accounts merge with episodes of prejudice and injustice, where script writers and directors underscore their outlooks and those of common people. In our communication society, the "so-called single-thought that replaced the debate among different ideologies, is most of all a single-consciousness" (Iaroussi, 2005:147).

Since the Nineteen-Eighties, the Italian cinema paid major attention to social phenomena, as well as to migration waves towards Italy and the profound changes it generated across our country after the arrival and integration of millions of foreign citizens.

Any video clips, fragments of lives and surreal stories were shot both by beginners and by acknowledged directors; the latter is the case of Gianni Amelio, who in 1994 directed *Lamerica* after the exodus of thousands of Albanians to Puglia. It is also thanks to these movies that solidarity towards the Albanians grew stronger. Then came Matteo Garrone with his 1996 *Terra di mezzo*, telling the clear-cut story of some Nigerian and Albanian immigrants in Rome, among hardships and survival testimonies. The director highlights a spontaneous or emotional solidarity, pursuing his artistic research towards "reality" stories, thus tracing a path that greatly attracted Apulian film directors, at the same time stressing different facets of diversity, such as the "anthropological conflicts" narrated by Edoardo Winspeare in his *Pizzicata*.

Ultimately, immigration is still at the cusp of “frontier cinema”, maybe representing – as journalist and writer Oscar Iarussi underscores –

the most evident and suffered counterpart of economic globalization in richer Western countries, the essential ethical and political watershed between those who criminalize clandestine immigrants and those who accept them, between who considers this matter an inevitable trouble, and who deems it an inevitable resource” (Iarussi, 2005:159).

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Within this horizon, the very concept of interculturalism entails the idea of a moral order, where the individual is a fundamental value. Stemming from this essential acknowledgement, people coming from different cultural worlds may overcome the initial unfamiliarity. Because this is not only a way to respect one another, but rather puts the interpreter’s pre-comprehension under

scrutiny, so that each and every person may understand and discuss everyone’s standpoint.

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