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Italian Neorealist and New Migrant films as *dispositifs* of alterity: How *borgatari* and *popolane* challenge the stereotypes of nationhood and womanhood?

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ABSTRACT



The article explores the place of women and migrants in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema, arguing that New Migrant cinema continues and reworks key Neorealist tropes and tendencies. It intends to render explicit how an ensemble of films challenge the stereotypes concerning gender, national and cultural identities. Among the figures that are scrutinized are the *borgatari*, *extracomunitari*, *popolane* and *terrone*. Its main objective is to demonstrate how the cinematic expression of these figures in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema enhanced the reinvention of *italianità* and the generalised understanding of gender. It also aims to explain why the cross-fertilisation between migration studies, urban studies and gender studies is indispensable for comprehending this reinvention. Particular emphasis is placed on the shared interest of Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* and Vittorio De Sica's *Il tetto* in the plight over housing and the special character of the urban landscape of Rome. The article also sheds light on certain common concerns of Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema, especially as far as national and gender narratives are concerned. Pivotal for the reflections developed here are the roles of Anna Magnani in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta*, Luchino Visconti's *Bellissima* and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*.

KEYWORDS

Neorealist cinema; New Migrant cinema; Italy; migrants; placemaking; national narration; gender roles; Anna Magnani; popolana; italianità; national identity; otherness

Introduction

The article departs from the intention to cross a range of disciplinary boundaries, and a desire to relate migration studies, urban studies, and film studies among other disciplines. Its main objective is to explore the affinities between Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema's concern about the role of women and migrants in society, and the relation of this concern to urbanity. The article places particular emphasis on some key concepts in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema. It also examines how the combination of approaches of gender studies and migration studies could help us understand better the

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connections between Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema. The article also presents how urban dynamics play an important role in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema's endeavour to challenge female and national identities.

The reconceptualization of the relationship between the vividness of cities and that of female and migrant roles was among the most effective *dispositifs* (Foucault 1994, 299; Deleuze 1992) that Italian Neorealist cinema used to reshape the dominant narratives concerning nationhood and womanhood. Numerous scholars, such as Noa Steimatsky (2008, 2009), John David Rhodes (2007), and Mark Shiel (2006) have analysed the connections between gender representations and urban representations. Despite the fact that urban dynamics were a common theme in several post-war films of European cinema, the authenticity of how quotidian reality of Italian urban landscapes is depicted in Neorealist films distinguish them from other films of post-war European cinema that focused on urbanity, and placed at their centre the special characteristics of metropolitan cities such as Paris or Berlin (Shiel 2006, 66). Gilles Deleuze understood cinema as “a whole ‘psychomechanics’” (Rodowick 1997, 176; Deleuze 1986), shedding light on its capacity to affect our senses. According to Deleuze, the aesthetic apparatus of cinema mediates the emotions of the public, reconfiguring the national narratives. (Bhabha 2013; Anderson 2006). The Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema, transformed the stereotypes concerning migrant roles and gender roles into *dispositifs* that challenged the conception of national identity (Charitonidou 2021). An affinity of Italian Neorealist and New Migrant films is the tendency of treating the stereotypes concerning migrant and gender roles as their very terrain of exploration and of reconceptualizing the way national and gender narratives are understood.

Central for Italian Neorealist cinema are the following issues: firstly, the polarity between northern and southern Italy; secondly, the transformations related to internal migration, and, thirdly, the housing shortage problem caused due to the increase of the population that became homeless during the war (Charitonidou, 2021). The lack of sufficient housing remained unresolved even during the years of the so-called *miracolo economico* – the period of strong economic growth in Italy after WWII from the 1950s to the late 1960s. Italian Neorealist films aimed to address the housing shortage problem. To grasp how significant was the issue of housing shortage during the post-war years in Italy, one can bring to mind that “in Rome, by 1951, almost seven per cent of the population was living homeless or in temporary accommodation, and a further 22 per cent in unacceptably crowded conditions” (Shiel 2006, 76). According to a survey on insecure dwellings and their resident population, ordered in 1957 by the city council, 13,131 dwellings occupied by 13,703 households consisting of a total of 54,576 people, or 3.75% of Rome's resident population were insecure (Salvucci 2014). Stefano Chianese, in “The Baraccati of Rome: Internal Migration, Housing, and Poverty in Fascist Italy”, refers to the “huge migrations that crossed the country between the two wars” (Chianese 2017, 3) due to the fact that large numbers of Italians moved from the countryside to the big cities of central and northern Italy. To realize the impact of internal migration, we should bear in mind that “[f]rom 1958 to 1961 Rome received more than 200,000 immigrants, growing from 1961000 to 2181000” (Bertellini and Giovacchini 1997, 95).

Many Neorealist films aimed to address the urgency of housing shortage through the depiction of figures of *borgatari*. The issue of the illegally built slums within the Italian post-war context was a central theme in Vittorio De Sica's *Il tetto* (*The Roof*, 1956) and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Accattone* (1961). Examining the ways in which the situation of the *baraccati* in post-WWII Rome were presented in an ensemble of Italian Neorealist films, such as in Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Accattone*, and Vittorio De Sica's *Il tetto*, one can understand how migrant incorporation triggers processes of place-making, opening up new social and conceptual spaces in the city. According to Stefano Chianese, the term *baraccati*, which refers to a type of informal dwellings, was not defined in a clear way "in the Governorate's census". Useful for understanding the status of the *baraccati* is the fact that the "census [aimed] [...] to pinpoint the slum settlements in order to proceed to the successive demolition of unlawful constructions" (Chianese 2017, 9; Forgacs 2014, 61).

Cinematic representations of working women and migrants in Italian Neorealist cinema reveal filmmakers' perception of a newly conceptualized Italy. The roles of *borgatari* and women functioned as devices of reconceptualization of Italy's identity, providing a fertile terrain for reflecting upon the intersections between migration studies, urban studies and gender studies. At the core of this article is the intention to shed light on the importance of representations of women and migrants in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema. A core concern for the article is how Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema addressed migrants' placemaking mechanisms through the reinvention of the subjectivities of the *extracomunitari*, which, in contrast with the term 'immigrants' and 'foreign workers', have a negative connotation. Jeffrey Hou has used the concept of 'transcultural placemaking' to "address the dynamic processes of cultural changes [and the] [...] cross-cultural interactions in the context of migration and diversity" (Hou 2013, 7). The concept of 'placemaking' addresses "not only the intercultural exchanges but also the cultural transformations that takes place in urban places and through urban placemaking" (Hou 2013, 7). As Aine O'Healy has remarked, this concept is useful for interpreting the "crossings' [that] mediate the unfolding drama and dilemmas of trans-cultural cohabitation for local audiences". This explains why the concept of 'placemaking' is useful for analysing the role of alterity in New Migrant films (O'Healy 2019, 7).

'Otherness' and internal migration in the *borgate*

During the 1920s and 1930s, the term *borgate* was used to refer to the areas that were created under the decision of the Governatorato of Rome and the Autonomous Institute of Popular Housing (Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari) in the suburbs of Rome to host low-income internal migrants (Berlinguer and Della Seta 1960; Greco and Petaccia 2016). To better understand the term *borgate*, we can bring to mind the German term *burg* referring to 'small settlements in rural settings'. However, within the Italian context, *borgata* referred to a 'quite large satellite of a metropolis' (Cecchini 2020, 207) and to 'a section of the city that does not have the completeness and organization to be called a "neighborhood" [and to] [...] a piece of the city in the middle of the countryside that is neither city nor countryside.' (Insolera 1962, 144). As Laura Moure Cecchini has remarked, '[w]hile moves to the *borgate* were often presented as temporary, they were part of a systematic strategy to restrict migration to the cities and encourage exodus to the countryside.' (Cecchini 2020, 209)

The *borgatari* belonged neither to the city nor to the countryside, but to a type of communities that Spiro Kostof has described as ‘Ersatz communities’ and ‘scraps of city’ (Kostof 1973, 19). This inbetweenness of the identity of the *borgatari* was at the centre of interest for many of the directors of Neorealist films. The *borgatari* were interpreted as symbols of creation of new forms of identities. To grasp to what extent the creation of *borgate* changed the outskirts of Rome during the 1930s, it suffices to think that ‘twelve *borgate* were created from 1930 to 1937 in the Ager Romanus, the rural area that surrounds the city’ (Cecchini 2020, 207). Despite the fact that, at the beginning, ‘the *borgate* were built to accommodate the urban poor who lived in shacks throughout the city[, later on they] [...] served to house low-income families who had lost their’ (Laura Moure 2020, 207) accommodation in the city under the pressures of the fascist regime to leave Rome. This also explains why the *borgate* function in both literature and cinema as symbols of political engagement and as contexts within which a plethora of anti-Fascist movements emerged.

During the fascist years, a large part of the inner-city working-class communities were forced to move to the so-called *borgate*—the slums on the outskirts of Italy’s major cities—while, after the end of WWII, many Italian citizens decided to migrate from rural areas to the cities hoping to find a better quality of life. These internal migrants from the countryside were installed in the *borgate*. As a consequence of this rise of the population that were displaced in the *borgate*, the latter ‘expanded, and progressively absorbed former *borghi rurali* (rural towns) into the boundaries of the newly enlarged cities’ (Bertellini and Giovacchini 1997, 96). Neorealist cinema was interested in depicting post-war urban crisis. The representations of urbanity in Neorealist cinema and their international reception after the end of WWII should be comprehended in conjunction with the fact that ‘Italy was the only one of the defeated Axis powers whose cinematic representations of the city achieved iconic status internationally so soon after its military defeat’ (Shiel 2006, 69).

Two traits of Neorealist cinema that are of great interest for the reflections developed here are the following: its intention to examine surgically matters of society, paying an almost documentary attention to the everyday life, and its disposition to the ontological truth of the physical and visible world. Neorealism’s attraction to ordinary and everyday situations are apparent in Deleuze’s interpretation: “in an ordinary or everyday situation, in the course of a series of gestures, which are insignificant but all the more obedient to simple sensory-motor schemata, what has suddenly been brought about is a pure optical situation to which the little maid has no response or reaction.” (Deleuze 1989, xii) Gilles Deleuze, in *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, relates the reinvention of signs in Neorealist cinema to the indiscernibility between the real and the imaginary, the present and the past, and the actual and the virtual (Deleuze 1989).

André Bazin discerns in Roberto Rossellini’s work an effort to never impose a pre-established meaning of images on his spectators. This implies an inversion of the shot’s subordination to montage. Bazin relates Neorealist formal aesthetic criteria to a search for a “common denominator between the cinematographic image and the world we live in.” (Bazin 1967, 108). At the same time, he conceives Neorealism as an attempt to refer to “a universe that is not metaphorical and figurative but spatially real” (Bazin 1967, 18).

Italian Neorealist cinema and looking for new signs

The term ‘Neorealism’ is related to the project of reformulating the nation’s identity in the period immediately after WWII and to the idea of creation of a *dispositif* for the recuperation of reality in its immediacy. In *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Gilles Deleuze understands WWII as a historical event underpinning divergent taxonomies (Deleuze 1989). More specifically, Deleuze, in the aforementioned book, argues that the post-war period greatly increased the situations in which one was faced with spaces they no longer knew how to describe, to which they longer knew how to react. Deleuze understood Neorealist reality as unrepresentable and referred to a crisis of the ‘action-image’ in cinema, which corresponded to the war’s historical caesura. Using the example of Italian Neorealist cinema, Deleuze discerned a delinkage between the affection-image, the perception-image and the relation-image. He identified certain formal inventions that aimed to reduce the distance between fiction and reality. The result of these formal inventions was, according to Deleuze, the production of a formal or material “additional reality” (Deleuze 1989, 1), a kind of formalism in the service of content. This led Deleuze to interrogate whether the problem of the real arises in relation to form or in relation to content.

A thought-provoking comparison would be that between André Bazin’s et and Gilles Deleuze’s conception of Neorealism. According to James Harvey-Davitt, “[t]he difference between Deleuze’s crystal and André Bazin’s is crucial to understanding the difference between their takes on Roberto Rossellini in general” (Harvey-Davitt 2014, 70). For Deleuze, Neorealism is related to time’s subordination to movement. Harvey-Davitt argues that Bazin interprets Rossellini’s films as an interrogation regarding “the current state of reality”. He claims that Bazin addresses the following question: “what is the current state of reality?”. Deleuze, according to Harvey-Davitt asks: “what does it mean to perceive the current state of reality? What changes when we perceive it?” (Harvey-Davitt 2014, 70).

In cinema, Neorealism has to do with the subordination of the image to the demands of new signs. This explains why in Neorealist cinema, the montage of representations is replaced by the sequence shot. This leads to the invention of a new type of image - the “fact-image” - , which aims address a new form of reality. As Bazin has remarked regarding Rossellini’s films, the Neorealist reversal of the image’s subordination to montage serves as a critique of how pre-established meanings (in images) are imposed on the spectator. Cesare Zavattini and Guido Aristarco may be regarded as key figures in Neorealist cinema. Zavattini worked as screenwriter for Vittorio De Sica, authoring numerous masterpieces of Neorealist cinema, including *Ladri di biciclette* (*The Bicycle Thieves*, 1948). His conception of Neorealism was based on the recognition of the indexicality of the cinematic medium. More specifically, he intended to reduce the mediation that mainstream cinema interposes between reality and its cinematic representation. As Deleuze remarks, “Zavattini defines neo-realism as an art of encounter” (Deleuze 1989, 1).

Gilles Deleuze also argues that what “defines neorealism is the build-up of purely optical situations . . . which are fundamentally distinct from the sensory-motor situations of the action-image in the old realism” (Deleuze 1989, 2). He relates Neorealist cinema to the “passage from the crisis of image-action to the pure optical-sound image” (Deleuze

1989, 3). Deleuze was particularly interested in the endeavour of Neorealist cinema to make “visible these relationships of time which can only appear in a creation of the image” (Deleuze 1989, xii). One could claim that Neorealism’s aesthetic is characterised by the following four basic principles: firstly, it aims to project a moment of everyday life rather than construct a fictional tale; secondly, it should focus on social reality; thirdly, it aims to use non-professional actors and improvised script so as to preserve the natural speech rhythms of the people it represents; and finally, it intends to film on location using hand-held cameras, rather than in a studio. Vittorio De Sica’s *Ladri fi bicicletti* (*The Bicycle Thieves*, 1948), for instance, adhered to all the aforementioned principles.

Vittorio De Sica’s *Il tetto* the contrast between informal housing and newly constructed middle- and upper-class housing blocks

In Vittorio De Sica’s *Il tetto* (*The Roof*), which was the product of a collaboration between De Sica and Cesare Zavattini, a young couple decides to build a single room with a roof (fig. 1). Mira Liehm consider *Il tetto* the final Neorealist collaboration between De Sica and Zavattini. According to Liehm, this film aims to address the impossibility of resuscitating the past (Liehm 1986, 139). A central feature of the film is the contrast between the Fascist city and the regions that were characterised by poor living conditions. Another noteworthy characteristic of this film is the intention to shed light on the contrast between the informal housing and the newly constructed middle- and upper-class housing blocks (fig. 2). A scene of the film in which the contrast between the informal housing and the newly constructed housing blocks is very present is that showing a vehicle passing through the *borgate*. The scene was shot from the front of the bus and displayed an ensemble of newly constructed endless housing blocks. As the vehicle moved Luisa shouts: “Goodness, so many houses!”.

According to Howard Curle, *Il tetto*, which was first screened at the Cannes film festival in 1956, was based on a sketch by Zavattini for a documentary about Italy (Curle 2000). The film concerns the efforts of a young couple to find a place to live. It takes into account the phenomenon of building informal housing in the uncultivated land in the suburbs of Rome. As film critic and historian Arthur Knight has remarked, “[t]he apprentice bricklayer and his young wife [...] are so real because De Sica has seen to it that every incident, every detail in every shot contributes to a sense of unstrained, unforced actuality” (Knight 1959, 23). While working on this film, De Sica conducted careful research on the housing laws of the time (Curle 2000, 210). The authorities that controlled these areas would then order the immediate demolition of the illegally constructed informal housing. To overcome this obstacle, informal housing structures should be covered with a rood within a single day. The plot of *Il tetto* revolves around the efforts of the young couple to construct a roof for their illegal housing in a single night before the arrival of the police. At the end of the film, Natale and Luisa celebrate their new home, after having paid a small fine.



Figure 1. Scene from Vittorio De Sica's *Il tetto* (1956).



Figure 2. Scene from Vittorio De Sica's *Il tetto* (1956).

Anna Magnani as *popolana*: Relating her authenticity to the vividness of urban life

Neorealist films aimed to transform the tension between forgetting the national past and conserving its memory into the very force of cinema making. In many Neorealist films, the significance of male characters is related to their political autonomy, while the female characters are depicted as having a victim status (Cottino-Jones 2010). Between 1940 and 1965, the figure of prostitute featured in more than ten per cent of Italian-made films (Hipkins 2008; 2016). Within this context, the figure of dynamic woman who struggles with the problems of daily life acquired a very central place in the strategies of cinema making. This figure is exemplified in the filmic personas of Anna Magnani, including her roles in Roberto Rossellini's *Roma città aperta* (*Rome, Open City*, 1945) (fig. 3), Luchino Visconti's *Bellissima* (1951), and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma* (1962). Magnani performed roles that aimed to challenge the stereotyped roles of women in cinema. Catherine O'Rawe, in "Anna Magnani: Voice, Body, Accent", refers to the "[c]ritical discussion on Magnani [...] around her passion and authenticity", and her spontaneity, not only in the case of her role as Pina in *Roma città aperta*, but also in her "performances as feisty mothers in Luchino Visconti's *Bellissima* and Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*." (O'Rawe 2017, 158).

Magnani's legendary performance in *Roma città aperta* was interpreted by Luigi Chiarini as the expression of "a collective soul called society" (Chiarini 1979, 141). In the case of this film, the struggles of everyday life during the post-war years were treated as the *dispositif* aiming to reinvent 'otherness'. As Stephen Gundle has remarked, "Anna Magnani poured every possible dose of humanity into this figure whose personal tragedy turns her into an emblem of the suffering of the ordinary Italians" (Gundle 2019, 154). Gundle has also shed light on Magnani's "[r]ich, larger-than-life personality, her ability to play women outside of the clichés of the cinema of the Fascist period and her capacity to inject emotional intensity into her performances in a way that made it seem as if she was emptying herself into them" (Gundle 2019, 152). In order to better grasp the importance of Magnani's performances for the transformation of gender stereotypes in Italian cinema, we should recall the definition of *popolana* as the "woman of the people" (Culhane 2017). Magnani's embodiment of the figure of *popolana* and her identification with post-war Rome is a representative example of how female roles symbolized the vividness of city in Neorealist cinema. The strategy of mapping Magnani onto Rome's cityscape reinforces her performance as a *popolana*. The urban fabric of Rome functions, in the case of *Roma città aperta*, as a site *par excellence* for the everyday practices of *popolana*. Through the filming of Magnani in familiar urban contexts and the emphasis placed on her mundane practices an identification of the spectators with Pina was achieved. Moreover, the vividness of her playing further reinforces the connection between her authenticity and the vividness of the urban life.

André Bazin, in "Cinematic realism and the Italian school of the liberation", maintains that Neorealism as a film movement rejected the star concept (Bazin 1997). Anna Magnani, as the opposite of the Hollywood star, was compatible with the anti-heroic narratives that Neorealism wished to promote. She promoted Neorealism's collectivist ethos. Magnani's place within the institutional discourse of Neorealism should be related to the notion of authenticity (Rigoletto 2018), which, in the case of Neorealist films, "was

the result of an ‘amalgam’ of players: non-professional actors and film stars such as Aldo Fabrizi and Anna Magnani, who became famous for their informal, unassuming self-presentation both on-screen and off-screen” (Bazin 1997, 35–37). Magnani’s image has been heavily shaped by the aesthetic, political and ethical concerns of Neorealism. Within this context, she has often been seen as the embodied cinematic sign of a national identity, which cinema was called on to reinvent during the post-war years.

Regarding the filmic persona of Magnani and how she embodied the culture of Neorealism, Catherine O’Rawe has shed light on her authenticity as Pina in Rossellini’s *Roma città aperta*. Pina became a “critical topos” (O’Rawe 2017). Mark Shiel has also underscored that this role is representative of the endeavour of Neorealism to reflect upon the suffering of Italian citizens during the post-war years. Pina could be interpreted as an embodiment of the post-war face of Rome. In a similar way, Silvana Mangano in Giuseppe De Santis’ *Riso amaro* (1949) had an important impact on the re-invention of gender roles in post-war Italian cinema.

Bernadette Luciano and Susanna Scarparo’s remark that “Neorealism defined a place for women on the screen rather than behind the camera”, producing “its own star personae” can help us better understand the representation of women in films by directors such as Michelangelo Antonioni, Bernardo Bertolucci, Vittorio De Sica, Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Roberto Rossellini, and Luchino Visconti. The representation of women in many of the films of the aforementioned directors differed “from the glamorous images of both the diva of the silent era and the Hollywood star who had come to colonise Italian cinema” (Luciano and Scarparo 2017, 431; O’Rawe 2010). Pivotal for understanding Pier Paolo Pasolini’s effort to challenge the stereotypical roles of women in cinema is Anna Magnani’s performance in *Mamma Roma* (1962). In the case of this film, Pasolini focused on the story of the prostitute Mamma Roma who decides to move with her son Ettore, a teenager whom she had allowed to grow up, to a new neighbourhood. Marga Cottino-Jones has highlighted “the recurrent concern of Italian cinema with gender issues”, claiming that “[t]his concern is a demonstration of the centrality of gender issues in both Italian society and art” (Cottino-Jones 2010, 7). Other female icons within this context, apart from Anna Magnani,



Figure 3. Scene from Roberto Rossellini’s *Roma città aperta* (1945) showing Anna Magnani as Pina.

were Gina Lollobrigida, Silvana Mangano, and Sophia Loren, who “were configured as youthful embodiments of a new national landscape” (Luciano and Scarparo 2017, 431; Small 2009; Bruno 1990).

How Pier Paolo Pasolini’s *Accattone* reshaped the Italian cinematic representation

The endeavour to transform the daily life in the *borgate* into the very essence of reflection is at the centre of Pier Paolo Pasolini’s novel *Ragazzi di vita* published (Pasolini 1955). Pasolini, in this novel, which was authored before the release of his renowned film *Accattone*, intended to grasp the specificities of the life in the *borgate* near Rome during the post-war era. *Accattone* is Pasolini’s first film and is often referred to as the last Neorealist film. Despite the fact that certain scholars claim that the films of Pasolini are not Neorealist, Naomi Greene writes in *Pier Paolo Pasolini: Cinema as Heresy*: “while Pasolini’s discussion of neorealism bears more upon writers - Pavese, Vittorini, Partolini - than upon filmmakers, his attempts to situate the phenomenon in cultural and political terms are clearly applicable to cinema. And one must also keep in mind that neorealist cinema did not by any means follow parameters laid out first by literature. In fact Pasolini pointed out, quite the contrary was true: ‘[...] cinema has been ahead of literature. . . . Cinematic neorealism (Rome, Open City) prefigured all the literary Italian neorealism which came after the war and lasted into the 1950s’” (Greene 2017, 36). The gender relations in the informal housing of the *borgate* in the suburbs of Rome during the post-war years had a central place in this film. The performativity of the female characters in *Accattone* has also been examined by Giorgio Bertellini and Saverio Giovacchini, in “Ambiguous Sovereignities: Notes on the Suburbs in Italian Cinema”, where they remark:

with *Accattone*, Pasolini radically reshaped the Italian cinematic representation of the proletarian borgata, representing it not merely as a site of oppression to be transformed and eliminated, but as the context where new, oppositional values were forged (Bertellini and Giovacchini 1997, 101).

In Pasolini’s *Accattone*, the female characters are presented as the most dynamic characters of the film. Given the importance of the female characters in this film, it is paradoxical that gender issues in Pasolini’s work are relevantly understudied. The relationship of *Accattone* – the male character of the film – with the three main female characters of the film – Maddalena, Ascenza, and Stella – should be interpreted as an apparatus that Pasolini employed in order to challenge the stereotypes dominating the role of women within the post-war Italian society. Pasolini tried to challenge these stereotypes through the fusion of the characteristics of motherhood, prostitution, and womanhood. As Julia Khrebtan-Hörhager and Carl R. Burgchardt have claimed, in “Pasolini and the Women of *Accattone*: Challenging Eternal *Ragazzi* in the Eternal City”, these “female characters’ identities [...] contain a strongly historicized and cultured motherly element, which facilitates the poverty-stricken *borgate* and enables continuity of life in the Eternal City” (Khrebtan-Hörhager and Burgchardt 2016, 227). The female figures in the aforementioned film could be distinguished in the following two categories: mothers (*mamme*), and women (*donne*). Khrebtan-Hörhager and Burgchardt note regarding the gender roles in *Accattone*:

His complex, oxymoronic, and subversive art invites diverse interpretations, including the interrogation of culturally determined Italian gender roles – and especially the relational dynamics and performative fluidity between boys (*ragazzi*), mothers (*mamme*), men (*uomini*), and women (*donne*). Nowhere is this better illustrated than in Pasolini's groundbreaking film *Accattone* (1961) (Khrebtan-Hörhager and Burghardt 2016, 227)

Another issue that is of major importance for understanding Pasolini's *Accattone* is the cinematic representation of the *borgate* (fig. 4). The special characteristics of the urban and suburban landscapes of Rome were very important for Pasolini's work. His interest in depicting the specificities of urban and suburban life in and around Rome should be interpreted in relation to his concern about the contradictions between the grandiose aspects of Rome and the situation in the *borgate* during the post-war years. Silvana Mauri described the daily life in Rome during the post-war years, when the *borgatari's* protest dominated Roman political life, as follows: "Here I am in a life that is all muscles, turned inside out like a glove [...] Rome, ringed by its inferno of borgate, is stupendous right now [...]" (Mauri in Pasolini 1986, 491). Pasolini believed that a "genocide" took place in the *borgate* and claimed that "a population was culturally destroyed" (Pasolini 1976, 154). Italian sociologist Franco Ferrarotti has described the *borgate* as "a Third World [...] at home", interpreting the *borgate* as a colony where the down-and-outs lived: "they haven't got the right of citizenship; they are illegal by definition; they are invisible men and women" (Ferrarotti cited in Bartolini 2017, 200). Giorgio Bertellini and Saverio Giovacchini, in "Ambiguous Sovereignities: Notes on the Suburbs in Italian Cinema", shed light on the ambiguous identity of the *borgatari*:



Figure 4. Pier Paolo Pasolini during the shooting of *Accattone* (1961).

No longer peasants and not yet blue collars, the post-war borgatari hardly fit the categories of Italian, rigid Marxism, which were predominant among the major exponents of Italian cinema. Who were they? Were they the future? Or did they represent the past (Bertellini and Giovacchini 1997, 98).

The cinematic framing of the ambiguity of cultural representations in *the New Migrant cinema*

Central for New Migrant cinema in Italy is the concern about depicting spaces that aim to express migrants's otherness. Some representative films of New Migrant cinema are Helen de Michiels's *Tarantella* (1995), Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* (1994), Ermanno Olmi's *Il villaggio di cartone* (*The Cardboard Village*, 2011), and Giuseppe Tornatore's *La sconosciuta* (*The Unknown Woman*, 2006). In order to overcome understanding New Migrant cinema in Italy through the lenses of a binary relationship between the self and the other one could adopt the ethico-political thought of difference drawing upon Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's approach. The concept of difference in Deleuze and Guattari's thought is based on the idea of "an (un)becoming-subject that always becomes other and thus overcomes any opposition between self and other" (Thiele 2012, 59). A concept of Gilles Deleuze that is useful for interpreting migrant roles in cinema is that of "island". Deleuze's understanding of the concept of "deserted island" as re-creation instead of creation, and as re-beginning instead of beginning is useful for interpreting the mindsets of the migrants' mechanisms of placemaking when trying to settle in their new homes. Deleuze's reference to the "imagination that makes the deserted island a model, a prototype of the collective soul" (Deleuze 2004, 13) is useful for grasping the migrants' endeavour to establish a new beginning through the construction of a "collective soul". (Deleuze 2004; Thiele 2012).

A characteristic of Italian New Migrant cinema is its focus on the postcolonial 'other' and its intention to address the stereotypes concerning the legacy of fascism, imperialism and war within the Italian context. For instance, the films of Ferzen Özpetic, Mohsen Melliti and Matteo Garrone intend to problematize the relationship between migrant roles and the concepts of diaspora, citizenship, nationhood, womanhood, sexuality, identity community, and history. A figure that is very present in New Migrant cinema is that of *terrone*, which refers to the figure of "African" in the popular imagination (Pell 2010; De Franceschi 2013; Russo Bullaro 2010). The figure of *terrone* has an important place in films such as Mohsen Melliti's *Io, l'altro* (*I, the Other*, 2007), Vincenzo Marra's *Tornando a casa* (*Sailing Home*, 2001), and Ermanno Olmi's *Il villaggio di cartone* (*The Cardboard Village*, 2011). These films depict the endeavours of the *terrone* to turn the specificity of their identities into something positive. Marra's *Tornando* focuses on some fishermen that aim to cross the borders between Sicily and North Africa. Salvatore, their captain, tries to push the boat that transfers them into African waters at the risk of their lives. In Olmi's *Il villaggio di cartone*, on the other hand, the plot revolves around some African immigrants who construct a cardboard village and find shelter in a church, giving the priest a new role and set of responsibilities. The priest, due to his intention to help the group of undocumented African migrants, does not obey disobeys to immigration laws and helps them despite the pressures by the authorities.

Gianni Amelio's *Lamerica* and its relation to Neorealist cinema

As Derek Duncan has remarked, “*Lamerica* explicitly links the phenomena of migration to Italy in the 1990s with the Italian emigration and colonialism”. Duncan has underscored that “*Lamerica* quite ostentatiously avoids the types of film-making technique associated with Neorealism” in the sense that it presents the notion of national identity as “labile” and “porous”. Duncan has also shed light on the fact that “cinema in Italy has been seen as the cultural form in which national identity is most securely located” (Duncan 2008, 277). According to Francesca Colella, what is at the centre of *Lamerica* is “the relationship between immigrants and the social fabric” (Colella 2017, 170). Luca Caminati, in “The Return of History: Gianni Amelio's ‘Lamerica’, Memory, and National Identity”, analyses the common concerns of Neorealist and New Migrant cinema about “the ‘cinematic past’ of Italy” (Caminati 2006, 597). Among their affinities, he discerns their shared interest in the “North/South divide” – the so-called “questione meridionale” – referring to the tension between the southern emigrants and the industrialized North (Caminati 2006, 597). Caminati also highlights the attention that *Lamerica* paid to “the ‘cinematic past’ of Italy”, given that numerous of its scenes refer “to moments of Italian history, and of Italian film history” (Caminati 2006, 597). This becomes evident especially in the “second half of the movie that is devoted entirely to the coming to consciousness of Gino and Michele/Spiro and the rediscovery of their Italian past” (Caminati 2006, 670). The fact that this dialogue with the cinematic past of Italy is at the centre of *Lamerica* renders it a fertile case for reflecting upon the similarities between Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema.

Constantin Parvulescu agrees with Caminati regarding the central place of the cinematic past of Italy in *Lamerica* is concerned, claiming that “[t]he Albanian landscape, its inhabitants, and its economic relationships bring back cinematic images of post-WWII Italy” (Parvulescu 2010, 54). Parvulescu also underscores Amelio’s “admiration for De Sica and Rossellini” (Parvulescu 2010, 56). A meeting point of *Lamerica*’s aesthetics and the aesthetics of Neorealist films is the instrumentalization of documentary power. Apart from Caminati and Parvulescu, Piera Detassis has also highlighted the impact that Neorealist cinema had on Amelio’s *Lamerica* (Detassis 1994). Throughout the film, one can decipher several references to Neorealism, and, particularly, to the films of Rossellini such as *Germania anno zero* (*Germany year zero*, 1946). In contrast with Caminati, Parvulescu and Detassis, Aine O’Healy is less convinced regarding the common concerns between Amelio’s *Lamerica* and Neorealist cinema. O’Healy has discerned certain dissimilarities between Amelio’s cinematic techniques and those characterising Neorealist cinema, emphasizing Amelio’s choice to “shoot the film in Panavision, with sweeping, wide-screen vistas” (O’Healy 2004, 246), which is closer to American cinematic approaches than to the Neorealist ones. O’Healy also refers to Guido Aristarco’s critique of this choice of Amelio in *Lamerica* (O’Healy 2004). Parvulescu underscores that the choice of Amelio to use wide screen shots “should be regarded as a statement against media realism, and an acknowledgement of narrative cinema’s different way of signifying” (Parvulescu 2010, 57). He also argues that “*Lamerica*’s dialogue with neorealism unfolds on several planes”, placing particular emphasis on Amelio’s admiration for De Sica and Rossellini’s work, particularly on Rossellini’s *Paisà* and on the “film’s “humane representations” of the ‘other’ (Parvulescu 2010, 65, 66; Landy 2006).

Giuseppe Tornatore's *La sconosciuta* and the ambivalence of national identity in Italy

In Giuseppe Tornatore's *La sconosciuta* (*The Unknown Woman*, 2006), the role of gender is central since the film addresses the issue of sex trafficking, relating it to migration from countries of the former Eastern bloc to Italy, to the question of illegal adoption of migrant women's infants (O'Healy 2019; Hipkins 2008; 2016). The noir aesthetics that Tornatore employed in this film to convey the anxieties related to the aforementioned phenomena are very apparent in the opening scene of the film, which takes place in a disused warehouse that is depicted in a way that brings to mind a stage-like experience. The appearance of a group of women that wear only masks and underwear convey emotions of anxiety since it implies the gaze of a hidden observer.

In *La sconosciuta*, as Vetri Janal Nathan remarks, "the immigrant is configured within and against [...] [Italy's] historical and cultural tradition" (Nathan 2010, 264). The way in which the bodies of migrant women are depicted in *La sconosciuta* provokes a sense of ambivalence that corresponds to the understanding of national identity in Italy. For instance, the way in which the body of Irena is depicted symbolizes the conditions of migration in contemporary Italy. Tornatore "develops an affect of ambivalence to highlight the hybrid condition of being 'in-between' the identities of Self and Other, Italian and extracomunitario" (Nathan 2010, 264). This affect of ambivalence is closely related to the anxieties of migration. Tornatore, through this film, aimed to express a "sense of menace and disquiet that characterises the hybridity of the migrant condition of ambivalence in Italy" (Nathan 2010, 264).

Ferzan Özpetek's critique of the homogeneity of Italian identity

At the centre of Ferzan Özpetek's work is the critique of the homogeneity of Italian identity. A film in which this is very present is *Le fate ignoranti* (2001). In this film, Özpetek juxtaposes foreign immigration and internal immigration from the Southern to the Northern Italian regions. More specifically, Özpetek aimed to challenge an ensemble of stereotypes concerning foreign immigrants and Southern Italians, and the notion of *italianità*. More specifically, Özpetek places particular emphasis on rendering explicit the fluidity of the notion of 'otherness'. As Luca Caminati has highlighted, *Le fate ignoranti* presents "a dialectical approach to living spaces" (Caminati 2008). Caminati compares Antonia in *Le fate ignoranti* (fig. 5, fig. 6) with Katherine in Roberto Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (*Voyage in Italy*, 1953) (fig. 7). The Neorealist model could be seen as a precursor of the narrative rhetorical strategies of *Le fate ignoranti*. Architecture plays an important role for conveying the feelings of ambivalence, which are central in this film. This becomes apparent from the very beginning of the film, when Antonia and her husband meet in the Centrale Montemartini, an electric plant converted into a museum in the Ostiense neighbourhood. The tension between the industrial and the monumental character of this place could be interpreted as an allegory of the ambivalent status of Italy's identity, which is characterised by a tension between memory and its denial. The way in which Antonia is confronted with the statue of a

feminine figure could also be understood as an allegory of this ambivalence. The ending scene with the couple sharing an intimate conversation that brings to mind the atmosphere of the interior space of a home in front of the skyline of Rome could also be understood as a device that aims to challenge the contrast between the intimacy of interior spaces and the chaotic character of the urban landscape. Through this device, the director manages to convey a new understanding of the emotions related to urbanity.



Figure 5. Antonia in Ferzan Özpetek's *La fate ignoranti* (2001).



Figure 6. Antonia in Ferzan Özpetek's *La fate ignoranti* (2001).



Figure 7. Katherine in Roberto Rossellini's *Viaggio in Italia* (1953).

Juxtaposing coming communities and national Identity

The roles of the migrants and their practices of placemaking mediate the emotions of the spectators regarding the re-configuration of the national identity, replacing a rigid understanding of *italianità* with a more flexible one. Useful for understanding how the migrants transform their 'otherness' into a positive attribute is the tension between the concept of national identity and the concept of the 'coming communities' as Giorgio Agamben understands it. Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the notion of community, in *The Coming Community* (*La comunità che viene*) (Agamben 1986), is useful for comprehending how the formation of new ideas of community and the nation building project of Italian cinema are interconnected. Agamben uses the term 'coming community' to refer to a "community that is always in the process of coming and is here in the present (as the community that is coming), but its potential has not yet been grasped" (Murray 2010, 50).

Agamben's concept of the 'coming community' is useful for interpreting the nation building project of Italian cinema – referring to both Neorealist and New Migrant cinema. At the centre of the concept of the "coming community" lies the reinvention of the subjectivities of figures such as the *borgatari*, the *extracomunitari* and the *terrone*. Renée van Riessen's remark that "[t]he Coming Community was an answer or rather a reaction to the collapse of communist states and the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989" (van Riessen 2011) is useful for comprehending that Agamben used the concept of the 'coming community' to address the processes characterising the formation of the state apparatus. This explains why his analysis of the concept of the 'coming community' would be helpful for examining the migrant roles and their processes of placemaking in Italian New Migrant films. In parallel, it would help us better understand how the potentials of 'otherness' become the very force of Italian New Migrant and how the state apparatus and the cinema apparatus are related to each other.

Many films of New Migrant cinema in Italy are based on the intention to establish visual devices aiming at reinventing the subjectivities of *extracomunitari*. The cinematic expression of the *extracomunitari* (Russo Bullaro 2010; De Franceschi 2013) should be understood within the postcolonial context. It should also be related to the intention to establish visual strategies aiming at re-inventing the notion of ‘otherness’. The filmography on immigration in Italy is a phenomenon that started with the arrival of the first migratory movements in Italy, in the 1990s. Unauthorised immigration has emerged as a generalised fact in all Western economies in the post-Second World War era. In Italy, before 1986, the entrance of migrants was regulated by the sanatorie, which are a kind of mass amnesties (Rivi 2007). Given that there was no formal legal control for migrants, a large part of them gained their status of migrants through ex-post regularization programs. The ex-post regularisation programmes aimed “[t]o cope with the discrepancy between planned legal inflows and the actual needs of economy [...] presenting them each time as exceptional ‘one time only’ measures” (Doomernik and Bruquetas-Callejo 2015, 62-63). These details are useful for understanding the specificities of migrant roles in Italian cinema because they render explicit that immigration to Italy was not the outcome of a strategic decision to attract international workers.

A turning point for the migration movements to Italy was the collapse of Eastern European Communist regimes, which caused a significant increase in the number of migrants from Albania and the former Yugoslavia. Within this context, large numbers of Albanians have moved to Italy since 1991. This should be related to the intensification of the interest of contemporary Italian cinema in migration practices. This intensification was accompanied by an interest of New migrant cinema in depicting the informal character of the strategies of placemaking of the migrants and the anxieties that accompany their new beginnings. A parameter that should be taken into consideration in order to understand the strategies of New Migrant cinema in Italy is the shift, during the last thirty years, from Italy as a country of emigration towards a country of immigration. The “New Migrant Cinema” should be understood within the context of postcolonial cinema in Italy. As Sandra Ponzanesi and Verena Berger remark, “the terms ‘migrant cinema’ and ‘postcolonial cinema’ are often used interchangeably” (Ponzanesi and Berger 2016, 111). A concept that is really at the centre of the subjectivity of migrants in Italian cinema is that of the so-called *extracomunitario*. In the case of the Italian cinema, the intention to conceive cinema as a nation building project has always been very present since the post-war years.

The representation of migrants as challenging the stereotypical narratives of nationhood

The representation of migrants in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema intended to challenge the stereotypical narratives of nationhood. Within this context, cinema functions as “the cultural crucible of Italian national identity” (Duncan 2008). In the framework of this endeavour to challenge the stereotypical narratives of nationhood, Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema aimed to express a “preoccupation with the integration, or not, of non-Italians into Italian society” (Wood 2005, 145). Addressing the ambiguities of the roles of women, *extracomunitari*, *borgatari*, and *terrori* (De Franceschi 2013; Russo Bullaro 2010), Italian Neorealist cinema and New Migrant reinvented the relationship between the

State apparatus and migration (Günsberg 2005). The re-configuration of the notions of hospitality, home, belonging, emotion, identity, nationhood and community are pivotal for understanding New Migrant cinema's concern about how migration can contribute to the emergence of new forms of living together. Marta Segarra analyses the concept of community, comparing how Jacques Derrida, Roberto Esposito, and Jean-Luc Nancy conceived it. Segarra also refers to the "symbolic construction of the Roma community" (Segarra 2019, 75), placing particular emphasis on Benedict Anderson's understanding of 'image-nation' (Anderson 2006), and particularly on his claim that "[c]ommunities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style they are imagined" (Anderson 2006, 6). Her analysis can help us better understand the role of imagination for the creation of a sense of belonging to a community.

The re-invention of the concept of community is related to the mutations of the representation of the 'other'. The relationship of community and the 'other' is among the main concerns of European migrant cinema and has been addressed by Guido Rings, in *The Other in Contemporary Migrant Cinema Imagining a New Europe?*. According to Rings, cinema as an expression of collective ideas has an important impact on the dominant understanding of migration (Rings 2016, 19). This explains why contemporary Italian migrant cinema is a terrain within which one can discern the specificities of the cultural representations of migration. Sandra Ponzanesi, in "Outlandish Cinema: Screening the Other in Italy", used the term 'outlandish cinema' to analyse the specificities of the representations of Italy in cinema. Ponzanesi pays particular attention to the dichotomy between colonial memory and its denial that characterised post-war Italian cinema and, more recently, Italian New Migrant cinema. She relates this dichotomy to the fact that alterity played an important role within the framework of both Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema's endeavour to reshape or reconfigure Italy's national narration (Ponzanesi 2005, 270). This interest of Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema in alterity was expressed through the roles of migrants and women, which function as *dispositifs* (Foucault 1994, 299; Deleuze 1992; Casarino 2017) aiming to express the tension between colonial memory and its denial among other tensions.

Combining the methods of gender and migration studies: Towards a new understanding of Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema

Migrant incorporation triggers processes of place-making, opening up new social and conceptual spaces in the city. Both Italian Neorealist and New Migrant films aimed to address this. In parallel, Italian Neorealist and New Migrant films share an interest in surgically examining matters of society, paying an almost documentary attention to the struggles characterising daily life. As it becomes evident in this article, migrant roles and gender roles are central in Neorealist and New Migrant cinema in Italy. For this reason, combining the methods of migration studies and gender studies to examine the films under study here could reveal aspects of the Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema agendas that remain understudied today (Hipkins 2008; 2016). Given the intention of Italian Neorealist and New Migrant Cinema to address social issues, it is useful to examine which methods would be more efficient for understanding the relationship between cinema and social change. Combining methods that come from both migration and gender studies migration to analyse the way Italian Neorealist and New Migrant

cinema addressed questions concerning to issues gender and the problem of homeless people and *borgatari* would be helpful for comprehending how the cinematic reinvention of the concepts of gender, inhabitants, domesticity and citizenship challenges stereotypes dominating Italian society. Danièle Bélanger and Andrea Flynn's "approach in Gender and migration: Evidence from transnational marriage migration" (Bélanger and Flynn 2018) can help us shape methods aiming to merge migration studies and gender studies. A remark of Bélanger and Flynn that is particularly enlightening is that "[t]he feminist reading of migration allows for the inclusion of gender as a central aspect of migration flows, labour patterns, trajectories, and experiences." (Bélanger and Flynn 2018, 185).

Another aspect that is important for better understanding how Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema challenged an ensemble of stereotypes concerning Italian society is the relationship between cinema and social change. This relationship was investigated by Natalie Fullwood, in *Cinema, Gender and Everyday Space* (2015). In the aforementioned book, Fullwood examined the relationship between cinema and social change during Italy's economic boom of the 1950s and early 1960s. An article that is pivotal for any research aiming to address the relationship between gender studies and film studies is concerned is Teresa De Lauretis's "Technology of Gender", in which gender is understood as a product of various social technologies, including cinema (De Lauretis 1987). Caroline Bainbridge's book entitled *A Feminine Cinematics: Luce Irigaray, Women and Film* (2008) is also useful for exploring gender issues in Neorealist and New Migrant cinema in Italy, given that it draws upon the work of philosopher Luce Irigaray to suggest a new understanding of the debates around the relationship between women and film. Rosi Braidotti's *Nomadic Subjects Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (2011), on the other hand, could help us establish methods aiming to bring together gender and migration studies. In the aforementioned book, Braidotti explores the possibilities of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of "becoming-minoritarian", arguing that "Deleuzian becoming is the affirmation of the positivity of difference, meant as a multiple and constant process of transformation" (Braidotti 2011, 246).

The research methodologies concerning both migration studies and gender studies have changed considerably since the 1980s, shifting from discipline-specific studies of women immigrants and sex roles toward multidisciplinary analysis. As Silvia Pedraza underlines "[d]espite the overwhelming presence of women in migration flows, until recently the role of women in migration had been totally neglected" (Pedraza 1991, 303). The intersections between migration studies, urban studies and gender studies can provide a new reading of the concepts of domesticity, citizenship and displacement in Italian Neorealist and New Migrant cinema. During the last four decades, there has been a change in the paradigm of migration studies, which are gradually paying more attention to the gender composition of migration streams. Representative of this tendency is Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo's interpretation of "gender as a constitutive element of immigration" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003, 9). This trend of conjointly studying gender and migration phenomena becomes more and more dominant. Important for these endeavours aiming to merge the methods of gender scholarship and those of migration scholarship is the intention to draw upon approaches of social sciences, on the one hand, and to treat gender as an institutional part of immigration studies, establishing legitimacy for gender in migration studies, on the other hand.

According to Stephanie J. Nawyn, “[t]he integration of gender analysis in migration studies first emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s” (Nawyn 2010, 750). Nawyn also highlights the underpinnings of the shift from studying women to studying gender, claiming that this shift took place in the mid- and late-1980s. Symptomatic of this shift is the 1984 special issue of *International Migration Review* devoted to the topic “Women in Migration”. The feminist gender-based migration studies understand gender as a system of relations which is influenced by migration. By the 1990s, there was an intensification of the tendency of understanding migration as a gendered process, promoting gender as a dynamic and constitutive element of migration and immigrant integration. More recently, an ensemble of studies such as the 2006 special issue of *International Migration Review* devoted to the theme “Gender and Migration Revisited” aimed to shed light on the intersection between gender studies and migration studies. The key insights of these studies lie in their intention to incorporate key questions concerning gender studies into historical research, emphasizing “the need for longitudinal analysis in any study of gender and migration, and not[ing] some approaches to the concept of time used by historians” (Sinke 2006, 82). Saskia Sassen’s understanding of immigration as “a process constituted by human beings with will and agency, with multiple identities and life trajectories beyond the fact of being seen, defined and categorised as immigrants for the purposes of the receiving polity, economy and society” (Sassen 2014, 20-21) is useful for grasping the impact of migration on the status of public space. Sassen’s approach is based on the intention to reconceptualize the notion of place beyond traditional definitions, while challenging the boundaries between what is public, communal and domestic.

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