

Recent migrants from Punjab can supply even harsher examples of exploitation due to their status as undocumented migrants. Their precarious conditions embolden some local employers to either curtail their wages or withhold their pay entirely. An undocumented migrant cannot report any mistreatment to the police without taking the risk of being deported. Connected through similar difficulties of life and the complexities and sacrifices inherent in migration, the experiences of Armida, Satwinder, Dhillon, Hardeep, Deep, and Harbajan reject any stereotypes in the definition of the experiences of migration and in the portrayal of contemporary Italy as a destination country.

Visit India is highly successful in presenting the complexity in the life of a community of immigrants in Italy and simultaneously presenting the complexity of the process of narrating other people's lives in a documentary directed and written by nonmigrants. Santangeli and her collaborators chose to highlight the testimonies and celebrations of the protagonists and tried to limit the space allowed for the intervention of experts on others' lives. Hopefully, in the near future we will have narratives authored both by members of this Sikh community and by members of other communities of recent migrants to Italy who can complement and dialog with works such as Santangeli's extremely valuable documentary.

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18 Ius soli.

By Fred Kuwornu.

Struggle Filmworks Production, 2011.

49 minutes. DVD format, color.

In the last two decades, scholarly and artistic works dealing with contemporary immigration to Italy have mainly been geared toward questions of the rights of illegal immigrants; but as large numbers of immigrants continue to cross the Mediterranean to Italy either as a final destination or as a portal to other European countries, debates about immigrants' rights have become more heated. The documentary *18 Ius soli* (18 Right of the soil) sheds light on a new aspect of the immigrant presence in Italy that has been largely ignored: that of legal immigrants and their right to citizenship, a right already granted to them but only by a problematic law not yet put into effect. The ultimate goal of the film is to campaign for a new proposed law, "Modified Ius Soli," put forward, according to the film, by the St. Egidio Community (a Roman Catholic lay association) with the support of social networks of second-generation children and the bipartisan support of fifty members of the parliament. The new law proposes to grant citizenship automatically to children born in Italy "to a family legally resid[ing] in Italy for at least five years." In this way, the documentary, by being "uno dei primi documentari 'grassroot' prodotti in Italia" (one of the first grassroots documentaries produced in Italy), as explained on the film's website (www.18-ius-soli.com), stands as a form of political activism (although what is meant by "grassroots" is not clarified).

In this innovative film Fred Kuwornu gathers a myriad of pieces of contemporary and historical footage, creatively interlacing them with interviews with eighteen young and promising second-generation immigrants who, despite being seemingly well-integrated into their Italian communities, are marginalized by the existing law. Their positive social, cultural, and career experiences are contrasted with the negative reactions they get when applying for legal documents. Their different backgrounds and accents echo different Italian regional cultures, reminding the audience that Italy itself is already diverse in culture and dialect.

The documentary (in Italian, with English subtitles) skillfully employs a montage technique that supports its equating contemporary discrimination with the racist discourse of the fascist era. The film begins with footage from a 2010 soccer game between Italy and Romania. A group of Italian fans jeers, “Balotelli son of a bitch” at their own team’s player, black Italian striker Mario Balotelli. We hear the derisive phrase over a dark screen; then the film cuts to a young interviewee who asks, in Roman dialect as if to emphasize his Italian identity, “Ma che stanno a di?” (What are they saying?). This is Paolo (one of the eighteen individuals interviewed in the film), a young black Italian who demonstrates maturity and common sense in contrast to the irrationality of the angry crowd. A title card explains that the Italian “ultras” (translated as “hooligans”) are shouting, “There are no black Italians!” Ultimately, Kuwornu connects Balotelli’s situation in this 2010 game with another case from history: that of the black boxer Leone Jacovacci, in reference to whom a 1928 headline in the Italian *Gazzetto dello Sport* read, “A black cannot represent Italy!”

One of the great strengths of this documentary is that it effectively campaigns for the rights of second-generation immigrants by evoking a sense of hope and reassurance rather than sympathy and guilt from the audience. The film structure echoes a speech given by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano—portions of which are quoted in the documentary—in which he states that the diversity offered by immigrants is “a fruitful stimulus” and “should not be a source of concern.” As such, while the documentary points to negative moments of discrimination and racism, it aims at gathering support for the proposed law both by portraying Italian-born second-generation men and women as a very well-integrated group and by displaying their positive contributions to Italian society and culture. In addition to lines spoken by interviewees such as “I’ve always been accepted and liked,” and “There was on my part a predisposition, a desire, so I had to take the first step because I had to become part of a group,” the film shows abundant photographs of these young people with their Italian friends. Moreover, we see these second-generation Italians depicted as great contributors to their society as they recount donating blood, volunteering, working part-time to support their education, and training to represent Italy in sports.

Unfortunately, while successfully resisting the racial component in the construction of Italian identity, the interviewees—themselves part of Italian society—understandably fluctuate in their statements regarding the possibility of defining and qualifying what it means to be “Italian.” Aravinda, one of the interviewees, comments on the beauty of Naples, where he lives, describing it as a culture “[he] wouldn’t really define as Italian but actually Neapolitan.” The suggested contrast between the two cultures (the Italian and the Neapolitan), while complimentary to the character of the southern

city, implies his acknowledgment of the existence of a defined Italian culture, one that cannot encompass the cultural diversity of Naples.

Such a statement comes as a contrast to another statement, by Anastasio: “You can’t really define an Italian as Italian. We all know well that Italy is a country that has been influenced by different populations starting with Africa, Tunisia, the Scandinavian countries.” In addition, while inviting the audience to reconsider the “right of the soil” as a basis of access to citizenship, Aziz, of Moroccan origin, speaks about his marriage to a Neapolitan woman as a deliberate attempt to integrate into an Italian community. Filmed buying bread and eating pasta with his wife, Aziz says that he purposely decided “to marry someone who was not from Morocco but a girl from Naples.” Earlier in the film, Anastasio says, “I like Italian food much more than the stuff from my country,” and Waheed, of Pakistani origin, says, “We decided to integrate with Italians and not to spend all our time with Pakistanis or Tunisians,” which gives the impression that these young people have been successfully Italianized. By placing so much emphasis on what makes these young people Italian, the film unintentionally reflects the already existing challenge of breaking down the old paradigm that erroneously claims the need to define what it means to be Italian as an indispensable component of the national project of Italian unification. As such, while the film campaigns for alternative positionings of second-generation immigrants vis-à-vis hegemonic definitions of Italian national identity, it cannot escape being a product of such hegemonic discourse.

On the other hand, while the current law allows second-generation immigrants to request citizenship, the film efficaciously portrays this law as crippled by bureaucratic measures and ambiguity. According to law No. 91 of February 5, 1992, governing the citizenship “issue” in Italy:¹ “Aliens born in Italy who have been legally resident in Italy up to the attainment of their majority” have the right to become citizens “if, within one year of that date, they declare the wish to obtain Italian citizenship.”² Difficulties encountered today by legal immigrants—as illustrated by the documentary and sometimes even by Italian citizens residing abroad—underline the law’s ineffectualness. The narrated experiences indicate ignorance and malpractice on the part of some officials in addition to their sometimes intentional reluctance to provide guidelines to applicants. Sentences uttered by the interviewees such as “they [police officers] know nothing,” or “the best knowledge comes from other immigrants” attest to a convoluted procedure that demands improvement. As such, the film makes a very good case for the call for reform to the current citizenship law.

Finally, by interlacing the interviews with a rich mosaic of archival material—from stories of black Italians, to Italians who migrated to the United States, to individuals from diverse backgrounds who contributed to the shaping of Italy—*18 lus soli* rewrites Italian history to encompass alternative Italian identities. Produced the year of the 150th anniversary of Italy’s unification, the film contributes to ongoing discussions about the construction of an Italian national identity. The film justly challenges the outdated connotations of the term “Italian,” especially through the voices and images of those interviewed. According to Heena, “[F]eeling Italian is not just a matter of eating Italian food or wearing Italian labels. Being Italian [. . .] means being citizens.” Aravinda says, “I feel Italian even though I don’t have citizenship yet for the simple reason that I’ve been here since I was three. So, if I don’t feel Italian what am I supposed to feel?”

A close-up shot of Dorkas's eyes confronts the audience with her balanced statement: "When you grow up in a country, you live there and you get your education there, it's normal to feel a part of that country." At some other point, Fakir expresses his fear of the possibility of being deported to his family's country of origin. His question: "Where would I go?" echoed by Dorkas's question "Where do you think I would go?" is followed by Fakir's remark: "I'll always have this fear of losing my new life, my new adopted country, the fear of losing my new homeland, the fear of losing all the people I've loved up to now." The voices of these young people, in addition to historical examples, such as Roman Emperor Caracalla (of African background, and a somewhat problematic choice given his violent reign), the boxer Jacovacci (of Congolese origin), and Giorgio Marincola (the antifascist partisan of Somali origin killed by the Nazis) invite a revision of the history of both ancient and modern Italy. It is a revision that embraces new examples that are pivotal to understanding Italy's multiculturalism as an ancient condition rather than a modern one. As such, the documentary expands the limits of Italian diaspora studies to encompass other marginalized Italians whose identity is questioned by the Italian law despite their indisputable relationships with Italy and its culture.

18 Ius soli would be an ideal resource in a course in cultural studies, ethnic studies, or Italian film that addresses issues of identity, race, and migration, especially for a non-Italian student body less familiar with these issues as they pertain to Italy. The documentary offers a very good example of the role of film in resisting or challenging existing social relations in Italy, while also proposing alternative forms of political activism. Within a seminar on film studies, for instance, it would be a very good example of innovative documentary-making while closely examining the roles of music, interviews, and montage as efficient and interesting technical effects in campaign documentaries and psychological filmmaking. At the same time, the film, with its ability to appeal to a younger generation, would be useful in initiating a discussion in an undergraduate course that addresses issues of immigration and diversity in Italy in particular and in Europe in general. Finally, if used in a course focusing on U.S. ethnicities, it would provide an important reminder of how legal and social issues around race and ethnicity function abroad, while also acting as a reflection on the United States' own policies around immigrant rights, past and present.

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Notes

1. The term "issue" seems to be used unironically in the English version of the Italian Ministry of Interior official website.
2. Article 4 Section 2 of the mentioned law. It is relevant to note that despite the availability of an English version of the Ministry of Interior website, the full text of the law is only available in Italian. The English translation cited here, with its awkward and ungrammatical syntax, is available on the UNHCR website where it is described as an "unofficial" translation (ct No. 91 of 5 February 1992, Citizenship [Italy], 15 August 1992, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b4edc.html> [accessed September 10, 2012]).