

MIGRANT MEMORIES – CINEMA AND DIASPORA

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Abstract

Migrant memories of 'back home' are often infused with images and emotions of both pain and loss. Popular cinema has aided in maintaining a complex line of unity around issues of identity, kinship and family within the diasporic Italian community in the UK.

This paper will look at how the family melodramas of the film maker Matarazzo (1909-1966) helped to give first generation Italians a sense of 'belonging' within the hostilities that marked post war Britain. Memories of the cinematic experience left behind in Italy and brought to their new home went on to gain currency within both the Italian migrant family and within the migrant/Diasporic community as a whole. Through a series of oral interviews it became apparent that identity formation for the migrant family whose diverse generations cross time and spaces, memories serve to complicate as well as to support. Migrants' sense of self is all too often pitted against their very 'difference', particularly within the context of a new 'home'. This weaves uncertainties for subsequent generations where dual nationalities and notions of identities become more fluid within the context of globalisation.

This paper will address these ideas and will focus on the role and function that memories of cinematic family melodramas have played in shaping contemporary Italian migrant/Diasporic identity in the UK.