

Cultural Dialectics presented through Italian Films: focusing on the Mosen
Melitti's works

KIM, Heejung

ABSTRACT

Literature and cinema are an ideal stage for explaining how new forms of representation and socio-political disputes are articulated in what we now refer to as the New Europe. Although migratory characters and issues were occasionally presented in films and literature made before the 1980s, changed and accelerated patterns of migration have magnified their visibility and significance in more recent productions. This is linked to the European crisis, during which self-evident identity has come under pressure in recent decades as a result of increased postcolonial awareness, the revival of religious practices in the public sphere and the crisis of the secular state, and the rise of new forms of racism, such as those that emerged in the aftermath of 9/11, often grouped under the banner of Islamophobia. Such transnational shifts serve to explain the recent interest shown by Mohsen Melliti's literary work and film in postcolonial and migratory themes, issues and characters, as they attempt to make sense of the increasing erosion or changing notions of European identity. These are also endeavouring to deal with the national 'colonial unconscious', in other words, the unprocessed colonial legacies of several European countries (such as France, the Netherlands, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Belgium) and growing xenophobia and racism within Europe.

I would like to focus in particular on another repeating aspect that is of thematic and aesthetic relevance and provides a critical commentary on migration and the condition of postcolonial Europe (and elsewhere): the use of 'non-places'. I will explore these 'non-places' in Melliti's works: the first novel, *Pantanella: Canto lungo la strada* and the recent film, *Io, l'altro* (I, the Other, Italy, co-production, 2007), written and directed by Melliti, articulates the encounter with, and response to, religious fundamentalism and media alarmism in the wake of 9/11 through the representation of two fishermen in a boat in Tunisian extraterritorial waters off the coast of Sicily.

[KEY WORDS Mohsen Melliti, *Pantanella*, *Io l'altro*, migrant, multiculturalism, identity, non-spaces, postcolonial Europe, cultural dialectics]