

and rhythms of Muslim African slaves themselves influenced by the world of Islam (Chambers 2012, 1).

2. It is important to point out here that in the old center of Naples, especially in the areas of Porta Capuana, Montesanto, Quartieri Spagnoli, Porta Nolana, Tribunali, and Borgo di Sant'Antonio, there are large communities of migrants from locations including North Africa, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Dominican Republic, and China. Referring to the area of the *ferrovia*, which is part of the old center, Neapolitan author Peppe Lanzetta writes: "Palermo me sora, Marsiglia me mamma, Dakar me frate . . . Questa è la ferrovia!" (Palermo is my sister, Marseille is my mother, Dakar is my brother . . . That's the ferrovia, Quintavalle 2008).

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### *Devoti: The Documentary.*

By Pete Soby.

A sobyVISION Documentary, 2013.

92 minutes. DVD format, color.

In the early 1920s, Grazia Bonafede Caniglia of Omaha, Nebraska, began raising funds to create a version of the *fiesta* in honor of Saint Lucy (known locally as the "Saint Lucia Festival") that she knew from her early years in Carlentini (Syracuse province), Sicily. By 1925, she and other early supporters had gathered enough funds to have a replica of Carlentini's Saint Lucy statue created and shipped from Italy, and the tradition of an annual Mass, procession, and feast was recreated. *Devoti: The Documentary* explores

this feast through the memories of its participants, connections with Carlentini, and the history of the Little Italy neighborhood.

Through interviews with dozens of residents, and a mix of home movies and new footage, the film depicts key elements of the feast: the Mass, the emergence of Saint Lucy's statue from Saint Frances Cabrini Church, the procession of the float as people approach it with offerings, the crowning of the "festival queen," the band music, dancing, fireworks, and food. Firsthand recollections of feast participants vividly convey the emotional impact of these events and the sense of pride and history that many associate with this celebration.

Director Pete Soby has also incorporated substantial footage of Carlentini's feast in Italy, giving viewers the opportunity to compare visually these two events. In Carlentini, the streets are filled with people, and Saint Lucy's statue is carried beneath a seventeenth-century canopy, moving from neighborhood to neighborhood throughout the day. Fireworks punctuate the event, culminating in a grand display. Decorative illuminations hung above the streets add to the sense of celebration. During a midnight viewing of the statue before the morning Mass, a crowd of devotees in the church recites prayers as people approach the statue to make offerings and request healing. By comparison, the Omaha event is smaller and less elaborate but clearly well-loved by those who take part in it.

Early in the film, a segment depicts Saint Lucy's story using a combination of artwork and reenactments. As Patricia Coate, a graduate student who appears at several points in the documentary, notes, Carlentini is not the site of the saint's birth or death; rather, the special association between the saint and the town resulted from a pilgrimage. Lucy persuaded her ailing mother to travel to the tomb of Saint Agatha in search of miraculous healing. Along the way, the two stopped at Carlentini to rest, and this is why Saint Lucy was eventually declared the town's patroness. Following her mother's restoration to health, Lucy was martyred because of her refusal to marry a pagan man and make offerings to the emperor. The film takes viewers to two key sites that house materials associated with Lucy's life: Venice and the Sicilian city of Syracuse. At the tomb of Saint Lucy in Venice, her body is displayed, adorned with a silver mask and fine clothing, and the voice-over narration recounts many movements over the centuries that ultimately brought her remains to this site. In Syracuse, her birthplace, the basilica at the site of her execution now houses a precious collection of her relics, alongside ex-votos (e.g., rings, jeweled crucifixes, wristwatches) donated by visitors.

During a section on the early history of Italian immigrants in Omaha, the narrator notes that the thousands of residents of the neighborhood known as Little Italy who came from the Carlentini area were not the only Italians who came to Omaha (for instance, Calabrian immigrants lived elsewhere in the city). The filmmakers also show a few examples of other food-centered celebrations of Italian heritage in the city. Because the narrative is so entrenched in the viewpoints of those with fond memories of the Saint Lucy feast, the film does not give a sense of whether there were rival events, if the appeal of the feast was primarily for those with personal connections to Carlentini, or if it drew a broader group of participants. It is also unclear whether most who attend the feast follow the full sequence from the Mass through the procession and out to the grounds. By the 1930s, the feast had grown to be a nine-day event, so it seems

likely that most people pick and choose their favorite parts, but the many interspersed interview segments give the impression of a more uniform experience.

To the film's credit, while the narration places a great deal of emphasis on continuities within this tradition, it also considers changes in both the Omaha and Carlentini feasts. In Carlentini, participation in the various activities of the feast was once rather rigidly limited by class, but it is now much more open. Furthermore, the platform on which the statue is transported was originally hand carried; then, in the twentieth century, participants pulled it by truck. During the 1980s, a campaign succeeded in restoring the practice of moving the platform by hand, reviving a sense of commitment and physicality among those who volunteer for this task.

Instead, in Omaha, the early energy of the feast was cut off for several years during World War II and then revitalized and expanded when returning soldiers joined the feast organizing committee. This group revived an earlier practice of naming a queen and added a coronation ceremony, which is popular to this day. One Omaha woman's account of being stricken by and recovering from polio as a child highlights the tradition of turning to Saint Lucy for healing, but this emphasis seems less central in descriptions from more recent feasts. Most dramatically, the city of Omaha, in the wake of complaints by newer residents and businesses, barred the festivities from their original neighborhood, leading to a succession of venue changes and major shifts in the procession route.

The Saint Lucy feasts in Omaha and Carlentini resemble numerous other Italian and Italian American *feste* in many respects. It is unfortunate that the film does not make viewers aware of this broader tradition, as such comparisons could illuminate common elements among the feasts while also highlighting issues that make these two particular feasts distinctive. For example, the displacement of the feast from its original neighborhood parallels the challenges faced in Brooklyn, where traditional routes for processions wind through areas where Italian Americans no longer make up a visible majority of the population (Sciorra 1999).

This is an unabashedly sentimental film, centered on the memories and emotional associations that participants have with the feast. It honors a host of donors and fundraisers in its credits and packaging, and it feels primarily like an effort to document the history and value of this event for future generations rather than a project undertaken from an academic perspective. The inclusion of many firsthand recollections makes sense in this regard. Unfortunately, at over ninety minutes, the many recountings of the same favorite elements get somewhat repetitive, which may limit the value of this film for classroom use. However, viewers interested in lived religion and the revival of traditions in new contexts will find much to appreciate in this rich document.

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