

York City community, focusing on the figure of Generoso Pope, a media tycoon and business man who emerged as a strong supporter of Mussolini, they do not explicitly acknowledge the regional and class divisions that marked the history of the Italian-American experience. The desire to incorporate personal narratives and tell a visually and emotionally compelling story requires a local perspective; however, recognizing the particular location of the subjects of the film would have made the film even stronger.

The Italian version of the film was broadcast on Rai in 2007, two years before the English edition appeared in the United States. The Italian production is particularly significant. For too long the history of Italian emigrants has been marginalized within Italian historiography. Scholars have focused on the economic, political, and social impact of emigration and repatriation but have only rarely considered the experiences of the migrants who settled overseas as part of the history of Italy. As Italy struggles to make room for a new generation of immigrants, *Pane amaro* offers a well-timed reminder to Italians of the violence and pain inherent in a migrant's journey from outsider to insider.

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Ho fatto il mio coraggio.

By Giovanni Princigalli.

Héros Fragiles Cinéma Art Culture & Production, 2009.

50 minutes. DVD format, color.

Love letters and photographs sent across thousands of miles are valuable cultural artifacts that have spurred the imaginations of countless women and men in their thoughts (and dreams) about marriage and migration. Montreal-based Italian-Canadian filmmaker Giovanni Princigalli transforms these memories into visual life stories in his documentary film *Ho fatto il mio coraggio* (I got up my courage). To view this documentary is to gaze through a stream of filmic poetry and catch a glimpse of humanity in a myriad of constellations. Princigalli's profound sensitivity and respect for his theme and interviewees are acutely rendered in his visual style that gives center stage to the experiences retold by Italian-Canadian women and men. Filmed mostly on the premises of the Conseil Régional des Personnes Agées Italo-Canadiennes (Regional Senior Council for Italian Canadians), the Centro Donne Italiane di Montreal (Italian Women's Centre of Montreal), and in the migrants' homes, the film features women and men who emigrated from Italy's southern regions (Abruzzo, Apulia, Campania, and Molise) to Montreal in the 1950s and 1960s, the decades that saw the highest concentration of Italians immigrating to Canada.

While the film does not discuss immigration policy and statistics on Italian postwar migration to Canada, some background knowledge is useful here. In the decades following World War II, over half a million men, women, and children arrived from Italy to settle in cities such as Montreal, Thunder Bay, Toronto, and Vancouver and in

mining, pulp mill, and paper mill towns in other parts of the country. On May 1, 1947, Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King issued a frequently quoted directive on Canada's postwar immigration policy that included the sponsoring of close relatives. This long-term program was without precedence in promoting immigration to Canada. For thousands of Italian men and women, it was the key that opened the opportunity to move to "America" – which in this case meant Canada. Many of these first immigrants were single men who returned to Italy in search of Italian wives or prompted family members back home to find a suitable wife for them. As several of the life stories in the film show, once a match was found between a prospective husband and wife, a request for marriage would typically follow. Shortly after, with her papers in order, the wife would arrive in Montreal and begin living her married life alongside a man she knew barely, if at all.

Such was the fate of thousands of women who married by proxy and eventually immigrated to Canada. As some of the women in the film recall, this arrangement did not always result in happy endings. Many women suffered and were bound to a life that was burdened by hard work, husbands' jealousies and control, and little personal freedom. For others, married life in Canada brought its share of satisfactions and happiness. The film reminds us that the dream of going to "America" in the immediate postwar years for many working-class Italian women and men represented an opportunity for personal and economic betterment. In fact, as several women in the film recall, many had declined marriage proposals from young men in their hometowns for the chance of marrying *un americano* – an Italian immigrant man in Canada or the United States who, interestingly enough, came to embody the mythical American dream.

In the 1950s and 1960s, when such marriage proposals were being negotiated between families, letters were the most popular form of communication, aside from rare visits, telegrams, photographs, and even rarer telephone calls. In Princigalli's film, we are acutely reminded of the declarations of marriage that at times preceded formal unions between couples. As Antonietta reads aloud the letter she and her father had received from her prospective husband over fifty years ago – beginning with the words "Carissima fidanzata, ho ricevuto la tua fotografia e mi affido con affetto al nostro matrimonio . . ." (Dearest fiancée, I received your photo and I am affectionately committed to our marriage . . .), viewers are struck by the excitement with which Antonietta reads it juxtaposed with the formal language, words of affection, and the seriousness of the assumed lifelong commitment woven into the letter's content. What is also underscored in watching and listening to the letter being reread is that in working-class families, a marriage agreement was not reached solely by the two individuals involved. Instead, for most families, marriage was a collective enterprise that involved the close collaboration – locally and transnationally – of the couple's immediate and extended families. The letter, its reading aloud, the accompanying photographs, and memories recollected by both husband and wife lead viewers to conclude that their marriage has fulfilled the promise of a happy life together. The intensity in the voices of some of the women and men in the film describing their immigrant and romantic love experiences – memories inherently nestled in a youthful past – while they are cooking, driving, eating, and engaging in discussions with their cohorts renders the experiences of mobility and romance as tangible. In short, by juxtaposing quotidian activities with storytelling, Princigalli astutely bridges the distance between film and audience – and makes the stories of these ordinary folks palpable and relational to his audience.

Interestingly, Princigalli's film traces the personal trajectories of women and men beyond their thoughts on marriage and migration experiences in Canada. Extensive film footage of southern Italian towns and Italian-Canadian life in the postwar era, accompanied by gorgeous photography, complement the life experiences described by these women and men. Thematically, the film follows life-course events in the individuals' stories—moving from their arrival in Canada, their working lives in Montreal's textile industry, the rituals and traditions some have carried with them all their lives (as in the case of Lina from Apulia, who has continued the tradition she learned as a young girl in Italy, baking small breads and donating them to friends, family, and visitors in the spirit of Saint Anthony), the beginning of militant labor movements, and the development of the Italian Communist Party in Montreal. In addition, the film offers us these women's and men's thoughts about return trips to Italy, their current, everyday lives (for most, in retirement), and their reflections about death.

It is specifically on the theme of death that I have reservations. While I appreciate the documentary's focus on Italian women's lives in Montreal, I wonder if it was necessary to conclude the film on the theme of death and dying. Perhaps, a more effective ending would have attributed more time and space to the women's and men's own children and grandchildren, and led the audience to think about how subsequent generations of Italians in Montreal experience and reflect on their parents' immigrant lives in Canada. This perspective would have concluded the film with expressions of hope and continuity, as opposed to decline and death. In so doing, it would also have underscored a historical and cultural appreciation of immigrant recollections, and the faces behind them. On another point, the interviews and life stories selected for the film provide a vivid and no less genuine portrait of many first-generation Italian immigrants in Montreal. However, more attention to the context of individual life stories and to the film's overall scope and narrative approach would have contributed to a more complex portrait of the women's and men's lives and worlds. This film is the first of Princigalli's two documentaries on women's lives in movement and the tools of communication they employ to carry on: The second, *Les Fleurs à la fenêtre* (The flowers at the window) (2010), is about women in Cameroon and their desire to seek out a better life by turning to the Internet as a door to marriage opportunities.

Anchored in a theme that is globally pertinent today as it was during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the documentary film *Ho fatto il mio coraggio* should be viewed not only by students and scholars interested in migration studies and human mobility but also by wider audiences who no doubt will be moved by the life stories of these women and men. This film joins Paul Tana and Bruno Ramirez's *Caffè Italia* (1989), also about Italian Canadians, and other documentaries that have inspired historians, artists, and other scholars to appreciate migration and mobility as an inherent part of our humanity.

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