

CHIARA FRANCESCA FERRARI
California State University, Chico

Cinema and *Sassi*: Urban development and film-induced tourism in Matera and Basilicata

ABSTRACT

The article discusses the impact that cinema has had on the Città dei Sassi/the City of Stones throughout its recent history, specifically on its preservation and touristic development against the odds of its southern backwardness. This article provides a comprehensive look at the phenomenon of urban development and film-induced tourism through the use of a variety of sources that cover a wide spectrum of fields: Materan architecture, preservation and urban development, cultural and anthropological texts, theoretical discourses about the evocative and symbolic power of film location, economic discussions about film tourism and documents about policy-making and tourism in Matera and the region Basilicata. In particular, the article explores three films that have significantly contributed to the exposure of Matera in the national and international arena: Pier Paolo Pasolini's The Gospel (1964), Mel Gibson's The Passion (2004), and Rocco Papaleo's Basilicata Coast to Coast (2010).

KEYWORDS

Matera
Basilicata
Italian cinema
film tourism
film location
Southern Question
Carlo Levi

1. The quote can be found in Muriel Pearson's documentary *Mel Gibson's Passion of the Christ*, produced by ABC in 2004.

2. While the quote is easy to find in a number of recent promotional publications and press releases about film-induced tourism in Basilicata, information about the original context of the quotes is hard to pinpoint. Pasolini's quote was found in a brochure published by Regione Basilicata titled 'Basilicata A Film Set' (2008), which testifies to the continuous efforts put forward by the local administration to use cinema as a promotional tool for tourism (available online: http://www.visitbasilicata.nl/manual_upload/brochures/Basilicata%20als%20filmlocatie.pdf, accessed 2 March 2015). The publication is in English, therefore the quote by Pasolini was translated (by an unknown author).

3. Unless otherwise indicated, all other translations from the original Italian are mine.

4. Matera's leading cultural role in the South of Italy has a precedent: in 1993 Matera was the first southern Italian city to be proclaimed a UNESCO Heritage Site (together with the Park of the Rupestrian Churches), at a time when only seven Italian cities – all in the north and central areas of the country – had made the prestigious list. Information about Heritage sites (including criteria for their selections) can be found on UNESCO website: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>, accessed 19 March 2015.

The first time I saw Matera I lost my mind, because it was simply perfect.

(Gibson 2004)¹

Miserable, plain, poverty-stricken places, not spectacular at all. And yet, quite sacred.

(Pasolini 2008)²

The year 2014 was particularly significant for the city of Matera: it marked the 50th anniversary of the release of Pier Paolo Pasolini's masterpiece *Il Vangelo secondo Matteo/The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964) as well as the tenth anniversary of Mel Gibson's controversial film *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), both shot among the renowned Sassi di Matera (ancient cave dwellings, proclaimed UNESCO Heritage Site in 1993).³ As a consequence, a variety of celebrations, exhibitions, screenings, tours, cultural events and conferences were organized in Matera throughout the year to showcase the city's influential cinematic heritage and its persistence in contemporary culture and memory. In tandem with these events was the relentless work put forward by the many local committees supervising the nomination for European Capital of Culture for 2019. Matera, along with Cagliari, Lecce, Perugia, Ravenna and Siena, was one of the six finalists for the prestigious award.

On 17 October 2014 the European Commission announced Matera as the winner via the Italian Minister for Culture and Tourism, Dario Franceschini. The victory of Matera as European Capital of Culture is an exceptionally significant one for two major reasons. As a consequence of the publication of Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli/Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1950) and during the political campaign for Italy's General Elections of 1948 held to select the first Parliament, Matera was seen and exploited – by politicians and critics alike – as a symbol of peasant misery and the backwardness of the South (Parmly Toxey 2011: 52–53). Publicly defined as 'vergogna nazionale' (national shame) in 1948 by Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti (Parmly Toxey 2011: 53) and more broadly by the national Press, Matera underwent a drastic process of redevelopment in the following two decades (1950s and 1960s). Discussed and publicized by the State as a dynamic intervention in the goal towards of modernization of the South, 'Matera became the case study for the solution of the Southern Question' (Parmly Toxey 2011: 53).

Furthermore, Matera is the first southern Italian city to ever receive the European Capital of Culture Award (Anon. 2014). In the words of Matera's former Mayor Salvatore Adduce, 'This recognition is not only a victory for Matera, but for the entire South' (Anon. 2014). The recognition as European Capital of Culture for 2019, represents a proud comeback for a city that 'came to symbolize the state of indigence in southern Italy, and served as a paradigm for meridionalismo [southernness]' (Scrivano 2005: 318), but was recently defined by *Smithsonian Magazine* as 'Europe's most dramatic story of rebirth' (Perrottet 2014).⁴

Although at times problematic and reductive, the cinematic connection between Matera and the South is an important one: both Italian and foreign film-makers have managed to capture and reproduce the southern spirit that Matera embodies in the frames of their films, creating a collective image of a symbolic visual and narrative South. This article discusses the impact that cinema has had on the Città dei Sassi/the City of Stones throughout its recent history, specifically on its preservation and touristic development against the

odds of its alleged southern backwardness. This article also provides a comprehensive look at the phenomenon of urban development and film-induced tourism through the use of a variety of sources that cover a wide spectrum of information, including, among others: Materan architecture, preservation and urban development, cultural and anthropological texts, theoretical discourses about the evocative and symbolic power of film location, economic discussions about film tourism and documents about policy-making and tourism in Matera and Basilicata. Additionally, the article aims to fill a variety of gaps in the research concerning Matera (and the broader region Basilicata) and its cinematic legacy. It provides an analysis of some of the films that have offered visual evidence of the conditions of Matera, have facilitated State intervention on its territory and architecture and have strongly promoted tourism in its locations. In the next section, this article will explain film-tourism in depth and explore three films that have significantly contributed to the exposure of Matera in the national and international arena: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel* (1964) was instrumental in maintaining the discussion about the preservation of the Sassi di Matera alive within the Italian government, Mel Gibson's *The Passion* (2004) initiated a significant flow of international tourists to Matera and Rocco Papaleo's *Basilicata Coast to Coast* (2010) opened up Basilicata to massive flows of Italian tourists.

While the literature published in Italian about Matera and its cinematic history is fairly broad and well established, there is a general lack of discussion about the link between Matera's cinema and its urban development. In addition, scholarship written in English on the subject is scarce. The few sources available in English mostly discuss individual films as opposed to a comprehensive historical overview of the cinematic influence on the city of Matera and on Basilicata. Those single films tend to be either Pasolini's *The Gospel* or Gibson's *The Passion*, therefore the scholarship in English offers analyses that oftentimes discuss the films from the perspective of religious studies, not of film studies. Lastly, there is an overall problem with the Italian literature on this topic: the sources about Matera and its film history often read exclusively as encyclopaedic chronological accounts of the different films shot in Matera and Basilicata. In other words, these sources provide valuable information about locations and specific movies, but they rarely propose a systematic analysis of the cultural, narrative and ideological elements that these films share, or the reasons why Matera and Basilicata offer the ideal locations for their representations.

MATERA: FILM LOCATION AND FILM (INDUCED) TOURISM

Cucco and Richeri identify three different kinds of economic effects caused by audio-visual productions on a given territory: direct, indirect and induced effects (2013: 105). The direct effects are those 'generated by the local purchase of both goods and services by the production company working on a given film (transportations, catering, local practitioners, extras, etc.)' (2013: 105). Indirect effects are strictly related to the direct outcomes just described, and include the materials purchased by local companies 'to provide products and services to a given film company (various materials purchased to assemble the set, food for the catering)' (2013: 105). Induced effects are harder to quantify and include 'increasing consumption generated by the increase in profits among local producers and suppliers and tourist flows stimulated by the various cinematic representations landscape, cultural, social of the territory' (2013: 105). As far

5. Anne Parmly Toxey discusses how 'talk of change and of ways to solve the Sassi Question transformed into physical action in the 1950s' when Matera's citizens were evacuated into the modern housing provided by the government. What was originally planned as a six-year project, however, 'grew to several decades, and the accommodation in new housing of an ill-defined number of residents among the Sassi's 16,000 inhabitants grew to the accommodation of 20,000' (2011: 103).

6. Together with *Basilicata Coast to Coast*, they cite: *Notting Hill* (Michell, 1999) and *In Bruges* (McDonagh, 2008).

7. Acqua Traverse in *Io non ho paura/I'm Not Scared* (2003) by Gabriele Salvatores is a made-up name; the name Accettura was used instead of the real Accettura for Lucio Fulci's giallo *Non si sevizia un Paperino/Don't Torture a Duckling* (1972); Matera is often portrayed as Jerusalem in the many nativity movies or as Guernica in Fernando Arrabal's *L'Arbre de Guernica/The Tree of Guernica* (1976).

as *The Gospel*, the induced effects are not necessarily related to the fostering of film tourism per se, but have more to do with the impact the film and Pasolini himself had in promoting a plan for the safeguard and urban redevelopment of the stone dwellings. Data is available for both *The Passion of the Christ* and *Basilicata Coast to Coast*, which allow to quantify the changes in tourist flow after the release of each film. In relation to *The Gospel*, this article relies more on the discourses developed in the press and in government policy documents at the end of the 1960s that shed light on the decisions for the new urban plan for Matera after its evacuation in the 1950s.⁵

Before delving into the specific role that each film played in shaping contemporary Matera, the concept of film tourism needs to be properly defined and clarified in all its aspects. Cucco and Richeri (2013: 110) add nuances to the discussion of film tourism and problematize the term itself. The authors argue that the term film-induced tourism is better suited to capture the different characteristics that each case of movie-motivated tourism offers. The term also implies that a tourist's choice is not always exclusively related to the cinematic representation of a given location, but needs to be met by dynamic local tourist policy and infrastructures able to sustain the tourist flow.

John David Rhodes and Elena Gorfinkel pose the following questions: 'When do places matter, and when do they not? How does a specific location allow itself to be subsumed as background, and how can it resist such subsumption?' (2011: xii). In the case of Matera, the answer is complex: the city and region have always served as a very unique iconographic background for a variety of movies, and yet they have generally remained anonymous until 2010 with the release of *Basilicata Coast to Coast*, which clearly identifies the region in its title and promotes the territory throughout its narrative. Cucco and Richeri discuss the concept of 'naming placement' (2013: 112) within movie titles in the promotional efforts towards film-induced tourism.⁶

In the case of Matera and Basilicata, the actual geographical locations are rarely, if ever, mentioned in the film titles and narratives. Matera and Basilicata are never revealed as specific and recognizable locations in movies: the names of the location are either invented based on real places, but modified for the sake of moral concerns, substituted with real locations, or simply never mentioned.⁷ More often, the locations are chosen for the powerful visual significance they evoke, and are portrayed 'metaphorically' as an ontological idea of South, but are not promoted as specific real locations that can be visited.

Enrico Nicosia helps clarify the important relation between film and location: 'a film needs a location for an essentially material reason – to give a context to the narration – and for an aesthetic reason, to make sure the location is coherent with the screenplay, and possibly is able to enhance it' (2012: 55). And he also states,

the first concern of film criticism is usually to verify the likelihood of representation in comparison with the location where the film is shot. A film and its location are judged on the basis of the ability to reproduce a situation that must be replaced and utilized as if it were real.

(Nicosia 2012: 23)

Nicosia looks for authenticity and for a direct correspondence between real territory and film location to determine the validity of cinema as a realist geographical and photographic tool. Maria Luisa Fagiani moves away from the strict concept of authenticity arguing that 'it does not seem to have the same

weight in the case of “movie-induced tourism,” which gladly accepts unreal and hyper-real experiences where replica and reality merge’ (2008: 233).

Considering that Matera has been repeatedly utilized in film to represent a generic South or Palestine (among other locations), speaking of authenticity about Matera’s territory in relation to its cinematic representation is paradoxical, to say the least. The problem of authenticity is not only practical, but also theoretical. Gorfinkel and Rhodes challenge the traditional concept of the ‘photographic medium’ as the ‘medium of truth’ (2011: x) and invite viewers to look at cinema ‘as a text, or as an instance of speech, language act, code, etc.’ (2011: x).

In relation to Lucania, the broader southern territory that includes Basilicata,⁸ such ‘codes’ are interpreted through the picturesque lens of folklore and the stereotypical view of southern backwardness. This lens and these codes are fundamental tools to understand what kind of cinema was shot in Basilicata and why its locations remained anonymous. The following section offers an anthropological trajectory that contextualizes elements of *meridionalismo* within Lucania’s cinema and helps readers to understand the framework in which Pasolini’s *The Gospel* was produced, and the kind of stylistic and ideological tradition to which it belongs.

THE TRADITION OF MERIDIONALISMO

One of the first and most intriguing motifs found in the films shot in Basilicata reveals a land of folklore, magic rituals and cultural practices emblematic of an archetypical idea of southern misery. It is the case, for example, of Brunello Rondi’s *Il Demonio/The Devil* (1963), a story of exorcism in rural southern Italy, which offers a grim view (albeit in a visually stunning realistic style) of a region still plagued with superstition. Morreale discusses how the cinematic image of Lucania in the post-war era, with the exception of Levi’s *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1950), was not shaped by a strong literary tradition – as it happened for Sicily and Naples – but instead was modelled after the dedicated work of anthropologists (2005: 218–19). In the aftermath of World War II, a number of anthropologists visited and studied Lucania to document such folklore and the harsh conditions that peasants had to endure before Matera’s and Basilicata’s new urban planning and redevelopment. Among them, it is imperative to name Ernesto De Martino and Friedrich G. Freidmann. Writing in the early 1950s as part of a Fulbright-sponsored research project, Freidmann described southern misery as ‘more than a set of material conditions’ (1953: 220). He saw poverty as a ‘philosophic outlook’, explored the ‘nobility of the [peasants’] response’, and argued that ‘a sense of primitive speculative realism, of acceptance of the unavoidable, of recognition of an established order – both natural and moral – pervades the people’s life’ (1953: 220). Also according to Freidmann, ‘for the peasants of Calabria and Lucania the possibility of constructing and directing their own social, political and economic life does not exist. The cosmic order is not perceived as a stimulus to do, but as an *admonition to accept*’ (1953: 221, emphasis added).

While Freidmann portrays Lucania as a land void of change and rooted in the resilient acceptance of its own destiny, De Martino proposes an account of peasant life strongly ingrained in Gramsci’s teachings and highly influenced by Carlo Levi’s *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1950), specifically his descriptions of magic rituals and archaic cultural practices. De Martino offers a highly ideological explanation to the folkloric dimensions of Lucania, arguing how such rituals ‘constitute elements of an ideological and institutional construction rooted

8. Lucania was an ancient territory situated in Southern Italy. It included the territories of Campania, Samnium (current Abruzzo and Molise) and Apulia.

9. The Southern Question, discussed by Antonio Gramsci among other authors, philosophers, politicians, and sociologists, is an economic and political debate that originated in Italy and looked at the conditions and destiny of the South after the country's unification in 1861. In 1873, Giustino Fortunato wrote:

That a 'Southern Question' exists, in economic and political terms, no one doubts any longer. There is, between the North and South of the peninsula, a great disproportion in the realm of human activities, in the intensity of collective life, in the results and modes of productions, and, therefore, because of the intimate ties that run between a people's wealth and their soul, also a profound difference among their habits, customs, and their intellectual and moral world.

(1911: 311–12)

in a real *psychological misery*, itself related to socio-economic backwardness' (1975: 147, emphasis added). De Martino, an activist and active member of the southern working class, cannot separate himself from the struggle of southern peasants and revisits his ethnographic approach, realizing how his '*theoretical* interest in understanding the primitive originated from [his] *practical* interest in participating in its real liberation' (1975: 46, emphasis added).

The early films shot in Lucania (from 1949 to the 1970s) offer visual evidence of these anthropological studies and ideological struggles. Gian Piero Brunetta discusses the visual paradigm of meridionalism in relation to Francesco Rosi's adaptation of *Christ Stopped at Eboli* (1979), shot in Craco, an abandoned ghost town in the province of Matera:

If Leonardo Sciascia had spoken of *sicilitudine* ... or the reconsideration of Sicily as a reality ... capable of becoming a paradigm and topological space with universal characteristics, for Rosi one could talk of *meridionalitudine*, or a totality of modes of thinking and acting characteristic of a circumscribed geographic reality.

(Brunetta in Di Salvo and Hilliker 2002: 122, original emphasis)

The quote should not be limited to Rosi's film, but might as well refer more broadly to every film shot in Lucania. Morreale provides a meaningful explanation to this unusual characteristic:

The cinematic image of Lucania has historically lacked strong 'visual paradigms,' powerful images that could function as immediately recognizable [traits] for a location, as true signs [...] Seemingly, Lucania has no specificity in cinema that cannot be extended to the entire South.

(2005: 215)

By offering a 'neutral' scenery, void of identifiable landmarks, Lucania has long provided an ideal stage for stories that discuss and portray peasant life and the accompanying social struggles. This tendency is not limited to cinema, but finds important precedents in the post-war rhetoric both politics and media adopted to discuss the problems of the South (mostly in relation to the North):

Matera shaped [...] into the emblem of peasant misery, or southern underdevelopment and alterity, of the third world within the first world, the step-child spawned by unification, the embarrassment of the nation, the *symbol* of the Southern Question.

(Parmly Toxey 2011: 53, original emphasis)

Carlo Lizzani's documentary *Nel Mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato/Something has Changed in the South* (1949) – released during the Assise per la rinascita del Mezzogiorno (debate for the rebirth of southern Italy) – embraces the Gramscian discussion of the 'Questione meridionale' (Southern Question)⁹ and is the first film that allows Matera to be shown nationally on the big screen (Anon. 2013). Denouncing the conditions of Basilicata and the South, the voice-over narration talks about 'The tragedy of the South', defines Matera as 'the tragic Stone of Matera', and reiterates how, 'the war added new tragedies to a tragedy, new miseries to an ancient misery'. In line with more

contemporary utopian theories of the South and its autonomy, such as Franco Cassano's *Pensiero Meridiano* (1996), Lizzani's documentary is not a work of art that promotes pity for an underdeveloped land, but one that praises the workers' spirit of sacrifice and organizational skills, and encourages the need for northern and southern forces of the country to work together with a fresh will for renewal.

HOW PASOLINI'S *THE GOSPEL* 'SAVED' MATERA

Interested in an ideological perspective similar to Lizzani's, Pier Paolo Pasolini adopted, fifteen years later, an analogous approach to create his masterpiece *The Gospel* (1964). Utilizing Matera as a symbolic Jerusalem, Pasolini created the ultimate work of art and ode to Matera, the one that denounced the waste of an invaluable cultural heritage and helped advocating for its process of redevelopment. To this day, *The Gospel* is discussed and remembered as the emblem of Matera's cinema, the icon of the ancestral beauty of its *Sassi*, and the engine of its rebirth. As a Marxist and an atheist, Pasolini's choice of topic was not an obvious one, nor one that satisfied his fellow contemporary Italian leftist intellectuals. The left-wing newspaper *L'Unità* reported, 'our film-maker has simply created the most beautiful film about Christ that has ever been made so far, and probably the most genuine he could conceive. He should get an objective credit for both reasons, but not an enthusiastic one' (Valente 2012). Alberto Moravia elegantly defends the ostensible ideological contradiction in Pasolini's work in a review of the film published by *L'Espresso* in 1964. Moravia points out how 'Pasolini remained faithful mostly to himself' but also 'in a very natural way, faithful to Christianity. A sort of Christianity [...] which allowed him on the one hand to highlight the revolutionary character of the Christian message, and on the other to recuperate the beauty of the Gospel' (Valente 2012).

Praising the director's style, Moravia noticed Pasolini's ability to add moments of silence in close-ups to the words of the Gospel, his talent in portraying a particularly human Christ, and in doing so, his determination to remain true to his revolutionary beliefs. Moravia also admires Pasolini for possessing 'an acute sense of the human face' and the human nature (Valente 2012). The director's ability to find and portray the right faces those that would evoke the hardships and the wrinkles of Palestinian shepherds 2000 years prior, is well documented by Domenico Notarangelo¹⁰ and in a documentary Pasolini shot during his unsuccessful location scouting in Palestine the year before the release of *The Gospel*. Notarangelo recalls Pasolini's disappointment after his exploration of the original locations, and how the director did not find what he was looking for, because Palestine was an industrialized land by the 1960s (Notarangelo, 12 September 2013, interview).

Pasolini was actually disappointed for a number of reasons. On the one hand, as Notarangelo recounts, the original Holy Land was too modernized; on the other, the film-maker found that some of the Palestinian locations were 'made of things extremely little, extremely meager, without a scenery, plain, dry, devoured by the sun' (Pasolini 1965).¹¹ While the lack of a 'set' for his film was certainly highly problematic, Pasolini's concerns went beyond practical issues: 'As far as I'm concerned, I think I completely transformed my imagination about these holy places. So, more than adapting the places to my imagination, I will have to adapt my imagination to the location' (Pasolini 1965). And imagination was what allowed Pasolini to adapt his preconceptions about the way the Holy Land should look like to Matera,

10. Domenico Notarangelo is a former journalist and photographer who worked on the set of *The Gospel*.

11. The film-maker refers here to Cafarnaum in *Sopralluoghi in Palestina per il Vangelo secondo Matteo/ Location Scouting in Palestine for The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Pasolini, 1965).

where the cave dwellings, walkways, buildings made of tuff, and surrounding nature offered him a tragically beautiful stage, filled with a millenarian culture. Similarly to De Martino, however, Pasolini's interest went beyond the theoretical and the aesthetic, and soon turned into activism. The filmmaker and poet denounced the state of abandonment in which the Sassi had been left and proclaimed: 'You are committing a crime against peasant culture!' (Fiore 2014).

Pasolini's preoccupation was shared by Carlo Levi, who had been elected to the Italian Senate in 1963. In 1966 Levi shared his concerns with the commission in charge of the new urban plan for Matera: 'the complete transfer of all citizens could turn the Sassi into lifeless neighborhoods destined, in the long run, to decay' (Valente 2007: 107). Levi argued that the 1952 redevelopment law, 'notwithstanding important and positive results, had been lacking in terms of concrete solutions for the promotion and support of Matera's economic development' (Valente 2007: 107). The commission initially refused the idea that Materan citizens wanted, at some point, to return to live in the Sassi and pushed forward its thesis that 'I Sassi could not be recovered for residential use' (Valente 2007: 108). As a consequence of the work and debates brought forward by the designated commission, two important laws were created to safeguard the Sassi. In 1971, Law 1403 allowed for the promotion of a national competition aimed at the creation of a systematic plan for the recovery of Matera's Sassi (Valente 2007: 109). In 1986, Law 771/86 allowed the Sassi to be given in sub-concession to Italian citizens, following a given set of priorities: Materan citizens who used to own the property, young married couples, associations, young entrepreneurs. The ultimate goal of the sub-concession and one of the eligibility requirements was the commitment to recovery of each given property at the expense of the concessionaire ('Legge 771/86. Regolamento per l'assegnazione'). Both laws, and the redevelopment plan that followed, brought Matera to be included in 1993 in the list of UNESCO Heritage Sites.

Quantifying the actual impact that both Pasolini's and Levi's concerns had in Matera's fate and urban development is a hard task. The rhetoric surrounding *The Gospel*, however, leaves little doubt: *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, if only for tourist promotion, is fairly consistently described as the film that saved Matera from its ruins. When Catalan actor Enrique Irazoqui, the protagonist of *The Gospel*, received Matera honorary citizenship in 2011, the city's Mayor Salvatore Adduce described the ceremony within its broader cinematic and historical context, explaining how the event was a way to celebrate the importance *The Gospel* holds for the city. 'If the extraordinary nature of the ancient tuff neighborhoods was well known among a small group of intellectuals, through Pasolini's film the debate about the Sassi was brought forward more widely' (Anon. 2011a). Irazoqui considers the ceremony nothing more than a promotional tool towards Matera's nomination for 2019 (11 March 2015, interview), and Adduce's further comments seem to confirm the actor's feelings: 'we intend to start from Pasolini to embark on a new journey: that of European Capital of Culture 2019' (Anon. 2011a).

MEL GIBSON'S *THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST*: INTERNATIONAL FILM-INDUCED TOURISM

Allegedly, the same ancestral land Pasolini had discovered to create his Jerusalem is precisely what Mel Gibson came looking for in Matera for *The Passion* (2004) 40 years later, even if he seems to reject any connection with

The Gospel. Obsessed by and unhappy with the changes the Catholic Church had gone through in the previous decades, specifically with the Second Vatican Council, Gibson's goal was to create a film that could depict Christ's suffering, and he thought that Matera was the ideal location.

The author is more interested in discussing what 'kind of city' Mel Gibson found in 2004, in comparison to the city that Pasolini found in 1964, how such differences affected the final cinematic products created by the two film-makers, and what consequences *The Passion* had on Matera's touristic promotion. Notarangelo helps answering the first two questions: the former journalist invites to look instead at what Gibson did not find (compared to Pasolini's experience). The cave dwellings had been evacuated, and Gibson had to bring to Matera extras that did not look like the Jews and the Arabs of Jesus' times (Notarangelo, 12 September 2013, interview).

Gibson's experience contrasts sharply with Levi's opening description of Lucania in *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*:

Christ never came this far, nor did time, nor the individual soul, nor hope, nor the relation of cause to effect, nor reason nor history. Christ never came, just as the Romans never came, nor the Greeks [...] None of the pioneers of western civilization brought here his sense of the passage of time.

(Levi 1950: 4)

This is a glimpse of Lucania Pasolini managed to find and document in 1964, while people were forced to move out of the cave dwellings and into the modern buildings the State was developing.

If we fast-forward history 40 years, much had changed in Matera. A process of cultural and architectural recovery allowed the city to be proclaimed UNESCO Heritage Site in 1993. As per UNESCO's guidelines, restoration of the cave dwellings must follow specific rules, the materials chosen must fit with the surrounding tuff style, and permits must be received before performing any kind of modification, as the author discussed with Materan tourist guide Cosimo Santeramo (2013). This is the clean city Gibson found in 2004, growing in restaurants and hotels, and yet still quite unknown to both domestic and international tourism. The changes in urban planning and development forced Gibson to close his lens in medium shots and close-ups to avoid revealing a modern city within the fictional Jerusalem, as compared to the wide angle shots available to Pasolini in 1964. In this respect, a striking example of the stylistic differences between the two films is the scene of Peter's denial after Christ's arrest. Pasolini shows Peter mostly in isolation, lost in a labyrinth of alleyways, and follows him with his hand-held camera keeping the Sasso Barisano as his background.¹² Gibson, on the other hand, shrinks the visual perspective, creates a parallel montage of Peter's expression and the images of Christ being tortured, and closes Peter inside a claustrophobic crowd, never opening the camera to record the surrounding location.

In addition to the visual differences, the Marxist approach is also lost in Gibson's film – the approach that was so dear to Lizzani, Pasolini and the anthropologists who studied Matera, and was instrumental to turn film into a tool for the exposure of the peasant struggle. However, Matera had changed as well, and 'the national shame had turned into tourist attraction' (Irazaqui, 11 March 2015, interview). *The Passion* was able to promote international tourism in Matera like no film had done before. Statistics suggest that international

12. The historic area of Matera's Sassi includes two major districts (rioni), Sasso Barisano and Sasso Caveoso, separated by the peak of the hill, called *civita*.

visits to the city increased by 144 per cent as a consequence of the film's release in 2004 (Anon. 2011d: 4). Carlo De Falco also claims that, as a consequence of the international flow of tourists after the release of Gibson's film, the city's lodging and entertainment structures dramatically changed as well:

While in 1999 Matera only had one youth hostel and one *agriturismo* [a style of vacationing in farm house resorts], in 2006 lodging structures [went] up to 48: 30 bed & breakfasts, 7 *agriturismi* and 8 vacation homes. Bed and breakfasts and vacation homes, in particular, are the structures that developed more widely as a consequence of Matera's international cinematic exposure.

(De Falco 2007: 6, emphasis added)

The importance of the two films, then, in relation to the city's restoration and promotion, cannot be stressed enough: Pasolini was the artist that exposed Matera's peasant beauty, and Gibson was the film-maker that made the new modern city 'visible' to the entire world (even its many artificial reconstructions).

PAPALEO'S BASILICATA COAST TO COAST: ITALIAN TOURISTS DISCOVER BASILICATA

Paradoxically, *The Passion* only helped Matera's visibility internationally. It was not until 2010, with the release of Rocco Papaleo's film *Basilicata Coast to Coast* that the region became the preferred destination of Italian tourists eager to retrace the steps of the four protagonists who walk from Maratea to Scanzano Jonico in a classic *Bildungsroman* narrative. A road movie that features four musicians and friends (Nicola, Franco, Salvatore and Rocco) who decide to cross the entire region by foot, from the Tyrrhenian to the Ionian Sea and to participate in a music festival at the end of the journey, *Basilicata Coast to Coast* is a film constructed around the traditional model of the growth and formation genre and focuses on the personal journey of each protagonist.

Looking for a more meaningful way to experience the journey from Maratea to Scanzano Jonico (where the festival takes place), the protagonists decide to walk instead of driving. The four then embark on a journey that touches different towns and local villages: Maratea, Trecchina, Lauria, Latronico, Tramutola, the Pertusillo dam, Aliano, Craco and finally Scanzano. In each town, the four protagonists, together with journalist Tropea Limongi (Giovanna Mezzogiorno), meet a variety of characters who contribute not only to the story, but also offer information about their specific hometown, including discussions about local products: bread and frittata (omelet), crusco peppers, Sarconi beans, gnumaridd (entrails rolls) and Aglianico del Vulture wine (Anon. 2011d: 9).

The same report claims how 'one way to explain the success of *Basilicata Coast to Coast* may be to consider the successful interpenetration of story and scenery in the film' (Anon. 2011d: 5). This aspect becomes evident in the very first frames and voice-over narration: Rocco Papaleo, the director-narrator, opens the film with a map of Italy missing Basilicata and confesses: 'I was born in Basilicata. Yes, Basilicata exists. It does exist. It's like the idea of God. You either believe in it, or you don't. I believe in Basilicata' (*Basilicata Coast to Coast*). The main purpose of the film is indeed to put Basilicata 'back in the picture and back on the map' both geographically and culturally, but also on a cognitive and emotional level as the characters learn about their region

while discovering their own identities. The film offers a delicate portrayal of one of the most rural regions of Italy, the same territory described by Carlo Levi as a land 'without comfort nor sweetness', a 'dark land without sin or redemption, where evil is not moral, but an earthly evil' (1950: 4), and the same land left behind by Alain Delon and his family in Visconti's masterpiece *Rocco and His Brothers* (Visconti, 1960) in search of work and a better life in the North. Papaleo, with an ironic tone, discusses a number of issues related to Basilicata's liminal position within Italian culture, and challenges such a tradition through a series of stories that remind viewers of the true role that Lucania has played in Italian history: how Carlo Levi first 'endured this land and then chose it' (*Basilicata Coast to Coast*) for his burial or how Basilicata's brigandage contributed to southern political resistance against Napoleon's conquest. In the documentary *Post Scriptum* (Papaleo, 2011), Papaleo revisits the film, exploring elements that were left out, among others: Potenza, Basilicata's vineyards, the poetry of Leonardo Sinisgalli and Matera itself.¹³ Provoked by one of the actors (Antonio Gerardi), who invites him to embark on a second, more complete journey and reminds him of how 'you made more money than *Avatar* in Basilicata', Papaleo justifies his choices: 'we always see Matera's Sassi in film!'.¹⁴

Financed by the Regione Basilicata¹⁴ with a €350,000 grant awarded for the promotion of the region's territory (Anon. 2012: 38), *Basilicata Coast to Coast* managed to create different flows of Italian tourists: among others, those interested in discovering Basilicata at large, those interested in retracing the protagonists' steps – many trekking tours developed after the film's release – and those interested in exploring a variety of film locations in the region, beyond *Basilicata Coast to Coast*. For specific data about the effects of film-induced tourism in Basilicata as a consequence of the release of *Basilicata Coast to Coast*, the Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei's invaluable research report provides information about the perception of local business owners, it describes film-related initiatives, and offers tourist opinions. Overall, the report finds that while the film promoted the territory very successfully, the local structures were not able to understand this potential, and thus failed to create a strong marketing campaign to attract tourists. Among the interviewees, '65 per cent stated that they had experienced no increase in turnover' (Anon 2011d: 16) after the film's release, which contrasts with the idea that *Basilicata Coast to Coast* represents, instead, a unique case study in film-induced tourism (Becheri and Maggiori 2015: 465). What is unique about the film's induced tourism on the region is its slow impact, noticeable more clearly in 2012 and 2013 than in the year following the film's release, thanks also to a stronger branding identity developed by the local associations for tourist promotion (Azienda di Promozione Turistica) and Regione Basilicata. While *Basilicata Coast to Coast* might not have had the same explosive impact on Italian tourists that Gibson's *The Passion* had on international tourism, what is ultimately important to notice is that Papaleo's film favored not only the desire to visit certain film locations, but also promoted the curiosity to know deeper cultural, literary and historical elements of the region.

CONCLUSION: MATERA AS A BRAND

After the celebrations for the 2019 nomination, Matera is currently involved in another cinematic epic colossal: *Ben Hur* (Bekmambetov, 2016), the remake of *Ben Hur* (Wyler, 1959). Cucco and Richeri argue that 'a territory and its landscape and architectural attractions do not constitute a *brand* or merchandise goods',

13. The documentary shot one year after the release of the film and was added as extra feature to the DVD.
14. Regione Basilicata – like other fifteen regional autonomous institutions in Italy (established by the Corte Costituzionale) – is an administrative organization that rules over the local territory, population and government. More specific information can be read in the official government bulletin (Gazzetta Ufficiale) as part of Law 87, 11 March 1953: http://www.governo.it/Presidenza/CONTENZIOSO/contenzioso_costituzionale/documentazione/L_19530311_87.pdf.

(2013: 112, emphasis added) but at the end of this article it seems inevitable to ask whether or not Matera and Basilicata have been turned into a brand and marketing tool for cinematic and touristic purposes. In this respect, Pasolini's 'revolutionary Christ' Enrique Irazoqui sheds some light on the promotional efforts put forward by Matera's local administration:

It was evident, when I went back three years ago [in the occasion of the honorary citizenship] that no one cared about *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*. It holds an instrumental value, as a tourist attraction, to achieve the award of European Capital of Culture. In 1964 we were a miracle. Now, [we are] a daily tool. In 1964 they asked me to perform miracles (quite literally). Three years ago they hoped I could serve for the nomination to European Capital of Culture.

(Irazoqui, 11 March 2015, interview)

It is no surprise that a Marxist like Irazoqui looks at the 'new' Matera unfavourably, denouncing the hypocrisy of its artificial cultural identity, based on its branding as a 'nativity film location'. In the case of Lucania and its cinema, the balance is a delicate one: they went from symbolizing the Southern struggle of the subaltern peasants to becoming part of the money making film-induced tourist industry: 'one of the quandaries of tourism is that it carries with it the seeds of its own destruction, which may contribute to (or even cause) the deterioration of communities and the environment' (Beeton 2005: 12). While it is important to understand that the magic rituals performed in the South are not necessarily and exclusively a symbol of backward misery and nostalgia, but a powerful evocative instrument for the depiction of Southern culture, it is also fundamental to look at ways in which the South is currently and rapidly evolving and to use 'caution in order to avoid being trapped in the ideology of archaism' (Lombardi Satriani in Picchi 2006: 15) and the fetishism of folklore when discussing Southern cinema and its cinematic representations.

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SUGGESTED CITATION

- Ferrari, C. F. (2016), 'Cinema and Sassi: Urban development and film-induced tourism in Matera and Basilicata', *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 4: 2, pp. 267–282, doi: 10.1386/jicms.4.2.267_1

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Chiara Francesca Ferrari is Associate Professor in the Communication Design Department at California State University, Chico, where she supervises the option in Mass Communication and teaches courses in Media Criticism, Film and Television history, and Global Media Studies. She is the author of the monograph *Since When is Fran Drescher Jewish?* (University of Texas

Press, 2011), and she is the co-editor with Michela Ardizzoni of the anthology *Beyond Monopoly. Globalization and Contemporary Italian Media* (Lexington Books, 2009). Her work has also been published in the *Journal of Film and Video*, *Global Media Journal*, *Prosopopeya*, and in the anthology *Global Television Formats*, edited by Tasha Oren and Sharon Shahaf (Routledge, 2012). In addition to Italian cinema, her research interests concern reformatting practices and audio-visual translation within global television.

Contact: Tehama Hall 205, California State University Chico, Chico, CA 95929-0504, United States.

E-mail: cfferrari@csuchico.edu

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