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Of migrant revelations and anthropological awakenings

This article analyses how otherness and a politics of affect emerge from the presence of a new Latino migration to Rome, Italy. Looking at processes around Catholic evangelisation and plural migrant itineraries, the paper argues that different and contradictory forces such as narratives of centrality and periphery are mirrored in the presence and history of the Sacred Heart. Exploring and counterposing de Certeau's ideas on migrations and mystics, and the urban as a space of enunciation, I suggest that we should explore a modality of ethnography that combines and mirrors revelatory and analytical apprehensions of the world.

Key words de Certeau, Latino migration, Catholicism, Sacred Heart, Rome, ethnographic method

Michel de Certeau has highlighted, through the analysis of early missionary and ethnographic writings, the destructive epistemic violence that Renaissance Europe exerted over the Americas. This violence, engrained in Western modernity, operates through the conversion of that which is unintelligible, oral and in the eternal present into a written, historical and reproducible text. One of the operative modes of this violence has been an act of 'poaching' that 'gives the textual artifact the energy of what it methodically eliminates' (de Certeau 1986: 167).

In the light of his analysis – developed on the basis of the study of religiosity (Buchanan 2000: 11) – I would like to explore some aspects of the scriptural violence that is implied within the meeting of Italian society with a migrant Other. The specific and historically related otherness that I refer to is about Latino and Mexican migrants in Rome and the mirroring of different forms of evoking the heart, including the Sacred Heart. The epistemic violence I explore here is at the interface of official and popular expressions of Catholicism and the emergence of practices, in the migratory process, that shape multiple and contrasting aspects of Catholic subjecthood. Methodologically this paper addresses this articulation via a particular prism of a 'day in my fieldwork diary', and related ethnographic reflections which were present, in a fractal scale, that day.¹

1 I refer here to Marilyn Strathern's notion of fractals and scales, where she argues that it is the counterposition of ethnographic details through different magnifying levels and perspectives that opens up interesting and new understandings of that same ethnographic material (Strathern 1991: xx–xxi).

Moreover, I argue that this ethnographic prism allows for an interrogation of an anthropological apprehension of the world that emerges from historically located synergies of *seeing* and *gazing* (see below). At the same time, this ethnographic prism develops through an engagement with de Certeau's understandings of migration and the mystics together, as illuminating each other.² By revisiting and narrating the encounters of that situated ethnographic process, I also want to explore certain epistemological and ontological questions around the nature of our anthropological endeavour. The broad questions I attempt to address are: can anthropological engagements apprehend reality from a revelatory perspective? How is the translation between ethnographic encounters and anthropological narratives challenged and also transformed by multiple modalities of apprehension? And, finally, is it important to address now, in a time of increasing religious fundamentalisms, how the sacred – as a mode of apprehension – intersects with our anthropological understandings of the social and the political?

Like other countries of Western Europe, Italy is becoming a nation of immigration. In the period between 1991 and 2002 the estimated presence of immigrants in Italy has nearly doubled to over 1.6 million (Caritas 2003: 6). Rome has over 300,000 immigrants, more than 10% of its entire population, led by Romanians, Philipinos, Albanians and Peruvians (Brogi 2005; Roma and Caritas 2005). Moreover Caritas, projecting the data for the 2004–2006 immigrant influx, estimates that, by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, Italy will be second only to Germany for immigration in Western Europe (Caritas/Migrantes 2006). Emerging literature on legal and illegal migration in Italy attempts to understand the specificities of this migration through regional variations of different migrants' insertions into the labour market (Ambrosini 2001). With the exception of Spain, however, little research has been done on the presence of Latinos in Italy and Southern Europe (special issue of *Studi Emigrazione* 2004; OMI 2005).

In Italy the lack of political stability in the alliances between a large number of political parties has hampered the formulation and implementation of coherent and stable immigrant and asylum seeker legislation (Danese 2001), and recurrent crises in Berlusconi's government are not improving the picture. The Bossi-Fini law approved in 2002 has shortened the period for immigrants' search for new employment, as well as tightening rules and regulations around family reconciliation and asylum seeking, which cut across the whole body of migration, both from under-industrialised and industrialised countries (Artoni 2005). Nonetheless, the left-wing coalition that rules the municipality of Rome (headed by the mayor of the city, Walter Veltroni) has promoted more sympathy toward migrants, in contradistinction to the national government coalition in power until April 2006 – headed by Silvio Berlusconi – where the Northern League played a central role.

2 In his words: 'The fact that the mystics enclosed themselves in a circle of 'nothingness' capable of being an 'origin' is to be explained, first of all, by their having being caught up in a *radical* situation they took seriously. They have translated that situation into their texts, not only in the relation an innovative truth bears throughout with the pain of a loss, but, more explicitly, in the social figures that dominate their discourse, those of the madman, the child, the illiterate. It is as if, in our own day, the eponymous heroes of knowledge were the fallen members of our society – old people, immigrants, or the 'village idiot' who, says Simone Weil, 'truly loves truth, because instead of 'talents' favoured by education, he has this 'genius' that is 'nothing but the supernatural virtue of humility in the realm of thought'' (de Certeau 1992: 24–5).

In a politically unstable scenario, Catholic voluntary associations operate in place of a weak state migrant welfare system. A marriage between a Catholic notion of charity and a left-wing notion of solidarity has shaped the action of non-profit voluntary organisations dealing with non-EU migrants. Among others, the Scalabrinian³ intervention plays a central part in both translating emergent migrant demands for social and labour inclusion, and also turning the migrant Other into a recognisable Catholic subject through evangelisation. The majority of the Latino population in Rome (I refer particularly to Ecuadorians, Peruvians, Colombians and Bolivians) find employment in the cleaning industry, housekeeping and in caring for the elderly (the role of *badanti*⁴). Because of ‘common’ Catholic roots and the labour niche they fill, Latinos can be perceived in public discourse as distant siblings rather than ‘migrant others’, sharing with Italians, in a loose sense, a common *Latinidad*. But in practice not all Latinos share the same *Latinidad*. In fact, Mexicans in Rome seem slightly different. Among documented migrants, and in comparison to other Latino populations, Mexicans have the highest number of visas granted for study and religious training, and show a lower level of migrant family reunification. Nevertheless, there is a growing number of Mexicans who enter the country on a tourist visa, and when overstaying, find employment in the abovementioned industries. Mexicans can be perceived by other Latinos as *aceite* (oil). In the words of a Nicaraguan women’s labour organiser: Mexicans feel superior, ‘they are like oil, and they want to float above water’, and ‘Mexican women are often the ones who are married to Italians’ and ‘do not want to mix with us’. This tension is reflected in the fact that few Mexicans attend Santa Maria della Luce in Trastevere – the head-church of the Latin American Mission (LAM) in Rome (see below) – and a well-organised group called ‘The Comunidad Católica Mexicana’ has set up their own meeting group, separate from the LAM in the near by Jesuit Church of the Caravita.

These are clearly only some of the tensions that permeate the ‘unity’ of the Catholic missions and dioceses that deal with Latino migrants in Rome. There are tensions around differences in legal and illegal status, religious and secular affiliation, the degree of insertion into temporary and legal labour markets and Italian family networks: in short there are signs of strains between different Latino embodied and racialised migrants’ itineraries of religious, secular, symbolic and material accumulation. If I were to describe different Latino migratory trends in Rome via a comparative and descriptive mode I would focus on national groups’ specificities, ‘migrant communities’, their labour demography and the different or overlapping social organisations that emerge at the interface with the Italian labour market and civil society. I would also pay more attention to the globalised forces that make different transnational female labour experiences similarly dislocated and exploited in very dissimilar post-industrial nation-states (Italy being one, see Salazar Parreñas 2001: 15). In this essay, however, I am trying to explore

- 3 The Scalabrinian order – founded in 1887 by Giovanni Battista Scalabrini – is the only order in the Catholic Church which is entirely and exclusively dedicated to migration, and has projects that operate both in receiving and sending societies. The order was originally founded to attend Italian migrants to the Americas at the turn of the 20th century, and its interest now is on migration and mobility worldwide, with a particular emphasis in the Americas, Western Europe, Australia and South East Asia.
- 4 This is the official and constitutionally recognised name that in Italy is given to a new labour figure. *Badare* in Italian means to look after, *badante* is the person who looks after young, old or sick people. She/he can be either living in or living out, but the former option is more common.

a parallel field, which is not exhausted by a descriptive and comparative mode that tends to produce, through its mode of inquiry, a migrant 'community' as an 'object' of study.

My resistance to a description which fits into a 'neat' idea of 'migrants' community' is inspired by de Certeau's conceptualisation of migration through the study of ethnographic narratives in the plural. De Certeau refers to migrants as those who '[teach] us to circulate in our language and our customs, and [adapt] to our material and symbolic universe' (de Certeau and Giard 1997a: 133) and again: 'all we have to do is invent with them [the migrants] a "culture in the plural" in offering them the condition of a *plurality of mixed itineraries* that are diverse, changing and constantly being re-shaped' (1997a: 134).

De Certeau uses the concept of cultural swarm as an ensemble of that which proliferates at the margins. In a way, he undermines the concept of 'migrant communities' in favour of one of 'migrant itineraries'. Questions of centres and peripheries are important to understand the relation between migrants and the hosting civil society. Migrants, migrant's imagery and the stories that unfold at the interstices between and at the peripheries of homelands and host lands are central engines, in de Certeau's view, to the 'swarming' of contemporary culture and to a necessary re-visitation of national histories. As Tim Coley reading de Certeau puts it:

Immigrants and others are best equipped to animate and mobilize these fragments ... They animate the spirits of a past, they 'punctuate' the black spaces of our culture with new and different signs, or they confer new syntactic rhythms on inaudible or banal phrasings that circulate in the speech of our everyday lives. An 'ethnic alterity' thus shares much with the deracinating effects of historical displacements. Facts bearing on the past, these 'apparent trivial relics,' have an irruptive power by concretizing what is misrepresented in the pedagogical grist of national histories'. (Tim Coley in de Certeau and Giard 1997b: 159)

Since migratory processes are about borders, they are creative as well as conflictive interstices from where to re-think society and the violence that takes place in the encounter with otherness within a nation-state. To illustrate how this point of departure illuminates Latinos migrants' itineraries in Rome, I want to tell a few stories. One is the story of a fieldwork day in Rome, with interludes that spell out what was only embryonically present that day; however, I first start with the story of a female worker whose encounters with Italian families capture some of the mirrorings of the (Sacred) Heart.

In April 2005, I spent some time with Rosa, an educated Ecuadorian woman who has been a *badante* since 2001. Her story is not uncommon. She is an educated, unmarried woman in her early 40s, who can read English. She came to Rome three years ago, after her best friend was murdered in the streets of Guayaquil, following her married sister and brother, who were already living in Rome. She has benefited from the last regularisation process in November 2002, when she obtained a *permesso di soggiorno* (residence permit) which is still valid – she is in the country legally. Before coming to Italy her siblings warned her that it would be hard: 'but nobody can conceive how hard it can be, before you arrive here'. Rosa has changed to a different living-in household every year during her four years in Rome, but she now shares a flat with her brother and sister in one of the peripheral neighbourhoods of Rome. She spends over an hour

and half on the buses to reach the family she works for by 8 am in the morning. For her the major problem in Rome is the 'humiliation of the heart'. She talks about the complexities, the abuse, the anxieties and the pettiness of the bourgeois Roman families she had lived and worked for over three years: from an older man whom she had to look after and who bothered her at night for sexual favours; to the arrogance of an old wife of an ex-general, who assumed Rosa could not read and write; to another older woman who demanded company in front of the TV until the early hours of the morning, afraid of her own solitude; to the envy of the daughter of her employer for Rosa's educational and English language skills; to Rosa's puzzlement about Italian family relations that she does not understand as she mentions the case of an older parent, who had been totally left in her care, and was hardly visited by his only son who lived around the corner.

To a certain extent Rosa, like other *badanti*, is an intimate witness of the breaking down of older structures of family care and the increasing number of older people in Italian society; her accounts are full of amusement, sadness, disbelief and a sense of 'moral superiority', since in Guayaquil 'we do take care of our *papis* [affectionate word for 'dad']'. Although her tone is often upbeat, there is much insecurity and precariousness in her life, starting from her work contract: 'they can throw you out of the house overnight, and you may not even have time to come back for your things, so it's better to not possess anything of value here'.

Her sense of powerlessness emerges from being the weak and 'disposable' link in endless Italian family sagas. Migrant workers, in their role of *badanti*, can often turn into sacrificial carriers (as those who are morally upright, but nevertheless condemned to wandering) of Italian intimate familial odysseys.

But this moral superiority is situated within specific social and labour relations, and in contingent Italian immigration policies that have made family reunions harder than in the past.⁵ When the story is about other migrants, Rosa and her mates often mention multiple relations that Latino women and men have here. Starting with Rosa's sister who is married, has a child in Ecuador and a husband in the US, but who has now got a younger and 'lazy' Peruvian boyfriend living in the house: 'Is it because people are lonely here? ... there are no roots here', Rosa asks herself. Or in the words of her Peruvian domestic worker friend, 'the heart of people is getting colder'.

My second ethnographic story is about a day in my fieldwork. On a summery day in mid-September 2004, I went to see Padre Manuel,⁶ a Mexican Scalabrinian priest, who had been put in charge of evangelising the Mexican and Brazilian migrants to Rome by the Head of the Missionary Scalabrinian Order. This province (which is composed of two nations, Italy and the UK) was named after the Sacred Heart⁷ by the Scalabrinian Order within their pastoral organisation. Padre Manuel was originally

5 As I write, Italian immigration law is under debate and scrutiny. For instance, in summer 2006 the new Prodi government proposed and approved a change to residency requirements so those who cannot claim any *jus sanguinis* – any diasporic connection to Italian ancestry – can apply for Italian citizenship. The waiting period was shortened from ten to five years. Please note that this article was written previous to any changes to the immigration law that could and hopefully will be championed by the current Prodi government.

6 All names in the paper have been changed for reasons of confidentiality.

7 These two states, together with other European states and South Africa, are part of a larger province called 'European Region of St. J. B. Scalabrini'.

running his mission from a decentred parish in the western part of Rome, but now a new and more central church has been dedicated exclusively to the whole Latino population in Rome, by a directive of the Pope (then John Paul II). The church I am concerned with, in the middle of the *barrio* Trastevere, is Santa Maria della Luce, just south of San Peter and the Holy See. It is the only church dedicated full time to the whole Latin American population, since there are other churches in the city but each one is dedicated on a part-time basis to the evangelisation of particular national groups (normally carried out through a Sunday mass in Spanish and regular Sunday *convivencias*/gatherings).

I found out, in a passing conversation with Catalina – the Peruvian churchwarden – that the original church the Pope wanted to give to LAM was Santa Cecilia. This is a so-called ‘museum church’, situated nearby in Trastevere. However, a group of archbishops challenged that decision: that church was seen as too precious. Catalina added that it is because ‘they think the migrants will ruin the place, they will spoil and dirty it’. The Catholic hierarchy did not perceive migrants as good caretakers, neither of that church nor of precious Italian church art.⁸ This is just an example of a wider tension between culture as ‘historical heritage’ and ‘culture’ as lived embodied experience that is played out in multicultural Rome – the city named *caput mundi* by some of its nostalgic and nationalistic citizens.⁹ Moreover, this tension is not confined to the politics of sacred domains, but emerges in the discourse of local authorities too.¹⁰

Michel de Certeau reminds us that we should go behind a graphic representation and apprehension of the city, often dictated by dominant parameters of immediate legibility, in this Roman case, in terms of ‘artistic’ beauty and ‘cultural heritage’. What we should engage instead is an apprehension of the city that challenges dominant registers of the visual so as to ‘[look] from the shore of legibility toward an inaccessible beyond’ (de Certeau 1984: 97). This can be done by grasping an ‘acting-out of a place’ that puts in relation different disciplinary registers and transforms walking in the city into a ‘space of enunciation’ (1984: 98). Hence, Santa Maria della Luce may not be a ‘beautiful’ church in the Roman landscape, nor a particular asset for the urban/religious ‘cultural heritage’, but it has an interesting history which now emerges through practices of migrants’ re-appropriation.

8 The recognition of the migrant population as a core priority for mainstream Catholic evangelisation in Italy is relatively new. It was only in 2003 that the Permanent Episcopalian Commission officially dedicated both diocesan and missionary resources to the evangelisation of migrant communities in Italy, creating the association of ‘Migrantes’ under the umbrella of the CEMi, (Commissione Episcopale per le Migrazioni).

9 This definition was used by a Roman citizen and representative of a local neighbourhood association during a heated neighbourhood meeting with Latino migrant representatives to discuss the contested used of a square – Piazza Mancini – which has become a weekly, ‘noisy’ gathering for Latino migrants. It is not the theme of this paper to discuss the political, racial and gendered clashes that are emerging in the use of this square, but I only point out that current immigration awakens in some neighbours long-standing, and to certain extent fascist, sentiments around a Roman civilisation.

10 This emerged in an interview with the head of the Assessorato alla Multietnicità (Council for Multi-ethnicity), Dr Franca Cohen, when she articulated her view between a promotion of Rome for its archeological, artistic and tourist *beni culturali* (cultural heritage) versus the ‘lack of culture’ of incoming Latin American migrants (and for that matter of other economic migrants) to the city (interview with the author, October 2005).

That day I discovered it was a very old church, originally founded by Santa Bonosa, a Roman heiress, possibly on the remains of an Augustinian civil Court or a Jewish tribunal (Carreras 1980: 6). The zenith of its life was in the 11th–13th centuries, when the area was highly populated by those women and men who worked in and provided services for the Holy See. It was a church of secular labourers for the papal Court. However, after the middle of 16th century the church decayed (like hundreds of other churches in Rome). Padre Manuel stresses the fact that this has always been a church of labourers, whose work, often unrecognised, was actually the engine of not only a local, but also a much larger and partially unseen urban economy. The parallel with the position of Latino labourers in Rome who are now attending this church is striking. While we were walking in the church, we stopped in front a statue that stands behind a series of national Madonna(s), which are now permanently displayed in the church.



Vergine Addolorata circa 1880. Wooden statue in Santa Maria della Luce, Rome. Photo by the author

Padre Manuel and I commented upon the hard labour and the suffering that many Latino migrant women undergo in Rome in front of an iconic representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that stands close to this representation of the *Vergine Addolorata*.

On that day in September, while I talked to Loredana, another Peruvian female helper in the church, I learnt that the church had been effectively closed to the public over a number of years, and was only re-vitalised by the settling in of Latinos in the summer of 2003. Loredana particularly emphasises the decay and dirtiness of the church before the Latino community and the Scalabrinians moved in. One evening after Easter Sunday, a few months later, she recalled huge shopping trips that Padre Manuel made regularly to one of the big shopping centres in Rome, bringing back cars ‘full of soap and everything to clean’, as well as the back pains and the sore wrists of migrant women who had helped to clean the church, its ritual silverware and the Christ on the Cross in preparation for the celebrations of Good Friday. Dirtiness and the labour of cleanliness keep on being evoked in secular and religious migrant itineraries.

Padre Manuel’s account, that day in September, continued by recalling that the name of the church, ‘de la Luce’, comes from a miracle of the apparition of the Virgin to a blind man, and the resonance that the past history of this church – as a church for labourers in the Middle Ages – has in relation to its own present: the church is now, beyond being a centre for evangelisation, a point for migrants’ insertion, or at least contact with the Italian labour market of domestic help. As we spoke I saw a few men coming into the church, carrying some furniture. Later, Catalina told me their nickname – *los pollitos* (the kittens). They are those migrant men who have come without family, without a job placement, and their insertion and competition in the current Roman labour market is much tougher than it is for women. This priest has allowed them to refurbish a little part of the sacristy; if they want, they can cook for themselves, hang around, sometimes even sleeping there if they have just arrived and lack shelter. But some of the parishioners and visiting priests do not like the smell of food spreading into the naves of the church. I realise that there is an aspect of masculinity at stake in this church’s space: it is a space that is physically carved out from view in a church that is devoted to the Virgin Mary. My question is – beyond the gendered and biased conditions of insertion into the Roman labour market – about the space that these men inhabit in a religious discourse on migrancy. The Scalabrinian evangelisation recognises women labourers as exploited, but at the same time their femininity is glorified exactly for its suffering, for the leaving behind of children and in its heroic performance of transnational labour. However, this emphasis tends to banish men’s migratory journeys to the background. For them there are not clearly available heroic references that can be called upon within the vaults of this Latin American church in Rome.¹¹

On leaving the church I walked through the streets of Trastevere and, while thinking about what Padre Manuel said, I overheard strong sexual language. It was lunchtime and I glanced at a couple that was walking past me: she looked dressed up, and from her conversation I gathered she was a foreigner, probably Western European. She was

11 Visually the interior of the Santa Maria della Luce is overwhelmingly decorated with feminine icons. There is a permanent series of Madonnas – patron-saints of different Latin American nations – on display, and the only prominent male religious iconography in the church is a representation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

gripped by an older, very well-dressed man, and I saw them disappearing behind a gate into an hourly hotel. My eye caught hers, and I felt she was probably a mistress. Having just spoken about the apparition of the Virgin Mary and the unseen female Latino labour in Rome, I was reminded of the fact that I was in one of the leading centres for entertainment and prostitution in Rome. It made me think of the erotic dimension of the heart. My mind flicked to the image of the Sacred Heart of Mary that I had just glanced upon, and to the language I had been hearing of the missionaries and diocesans in their interaction with migrant subjects. During the mass sermons of the celebration of the day of the *Fiesta Patria*, at which I assisted two days previously – or during the Latino *Via Crucis*, which I was to hear a few months later – they repetitively stress the importance of the family, the solidity of (monogamous) marriage, and the central role that migrant women play in it.

I also remember that the day before I had visited the Vatican Museum, where one of the paintings had caught my attention:



Francesco Podesti *Gesù appare alla Beata Margherita Maria Alacoque*, 1864, Città del Vaticano, Musei Vaticani.

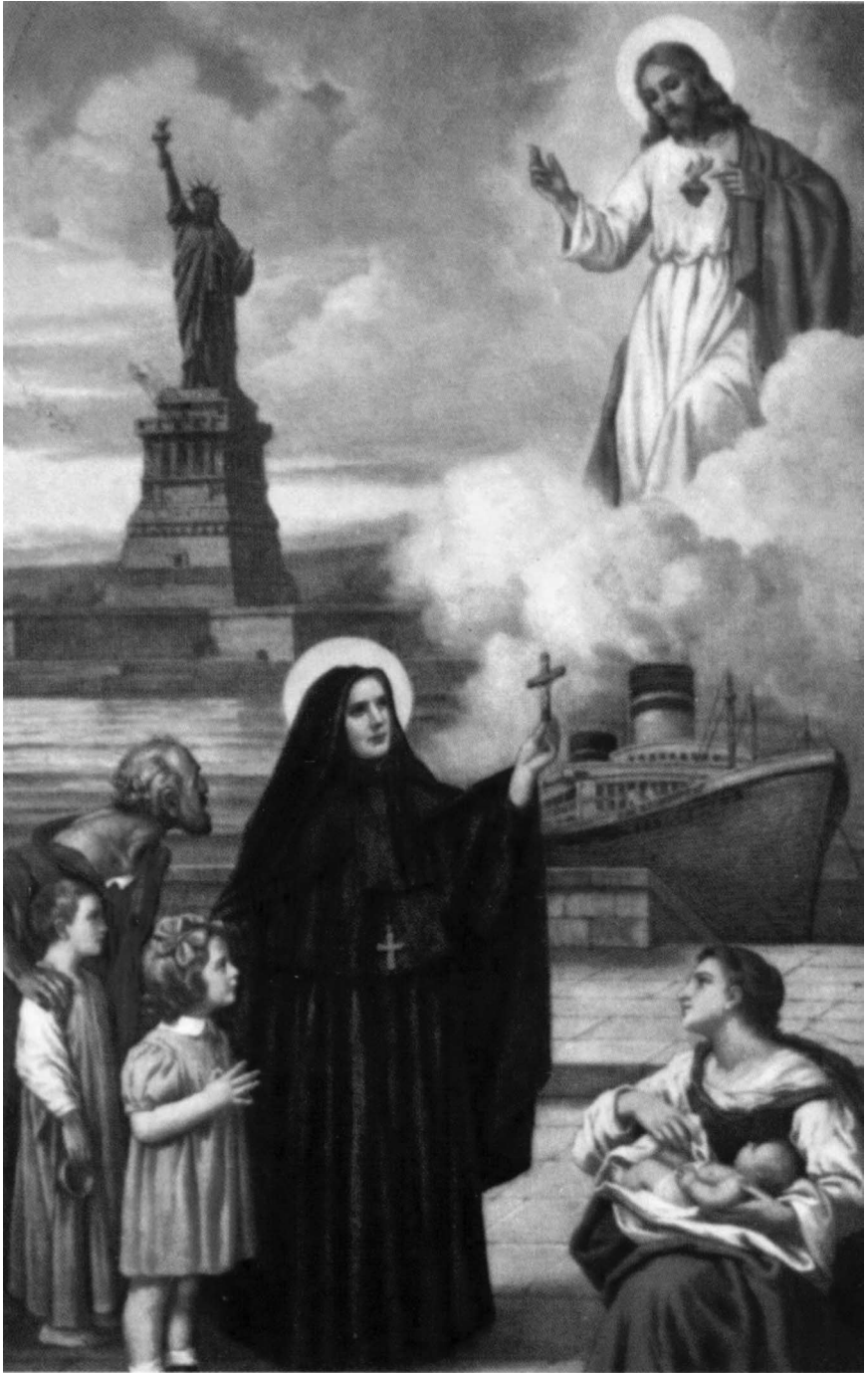
The eroticism of the image is undeniable, and erotic passion is a subdued but central dimension of the cult of the Sacred Heart. Following de Certeau, I explore the (Sacred) Heart and the ‘cooling of the heart’ (in the words of Rosa’s Peruvian friend) as possible revelations of migrant itineraries and their encounters, in the historically located Roman landscape, as a space of enunciation that may open up different registers of what is ethnographically visible. The symbolism of the Sacred Heart has a long history from its early apparitions to French saint Marguerite Marie Alacoque in the 1680s, to its usage

as a protective symbol during the outbreak of plague in 1720s Southern France, to wide circulation as a counter-revolutionary and counter-secularist symbol after the French Revolution and during the early Republic. This symbol emerged against secularist histories that were part of the project of nation-state modernity and the supremacy of secular powers over Catholic religious and mystical ones (Jonas 2000). In Paris the cult of the Sacred Heart grew around the contestation of the building of the Basilica of the Sacré-Coeur and its symbolism as a site of martyrdom that embraced both conservative *ancien régime* impulses and communard revolutionary attempts (Harvey 1989). Paradoxically, in a 'strange quirk of fate', the basilica openly commemorated martyrs of the right, and unwittingly 'in its subterranean depths a martyr of the left' (Harvey 1989: 222).¹² From its inception, the Sacred Heart was an embodied, verbal and visual 'living image' (Mitchell 2005: 10) that contained and called upon both official and unofficial histories. Throughout Catholic history, it also stirred theological fears by evoking in believers 'improper' reifications of earthly, passionate and popular sentiments rather than 'appropriate' teaching about Christ's humanity (Manning Stevens 1997: 275).

Moreover, the histories of the early female saints that championed the need for the Church's (male) establishment to embrace such devotions reveal interesting tensions. Firstly, the cult of the Sacred Heart has historically worked as a call for 'the chosen' people in moments of historical and devotional upheaval. Secondly, it has been a call for a bodily and intimate experience of the divine, the love of Christ in particular: through the symbolic door of Christ's wound, believers could reach the dwelling of the divine heart incarnated in a human form. This symbolic evocation of the divine in a human dwelling (the heart) indicates a movement from the periphery to the centre, from the un-hosted (away from the heart), through the wound, to the hosted (into the heart) (Pozzi 1993). Thus the (Sacred) Heart may then be a pregnant way to think through the sedimented affects that are intricately woven into migrant itineraries: histories of centrality, periphery and returns.

Walking through the city and witnessing migrants', mistresses' and priests' narratives awoke me to some of intricacies of the 'Heart': migrants' heart, nation's heart, transnational hearts, Catholic hearts and erotic hearts. Paraphrasing de Certeau, walking in the city becomes a space where the histories of people are 'put in motion by the remaining relics of meaning, and sometimes by their waste products, the inverted remainders of great ambitions' (de Certeau 1984: 105). On this path of remainders and historical returns, the Sacred Heart is a central symbolism not only for the Scalabrinian and the Jesuit missionary orders, but also for the order of Madre Francesca Cabrini, which founded the order of the (women) Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, in the time of the great Italian migration to the USA at the turn of the 20th century. Her work is a reminder of the history of immigration and hardship that Italians lived through at the turn of the 20th century. In the voice of Juanita, a Nicaraguan missionary of this order, who helps Padre Manuel with the evangelisation in the Church of Santa Maria della Luce: 'Santa Cabrini always held the migrants in her heart'.

12 Harvey refers to a martyr of the left, Eugène Varlin, who was a respected and committed socialist brutally murdered in May 1871 during the Commune repression on the exact spot where the Basilica was finally built.



SAINT FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI

HEAVENLY PATRON OF THE IMMIGRANTS

In late 19th century Italy, the devotion to the Sacred Heart was twofold. On the one hand it was an individualisation of devotion, a personal search for sanctification that has championed the stability of the family and marital union above the corruptions of the senses and contemporary habits (Zambarbieri 1987: 339). But it was also a devotional symbol in times of cholera, epidemics and wars (especially during WWI). It operated both as a collective, devotional and nationalistic agglutinating force for faraway soldiers,¹³ as well as a unifying and protective shield for particular labour guilds and factory workers. The Sacred Heart has been a devotional *point de ralliement* (literally, the point of winning over and getting together) (Bowman 1981) and a revelation of centrality: to be the chosen people through divine blessing, regardless of the fact of being a migrant and a socially marginalised Other or a heroic self at the periphery.

The multiple and contradictory nature of this devotion emerges in Padre Manuel's and other Catholic priests' evangelisation and ways in which migrants' spaces are evangelised. It appears, for example, in the appeal to the role that migrant Latino women have as mothers and faithful wives. It is not surprising that references to this family devotional aspect emerge in the Latino community. In the web page of the 'Comunidad Católica Mexicana' of 27 March 2005 appeared a reflection on the Sacred Heart. This Internet account, by Pedro García, a Claretinian missionary, presents the story of an encounter between a missionary and Pope Pius X in the early 20th century. The account is an evocation and reminder of the strength that the cult of the Sacred Heart (both of Jesus and Mary) has had in generating that love which keeps together and blesses the Catholic household as the 'primary cell of society'.

However, in current everyday practice, something different emerges. Once in private, away from Catholic ritual performances, narratives of relations out of wedlock proliferate, as a constant reminder of the partial failure of the Church's evangelical discourse of family values – the haunting memory of a project of Catholic subjecthood and subjectivation which is never completed, and may never be. Hence the Sacred Heart is talked about, by some of the migrants who attend the church, as a vessel in which a sense of home is made present, but at the same time it is talked about by a part of the clergy as a reproduction of a particular Catholic *hogar* (household). Migrants' intimate sense of homely presence may not coincide with the social reproduction of a clerically-championed Catholic household. The Sacred Heart then reveals this historically located disjuncture. This points, following de Certeau, to a scriptural economy that makes clerical discourses and sermons the repository of an official 'visible' migrant history about a monogamous Catholic household, while it 'invisibilises' the proliferation of those Latino migrant embodied itineraries and stories – recalling Rosa and her friends' stories – where the (Sacred) Heart is also experienced as an erotic, embodied, out-of-wedlock heart.

It is in a book called *Senza Radici* ('Without Roots') that the then Cardinal Ratzinger and now Pope Benedict XVI explores a crisis of Catholicism in Western Europe:¹⁴ Europe, exactly in its time of maximum economic success, seems to him to be hollowed from within, as if it was paralysed by a cardio-circulatory crisis, a crisis that endangers its life and leaves it exposed to transplants that threaten to cancel its identity. In this book

13 See the 1916 Constitution of the 'Comitato Italiano per la consacrazione dei soldati al Sacro Cuore di Gesù' (Italian Committee for the soldiers' consecration to the Sacred Heart) based in Milan and Udine.

14 This is a book co-authored with Marcello Pera, the President of the Italian House of Senate in the last Berlusconi's government. My thanks to Teo Quispe in Rome for timely pointing it out to me.

Ratzinger argues that the cooling of the heart of Europe is connected to the ‘invasion’ of the immigrant other, in particular the Muslim other. What we see is a battle taking place and the emergence of ironic turns of history: Western Europe is now considered a land in danger, in need of evangelisation and of ‘heart’s revitalization’ (Pera and Ratzinger 2004: 60–1).

But the Heart is also a site for another Italian civil society response. At the end of February 2005 a new film by Ferzan Ozpetek was released entitled the ‘Heart Sacred’ (*Cuore Sacro*). This film tells the story of a very wealthy woman manager in Rome who, through the suicide of two close colleagues, the unravelling of a previously unknown family history and the encounter in the street with a young, half-trickster, half-clairvoyant girl, opens herself up to another – up to then invisible – reality. Through a spiritual and sacred call, this woman changes her life and opens her heart to the ‘underworld’ and to social solidarity. Through, but also beyond Catholic institutionalised religion, she embraces the Other, which is manifested through the life at the periphery: the lives of migrants, the poor and drug addicts. In a rather uncanny resonance with Saint Cabrini’s language, the Other of the dispossessed becomes a way to acknowledge that which is ever present in life, in its beginning and in its dissolution, but never fully graspable. Hence, once again the mirroring of and around the Heart reveals aspects of migrants’ itineraries and their encounter with Italian civil society.

Hence this paper has engaged with a modality of mirroring that allows us to explore Latino migrant itineraries in unexpected ways. I am not here creating a migrant community as a contained subject/object of study: there is much of that community that would fall outside this account, such as those who do not profess themselves Catholic, or do not take part in the processes of evangelisation that I witnessed. So my argument is not about making comparative generalities out of anthropological singularity. What I have tried to do is to expose glimpses of a revelatory mode in the field that, through a process of mirroring, allows us to grasp different aspects of migrant’s subjectivity.

This is a revelatory approach that de Certeau champions in his analysis of 13th century mystical thinking, and more precisely in his interpretation of seeing as ‘enigma’. This approach is a synergy between two ways of approaching reality. On the one hand, it identifies a mode of *seeing* that collects, classifies objects and events and makes them the hosts and the objectives of human reflections – in short an idea of understanding the world through a process of accumulation of knowledge. On the other hand, through a process of internal mirroring a mode of *gazing* emerges. The intuition is the concentrated and distinct act of the mind that transforms all objects in possible mirrors – alias a transformation that is at work in the picture that animates it, but that cannot be fully textualised, nonetheless being present as ‘the inter-textual form of a *forward*: outside the text, neither conclusion nor proof’ (de Certeau 1987: 8). For de Certeau, this is a mode of apprehending the world which transgresses linear temporality of accumulation of meanings and neat epistemological classifications. Instead, gazing reflects a polysemic proliferation of meanings which coexist and become intelligible because of the relationship to each other. For de Certeau, mirroring animates the world in its encompassing sense: as an encounter of a tangible reality and the real – that which cannot be grasped by analytical experience and exists in the residue of analytical and textual articulations.¹⁵

15 This mirroring, although Lacanian in impulse, is not primarily an act of identification that transforms the subject through a sense of lack, and a life-drive for a lost and holistic image of

I am here tempted to argue that the interface between these two modes of apprehension of the world, two forms of *videre* – a synergy between seeing as the ‘tireless “race” of erudition’ and the gaze that turns the ‘texts and curiosities that the researcher never ceases to inventory into “mirrors” of what animates them without being visible in them’ (de Certeau 1987: 9) – is a compelling anthropological method. Putting it boldly, anthropologists need to address, through historically situated engagements in fieldwork, the presence of the unseen¹⁶ and the unintelligible that nonetheless is *at work* in the visible events and objects that constitute fieldwork. The anthropological endeavour, I would argue, is at its best when there is an overlapping of gazing and seeing, of intuition and observation as an art of synergy of modes of seeing, where excesses and flashes overturn the ‘normal’ course of reasoning and bring surprise and therefore renewal to more predictable and observable interpretations (de Certeau 1987: 10).¹⁷ To dwell on an anthropological method that allows the presence of the gaze, of what is there all the way through, but cannot be fully grasped, requires understanding the working of history with a capital ‘H’ – the history which coincides with its object and the visible.¹⁸ In the light of the histories of Latino evangelisation in Rome, de Certeau’s analysis helps us to see the remainder of unfinished projects of Catholic subjectivisation of a migrant Other – a remainder which, through particular scriptural economies, has fallen out of official historical narratives.

I hope that, throughout this paper, I have been able to evoke glimpses of the historical sedimentations that, in contemporary Rome, animate the Catholic evangelisation of Latino migrants’ itineraries, and to have highlighted reminders of a more or less Sacred Heart, that point to an unfinished project of Catholic evangelisation by its own clergy. This evangelisation started with the Catholic subjectivisation of the

itself (Lacan 1990). It is not a mirror stage that painfully fragments the subject/I because of an initial image of an unachievable, and therefore alienating, identity.

- 16 De Certeau is not arguing that the ‘unseen’ is a transcendental force, but that the unseen produces the materiality of the visible. De Certeau is historicising both the perspectives and the ontologies that are at stake in different modalities of knowing. As argued in the introduction of this special issue, his argument resonates with current debates about the ontological and epistemological natures of anthropological inquiry (Viveiros de Castro 2004).
- 17 This anthropological synergy could be understood in relation to earlier explorations of a fieldwork methodology. Malinowski, in his diaries, was interested to capture the ‘native’s point of view’ through a painstaking collection of innumerable ‘events, records of feelings and instinctual manifestations’ that made up the complex texture of fieldwork. Interestingly, that was in his view meant to achieve a ‘clear idea of the metaphysical nature of existence’ (Young 2004: 401). The synergy, and the methodological mirroring I am addressing here, is not metaphysical in nature, but very much immanent, as a remainder of the articulation of the everyday life.
- 18 There are important parallels between Benjamin’s and de Certeau’s apprehension of the world through its histories and the path of the mystic (de Vries 1992). I just want to point out one of their common intellectual roots in mystical thinking. Benjamin explores a ‘fall’ of God into human history as the loss of a non-significatory, performative and unified dimension of language. That happened when it was transformed into a human language that is always mimetic, incomplete and therefore prone to violent acts of appropriation by the state or those powers who can hijack spaces of signification. The position of de Certeau is slightly different. Although he stresses the same loss of God-like unity of language, he also sees in the mystic and their *volo* a similar itinerary of the socially dispossessed that can use language in a way that opens and destabilises it within socially accepted parameters of its meaning. In this aspect de Certeau’s analysis still reads a possibility of social transformation within rather than against the consequence of this original fall. For a further discussion on this point please refer to the introduction of this special issue.

Indians in the Americas and with the missionary writings of the early 16th century. The missionaries forced the unintelligible, the oral and the embodied performance of the Indian Other into a written translation through an act of seeing that would classify, compare, feminise and eroticise that Other (de Certeau 1988: 209–43). In Rome today, we find other Catholic projects in the making which on the one hand aim to insert worthy migrants into the Italian labour market (see the support given in the Parish of Santa Maria della Luce), but on the other stress a particular Catholic migrants' evangelisation about the *hogar*. However, in their complexities, migrant itineraries are also about a mirroring of the (Sacred) Heart which captures a struggle with different erotic, familiar and spatial vessels for the homely.

This mirroring of Hearts that flashes across migrant itineraries swarming the Roman urban landscape is also revelatory of the circulation of deep-seated anxieties, both about the pollution of a migrant Other and the present Western cardiovascular paralysis (to use the words of Loredana and Pope Benedict XVI) as well as the possibility for renewed forms of centrality and counter-narratives of the periphery (see the paradoxically empowering nature of the revelation of the Sacred Heart for mystic and migrant itineraries). Latino migrant itineraries emerge at the violent as well as redemptive intersections of these circulations and paradoxes. Finally, de Certeau points us to a way in which, by being present to a synergy of modes of seeing, we may awake to the field, see the field anew – engaging with what conveys visible and invisible registers of reality – threading together those reminders that appear at the cracks of dominant projects, historical sedimentations and that which we cannot fully grasp.

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Abstracts

Révélations de migrants et réveils anthropologiques

Cet article analyse la manière dont l'altérité et la politique des affects émergent à travers la présence d'une nouvelle immigration Latino à Rome, en Italie. En étudiant les processus d'évangélisation Catholique et plusieurs itinéraires de migrants, l'article montre que des forces différentes et contradictoires, comme par exemple les récits de centralité et de périphérie, sont reflétées dans la présence et l'histoire du Sacré-Coeur. En explorant et discutant les idées de de Certeau sur les migrations et les mystiques, ainsi que sur l'urbain comme espace d'énonciation, je suggère que nous devrions explorer une modalité de travail ethnographique qui combinerait et reflèterait des manières révélatrices et analytiques d'appréhender le monde.

Über wandernde Enthüllungen und anthropologisches Erwachen

Dieser Artikel analysiert wie sich Andersgeartetheit und Affektpolitik in einer neuen Latino Einwanderung nach Rom in Italien auswirken. In der Betrachtung von Prozessen rund um katholische Evangelisierung und verzweigten Auswanderungsströmen zeigt der Beitrag auf, wie sich verschiedene, auch widersprüchliche Kräfte, so wie Narrative von Zentralität und Peripherie, in der Anwesenheit und Geschichte des Heiligen Herzens widerspiegeln. In einer Untersuchung und Abwägung de Certeaus Gedanken zu Migration und Mystikern, sowie dem städtischen Raum als Artikulationsort, schlage ich vor, eine Modalität von Ethnographie zu durchgründen, welche enthüllende und analytische Auffassungen der Welt kombiniert und reflektiert

De revelaciones migrantes y despertares antropológicos

Este artículo analiza cómo la otredad y la política de los afectos emergen por medio de la presencia de una nueva inmigración latina en Roma, Italia. Al observar los procesos propios de la evangelización católica y plurales itinerarios migrantes, en el ensayo se sostiene que las diferentes y contradictorias fuerzas como las narrativas de la centralidad y periferia, son reflejadas en la presencia e historia del Sagrado Corazón. Al explorar y contraponer las ideas de Certeau sobre migraciones y mística, y lo urbano como el espacio de la enunciación, propongo que exploremos la modalidad del etnógrafo que combina y refleja las reveladoras y analíticas maneras de comprender el mundo.