Film Flow And Globalisation Essay, Research Paper

In this paper, DR. ARUP RATAN GHOSH puts cinema into the orbit of Globalisation. The context and texts of ?identity?, MTV, beauty contest, cocacolaisation, localism, regionalism and nationalism, Amartya Sen?s notion on globalisation, block-buster films and cinema in general come with a serious approach to state the global matter of fact of the moving images.

Be it the playfulness of zapping the satellite television or surfing the Internet or jiving with the music of foreign tune the experience of Globalisation rotates. Seeing Titanic all over the world has recently become a global phenomenon after its cultural -economic moving predecessors like Jurassic Park, E.T. etc. This world seems to us as a village. Like a village community sometimes we share the same thing all over the world. For example drinking Coca-Cola. People drink Coca-Cola whether they are in Chile, Ghana, India or in the U.S.A. Staying far away from each other people share the same thing as if they live in a small village. It is the Global Village. So millions of people see Titanic at the same time residing at different corners of the world. So do we browse the websites and take printouts from the far. Effacing the distance we chat. Even we place order for material goods from the virtual shops. To the modern generation national boundaries are becoming relicts. Now the ubiquity of Globalisation is strongly felt with the skulduggery of the electronic media or with the marvels of technological advancement.

In this discourse of Globalisation and Cinema we put some categories.

Film culture specially Indian Film Culture is international recognition including awards and applauds and screenings in the foreign festivals or transmission through Channel four or the other TVs and also the reflections of foreign critics on Indian cinema are embedded in the pulsating global compass of the film makers, film journalists, and almost everyone associated with film. Consider the sequels of Indian Art films down from Satyajit Ray to our contemporaries. Even today a De Sica award to Goutam Ghose gives a global dimension to serious Indian film making. Or when seeing Buddhadeb Dasgupta?s Charachar some German spectators sprang upto their feet reading the film as a momentum to their Green movement. But Dasgupta has reflected 1 that he doesn?t think the film as a camcorder of ecological movement. Though Internationalism and Globalisation are different but for the Indian cinema sometimes they coalesce to some extent sometimes quasi or half globally. Considering the popular entertainment film in the same context we should not forget the zeal of the Russians over Raj Kapoor and his Hindi movies or the present feast of eyes with the Hindi movies through the satellite channels or in the auditoria in the Middle East. The Indian subcontinental countries are also to be included in this rhapsodic periphery.

Cinema from its birth is global. After the grand success of Lumi?re brothers? screenings in France they travelled in many countries to receive honour and felicitation. As a consequence cinema became a global phenomenon effacing the boundaries of nations. Indian celluloid chapter started with the successful endeavours of Dada Saheb Phalke. The essence of folk entertainment had been cinematographed and exhibited regularly. Keeping this in the mainstream Indian cinema continued at least upto the forties. Absorbing the form and techniques of cinema ceaselessly Indian cinema has been in the process of Globalisation but was not in the currency of market economy or culture. We may sum up that Indian cinema records crossover global cultures in different times.

As the billion dollar big budget blockbuster films from Hollywood draining up money from all over the world spreading American culture in a way in the name of Globalisation. Some producers try to reach Indian films in the middle East or South Asian countries to fetch more money and subsequently flashing contemporary Indian culture in perverse versions. Both the Bollywood (India) and Hollywood producers, can be said, are following in their own way almost like Ohmae?s prescriptions ?The customers you care about are the people who love your products everywhere in the world. Your mission is to provide them with exceptional value. When you think of people who share that mission. Country of origin does not matter. Location of headquarters does not matter. The products for which you are responsible and the company you serve has been denationalized. [...]

You really have to believe, deep down, that people may work ?in? different national environments but are not of them. What they are ?of? is the global corporation.? 2

To them the whole world is a market. In this market-economy controlled world Globalisation is in amoebic ramification. Cinema has become its easy and saucy prey. A large number of Indian films have been succumbed to it. Obviously there are many Indian films made for local or regional or for some niche audience which are not moving under the bulldozer of Globalisation.

It is an age when our life is always interpelleted? with images. The burgeoning electronic impulses from television, VCRs, VCDs, computers, virtual reality projections bemused our daily realities. To the Americans Disneyland is hyper-real. But to many who live in the rest of world America appears as if it is constituted of the hyper-real. ?Its an MTV world? says Marc Levinson writing the phrase as a title of an article on MTV. To many MTV appears? as the deliberately obnoxious voice of the next generation, the channel that features heavy metal and the juvenile dialogue of those animated anti-heroes, Beavis and Butt – head. But MTV rocks around the clockk all over the world with a bit of different presentations according to the regional tastes and needs (artificial?). ?MTV combines a global presence and a single global brand with a product designed for separate regional markets. “The container?s the same”, says chair Tom Ereston? “The contents are different”. 3 In Globalisation we find regional or national. MTV is an example of that type. Most of MTV programmes are in English. But ?MTV Europe draws its staff from a generation of worldly youths for whom English is a second language and national borders are outdated relics. 4

This kind of Global marketing of entertainment in the process of Globalisation can be seen in the successful distribution of blockbuster films dubbed in Hindi like Jurassic Park, Speed, Titanic even the children?s film Aladdin.

Globalisation in the media, performing arts and film presents a sort of cross cultural presentation. Peter Brook?s Mahabharata is a fine example of that. Where Yudisthira is acted by a Russian, Bhima is a black and Draupadi is an Indian – Ms. Mallika Sarabhai. With such an international cast Peter Brook represents Mahabharata as a global phenomenon or modern re- presentation of a glorious mythical global event. Mythical and theatrical values and practices are amalgamated in this drama. The concept of Greek nemesis and application of environmental theatre techniques with the very Indian values of Mahabharata are mixed in tune with Universalism. Which is in a way in the terminology of cultural production Globalisation. Peter Brook?s Mahabharata is basically a theatre but its widely distributed video-cassette is quite popular to sense spectators it as a film.

A lot of examples can be given in this way. Contemporary Indian examples are Richard Attenborough?s Gandhi, Shyam Benegal?s The Making of Mahatma etc. In this process of globalization we get blended cross-cultural elements. As it is true in the context of MTV. ?Its no only brings culture to your country: it also takes music and culture from your country and exposes it to others.? 5 Its suitable example is MTV India/ Asia. In Hindi with Indian Jockeys with Hindi lyrics and the mobile amalgamation of glancing Indian visuals it does so beaming its telecast from the Indian subcontinent to middle east.

Globalisation with one of its form gets root in Indian soil through the introduction of Ex-finance minister Manmohan Singh?s free economy for boosting Indian economy. With his call for Indian people to bear the hardship we see in astonishment various foreign cars or cars made in collaboration with foreign technology come through the media to the streets. The designer dress materials following the flux of fashion and modelling have made Indian ethnicity global and cross-cultural. From the everyday life or from our popular culture we can cite many examples of global culture or at the least the deep impact of globalisation in our country as well as in other countries too. To take a very serious note on Globalisation we should rethink the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen?s personal comment on the subject in his first press conference on 15th October 1998 in New York that ?I am not against Globalisation but the weaker countries suffer for it?.6 His utterance comes out of a great depth of realisation and feelings, which even touches the context of the film and globalisation in its own way. When the repentance comes from Bollywood that what can be done if the billion dollar blockbuster films from the 20th Century Fox or Warner Brothers or Dreamworks release world-wide and drain out money and arrest attention of the Indian mass movie-goers. How Bollywood be able to compete with them?

To make the movies entertaining, interesting and attractive Bollywood film producers and makers think a lot. A certain style of filmmaking fit in with our subject. It is better to cite the example proper. In the film Genes, we find different shooting spots throughout the world covering the Seven Wonders of the World from the Taj Mahal to the Pyramids of Egypt. In a song picturisation, they move the spectators around the world sensually in tune with globalisation.

In the context of the impact of globalisation and cinema in the everyday life of a third world country, we can go through the quotation given below. This apparently funny story has penetrating suggestion towards market economy, late Capitalism, and Globalisation. To discuss ?deductivism? N?stor Garcia Canclini narrates ?We find these concerns in various theatrical works disseminated in Brazil at the outset of the 1970s by the Popular Culture Centres. One of these, Jose de Silva and the Guardian Angel portrayed an average day in the life of a Brazilian in order to reveal the minute effects of imperialism in everyday life. From the moment he wakes up and switches on the light Jose pays his dues to foreign companies (Light and Power). And so it goes on when he cleans his teeth (Colgate-Palmolive), drinks coffee (American Coffee Company), when he goes to work whether in a Mercedes Benz bus or walking on his Goodyear soles, or when he goes to the cinema to see a western (Hollywood produces more than half the films shown in Brazil). Even inside the cinema, when he simply breathes the air, this is conditioned by Wasting house. Made desperate by so many royalty payments, he decides to kill himself. But then the Guardina Angel appears, with an English accent, in order to collect Smith and Wersson?s royalties from Jose (Boal, 1982:23)

This conceptual approach, in which all aspects of popular life derive from macro-social powers, has characterised the majority of sociological communications and educational studies during the past two decades. 7

Don?t we do the same thing when we go to see Titanic in Globe (Calcutta) and many other foreign films in this way in the name of Globalisation.

The nature of Globalisation today

Globalisation is not an amalgamated process or presentation in which everything ethnic, communal, local, regional or national feature, element or spirit mingles with each other. In the recent time, we find Muslim fundamentalism effects prominently in the orbit of globalisation. The burning example is the bout over Salman Rushdie. It was suddenly suspended after ten years and hovered over him again. Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasrin is also a victim of Muslim fundamentalism. Another reaction to protest against cultural globalisation Muslim fundamentalists block the satellite beams telecasting MTV and other European or American TV channels. ?The attempt by some Islamic countries to ban satellite television have seemed to symbolise resistance to global information and communication flows (those for which Steven Rose was such a powerful advocate) 8. Erasing the traditional culture is not to be erased and we observe in globalisation an interplay of the local, regional, national and international elements. In our discussion and in the examples given above the matter is clearly seen in the political economy of beauty from Miss Belize to Miss World? exemplifies this beautifully.

“Pageants also make ethnicity safe by subordinating cultural identity to gender and sexuality. The contestants first appear clothed in ethnic garb, as representatives of their ?people?. But in the next step the contestants appear in bathing suits, as bodies stripped of their external cultural costume. Since skin color and features are so heterogeneous among Belizeans, in bathing suits ethnicity is gone; the woman remains. Gender transcends the ethnic, but what transcends gender? The final transformation of the image of woman in the pageant occurs when symbolically naked essentialized sexual objects are reclothed, but this time as creatures of modernity and fashion. The evening-gown competition brings the contestants back on stage transformed into cosmopolitans, wearing the latest expensive imported dresses, showing their sophistication and knowledge of the world outside Belize.

The flow of imagery in the pageant makes representational order by linking together different feminine images. We start with woman submerged in the localized, ethnic and ?primordial? community, strip away that identity to reveal woman-as-body as something supposedly more basic and essential, and end with woman transformed by modernity into a transcending figure ready to move outwards to the global stage. (There is a clear structural parallel to the classic stages of a rite of passage).” 9

To look at the world of film and globalisation in a certain way, we get the beauty pageant like behaviour and its reception to some extent. I mean, as Rashoman by Kurosawa with its strong Japanised flavour, essence and culture becomes a global phenomenon in the modern world of film culture. The Seven Samurai and many other films of Kurosawa with strong vigour of Japanism out of the local, regional and national culture of Japan went global. On the contrary, with the European theme, subject, and drama of Macbeth, Kurosawa?s The Thrown of Blood becomes Japanised or Oriental. It is again a part of the process of globalisation. Richard Schechner, a performing arts expert and a theatre personality enacts his theatre in this way to shape his theatre up as a cross cultural environmental theatre. In an interview with me 10 he comments that he does so to find out the root of human civilisation. A few years back he produced Mother Courage (a play by Bertolt Brecht) in the form of a Peaking Opera in Sanghai. From his production any stamp of Westernisation is hardly evident. In the interview, he revealed later that from all over the world he took elements for his theatre. As African rhythm, Raga and Rasa concepts from Indian Natyashastra, from various drama and dance forms of China, Korea and from the performances of South East Asia he took elements to shape up his theatre or Performative circumstances. Globalisation follows this sort of blend of cross-culture and intercultural aspects in the formative perspectives of cultural globalisation at present, Akbar Ahmed, observes a consequence ?both communication flows and human flows: The mixing of images, interlocking of cultures, juxtaposition of different peoples, availability of information are partly explained because populations are mobile as never before. The mobility continues inspite of increasingly rigid immigration control. Filipino maids in Dubai, Pakistani workers in Bradford, the Japanese buying Hollywood studios, Hong Kong Chinese entrepreneurs acquiring prime property in Vancouver testify to this the swirling and eddying of humanity mingles ideas, cultures and values as never before in history. (Ahmed, 1992, p. 26)

Cultures are transformed by the incorporations they make from other cultures in the world. Salman Rushdie (1991, p.394) has famously written of ?the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs: ?M?lange, hotchpotch,? he declares, ?a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world?. This process of hybridization is particularly apparent now in developments within popular culture. The sociologist Les Back (1994, p. 14) describes the bhangramuffin music of the singer/ songwriter Apache Indian as ?a meeting place where the languages and rhythms of the Caribbean, North America and India mingle producing a new and vibrant culture?. ?Artists like Apache Indian are expressing and defining cultural modes that are simultaneously local and global.? Back observes. ?The music manifests itself in a connective supplementarity ? raga plus bangra plus England plus India plus Kingston plus Birmingham?. (ibid., p. 15)

To conclude the context of film and globalisation I would like to back again on the context of film – especially on Indian films, which are accepted globally or help shape the global cinematographic culture. As Kurosawa becomes famous internationally making his films global phenomenon similarly we should place Satyajit Ray with his films bearing the expressive images of the local, regional and national India including microscopic details of the culture of West Bengal villages and towns, into the progressive flux of Globalisation and cinema.

Notes and References

1.In an interview with the author of this paper, Buddhadeb Dasgupta reflected that

2.Ohmae, 1990, pp. 94, 96 as quoted in The Production of Culture: Cultures of Production (Ed.) Paul de Gay, Sage Publications, London, 1997, p. 49.

3.Marc Levinson, Its an MTV world, ibid, p-56

4.ibid, p. 57

5.ibid, p. 57

6.The Telegraph, Calcutta, 15 October 1998

7.Paddy Scannell, Philip Schlesinger and Colin Sparks N?stor Garcia Canclini (eds.) Culture and Power: the state of research: Culture and Power ? a Media, Culture and Society reader, Sage Publications, London, 1992.

8.Gay (1990)

9.Mark Levinson in Gay (1990) pp. 63-64

10.In an interview with Richard Schchner with the author of this paper

Pattern is the soil of significance;

and it is surely one of the hazards

of emigration, and exile, and

extreme mobility, that one is

uprooted from that soil.

(Hoffman 1989: 278)

In December 1993, the Italian Centro Scalabrini, in South London, celebrated its 25th anniversary. The Centro Scalabrini, and Italian religious-cum-social club, is part of the Scalabrini congregation, an Italian missionary order founded in 1887 to minister mainly to Italian emigrants and their descendants around the world. Aside from the administration offices, the building houses the Italian Women’s Club, a club for retirees, a youth club, and the Church of the Redeemer (Chiesa del Redentore). The Scalabrinian fathers in London also edit the most widely read Italian newspaper in Britain: La Voce degli Italiani (LV hereafter).

The Centro’s anniversary was marked by a series of events spread out over a seven-day period. During this momentous week, the Centro re-assessed its role and re-asserted its ecumenical character. That year, the Chiesa del Redentore was also consecrated, and was completely renovated in view of the festivities in December. The inauguration of the new church coincided with an attempt to re-orient the meaning of the organisation as a whole, in order to adapt it to new social parameters that the ?fathers of emigrants? now have to contend with. This signalled a shift away from the idea of ?ethnic church? toward the ??migr? church?, in an attempt to solve the anxieties about the future of the Italian Catholic faith in London. As Padre Giandomenico Ziliotto stated on the final night of the celebrations, ?the future of the centro depends on its creative capacity to construct a community.?

In this particular context, the manufacturing of this new identity relates to the shaping of physical spaces into mirrors of who ?we? are. In light of the ongoing redefinition of the centre’s purpose, I shall explore the ways in which the Centro and, more specifically, the Church, embody the project of identity. What interests me here is how, in the process of turning physical buildings and spaces into cultural objects, ideas of collective identity are crystallised in particular images and narratives.

A former resident-priest of the Centro once dubbed it a ?habitual space?. But in order for a place to be recognised as a ?habitual space?, some kind of ?architecture of reassurance? (2) is required. That is that the material organisation of space is such that it will interpellate its users and call upon them to ?feel at home? in the setting. This, at least, was the objective of the Scalabrinian priests when they had their church renovated in view of the 25th anniversary. In the words of the architect in charge of the renovations, the church’s interiors were restored in the Italian classical style ?to bind a Church loved by many of our community, to our history, to our cultural tradition? (Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 9; my emphasis). For the church leaders, this represents ?the best of our culture, that the community, and particularly the younger generations, could proudly identify with in front of the English. It is an accomplishment worthy of the fantasy, enterprise and generosity of the Italians who live in South London? (Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 9; my emphasis). The church is a space where these leaders express and hope to transmit the purpose and pleasure of their selves as Italians in London. It is objectified as a distinct marker and expression of the Italian presence in South London, standing at the junction of identity/difference, at once locating and projecting Italians in relation to English culture and in relation to themselves. England emerges as the ?significant other? which is located outside, yet which surrounds, thus includes, the church and Centro. Consistently represented as a hostile environment ? ?the great cold of the anonymous city? ? where Catholics are but a ?small minority? who must proudly display their cultural heritage ?in front of the English?, Britain is also coveted as the necessary, indeed unavoidable site of integration. There is a narrow clearing for the establishment of a ?habitual space?, or comfort zone, where the projected identity can be at once different and integrated. For the Scalabrinians, the challenge is to provide such a space that draws individuals outside of the privacy of family life and fosters a communal sense of belonging in Britain. The inauguration of the new church, in December 1993, provided the opportunity to lay down the new grounds of Italian ?migr? belonging in present-day Britain: an idealised form of belonging born out of, and liberated from, migration.

As I will show below, migration is conceived, by the Scalabrinians, as the basis of the distinct identity of ?Italians abroad?, and has been at the forefront of their own attempt to create a new identity for Italians, at a time where ?ethnicity? alone could no longer play that definitional role. In this respect, the Scalabrinians are very much living in their time, dialoguing with the increased currency of what John Urry calls ?mobile sociologies? (2000). As Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson write, ?[p]art and parcel of this conceptual shift [in definitions of identity] is a recognition that not only can one be at home in movement, but that movement can be one’s very own home? (1998: 27). And indeed, the project of being ?at home in migranthood? that the Scalabrinians have put forward is a good example of this shift in definitions of identity. Uprootings, mobility, are widely conceived, in contemporary cultural and social theory, as the basis of new forms of identity formations (Rapport and Dawson 1998; Chambers 1994; Robertson et al. 1994; Urry 2000). Mobility has become the emblematic concept of life within the globalised world, understood in terms of flow, fluidity, and liquidity (Appadurai 1996; Castells 1996, 1998; Urry 2000; Bauman 2000). Movement, travel, are viewed as the ?reality? of the experience of daily life in the contemporary world, whilst fixity and rootedness are marginalised as experiences from which we withdraw from the world and take a look at it as it passes (us) by. Within this theoretical context, ?the migrant? and ?the exile? have become paradigmatic figures of postmodern life, whose ethnoscapes are increasingly documented. Yet, as I argue elsewhere, the privileging of mobility over attachment obscures the complex processes of ?regrounding? that are also constitutive of new forms of belonging (Fortier 2000). This chapter is premised on the assumption that, against the assumed isomorphism of space, place and culture, on the one hand, and the reification of uprootedness as the paradigmatic figure of postmodern life, on the other, cultural identity, in migration, is produced through both movement and attachment, at once deterritorialised and reterritorialised. The ensuing question, then, is: how is the regrounding secured, held into place? What kind of ?patterns? constitute the new ?soils of significance?? How does migranthood constitute the grounds for a new ?we?? What are the effects of positing migranthood as the shared terrain of belonging, on definitions of home, origins, identity and difference? What are the issues at stake in the project of creating a new identity for Italians in London (and more broadly, in England and Britain)?

First, the new migranthood proposed by the Scalabrinians is deeply connected to their mapping of Italian migranthood onto a global horizon. What interests me here is the ways in which the globe circulates within the Scalabrinian imagery as a figure that might stabilise the multi-local and dispersed Italian population. Informed by Franklin, Stacey and Lury (2000), I consider the globe as something which is put to work, which is mobilised to produce desires, identities, and so on. One of the questions at the basis of this chapter is to uncover how a global consciousness manifests itself and is articulated through ideas of difference and unity. I will do this by scrutinising the construction of the Centro Scalabrini as a space of localised global belonging. What kind of work do images of the globe do in identity narratives? What kind of social landscape does it map out? What kinds of ideas, desires, and anxieties are projected onto the global horizon?

One such anxiety is the transcendence of the status of foreigner. In the second section, I scrutinise the implications of elevating migration as a source of empowerment and of collective belonging against the threat of estrangement. More specifically, I discuss the reprocessing of biblical narratives in terms of migration, and the ensuing construction of a ?migrant ontology?, which essentialises and universalises migration as a feature of being (Christian) human. I contemplate the implications of this construction on definitions of migrant subjects. In the third section, I relocate this new ?migrant ontology? in the British context, where the Scalabrinians defines themselves as ?invisible immigrants?. What does invisibility mean, for Italians? How do the tropes of visibility and invisibility relate to the racialised structure of contemporary Britain? How do the anxieties of (in)visibility and the project of transcendence articulate and relate to the bodily experience of migration, of inhabiting a body out of place?

A global ethnoscape of belonging

In the Chiesa del Redentore, at the Centro Scalabrini of London, a stained glass window neatly captures the raison d’?tre of the religious order that runs this Italian Catholic mission based in Brixton, an area in South London. The image in the window depicts the founder of the congregation, John Baptist Scalabrini, encountering emigrants at the Milan train station in 1887. This incident is said to be at the origin of the foundation of this missionary order, which caters to Italian (and other) emigrants world-wide. The railway tracks trace a central line in the scene, drawing our gaze towards a globe that covers the opening of a tunnel. The tracks and the globe meet at the centre of the image, symbolically linking Italy with the world, and the present with the unknown future. In the foreground, stands Scalabrini, and, slightly behind him, two ?pioneers? (sic) (3) of the London Mission ? P. Walter Sacchetti, founder of the Centro, and P. Silvano Bartapelle. In the background, on the platform, stand two figures, a man and a woman, their luggage on the floor, looking towards the globe, their back turned against us.

In this pictorial rendition of the foundational myth of the London mission, temporal and geographical differences are fused within a gesture that marks an initiating moment that extends into the present. The anachronism of joining Father Scalabrini with two ?founding fathers? of the Brixton Centro (established in 1968) breaks down the temporal distance and emphasises the continuity of the congregation’s ?mission?. At the same time, the location of this event in the past is effectively interrupted by the central figure of the railway track.

In Italian immigrant historicity, the railway is a symbol that bridges distinct but overlapping timespaces constitutive of an Italian ??migr? identity: here/there; now/then; present/future; Italy/elsewhere. In his account of Calabrian immigrants living in Bedford, Renato Cavallaro suggests that the railway between the home and the workplace acts as a hyphen that symbolically links Italy (home) and Bedford (workplace), the space of origins and the industrial space, tradition and modernity (Cavallaro 1981: 93). The railway-as-hyphen runs on the border zone of sameness and difference, of identity and change. Moreover, in spite of its absence, the expected train speaks volumes of movement across and within space. In this representation of the Scalabrini mission, the train station symbolically represents a zone between Italy and abroad, a borderzone, the poles of which are linked by the tracks. It follows that the identity of the travellers standing on the platform is already shaped by movement and difference, which are located in the ?elsewhere? awaiting them somewhere on the globe. Even before they have left the platform, they are already ?emigrati?.

Scalabrini’s epiphanic experience at the Milan train station is the subject of numerous written and pictorial renditions that circulate within the Scalabrini order. One such rendition is found in a stained glass window of the Chapel of the congregation’s see in Rome. Like in the window from the London church, this one also portrays travellers waiting for a train, and the railway tracks figure prominently in the image. Yet a distinctive feature of this representation, is the presence of the Holy Family among the passengers, in a re-construction of the biblical narrative of the flight to Egypt as a form of migration (see below).

But the point I want to consider at this stage is the use of the globe in the window in London. As one of the most recent versions of the congregation’s founding myth ? if not the most recent ? the inclusion of the globe suggests a shift in the way that the London Scalabrinians position themselves and the ?community? in relation to the world. The use of the icon of the globe is suggestive of the transnational project of identity that London-based Scalabrinians promoted, especially in the years 1992-1996 (Fortier 2000: chapter 3). The image of the globe carries universalist claims of a borderless world which is, here, literally at the travellers’ footsteps. At the same time, this image unequivocally places Italy as the centre from which the world is contemplated.

In the commemorative booklet produced for the new church’s inauguration, Scalabrinian priest Umberto Marin revisits the fa?ade of the building and gives it a new ‘global’ meaning:

Residing in a nation where Catholics are a small minority, and with ecumenical sensibility, we thought to dedicate [the church] to the Redeemer under whom all, at least all Christians, may and must find themselves, thus cancelling the notion of foreigner. On the fa?ade, alas rather modest, is a mosaic of Jesus-Christ Pantokrator who holds the globe in one hand, symbolising Christian universalism which is a fundamental instance of the migrant people. (Umberto Marin in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 6; italics original)

The Christian symbol of universalism, the globe, is explicitly picked out as a space where undifferentiated Christian ?migrant people? meet. This move ostensibly de-ethnicises the church’s identity, by suggesting the relativity of religious beliefs and insinuating a model in which particular forms of belief are less significant than the acknowledgement that ?we? belong to the same Christian family. In other words, claims to accept religious relativity are based firmly within highly universalised and globalised frameworks. Cancelling the foreigner condition, here, operates through the creation of a common grounds for Christians in Britain. Marin is stating that Catholics are not a minority, not foreigners, and do have equal status to Britons by virtue of their shared Christianity. At the same time, he is asserting a specific migrant identity that is distinct to that of non-migrants. This move ostensibly de-ethnicises the church’s identity, yet as I argue below, Scalabrinians are at once de-ethnicising and re-ethnicising the church’s identity (and the community they seek to create) within a wider global, rather than local, context. What strikes me here, is not so much the shift about the grounds of identity (which I address later), but the shift in the spatial horizon within which this question of ?identity? is cast.

Scalabrinians have used the globe in other instances as well. In the context of a debate over new voting rights for ?Italians abroad? in 1993 (Fortier 1998; 2000), the London Scalabrinians introduced the Simbolo degli Italiani all’Estero (SIE) in the pages of their newspaper, La Voce degli Italiani. According to Gaetano Parolin (former editor of La Voce), the SIE was the first stage in a longer term project which would consist of creating a more united movement of Italians living in Europe.

The logo represents a globe that is crossed lengthways by a pole, planted in the American continent, bearing the Italian flag, the three panels of which are parted, revealing parts of the globe between them. Insofar as the flag symbolises the nation state, this image suggests both unity and parting as a result of the dispersal of Italians around the world. The SIE is the symbolic representation of what is also coined the ?Other Italy? (l’Altra Italia), ?who lives far away? (LV 896, October 1993: 3). Both these labels suggest the preservation of the original fatherland, Italy, as a fixed geopolitical entity: its borders are preserved by locating the Italian diaspora all’estero or within another Italy.

The SIE represents a kind of global Italian citizenship. It stems from a vexed position between the impossibility of return to Italy, and the quest for new solidarities based upon new forms of existence. Likewise, the identity of ?Italians abroad? is produced from this complex combination of cultural nationalism (locating an original fatherland and culture within the confines of the Italian state territory) and of diasporic awareness (rehabilitating the emigrant, multi-local mode of existence). The Simbolo is the emblem of the Scalabrinian project of creating a new Italian identity that transcends regional differences ? which are at the basis of the existing London-Italian organisational structure ? while it represents a distinct political and cultural constituency abroad, thus producing yet another ?region? within the Italian state apparatus, but one which spills beyond the Italian borders. The borders to the Italian state remain unscathed as the ‘original fatherland’ within the ‘global’ home of Italians Abroad, whose ‘home’ is ‘the rest of the world, outside Italy’, rather than the world itself.

The space of ?Italians abroad? arises as a kind of third space, beyond the confines of territorial boundaries ?here? (England/the UK) and ?there? (Italy). This is strikingly conjured up in a section of La Voce titled ?planet emigration? (Pianeta Emigrazione), which again resorts to the metaphor of the globe, the planet, as a space of interconnected belonging.

Planet Emigration signals a shift in the grounds of identity from exclusively Italian to a broader ?migranthood?, and parallels the displacement from ?ethnic church? to ??migr? church?, creating a terrain of belonging that both maintains and exceeds the boundaries of immediate locality. The move from local integration to global interconnectedness is marked by a shift in the ways in which Scalabrinians imagine their and the Italian immigrants’ relationship to the world. Combining modern discourses of Christian universalism, and postmodern discourses of globalisation, this ?church among migrants? may be viewed as a site of ?global localism? (McDowell 1996: 31), that is that it stands at the crossroads of different ranges of belonging located on different scales. This is a belonging that is at once local ? being Italian and Catholic in a non-Italian, non-Catholic world ? and global ? being part of the world ?community? of Catholic/Christian migrants.(4)

This shift in the spatial horizon within which the question of ?identity? is cast, is part of the Scalabrinian imagined community of ?Italians Abroad?, where migration constitutes the basis of a new global ?ethnoscape? of belonging. For the London Scalabrinians, this new identity is deeply connected to locally specific struggles for recognition and liberation from what Umberto Marin has coined the ?brand of foreigner? (1975: 154).

Migration as transcendence: estrangement, community, home

The essence of the Scalabrinian project is to emancipate emigrants from the forever-foreigner condition. In Marin’s words cited earlier, the church will hopefully constitute a place where Christians may ?find themselves, thus cancelling the notion of foreigner?. In line with their politics of identity, the Scalabrinians ground the identity of the church and the ?community? in what they call the ?drama of emigration? ? in a manner akin to Iain Chambers’s ?drama of the stranger?: ?[c]ut off from the homelands of tradition, experiencing a constantly challenged identity, the stranger is perpetually required to make herself at home in an interminable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present.? (1994: 6) As I show below, the Scalabrinian project of recovery of a positive migrant identity speaks of the discomfort of not having a ?home? and of inhabiting a body that is out of place. The ghost of the stranger haunts their identity project, and becomes an emblematic figure of the human condition. Their view, I suggest, reifies the migrant-stranger as essence.

Emigration is the recurring theme running through the images displayed in the church. It is located at the junction of past and future in a project of continuity, change and liberation. ?People do not know where they are going, if they ignore where they are from?, writes father Umberto Marin (Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 7); and where they are from is emigration. However, the drama of emigration is not a site for indulging in nostalgic recollections, or for dreaming of mythical returns to a prior home, defined as stasis, fixity, comfort and familiarity; there is no going (to that) home. While the earlier ?ethnic church? arose from the necessity to provide a space of transition, for recently arrived immigrants, between two ?homes? (the one where one comes from, and the one where one lives), the present ??migr? church? has become a ?habitual space? where emigration is retrieved in images that shape a new kind of belonging and entrust individuals with the ?courage of the future? (Marin in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 7).

For the Scalabrinians, ?home? is not only the remembrance of migration, but also its transcendence. Emigration is remembered in the church’s iconography, but it acquires a special significance as a result of its association with religious languages and beliefs. A distinctive feature of the Chiesa del Redentore, is the reprocessing of biblical narratives in terms of migration, thus creating a new migrant Christian universalism. In a remarkable twist of the ?patriarchal pioneer? narrative that has characterised historical renditions of immigrant populations up until recently, the drama of emigration is retold through episodes of the life of Jesus that feature in three of the four stained glass windows of the Chiesa del Redentore: the flight to Egypt, deemed the ?first drama of emigration? (Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 13); the disciples of Emma?s (when Jesus made himself ?migrant among the migrants?, the motto of the Scalabrinian order); and the Pentecostal family: ?[t]he experience of human migrations is a stimulus and a recall to the Pentecostal fraternity, where differences are harmonised by the Spirit and charity lives through welcoming the ?other?.? (Scalabrini Order vade-mecum in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 13) The drama of emigration culminates in the Calvary, ?[t]he most dramatic story of migration? (5) which is most evocatively captured in the fresco that dominates the church altar.

To be sure, this is a narrative of origins: migration is not only the inaugural moment in the formation of a future (Italian) community, but of the history of (Christian) humanity. It constitutes a myth of origins, by virtue of which ?we? are descendants of the first migrants. More significantly, following Sara Ahmed, I want to suggest that the Scalabrinians are creating a common heritage on the basis of not being fully ?at home?, either in the location of residence or in the location of ?origins?. Contra the tendency, in theoretical discourses of exile and diaspora, to conceive of migration as a refusal of ?home?, here,

the sense of not being fully at home in a given place does not lead to a refusal of the very desire for home, and for a community or common heritage. The very experience of leaving home and ?becoming stranger? leads to the creation of a new ?community of strangers?, a common bond with those others who have ?shared? the experience of [migration]. . . The forming of a new community provides a sense of fixity through the language of heritage ? a sense of inheriting a collective past by sharing the lack of a home rather than sharing a home. (Ahmed 2000: 84-85).

Yet the transcendence of the ?foreigner? condition is not solely resolved by the constitution of a deterritorialised ?community? founded on new definitions of origins and heritage. Anxieties about estrangement, and the project of transcendence, are also mediated through the language of the body. This is most clearly captured in the fresco.

A male figure, young, white, muscular, arms stretched out in a cross, hovers against a sky-blue backdrop, the colour of God. His head is hanging sideways, eyes closed. His face expresses both pain and rest. He is naked except for a piece of cloth wrapped around his hips, covering his genitals. His feet are crossed and marked with blood stains. Above him, an opening echoing those of the church?s vaulted ceiling, is painted in trompe-l’oeil; light floods through it, seemingly drawing the floating body upwards.

The most striking feature of this painting is the truncated body: arms, legs, torso and head are sliced so that we see the blue backdrop in the spaces left by the missing parts. But despite its fragmented state, the body occupies the space as a whole, unified body.

This figure is remarkable for many reasons. Firstly, it emphasises the human, physical, bodily nature of Jesus by depicting a muscular body. Though such ?manly? representations of Christ are not new (Morgan 1996), this depiction nevertheless contrasts starkly with the suffering, slim, weak crucified body most often seen in Euro-American Catholic churches. Secondly, the fresco breaks away from the traditional crucifix by leaving out the cross, a gesture that enhances both the suffering and spiritual strength of Jesus. Hence the fresco further troubles traditional Catholic representations of the crucifixion by suggesting the strength of hope and redemption, rather than overemphasising the suffering and pain of an earthly life of sacrifice.

The fresco constitutes a highly resonant motif for an ?migr? religious organisation that is juggling with the project of creating unity in dispersal. Chosen as a replacement for the wooden crucifix that hung behind the altar prior to the renovations, the fresco signals a turning point in the mandate that the London Scalabrinians are defining for themselves. Deemed ?postmodern? by Padre Gaetano Parolin, this fresco symbolically captures ?the present day search for unity in the face of increased fragmentation? (in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 9). Indeed, this is a broken, fragmented body; its parts appear detachable, as if they could simply float away, in different directions. A disintegrating body, that hovers between presence and absence; the migrant subject, here, is at once embodied and disembodied.

The body of Jesus epitomises the ?migr? condition; it is ?the image that best represents that which animates the emigration event: sufferance and hope? (Marin in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 6). It is interesting to read this in relation to the discomfort Scalabrinians repeatedly express in relation to foreignness, which they associate with the ?immigrant condition? (Bottignolo 1985). More specifically, the implications of the Scalabrinian project of migration-as-transcendence are twofold: emigration is freed from its negative connotations, and this operates through the disentanglement of ?immigrant? and ?black?.

First, viewed as a ?one of the most complex and dramatic events of history? (Pope John-Paul II in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 12), or a ?social calamity? which has reached ?breathtaking proportions? (Marin in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 6), emigration is not fossilised into a protracted re-enactment of collective mourning over the ruptures of separation and loss. Migration rather becomes the ground for a new liberating force, symbolically reprocessed in religious terms. ?From migrations themselves come the call for a concrete and symbolic mobility, which breaks all structures of rigidity and of absolutism: Exile always precedes the Ascension, which prepares for the Pentecost.? (Scalabrini Order vade-mecum in Centro Scalabrini di Londra 1993: 13). Following the teachings of Scalabrini at the turn of the twentieth century (6), the Scalabrinians construct migration as a vector for world unity ?thus cancelling the notion of foreigner?. As Father Graziano Tassello, a leading advocate of Italian ?migr? identity, wrote: ?typical emigration values [include] a precious concern for universality and a desire to surpass borders? (LV 897, October 1993: 1). Migration, exile, are metaphors for a new universalism: what migrants share is the refusal of boundaries, the transgression of structures, the refusal of ?identities? that fix, of ?homes? that confine. Such a treatment of migration deploys a discourse of migration as

a movement that already de-stabilises and transgresses forms of boundary making . . . Migration is defined against identity; it is that which already threatens the closures of identity thinking. However, the conflation of migration with the transgression of boundaries in the impossibility of arriving at an identity is problematic. It assumes that migration has an inherent meaning: it constructs an essence of migration in order to theorise that migration as a refusal of essence. (Ahmed 2000: 81-82)

The essentialisation of migration goes hand in hand with the universalisation of the migrant body as any body. Running through the discourse of emigration are allusions to amorphous men and women whose only defining character is to be migrant, sharing the typical emigration experience of silent suffering and coping. Emigration is represented as an active thing animated by its own inherent characteristics: suffering, loneliness, estrangement, alienation, discreteness, but also displacement, settlement, and the negotiation of roots and routes. Emigration is something that is ?undergone, not undertaken? (Jacobson 1995: 24): it appears as something that happens to people and puts them through the inescapable obstacles of its journey.

In the process of creating a new ?migr? identity, a slippage occurs from migration as experience, to migration as metaphor, which operates through the denial of the ?immigrant? in favour of the fetishised exile; a denial that is mediated through the negation of the materiality of migration. The ?migr?, here, is emphatically abstracted from any material context, indeed from any material body. Forms of displacement such as labour migration are superseded by the more romantic an more valued spiritual suffering of the exile. Likewise, transnational, cosmopolitan subjectivities are valued as superior to the negotiation of local conventions and imperatives of nation, citizenship, race and gender, that immigrants negotiate in their efforts to integrate and be recognised as full fledged members of British society. To put it simply, the imperatives of British citizenship operate differently on different bodies. Hence the shift from ?ethnic church? to ??migr? church? works through the obliteration of material conditions that a number of migrants share, but which are not lived equally by all. In short, the claim that ?we are all migrants? obscures the fact that ?we? are not ?migrants? in the same way. Although the aim is ostensibly to declare that differences should not matter, representations of collective belonging are deployed within a pseudo-universalist rhetoric of Christian fraternity that denies and represses the social relations of power that construct categories of identity/difference. By symbolically representing the transcendence of absolutism through the erasure of the male body in the fresco, Scalabrinians are gesturing towards a politics that simultaneously erases bodily differences that do matter, such as skin colour and gender, whilst re-instating a masculinist discourse of transcendence.(7) This ties in with the second implication of the project of migration-as-transcendence, whereby the recovery of migration as empowering implies a disentanglement of ?immigrant? and ?black?.

Whiteness and the anxieties of (in)visibility

Scalabrinians are fully aware of the racial politics constitutive of the social and political context of Italian immigration to Britain. As Umberto Marin wrote in his monograph on Italians in Great Britain (sic),

The very terms immigrant and immigration are attributed almost exclusively to those originating from former colonies such as India, Pakistan, West Indies and some African countries. Only recently, following Great Britain’s entrance to the European Community, politicians, economists and sociologists have turned their attention towards immigrants coming from European countries, symptomatically labelled Invisible Immigrants. (8) (1975: 5; italics original).

In Britain, Italians constitute an immigrant, multi-generational population, a linguistic and religious minority, which is also absorbed within the white European majority. The indeterminacy of their social and political status is thus seized in the figure of ?invisible immigrants?. (9) The phrase was subsequently used by Father Graziano Tassello, in a speech he gave in 1983, which was reprinted in La Voce degli Italiani in 1990. Under the headline ?The Future of “Invisible Immigrants”?, Father Tassello explained that in the context of recent migration of ?people of colour? (sic) and of the ensuing re-configuration of a British ?multi-ethnic? society, Italian immigrants have become invisible.

?Invisibility?, in the British context, is a notion caught up with ?race struggles? that makes its appropriation by Italians both arrogant and challenging. The meaning of invisibility stems from the very radicalisation of immigration and ?multicultural? politics, and its adoption by Italians may be read as a gratuitous claim for equality by a population whose invisibility is the product of its integration and acceptance within British society, rather than from conditions of marginalisation and imposed silence which configure the ?invisibility? of blacks in Britain and in Europe (Mercer 1994: 7; Back and Nayak 1993). This invisibility contrasts strongly with the practices of differentiation and segregation that Italians experienced during the nineteenth century. In his discerning historical account of Italians in nineteenth-century London, Lucio Sponza (1988) reveals how public debates about hygiene, poverty and street noise were ethnicised by using the figures of Italian itinerant traders (such as organ-grinders) as emblems of urban degeneracy. Although not all negative ? Italy and Italian culture was also much idealised by the British upper-classes of the time ? images of Italian immigrants circulated in political, intellectual and ?popular? circles, thus rendering them highly visible in the public space. Likewise, the intense Italophobia pervading public discourse during the 1939-45 war, in Britain, compelled many to seek to hide their visible and audible Italianness: avoiding speaking Italian in public, anglicising their names, or their trade (the fa?ade of Italian delis in Soho, Central London, bearing signs stating ?This firm is entirely British?; in Colpi 1991: 111). For some Italians, the past is inhabited by memories of hiding the body marks of ethnicity by way of passing as non-Italian. In this respect, the fresco may be read as a metaphor for the erasure of identity/difference by way of avoiding violent marginalisation. The erasure of the body may symbolically represents the ?sufferance? of migration as a bodily experience (Ahmed 2000), suggesting the discomfort of inhabiting a migrant body, a body which feels out of place.

However, in the Scalabrinian project of recovery, ?invisibility? is not figured in terms of this history of discrimination and ostracism. Invisibility, rather, is deployed in discussions about multicultural Britain, and about the organic integration of Italians in the British social landscape. Italians represent themselves as ?invisible immigrants? to emphasise the political indifference they come up against in their country of settlement, as well as to describe what they view as the quiet, non-disruptive nature of their insertion within the British social fabric; as one community leader put it, ?this community lives and often solves its problems without making a din.? (LV 898, November 1993: 1) Tassello’s re-appropriation of the phrase ?invisible immigrants? thus forecloses the possibility that invisibility might have been desirable for some Italians. Consequently, a shift in meaning has occurred: from constituting a ?passing? strategy, invisibility is now perceived as the undesirable result of assimilation that causes the loss of an original ?ethnic and national identity?. ?[T]here lies within you a legitimate fear about the future of Italian emigration in Great Britain: the fear of losing your own ethnic and national identity.? (LV 831, October 1990: 15)

The issue at stake, for the Scalabrinians, is the loss of ethnic difference. The project of ?visibility? is thus couched in a politics of difference that both mimics and calls into question the ?invisibility? of whiteness (Dyer 1997). Calling for the recognition of Italians as immigrants challenges established conceptions of ?ethnic minorities? in Britain, and states that whites too can be immigrants, hence ?ethnic?. At the same time, rendering Italians ?invisible? allows them to be ?absorbed into the authoritative “norm” ? if no one looks black, everyone is white? (Fraser 1999: 112). As Breda Gray notes, ?[i]n a racially structured society in which categories of ?visibility? largely establish identity, looking “white” offers the possibility of “passing” and thereby exceeding the categories of “visibility”?. At the same time, when the identity of Italians is questioned, and the project to make them visible is raised, the idea of a ?totalising? whiteness begins to be challenged. The latter results in part from the British state’s response to immigration in the late 1950s, which reinforced a black-white dichotomy in terms of ?race?. But the Britain of the late 1950s and 1960s also witnessed the systematisation of a new racism where culture, rather than skin colour, became the key principle of differentiation: in this discourse, the naturalisation of culture diffuses ?race? and racism in ethnic-related discourses of differentiation. The re-configuration of ethnic identity in terms of cultural rather than racial difference may have provided the discursive backdrop against which the project of retrieving Italians from their invisibility became feasible. (10) Hence the Italian project of visibility walks the fine line between cultural-ethnicity and race, which constantly slide into each other in contemporary British discourses of multiculturalism. While the idea of ?invisibility? racialises Italians as ?invisible whites?, their project of visibility ethnicises them by seeking to create a distinct ?cultural-ethnicity?.

Indeed, some Italian intellectuals, including Scalabrinians, take pride in their ?marginality? as ?the most European section of British society? who will ?help Europeanise Britain? (Colpi 1991: 22, 258) by fostering a ?European conscience [within English society] whose temptation is always to shut itself off, to close itself upon itself? (Tassello in LV 831, October 1990: 15). At the same time, as already stated, the Scalabrinians are utterly aware of the dangers of absolutism which they seek to side-step through biblical modernist discourses about the universalism of the (Christian) human migrant subject. Thus a paradox ensues: that is that the Scalabrinian project of visibility is pronounced through the modality of invisibility, captured in the present/absent body in the fresco. More specifically, the bodily experience of migration are at once denied and enforced. This visual depiction of emigration-as-Calvary speaks of the hope of transcending the suffering immigrant body, of rendering the immigrant body invisible, whilst it the body is the preferred site for the representation of the sufferance and hope of the migration experience.

In conclusion

The project of migration-as-transcendence of the ?foreigner condition? is cast within the postmodern landscape of fragmentation within global interconnectedness. A kind of third space, which, however, does not exist outside of social forces of race and ethnicity. The construction of a migrant ontology universalises migration as part of being human, while it covers significant distinctions that relate to different conditions of migration and different experiences of ?home?.

First, differences are denied by concealing ?the substantive difference it makes when one is forced to cross borders, of when one cannot return home? (Ahmed 2000: 81). Italian-British culture, to be sure, is a migrant culture where the Italian homeland remains a ?spiritual possibility? (Salvatore in Caccia 1985: 158). Historically specific conditions of the diasporisation of Italians support a kind of imagining of Italy not as a mythical homeland, nor as a land of expulsion. It manifests itself in Italian ?migr? culture not in terms of rupture, uprooting, or discontinuity, but rather, as continuity, as a place where one can return. So even if the return to Italy is difficult, and the place of origin no longer feels like home, the deterritorialisation of ?home? surfaces from the possibility of moving between ?homes?. Italians can, and many do, move between Italy and the UK. Their refusal of fixing a home within the glorified migrant identity is formulated from a position of access to multiple spaces that could be called home; to put it bluntly, it’s easy to refuse ?home? when you’ve already got one (or more). In this respect, the ontologisation of migration as transcendence (of borders, of differences, and so on) denies the multiplicity of experiences of ?homing desires? (Brah 1996).

Second, a tension emerges between wanting to be visible and the suspicion for the surveillance that visibility allows. While the project of recovering the Italian presence in Britain conceals important differences by assuming the universal experience of migration-as-estrangement, it raises important anxieties about what it means to be a ?stranger? for those who are in that position. Being at home in migranthood is not a project shared by all members of the Italian ?community?. When I discussed the Scalabrinian identity politics with members of the Italian Women’s Club (Club Donne Italiane; CDI), who meet at the Centro Scalabrini, many resisted the labels ?immigrant? or ??migr?. ?I don’t consider myself an immigrant. I live here, I’m English.? ?I’m just an Italian who lives in London, I feel at home here and in Italy. I’m not an immigrant, and I’m not an emigrant?. ?But we are immigrants, whether we like or not!? ?But why do they [the Scalabrinians] spend so much time fighting for our voting rights in Italy anyway? I’d like them to fight for our rights here, in Britain. I’ve been here 20 years and I still can’t vote.? At this point they all agreed.

As I listened and engaged with the women, it seemed to me that in the midst of the animation surfaced an anxiety to belong. The energetic rebuttal of ?emigration? as a defining trait of collective identity goes hand-in-hand with a fear of being marginalised. In a country and continent where ?immigrant? means black, minority, and foreigner, these women refused to be pushed to the margins of belonging in Britain. As Europeans who move freely between two countries, who cross borders without hassle (in theory), who are organically integrated in the British social and economic fabric, these women’s experience of migration is not that which is associated with ?immigrants? or ?emigrants?. At once ?foreigners? ? culturally and politically (for example, many have no voting rights in the UK) ? and no-longer-immigrants, they are searching for a vocabulary that would adequately define their modes of living, their senses of identity, and, more importantly, that would not emphasise their marginality in British society.

The concern of some of these women is to go unnoticed and to be included within the white British majority. As Antonia (not her real name) once told me: ?We’re not a minority. We’re well integrated, we speak English, our children studied here, we’ve got good jobs. We’re not a minority.? Being defined as ?minority? is equivalent to being marked as cultural and economic ?outsider?. Whereas to be an unmarked ?invisible? white Italian, a non-?ethnic?, is to assume a mobile identity that can move without notice or effect. To be ?minority?, to be ?ethnic?, is to be hindered in that movement, to become visible and potentially open to surveillance (Gray). This is indeed a tension inherent in the Italian identity project: recovering the Italian presence in Britain and creating a ?new identity? inevitably allows for the construction of terrains of belonging through which the social dynamics of inclusion/exclusion are delineated. Who is included and who is not? What does it mean to be Italian, or of Italian cultural background? Likewise, what does it mean to be a (im)migran

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