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Popular Theatre in Naples: The *Sceneggiata*

The theatre genre of the sceneggiata *originated in Naples, Southern Italy, at the beginning of the twentieth century in proletarian neighbourhoods located in the city centre. The key aspects of the* sceneggiata *were its hybrid format made of popular music and spoken drama, its highly melodramatic tone, and the overlap of the staged plots with the daily experiences of its intended low-income audience. This essay analyses the aesthetic and socio-anthropological implications of the* sceneggiata *for popular culture in Italy from the 1920s to the late 1970s, both in live theatre and cinema. In this article the author reveals that the multiple layers of meaning the genre conveyed show that, beyond its seemingly entertaining nature, the* sceneggiata *narrated in depth the social, cultural and gender dynamics of Naples. Raffaele Furno is a theatre director and Professor of Performance Theory and Theatre History in the College of Global Studies, Arcadia University, Rome.*

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Introduction

In Italy, when you hear someone say "*non fare la sceneggiata*," the speaker is inviting the interlocutor to stop overreacting or stop being melodramatic about a situation. The expression describes a negative instance in which there is no adequate connection between the event and the emotional response to that event. What is the origin of this expression? The *sceneggiata* is a theatre genre that developed in Naples at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is based on musical numbers and an acting technique that privileged strong feelings and heightened emotional tensions. With actors often gesturing profusely or posing in exaggerated theatrical manners, "*fare la sceneggiata*" became synonymous with the over-the-top theatricality that many people associate with a stereotypical way of being Italian, especially in the South.

In a very short period, the genre turned into one of the most successful forms of popular entertainment for proletarian spectators not only in Naples, but also in Southern Italy and among communities of Italian migrants in the United States and Canada.[1] While the entertainment industry in Europe was flourishing

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with variety shows, slapstick comedy, and *café chantant*, the *sceneggiata* consisted of a mix of spoken theatre and music. What constitutes its specificity is that composers did not write new music for the shows. Instead, they adapted preexisting popular songs, which the audience already knew from the radio, and then collaborated with authors and actors to script (in Italian, *sceneggiare*) the plot around those songs. The most famous song gave the title to each *sceneggiata* and lured audiences into theatre venues primarily located in low-income neighbourhoods of Naples.

From a thematic point of view, the *sceneggiata* revolved around formulaic plot structures and stock characters, usually focusing on the love triangle between *isso* (he, the male protagonist played by an actor with a tenor's voice), *essa* (she, the female protagonist with soprano vocal qualities), and *'o malamente* (the antagonist, the lover or the bad guy). The repetitive and simple plots narrated stories that felt familiar to the spectators, written with the deliberate intention of overlapping the life of the characters represented on stage with the daily experiences of the spectators in the theatre.

The *sceneggiata*'s golden age ended in post-war Italy, but in the mid-1970s there was a resurgence of interest in the style. On the one side, critics who had always disregarded the *sceneggiata* for its trivial aesthetics started to reconsider the artistic and social relevance of the genre. In 1976, during the *Festa dell'Unità*[2] in Naples, journalists and actors organised a roundtable about the *sceneggiata*'s value. During the debate, left-wing intellectuals attacked the genre for misrepresenting the proletarian culture of Southern Italy. Famously, the well-known actor Beniamino Placido defended the *sceneggiata* and replied that he meant for people in the low-income neighbourhoods of Naples what Bertolt Brecht meant for the educated elite of the left.[3] In the same period, artists and actors belonging to the experimental wave, such as Leo de Berardinis and Perla Peragallo, started to research the possibilities of hybridising high and low culture, William Shakespeare's tragedies and the *sceneggiata*, giving a second life to the style. Likewise, the Italian movie industry of the 1970s found in the *sceneggiata* a rich field of melodramatic stories that could be successfully adapted into screenplays. Therefore, a new generation of Italian spectators discovered the style.

This essay will analyse the original theatre genre of the 1920s, and briefly its two adaptations in the 1970s, to examine both the cultural and social impact of the *sceneggiata* on the formation of Italian popular culture in the last century.

Theatre and the Sceneggiata

According to some critics,[4] the theatre company Maggio-Coruzzolo-Ciaramella, from the names of the three leading actors, staged the first *sceneggiata* in 1916 in Naples with the title *Pupatella.*[5] According to some others,[6] the first *sceneggiata* opened in 1919 when the theatre company Cafiero-Marchetiello-Diaz staged *Surriento gentile* in Palermo.[7] Whether one or the other is true, the original input in creating the *sceneggiata* is layered in history and cultural references. In European theatres there was an abundance of performance styles that mixed drama and music, including: the *recitativo* of Italian opera

(moments in which singers primarily utter the dialogue in between arias); *operetta* (vivacious, choreographed and systemic alternation between spoken parts and songs); baroque melodrama in Germany (poetic declamation commented and supported by chamber music); and the eighteen century French version of melodrama (spoken drama where music reinforced the emotional effect of crucial scenes). However, these earlier genres made use of original music that composers wrote exclusively for the theatre, while the *sceneggiata* adapted and re-framed songs that were commonly played by *posteggiatori* (informal music bands) in the streets of Naples,[8] or that were made famous thanks to recorded performances by renown singers such as Beniamino Gigli (1890–1957), Enrico Caruso (1873–1921), Elvira Donnarumma (1883–1933) and Armando Gill (1877–1945). The commercial success of popular songs tremendously increased when the Fascist regime established the first national radio broadcasting company in 1924.

The new style was an evolution of previous art forms as much as a clever response to practical problems arising from the Italian government's restrictive bureaucratic measures on live shows. In 1915 the national government placed a 2 percent tax on variety shows and musical comedies that were attracting thousands of spectators each night. Since the new law did not apply to spoken theatre, artists had the idea of transforming songs into a scripted play, one that required acting as much as singing, to avoid paying the tax. The first experiments like *Pupatella* and *Surriento gentile* had little to do with the later formulaic *sceneggiata*, but they were an assemblage of songs loosely linked to one another through a simple story line. However, in 1920 the show *Core signore*[9] used a very famous song as the main narrative device to tell a story of betrayal in which a husband (*isso*) discovers the unfaithful relationship between his wife (*essa*) and another man (*'o malamente*), settles to seek revenge, and eventually kills her. From that moment on, this dramatic resolution became the cliché of the *sceneggiata*, with the woman often succumbing to the law of honour that the man must abide in order to be seen as a real man.

The venues of the *sceneggiata* were mostly located around Naples railway station. Here the theatre company Cafiero-Fumo, the company primarily responsible for the codification of the stylistic rules of the *sceneggiata*, had its headquarter. The Cafiero-Fumo company based its work on family ties much like the ancient *commedia dell'arte* traveling companies. One was born in the actors' family or could be married into it. This system created a closed circuit of actors and technicians depending on the *capo comico* who was typically the leader of an acting troupe who worked and lived together to produce one, sometimes two new shows each week. The family was rooted in the territory. It constituted a stable structure that could contribute time, energy, and money in the continual efforts to write, rehearse and produce shows that discussed the traditional values of the audience, while being attentive to new elements of surprise taken from current events and trends. As I shall argue, the secret to the *sceneggiata*'s success was the creation of a theatrical structure of change within continuity: what audiences appreciated in the *sceneggiata* was the plot's recognisable organisation and repeated stylistic motifs with the addition of constantly new musical material that could keep the interest of the paying audience alive.

The Cafiero-Fumo company set the *sceneggiata*'s canons: three acts with the main song performed only in the last one, which was shorter than the previous two; the set usually represented an outdoor area, a portion of *vicolo* (small alley in the city centre of Naples) or a square. The outdoor, public, and shared life of the *vicolo* was the ideal location to represent the crowded chaos of Naples and the city's overlapping sounds and voices among which, little by little, one specific story became predominant within the plot. Musical numbers could vary, but each act contained at least three or four songs that diverted and amused the audience, while also enhancing the characters' emotional tensions. Music was not an ornamental choice, but functioned as a device to say something about the plot's development, to define the atmosphere of each scene, and to set the main emotions that spectators were to feel and share with the characters. The *capo comico* chose most songs for their commercial appeal to spectators. Famous songs were the pretext to the script, covering all shades of narrative potential whether it be dramatic, comic, romantic, or nostalgic. Authors and actors worked together to expand the lyrics of each stanza and develop them into a number of scenes, as long as the audience could relate them back to the main title.

According to literary and theatre critic Goffredo Fofi: "Spectators trust the song's title; the company trusts the emotions that the song rises in the audience's memory and its ability to imagine starting from this musical memory."[10] Fofi's analysis of the relation between memory and emotions touches upon a central element of the *sceneggiata*: the mirroring structure of the genre served the function of entertainment as much as the social purpose of teaching by example. In Naples, the venues around the main station tailored the performances towards sub-proletarian audiences who lived nearby the theatres. The stage representation of heightened emotions, including betrayal, violence, and revenge, was a fictional replica of the harsh daily life of dockworkers, fishmongers, street vendors, housewives, and petty thieves who lived in the area and loved the *sceneggiata*. They did not go to the theatre to escape from reality, but to see on stage their own experiences, framed in a performative fashion, being played out by famous singers and actors. There was a direct correspondence between the scripted plays, based on enhanced emotions and a tragic dramaturgy, and the daily life of the *vicolo*. The iconic status of the performers provided their low-income audiences with a glamourised vision of the everyday that made it bearable and justifiable. Although, for the most part, the *sceneggiata* was conceived as entertainment for the masses, the genre attracted also members of the middle and upper class, mostly men, who visited the poor neighbourhoods of Naples as a form of exotic discovery of the lifestyle of the city's have-nots.[11] As I will discuss further, the settings, characters and plots reproduced the atmospheres and lifestyle familiar to spectators, giving birth to a form of popular entertainment that was realistic in its inspiration yet imaginative in the ways it framed reality through musical memory.

Music

Paradoxically, the majority of musicians and writers who ended up contributing to the *sceneggiata*'s success did not belong to the proletarian class. The genre was initiated within families of actors who lived and worked in close proximity to their audiences, but soon these artists asked the collaboration of professional composers and poets in the search for new and meaningful literary inputs. Naples' cultural identity relied for centuries on the fusion between popular and refined elements. In the city, nobles and villains, the working class and the middle class lived side by side, sharing spaces, experiences, and interests. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, live instrumental music with a rich texture of strings and wind instruments helped the melodrama performers sustain the emotional pitches of the scripts.[12] The *sceneggiata* widened the middle-class atmospheres of melodrama to include popular music and traditional percussion instruments like *tammorra*. This hybridised the melodrama musical scores with hoarser sounds representative of the street culture which the *sceneggiata* reproduced on stage. Likewise, the proletarian Neapolitan dialect had acquired literary value thanks to novelists, poets, and intellectuals who published books and journals in both Neapolitan and Italian. The literary production of authors such as Libero Bovio (1883–1942), Salvatore Di Giacomo (1860–1934), and Ferdinando Russo (1866–1924) turned the Neapolitan dialect into an unofficial national language. Even the most celebrated poet of the time, Gabriele D'Annunzio (1858–1938) contributed to the trend of Neapolitan songwriting with the famous song *'A vucchella* (1907).

Authors who spoke to the heart of popular neighbourhoods of Naples were cultured, educated members of the intelligentsia. They borrowed lyrics from poems and turned them into songs, using the same technique that musicians and librettists had developed in opera for more than a century. These authors knew how to exploit the exaggerated love and sentimentalised emotions of songs thanks to the technical preparation learned in music schools. Music followed stylistic features that originated in the streets, with traditional instruments such as *putipù*, *caccavella*, and *triccheballacche*, mixed with orchestrations based on the piano and strings section.

The *sceneggiata*'s world-view derived from a middle-class sensibility that observed the life of the proletarians in the poorer neighbourhoods, looking for the most obscure characters and stories that highlighted basic human feelings like fear, guilt, and fragility. Through this magnifying lens, the *vicolo*'s characters acquired dignity. At the same time, traditional music used the folklore of Naples made of sunny days, pizza and tarantella, to describe the light, fun, communal and participatory life of the *vicolo*, providing the basic social and cultural identity of the *sceneggiata*'s settings. Neapolitan folk songs varied in their musical attributes, but for the most part, they were plaintive ballads in minor keys with an extremely fluid harmonic structure. This internal organisation fit perfectly the melodramatic goal of the *sceneggiata*, as musical minor keys worked in unison with the themes of tormented love and longing for home, that feeling of displacement wonderfully embodied in the song *'O sole mio*[13] (1898) about the migratory experience common to millions of Neapolitans. In similar ways, Neapolitan songs and the

sceneggiata gave primacy to the singers' voice as instrument.[14] The traditional singing technique called *a fronna 'e limone* (lemon leaf) was made of prolonged vowels.[15] Singers would play with the natural stress of a word or sentence to extend a single vowel for two or four bars. The recurring vibrato at the end of each verse created a rhythmical movement that contributed to the nostalgic feeling of the musical score. The quality of the singing technique was the main way that the audience appraised the performance.

The central component of the *sceneggiata* was the music and therefore the acting contained lapses in the action in order to feature a particular song or provide a powerful vocal performance by a famous singer. The plot was important, but it was mainly a means to focus the attention onto the songs. The singer had to sing from the heart and move spectators to tears. If the performance sounded technical but uninspired, spectators would probably consider it unsuccessful. The live performances moved the audience to react and participate in visceral ways. Many accounts of an evening spent watching a *sceneggiata* mention that spectators became so engrossed in the action on stage that they would partake in fights, yell at singers, sing along, or embrace with random strangers.[16] For instance, the actress Virginia Da Brescia remembers when a spectator threw a shoe on stage against the leading actor, Lino Mattera, because his character was disrespecting hers. Mattera had to stop the performance to remind the audience that they were acting, not really arguing with each other.[17] Likewise, when *'A figlia d' 'a Madonna* opened on 6 December 1927 at the Trianon theatre,[18] the audience repeatedly interrupted the show during act one because they disagreed with the author's decision to change the traditional structure of the *sceneggiata.*[19] The most common reaction, though, occurred at the apex of the confrontation between *isso* and *'o malamente* when, often, spectators would support the good guy by yelling, "accirelo a stu fetente" (kill that bastard).

Characters and Themes

The *sceneggiata* followed a three-act structure. Act one provided an introduction, depicting the background of the characters, their social status and the main plot tangle. Act two had a comic tone and served as a break between the dramatic conflict of the first act and the tragic ending of the third. Act three reintroduced the main problem and culminated in the tragic finale with the full performance of the title song. The *sceneggiata* represented the conservative values of Neapolitan society. The songs often addressed the longing for home, the value of manual labor, and, above all, family and love. Even though authors and composers envisioned it as entertainment for families, the genre was predominantly masculinist both on and off stage. The gender dynamic in the *sceneggiata* spoke against any progressive attempt to modernise Naples, even though some actresses became extremely famous and ran their own companies,[20] and women attended the *sceneggiata* theatres with their husbands, whereas they were not so welcomed in the venues dedicated to other musical theatres such as *varietà* and *café chantant*.

The *sceneggiata*'s mix of drama and music displayed the small and self-contained world of the *vicolo*, the main urban unit in Naples' city centre, literally meaning a small alley. In the *vicolo*, concepts of social pressure and community coercion moulded the boundaries of gender roles. The authors and musicians who composed the shows based the *sceneggiata*'s fundamental dramaturgical conflict on the culturally accepted distinction between *omme* (man, the protagonist, also known as *isso*, he) and *omme 'e niente* (the man worth nothing, the antagonist, also referred to as *'o malamente*, the bad guy). Sociologically, the *sceneggiata* was a representation of life in the *basso*. The *basso* was the typical living quarter of low-income and under-educated people. Located at or below street level, this one room hovel had one door opening directly on to the street, which constituted the only source of natural light and fresh air. Curtains hanging from the ceiling subdivided the room into smaller separate areas for sleeping and dining. The average family in the *basso* was made of mother, father, the older generation of grandparents, and a large number of children. As visual studies professor Giuliana Bruno points out:

> The characters in the *sceneggiata* are the *popolo*, members of the underclass or the poor artisan class, caught between the family and a harsh confrontation with the social and institutional apparatus. The difficult life in the belly of the city, among acts of deviance and revenge, or the painful separations of those who are forced to migrate to America are the recurrent social subtexts of this musical genre.[21]

The claustrophobic and unsanitary living condition inside the *basso* meant that life in the *vicolo* developed for the most part outside, in the street. People in the *vicolo* carried out their activities in the public eye, even those that modern life would normally associate with the private space of one's household. Washing clothes, taking a bath, cooking, breastfeeding kids, eating, and so on, for the most part occurred outside, as if the street were a natural addition to the one-room *basso*. The staging of a *sceneggiata* often included the visual reenactment of these common activities, which meant that life in the *vicolo* was a communal event, constantly unfolding under the scrutinising eye of neighbours. The watcheye provided by the community greatly contributed to the form of constant social pressure upon its inhabitants, which the *sceneggiata* narrated in the triangle of *isso*, *essa*, and *'o malamente*. For instance, many scripts used and declared the existence of social pressure as in *'O Festino* [22](1918) when *isso* unveils his broken heart singing:

Amice, me scusate si ve lasso!	Friends, forgive me if I leave
'o vico sta 'nfestino. E chi capisce	the *vicolo* is celebrating. If you knew
tuorto nun me po' dà, me cumpatisce:	you would not blame me, but pity me:
sposa chi m'ha vuluto bene a me!	he marries the girl who once loved me!
Jastemmo e maledico.	I swear and curse them.[23]

The community functioned as an external, independent body requiring that every single individual who belonged to it acted according to the rules of the *vicolo*. Little did it matter that most times these street rules clashed against the official law of the State. To be part of this social dynamic one had to respond to the

unwritten laws of the street, to the moral judgment and life predicament that the *vicolo* had developed for its inhabitants to survive notwithstanding unemployment, lack of formal education, absence of services, and so on. The public entity *vicolo* won over the individual choices of its people, and most times individuals had to act and respond to satisfy the expectations of the surroundings rather than follow their own ideas and feelings. This complex dynamic is epitomised in the *sceneggiata Malufiglio*[24] (1963), when the leading character sings:

'A stima d' 'o quartiere sto perdendo,	I've been losing the neighbourhood's respect
a quanno m'aggio miso nzieme a tte…	since I started dating you…
Ma tu si' 'ngrata	But you are ungrateful
e ancora nun t'arrienne	and you haven't made up your mind
a vulè bene solamente a me!	that you must love me and no one else!

Typically, a *sceneggiata* started with the presentation of a problem caused by the disrespect of the communal bounds of the *vicolo*, and it ended with the return of the lost individual into the appropriate boundaries of expected behaviors, which restored stability and continuity. Words like honour, vengeance, betrayal and respect played a central role in the construction of the plots that, like Greek drama, represented a journey from the disarticulation of the relation between community and self to the reconstruction of that stability.

The premise of each *sceneggiata*, which is also one of its biggest contradictions, is that it seems impossible for the people in the *vicolo* to live an honest life, even when their intentions are well placed. The government has betrayed them by not providing cities like Naples with economic prospects of growth, employment, and the quality of services that a modern city should have. Facing the impossibility of living according to the law, the male protagonist, who is married and carries on his shoulder the social weight of a numerous family that must be fed and protected, has to work through the interstices of legality to bring home food. That is why he often ends up dealing in the black market for cigarettes, sometimes medicines, some other times food. The State is present in the *sceneggiata* in the double repressive forms of the police and the courthouse–jail. Jail time is the perfect occasion for *'o malamente* to intrude into the family of the protagonist and manipulate his wife, often times with the alluring promises of little gifts, until she gives in to courtship and ends up committing adultery. In fact, *'o malamente* is generally an unmarried man who has little interest in settling down and finding a job. Because the *vicolo* knows and sees everything, the news reaches the husband in jail and, from that moment, his mind focuses on revenge. In *Carcerate* (1964),[25] for instance, the protagonist sings:

[…] *ll'aggio saputo!…* […] I've heard!…	
S'è mmisa cu nato!	She is seeing someone else!
Overamente? Che mappina 'e chesta!	Really? What a bastard he is!
Io po' avarria stà sempe carcerato!	I will not be in jail forever!
Ma mo' che nn'esco!	When I come out!
E' chi s'ha visto s'ha visto!	All will end!
Mannaggia 'o prisirente scellerato!	Damn that wretched judge!

When he finally returns home, *isso* confronts *'o malamente* in a duel, but usually ends up killing his wife rather than his rival, who often flees the city adding further discredit to his bad reputation. The revenge destroys, for the last time, the family ties. But, in a twisted way, it also allows *isso* to regain his social position in the small community of the *vicolo*. He acts in respect of the *vicolo*'s internal rules, uses them in a conservative way and, eventually, preserves the community from any other action that might put in danger its social and cultural balance. Therefore, the *sceneggiata* contains a form of teaching by example, as one woman is violently punished to teach everyone else that no individual desire or expectation is more important than the *vicolo*'s self-preservation. One of the first shows of the genre, based on Libero Bovio's song *Pupatella* (1916), displays this in the lyrics that close the show. First, *isso* talks to his dying wife and then he turns to *'o malamente* who is trying to run away from the scene:

[…] *Viene, abballa, strignete a me...*	[…] Come, dance, hug me...
Quanno abballe – sì sempe tu...	When you dance – you'll never change...
'o vì l'amico tuoio ca sta tremmanno.	look at your friend, he is shaking.
Pupatè…	Pupatè…
'O vede ca i' te scanno	He sees I am killing you
ma nun t'aiuta a te!!!	but he does not help you!!!
[…]	[…]
Ch'è, tu triemme?	Why are you shaking?
ma ch'ommo sì?	What kind of man are you?
Jesce, abballa!	Come out, let's get to it!
che guarde a ffà?	What are you looking at?
'A vì ca stesa 'nterra	See how beautiful she looks
è sempe bella!	laid dead on the floor!
Pupatè	Pupatè
e abballa 'a tarantella	dance the tarantella
ca fore aspetto a tte!	I'll wait for you outside!

In the *sceneggiata* there are also secondary male characters that acquire meaning especially in the second and third act: the *mamo* (the comic, naive type) and *'o nennillo* (the kid). They have specific roles within the structure of the show. The *mamo*, or comic co-protagonist, is the comedic counterpart who can subvert the rules of the *vicolo* without being subject to moral judgment. He acts the role of the village idiot. The need for such a character is mostly utilitarian because, along with the female comedian called *vaiassa*, he lightens the main story line with a secondary narrative that shows a weak masculinity crushed under the funny yet manipulative power of a woman. By contrast, *'o nennillo* produces the consolidation of the pathetic emotional force of the *sceneggiata* through two

powerful narrative devices: *'o nennillo* is either left an orphan, as his mother dies and his father goes to jail, or he dies of an illness that momentarily reunites the family around his death bed. Both the *mamo* and *'o nennillo* heighten the audience's emotions towards extreme ends of the spectrum: laughter or tears, with the latter being the dominant type of reaction to the *sceneggiata*'s main pathetic story line.

Since the *sceneggiata* is conservative in its internal value system, the representation of female characters stops at the stereotypical duality of the saint (*'a mamma*, the mother) and the whore (*'a malafemmina*, the lost woman). Femininity's spectrum goes from the mother's role, as the repository of care and familiar warmth, to the unfaithful wife and manipulative virago. When the *sceneggiata* builds a tension between the two, due to their ambivalent relationship with the man in the family, authors tend to direct the spectators' sympathies towards the older generation, since *'a mamma* embodies tradition, continuity, and respect for the *vicolo*. The *malafemmina*, instead, must suffer and pay for her wrongdoings, as it is clear from the song *Sott' 'e ccancelle* (1920). [26] The female character cries:

D' 'a casa soia 'a mamma m'ha cacciato,	His mom kicked me out of home,
cchiù nun me vo' 'a famiglia mia vedè…	my family doesn't want to see me…
E sola i' mo, cu 'a croce 'e 'nu peccato,	Alone, with a heavy heart and my sin
chi sa a qua' parte putarria cadè!	who knows where I will end up!
Ma nun me coglie, no, 'sta mala sorte…	Bad luck will not have me…
pecchè… pecchè i' corro	because… because I run
'nbraccia a' morte.	towards death.

People in the *vicolo* judge a woman's moral status on the basis of her willingness to care: care for her husband through respect for wedlock; care for her family through cooking meals and keeping a comfortable shelter; care for her son through emotional participation of the waiting mother who sits by the fire at home suffering, crying, and despairing. The *malafemmina* is hardly a protagonist of the *sceneggiata*, because this would represent a revolutionary claim in terms of acceptable gender balance in the *vicolo*'s society. The *malafemmina* serves as an antagonist. The representation of appropriate female behaviors balances the educational intent of the *vicolo*'s value system taught through the *sceneggiata*. Sometime the variables can take one direction or the other: the wife betrays her husband who then seeks revenge by *sfregio*, scarring the woman's face, or *zumpata*, a duel with the lover. It may also happen that the husband emigrates from Naples to escape the shame derived from betrayal or, more rarely, to escape capture after taking revenge. Some other times, the mother or the kid get ill and die. All of these options share the same goal of leading the audience towards the climatic conclusion constructed around feelings of pathos, drama, nostalgia, guilt, and repentance.

The main reason that the *sceneggiata* slowly stopped attracting audiences was the same reason that it had become so popular among the working class in the first place. While the genre stayed fixed in its performative and thematic dynamics, conservative in nature, from 1920 to 1970, Naples transitioned from

being mostly agricultural and low income to becoming service-based and middle class. The transformation of Naples' popular neighbourhood from working class to middle-class, with the decrease of blue-collar workers, meant that spectators were experiencing a lifestyle that did not connect anymore with the representation of the *sceneggiata*. The disconnection caused the regression of the genre into a form of traditional culture that did not appeal to theatre audiences anymore. The meaning of the *sceneggiata* was inextricably linked to the life of the *vicolo*. When the latter changed, the former had to change as well. The urban transformation of Naples was a consequence of the economic development of the city, but also of the natural disaster caused by the earthquake that hit the region in 1980. After the quake, thousands of people had to relocate permanently from the historic centre to the outskirts of Naples, because the old buildings in the city centre had suffered the most damage. Eventually, the traditional social ties of the *vicolo* disappeared, with people previously living side by side now residing in newly built areas distant from the old familiar quarters. The locations and audiences of the *sceneggiata* did not exist anymore and, consequently, the traditional performance style lost the ability to talk directly to its spectators. However, the interplay between social transformations, a change in the audience's taste, the broader appeal to spectators of cinema and television, economic interests and new cultural approaches reframed the *sceneggiata* in two ways. On the one hand, famous actors such as Dario Fo, Carmelo Bene and Leo de Berardinis started incorporating elements of popular culture in their intellectual research, hybridising the *sceneggiata* with the classics. On the other, the B-movies industry in Southern Italy fully and successfully adapted the *sceneggiata*'s characters and plots to the big screen.

Experimenting with the Sceneggiata

In the mid-1970s there was a resurgence of interest in the *sceneggiata* among critics and ethnographers who began to pay attention to that which American anthropologist Micaela di Leonardo calls "exotics at home," that is to say communities within the nation that do not fit into the dominant cultural, racial and gender boundaries.[27] Having overcome a certain intellectual elitism, Italian academics could finally analyse folktales, rituals, traditions, popular music, and theatre as legitimate subjects of inquiry because all these elements participated in the creation of identity and cultural meaning at local and national levels. This awareness, though, occurred in a Cold War climate that saw an extreme polarisation of artists and scholars around political principles inspired by either Communism or the Christian Democrats. The theatre world in Italy in the 1970s was heavily politicised. Either artists worked and produced shows within the circuit of public-funded theatres for the most part aligned with the moderate centre, or they brought theatre to the masses, in factories, youth centres, jails, and hospitals, participating in the recuperation of forms of popular entertainment from an explicit leftist position.[28] Such was the general atmosphere when journalists, critics, singers, and actors met at a roundtable at the *Festa dell'Unità* in Naples in 1976 to discuss the cultural value of the *sceneggiata*.

In those same years, Leo de Berardinis (1940–2008) and Perla Peragallo (1943–2007) were young actors dissatisfied with the nation's dominant modes of

theatrical education, production, and distribution. In 1965, Leo and Perla, as they are known by their stage names, decided to move to the periphery of Naples where they became accustomed to *sceneggiata*. Their Neapolitan period lasted from 1965 to 1981 in an occupied building in the city's suburb of Marigliano and intersected with the public debate occurring at *Festa dell'Unità* both in the sense of producing it and suffering it. Leo and Perla interrogated the relation between politics and aesthetics from a position of geographical and generational subordination. They constructed their performances on the juxtaposition of foreign classics, pop culture and local forms of cultural expression, creating a new and hybrid theatrical experience meant for audiences that, for the most part, were used to traditional shows, and for a minority of fellow professional actors and insiders.

The *sceneggiata* that Leo and Perla experienced was not the sociological category of the *vicolo*, but rather the anthropological interest in traditional culture as the embodiment of Naples' popular soul. The physical world of the *sceneggiata* had drastically changed. Since the origin of *sceneggiata,* there had been two world wars and the vivacious post-war reconstruction that led Italy into the economic boom of the 1960s. The city centre had undergone what today would be described as gentrification and the theatre venues where the *sceneggiata* had flourished either were closed or had become porno cinemas. Leo and Perla understood that the socio-economic atmosphere that originated the *sceneggiata* had moved to the outskirts of the city, in the new low-income housing projects that popped up around the city belt. That is why they decided to open their performance space in one of those neighbourhoods and to use the adaptation of the *sceneggiata* style to bridge the gap between the so-called proper culture and the people. This project fit within the poetic of *teatro dell'ignoranza* (theatre of ignorance), which signified Leo and Perla's desire to abandon all bourgeois atmospheres, to root their work in proletarian folktales and music, to reside where theatre was not a professional career, and to reevaluate forms of popular spectacle that the intellectual elites disregarded.[29]

What type of *sceneggiata* arose from Leo and Perla's experimentation, and how successful was it? First and foremost, the artists' interest arose from the fact that traditional *sceneggiata* was not a refined product, but it always contained acting and staging elements that made it feel improvised. Leo and Perla were little concerned with the idea of a play being a finished and polished product. Instead, each public presentation to an audience was the occasion to reinvent, remount, and recreate that same work, which enhanced its unrefined aesthetic. This is also the reason why they often preferred to work with non-professional actors, to keep that raw energy alive. Secondly, the stock characters of *sceneggiata* embodied archetypical conflicts of love, hate, and revenge that they could easily adapt from classical plays that suited their theatrical background. Leo and Perla theorised that the triangle of *isso*, *essa* and *'o malamente* was common to Libero Bovio's *Pupatella*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Euripides' *Medea*. Thirdly, the language of music functioned to elicit in the most unmediated way the instinctual emotions that Leo and Perla wished to achieve through their work. Music, constituting the real backbone of traditional *sceneggiata*, suffered the most in this experimental form, because it often lacked that element of commercial success

that had characterised the *sceneggiata*'s songs in the past. Finally, the popular audience who actively reacted to the *sceneggiata*'s performances, loudly cursing *'o malamente* or supporting *isso*, was very different from the middle-class, educated audience attending official theatres. Leo and Perla were hoping to have a similar visceral relation with their blue-collar audience, because theatre to them was not literature, but a deeply lived, deeply suffered, deeply nostalgic, and deeply embodied experience.[30] Unfortunately, the two artists rarely found a real connection with the audience in Marigliano. The shows were too complex, intellectualistic, and cultured for their spectators who could not see a reflection of themselves on stage, [31] which, as I previously argued, had been the key to the success of the *sceneggiata* in the early twentieth century.

Leo and Perla's 1972 production of *'O zappatore* (The tiller) was part of a *sceneggiata*-style trilogy with *King Lacreme Lear Napulitane* (Neapolitan King Tears Lear, 1973), and *'Sudd* (South, 1974). *'O zappatore* recalled in the title one of the most famous *sceneggiata*. The show appeared as a montage of images and situations rather than a logical plot development. On stage, the three main characters embodied respectively the countryside and the time of *sceneggiata* (the father), the vicious city life and the decadence of melodrama (the mother), and the young counterculture fond of jazz music and modernity.[32] The performance opened with a blind poet holding a saxophone, possibly a reference to Homer, while the Neapolitan tragicomic mask of Pulcinella paraded on stage with a suicidal rope around his neck. This framed the reassuring *commedia dell'arte* mask into a nightmarish vision of death. After all, Pulcinella was traditionally a servant, a subordinate character that made people laugh through a series of horrific misfortunes. Leo and Perla highlighted the mask's tragic destiny, rather than its comedic relief. Later in the show, *'o malamente* appeared surrounded by street lights typically displayed during religious festivities in Southern Italian towns, which somehow sanctified the negative male antagonist of the *sceneggiata*. The show ended with a clown wearing a hat too small for his head, a king with a very long white beard, and a ballet dancer in a pink tutu.[33] The impression stemming from the show was one of temporary construction, as if spectators were witnessing one of the many possible combinations of this rich visual material devoid of a closed structure and meaning. Images of religious belief and popular characters, of *sceneggiata* and poetry, clashed in the dissonance of cultural references that was a signature style in Leo and Perla's theatrical research. However, Leo and Perla's layered poetic, often times violent and painful, was not as accessible as they had hoped for the average proletarian spectator living in Marigliano.

King Lacreme Lear Napulitane adapted Shakespeare's tragedy and Libero Bovio's song *Lacreme Napulitane* (1925).[34] The song's lyrics and slow tempo communicated a pathetic feeling of loneliness and nostalgia, which perfectly combined the traditional atmospheres of the *sceneggiata* and the figure of the old king betrayed by his beloved daughters and condemned to a lonely death. As in the traditional *sceneggiata*, the emotional category of the pathetic was a common trait of Neapolitan poetry and music. The abundance of pathos in literary and musical compositions privileged intense, dramatic and tear dropping effects. The show *King Lacreme Lear Napulitane* opened with Leo and Perla acting out some

of *King Lear*'s dialogues, playing alternatively Lear, Cordelia, and the Fool. Musicians on stage accompanied this section with a live soundtrack that mixed American swing music and Neapolitan pop songs. The *sceneggiata* section of the show started with two actors, chosen among the non-professional volunteers in Marigliano, performing a grotesque version of tarantella. They danced on *Lacreme Napulitane,* while classical music by Tchaikovsky repeatedly interrupted the rhythm.[35] The show's overall feeling was one of a jazz improvisation.[36] *King Lacreme Lear Napulitane* played on layers of acoustic impressions: the poetic language of Shakespeare and the raunchy yet familiar sounds of Neapolitan dialect, the pleasing register of popular music and the complexity of classical compositions. The auditory experience hardly felt reassuring. Instead, it emphasised dissonance and multiplicity.

The montage effect was even more extreme in the third show of the trilogy, *'Sudd*, which felt more like a concert than a theatre piece. Theatre professor Donatella Orecchia, for instance, defined Leo and Perla's approach as "a theatrical jam session."[37] However, for many critics and reviewers of the time, the exaggeration of vocal and sound experimentation hindered the formation of a communicative ground between professional and non-professional actors, and between performers and spectators in Marigliano. Famously, critic Angelo Maria Ripellino defined Leo and Perla's shows as the result of "scripts whose papers have been randomly mixed by a cat."[38] The communicative gap between Leo and Perla's political intentions and the actual outcome of their performances indicate the difficulty of reframing the *sceneggiata* years after its heyday and away from the *vicolo* that had cultivated the cultural, artistic, and sociological elements that constituted the genre's vitality.

Movies and the Sceneggiata

The movie industry was better able to retrieve the commercial success of the *sceneggiata* and to attract the interest of the popular audiences who once inhabited the *vicolo*. In the 1970s and 1980s, this commercial success was synonymous with Mario Merola (1934–2006). The singer was born in Naples in a popular neighbourhood by the train station, that is to say in the natural hub of *sceneggiata*. Since a very young age, Merola worked as a dockworker while participating at various musical festivals. The passion eventually turned into a professional career that spanned six decades and led Merola to become for his audience *'o re da' sceneggiata*, the *sceneggiata* king.

When the post-war Italian movie industry started paying attention to the *sceneggiata*, it did so for various reasons. First, the *sceneggiata* had already provided plenty of melodramatic plots to the initial movie industry of Fascist Italy. Second, for many decades Neapolitan music had been extremely popular well outside the regional and national boundaries, thanks to its double tradition of highly poetic lyrics and easy tunes. In addition, Naples as the ancient capital of the Kingdom of the two Sicilies had produced linguistic and cultural works that were familiar to audiences all over Southern Italy and among the millions of migrants who had left the country. This meant that the movie industry of the 1970s could easily profit from a solid group of spectators both in Italy and in many Northern

European and American countries. As Martin Stokes has noted, "among the countless ways in which we 'relocate' ourselves, music undoubtedly has a vital role to play."[39] Music serves as a means of communication and cultural self-expression, as much as a means to establish ties of a shared culture and identity. The adaptation of the *sceneggiata*'s style from live theatre to film was like the making or altering of the cultural identity of Naples in the second half of the twentieth century, since the Neapolitan songs in the movies played an important role in the expression of the new social classes and collective experiences of what was once the *vicolo*.

The melodramatic topics of the *sceneggiata* provided a plot structure that could be easily adapted into movies. However, there was a major shift in the 1970s from the love–betrayal–revenge dynamic, which was the pivotal engine behind the original story lines, to an increasingly predominant focus on the mob and the conflict between legality and illegality in the violent streets of Naples. The *sceneggiata* had often reproduced cultural attitudes of dangerous characters, who acted according to scripts that inhabited the harsh, raw, sentimental, and often violent choices of the have-nots. The illegality of the *sceneggiata*'s characters and atmospheres were background information in the original live version, often providing a sociological justification for the attitudes of the characters, but never overshadowing their morality. Movie adaptations, instead, focused on the sensational and violent interactions between the legitimate world of the State and the underworld of the mob, creating a predominantly male narrative in which *'o malamente* turned into the *camorrista* (a member of the *camorra*, the Neapolitan mafia) vexing *isso* and *essa* for the sake of showing off his predominance in the neighbourhood. The new *sceneggiata* narrated how the mob controlled the economy and the life of the city, and how honest people were crushed under their pervasive power.[40]

This deviated narrative attracted a lot of criticism towards the 1970s *sceneggiata*, and even an overt dislike from movie critics and intellectuals, while producing undisputed commercial success. The new *sceneggiata* reduced the original themes to the fight between the police and the mob through a rigid scheme of good and evil. The male protagonist came to embody the hero who defends the values of family and tradition against the groups of gangsters. Usually the protagonist is bullied by a group of bad guys affiliated with the *camorra* and must choose between the loss of his good name and his honour, which is also his wife's honour, and death. The *camorra* represented ontological injustice deriving from the super-structure of illegality that crushed, transformed and annihilated the socially accepted life of the *vicolo*. The city's diffuse and complex relationship with the *camorra* consisted in the social evolution of a minority of men who could not find a clear position in Naples' urban and cultural structure. Initially, the *camorra* affiliated men around a clear cultural message and a specific geographical identity, soon turning into a structural mentality that affected the community through both extreme acts of street violence and the creation of a strong alternative economy to the official one. The combination of money and violence allowed the *camorra* to show a great deal of adaptability, and to enter into the control room of political, economic, and cultural activities in the city.[41]

Critics of the second wave of *sceneggiata* accused the movies of being inauthentic. For some, its proletarian class nightmare of poverty and lack of education simply did not tell the whole story about Naples' cultural production.[42] For others, the way these movies exalted the *camorra* played into glamorising illegality on the one side, and into reinforcing negative stereotypes against Southern Italian cities on the other.[43] For some others, the conservative nature of the *sceneggiata*'s values was a weak attempt to contrast the modernisation of Naples.[44] In calling the genre inauthentic, critics suggested that the *sceneggiata* did not adequately represent Naples of the period and that its depiction neglected real lives in ways that falsify the city's history. However, I argue that the 1970s wave of film adaptation disregarded the entertaining and community building goals of the early *sceneggiata* in favor of a gloomier narrative. In this sense, these movies were a faithful representation of the country's atmosphere of the 1970s made of a political polarisation between extreme right and extreme left, internal terrorism, and the so-called *anni di piombo* (lead years)[45] that saw the murders of dozens of politicians, policemen, and representatives of the State by the hands of deviated criminals.

In the original *sceneggiata*, the *vicolo*'s social codes legitimised the vindictive violence of the husband, while the behavior of *'o malamente* was outside of all logic and acceptability. In the film adaptations *isso* kept the qualities of a man of honour, while the figure of *'o malamente* turned into a man affiliated with organised criminal groups that do not follow any other moral commandment but the one of power. While the *vicolo*'s illegality had dealt primarily with cigarettes, for instance, the *camorra* controlled the heavy drugs market, which was a step up in the scale of crime. In addition, the *camorra* carried out shootings and murders that had nothing to do with defending one's honour, but pertained to the defense and conquest of territorial control. The *camorra*'s informal relation with violent rites of passage and affiliation became more determinant in the existence of a man than his original family or *vicolo*. This explains why the *vicolo* perceived *'o malamente* as a traitor of the social bond, as an outcast. *'O malamente* put his individual desires, his thirst for power, money, and social climbing over the collective ideology, and therefore lost his identity and his place in the community.

Both on the big screen and on stage, Mario Merola played multiple times the role of the hero who defends his dignity and traditional life against the changing forces of modernity that are loosening the social fabric of the *vicolo*. However, his off-camera life and artistic persona overlapped in ways that turned him into a controversial figure able to polarise supporters and detractors in extreme positions. Some of Merola's life choices may have overshadowed his vocal talent, but for the popular neighbourhoods of Naples he always remained a star and a generous philanthropist.[46] He was also an example of how the *camorra* represented in the movies was the strongest constituency of Naples society, since he often sang at weddings and parties thrown by equivocal figures of the mob, and the *camorra* itself often controlled the production and distribution of his movies. Probably the most iconic role played by Mario Merola was in the *sceneggiata Zappatore* (1980),[47] about a poor peasant confronting his son who has become a lawyer. Since graduating from university, the son has become a respectable member of Naples's middle-class. He has cut all ties with his family of

origin because he is ashamed of his poor background. In the pivotal scene, a devastated Mario Merola bursts into a mansion where a lavish party is taking place and confronts his son in front of his new friends. The father sings:

Mamma toja se ne more.	Your mother is dying.
O ssaje ca mamma toja more	Do you know your mom is dying
e te chiamma?	and calls your name?
Meglio si te 'mparave zappatore,	You'd have been better off as a tiller,
ca o zzappatore	because a tiller
nun s' 'a scorda 'a mamma.	would never forget his mom.
Te chiamma ancora "gioia,"	She still calls you "sweetheart,"
e arravugliata dint' 'o scialle niro	wrapped in her black shawl
dice, "mo torna core 'e mamma soia	she says "he'll come back, my darling,
se vene a piglià ll'urdemo suspiro."	he will come take my last sigh."

Conclusion

The tragic end of the *sceneggiata*, with the pathetic death of one of the main characters, became a cliché that sometimes played out as a meta-theatrical game with spectators, as in the song *'O re d' 'a sceneggiata* (1982),[48] written for Mario Merola. The lyrics blurred fiction and reality:

'Ncopp' 'a nu palcoscenico	On a stage
io canto 'a che so' nato	I began to sing since birth
io dint' 'e sceneggiate songo 'o rre!	I am the king of *sceneggiatas*!
Quando la donna perfida	When the evil woman
tradisce a l'uomo amato	betrays the loved one
p' 'a legge d' 'o triato:	she must die:
ha dda murì.	this is the theatre's law.
E 'o pubblico in delirio	And the raving audience
pe' forza ha dda appludì.	must applaud.

The *sceneggiata*, in its multiple adaptations, framed a layered narration that demanded both social and cultural elements: First, the existence of closed social classes with the majority of the urban population blocked in the sub-proletarian neighbourhoods and a few privileged ones doing everything they could to stop them from climbing up the social ladders. Second, the conservative gender roles that forced women to succumb to male power, or sometimes to receive only a temporary salvation or gratification. Third, the evil deriving from excessive desires for a woman or for money, which only placates itself after having caused tragic destinies. Fourth, family ties that were too tight and suffocating, requiring that all individuals limited their own independence in the face of social appropriateness. Fifth, the transformation of life in the *vicolo* where everyone sees, speaks, gossips, and judges what you do and why you do it, until the *camorra* stepped in to decide upon everyone's life with violence and arrogance. Finally, the oppression deriving from positive law that, legitimately, could neither understand nor accept the *vicolo*'s inner dynamic and sought to repress the daily petty activities of the *vicolo* and the structured violence of the *camorra*.

The *sceneggiata* was made of doubles: good guy–bad guy, motherly love–unfaithful wife, dramatic–comic, *vicolo*–city or countryside–city, street law–positive law, family-style acting companies–middle-class authors and composers. The genre was deeply popular both in its social fan base and representation style, though often times it incorporated poetry and music that had a high artistic value. There was something illuminating in the *sceneggiata*'s use of musical knowledge and representation skills. Politics was not the key element in the *sceneggiata*, but it functioned as the background conflict area of law and ethics. The *vicolo* developed its own idea of right and wrong, which the *sceneggiata* placed under the theatre's lights. In the *sceneggiata* the official law seemed to be well accepted only when it intervened in sanctioning the bad guy who had already been ousted by the people of the *vicolo*, hence only when the two overlapped in having the same kind of response. In this dynamic, the sub-proletarian audiences in Naples projected onto actors their needs and interests, and the work of actors became meaningful and useful only if they embodied vocally and dramatically the direct communication that went from the stage to the spectators, and vice versa.

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[1] On Italian immigrant identity and *sceneggiata*, see Reba Wissner**, "**All of Mulberry Street is a Stage: Representations of the Italian Immigrant Experience Through Community Theater Performances of the Italian-American Sceneggiata," *MAPACA Almanack*, no. 19 (2010): 92–111.

[2] This is a series of cultural and political events organised by the Italian Communist party each year in cities across the country.

[3] Cited in Pasquale Scialò, ed., *La Sceneggiata. Rappresentazioni di un Genere Popolare* (Napoli: Guida Editore, 2003), 7.

[4] See Guido Baffi, *Visti da vicino* (Napoli: Guida Editore, 2008), 24.

[5] In the essay, the titles usually indicate both the main song and its adaptation into *sceneggiata* style, unless otherwise noted. *Pupatella*. Title song: lyrics by Libero Bovio, music by Francesco Buongiovanni. The *sceneggiata* was directed by Mimì Maggio and opened at Teatro Orfeo, Naples, in 1916.

[6] See Emiliano Morreale, *Così piangevano. Il cinema melò nell'Italia degli anni cinquanta* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2011), 109.

[7] *Surriento Gentile*. Based on the song *Serenata a Surriento* (1907), lyrics by Aniello Califano, music by Salvatore Gambardella. The *sceneggiata* was written by Enzo Lucio Murolo and directed by Salvatore Cafiero. The show opened on September 17, 1919, at Teatro Olimpia, Palermo.

[8] See the definition of *posteggiatore* in Ettore De Mura, *Enciclopedia della Canzone Napoletana* (Napoli: Editrice Il Torchio, 1969).

[9] *Core signore*. Title song: lyrics by Salvatore Baratta, music by Nicola Valente. The *sceneggiata* was directed by Mimì Maggio and opened at Teatro Orfeo, Naples, in 1920.

[10] Translation is mine. Goffredo Fofi, "Dalla platea," in *La Sceneggiata. Rappresentazioni di un Genere Popolare*, ed. Pasquale Scialò (Napoli: Guida Editore, 2003), 43.

[11] Goffredo Fofi, *Il paese della sceneggiata* (Trapani: Medusa Edizioni, 2017).

[12] David Mayer, "The Music of Melodrama," in *Performance and Politics in Popular Drama: Aspects of Popular Entertainment in Theatre, Film and Television 1860-1976*, ed. David Bradby, Louise James and Bernard Sharrat (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 49–64.

[13] Lyrics by Giovanni Capurro, music by Eduardo Di Capua.

[14] Jason Pine, "Contact, Complicity, Conspiracy: Affective Communities and Economics of Affect in Naples," *Law, Culture, and the Humanities* 4, no. 3 (2008): 201–223.

[15] The technique is very ancient and possibly derives from daily practices not related to the theatre. According to some, *fronna 'e limone* was typical of *a cappella* choral singing used by fieldworkers to mark the daily routine during the long hours spent sowing or harvesting. According to others, it refers to the vocal performance in the markets by vendors who tried to praise their products and attract buyers by yelling over their competitors. A third option links the technique to a

communication practice used to chat from the outside with jailed relatives across the jail's walls. In any case, all these communication methods allowed the voice to travel loud and clear for long distances without compromising the vocal cords. For a technical analysis of the *fronna 'e limone*, see Raffaele Di Mauro, "Canzone napoletana e musica di tradizione orale: dalla canzone artigiana alla canzone urbana d'autore," *Musica/Realtà*, no. 93 (2010), 133–151.

[16] Enzo Grano, *La sceneggiata* (Napoli: ABE, 1976), 11–24.

[17] Cited in Pasquale Scialò, ed., *La Sceneggiata. Rappresentazioni di un Genere Popolare* (Napoli: Guida Editore, 2003), 102.

[18] *'A figlia d' 'a Madonna* was written by Gaspare di Maio for the Cafiero-Fumo company.

[19] Cited in Anita Pesce, "La scena dal vero per disco," *Quaderni dell' I.R.TE.M.*, no. 5 (2004): 1–111, 96.

[20] For instance, Ria Rosa (1899–1988) was an independent leading woman of *café chantant* and *sceneggiata*, a proto-feminist in a male dominated world. Gilda Mignonette (1886–1953) obtained fame and fortune especially among the Italian migrant communities in the US, where she was known as the queen of migrants. Tina Pica (1888–1968) played secondary roles in some *sceneggiata* before her successful career first in the theatre company led by Eduardo de Filippo and then as a movie star.

[21] Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotions: Journey in Art, Architecture, and Film* (London: Verso, 2002), 171.

[22] *'O Festino*. Lyrics by Pacifico Vento, music by E.A. Mario. In 1920 *'O Festino* was among the first adaptations of the *sceneggiata* into a movie, produced by Dora Film and starring the famous actress Elvira Notari. On Notari, see Lucia Di Girolamo, "La Dora Film di Elvira Notari, esempio di saggezza organizzativa tra esigenze commerciali e necessità familiari," *Nuove frontiere per la storia di genere*, no. 3 (2013), 293–298.

[23] All translations are mine. The songs in the essay can be found in alphabetical order at https://napoligrafia.it/musica/testi/testi.htm

[24] Based on the song by Alfonso Chiarazzo, the *sceneggiata* was produced in 1963 in Naples at Teatro Sirena by the theatre company Vitale, starring a young Mario Merola who became the most famous performer of the genre in the 1970s and 1980s.

[25] *Carcerate*, also starring Mario Merola at Teatro Sirena in 1946, was based on a poem by Ferdinando Russo from 1910.

[26] *Sott' 'e ccancelle.* Lyrics by Giuseppe Tetamo, music by Mario Nicolò. The song was also adapted into a movie version by Dora Film in 1920, directed by Michele Di Giacomo. The theatre version was brought to success by Ria Rosa at Teatro Trianon in the same year.

[27] Micaela di Leonardo, *Exotics at Home: Anthropologies, Other, and American Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[28] The work of Dario Fo and Franca Rame with the ensemble *Nuova Scena* and then with the theatre group *La Comune* is a perfect example of the theatre for the masses of the late 1960s to the late 1970s. See Tom Behan, *Dario Fo: Revolutionary Theatre* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

[29] See Angelo Vassalli, *La tentazione del Sud. Viaggio nel teatro di Leo e Perla da Roma a Marigliano* (Pisa: Titivillus, 2018).

[30] Marco De Marinis, *Capire il Teatro. Lineamenti di una nuova teatrologia* (Firenze: La Casa Usher, 1988), 183.

[31] Gabriella Giannanchi, and Nick Kaye, *Staging the Post-Avant Garde. Italian Experimental Performance After 1970* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002), 112.

[32] Donatella Orecchia, "'O Zappatore," *Sciami*, accessed February 24, 2020, https://nuovoteatromadeinitaly.sciami.com.

[33] Franco Quadri, "'O Zappatore," *Panorama*, July 20, 1972.

[34] The song *Lacrime Napulitane* played as a letter that a Neapolitan migrant in America writes to his mother back home. While Christmas is approaching, the migrant cannot help but feel lonely, disconnected and deeply nostalgic for his family and his homeland. He knows that he will probably never see them again. Therefore, each bit of the American fortune that he is trying to build for himself feels like a sour bite of bitter bread, filled with tears. See Pasquale Scialò, ed., *La Sceneggiata. Rappresentazioni di un Genere Popolare* (Napoli: Guida Editore, 2003), 35.

[35] Marco De Marinis, "L'attore comico nel teatro italiano del Novecento," in *Capire il teatro. Lineamenti di una nuova teatrologia* (Firenze: La Casa Usher, 1988).

[36] Oliviero Ponte di Pino, "Per un teatro jazz. Intervista a Leo De Berardinis," in *La connection con l'intervento di Leo De Berardinis*, ed. Jack Gelber (Milano: Ubulibri, 1983).

[37] Donatella Orecchia, "Gli anni sessanta e settanta e la regia della crisi. Gli esempi di Quartucci e Tatò, Bene, De Berardinis e Peragallo," in *Corpi e visioni. Indizi sul teatro contemporaneo*, ed. A. Audino (Roma: Artemide, 2007).
[38] Angelo Maria Ripellino, "Mezza Napoli nel tritacarne," *L'Espresso*, November 19, 1972.
[39] Martin Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity, and Music," in *Ethnicity, Identity*, *and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford and Providence: BERG, 1994), 3.
[40] Roberto Ubbidiente, "La figura del guappo e le sue declinazioni musicali dalla sceneggiata ai neomelodici" *ATEM - Archiv für Textmusikforschung* 4, no. 2 (2019), 1–16.
[41] Marcello Ravveduto, *Napoli... Serenata Calibro 9. Storia e Immagini della Camorra tra Cinema, Sceneggiata e Neomelodici* (Napoli: Liguori, 2007).
[42] Gaetano Fusco, *Le mani sullo schermo. Il cinema secondo Achille Lauro* (Napoli: Liguori, 2006). Fusco analyses the interesting and twisted relation between politics and cinema in Naples, with the former trying to manipulate the construction and representation of the city's image on the big screen.
[43] Marcello Ravveduto, *Napoli… serenata calibro 9: storia e immagini della camorra tra cinema, sceneggiata e neomelodici* (Napoli: Liguori, 2007). Ravveduto carefully traces the elements of continuity between the artistic production of movies and music about the *camorra* and their sociological and economic impact on specific areas of the city.
[44] Goffredo Fofi, "Dalla platea," in *La Sceneggiata. Rappresentazioni di un Genere Popolare*, ed. Pasquale Scialò (Napoli: Guida Editore, 2003), 22.
[45] The name comes from the material that the gun industry commonly used to build bullets. Metaphorically, *anni di piombo* describes the heavy and gloomy atmosphere of the 1970s when street shootings and mass slaughters by the hands of various anarchic or extremist groups became a common practice to reclaim political goals.
[46] In 1983 and 1989 Merola received a warranty notice for collusion with the *camorra*. Both times judges acquitted his position. Much of his life and career is narrated by Merola himself in the book *Napoli solo andata. Il mio lungo viaggio*, ed. Geo Nocchetti (Milano: Sperling & Kupfer, 2005).
[47] *Zappatore* (1980), directed by Alfonso Brescia, written by Alfonso Brescia and Piero Regnoli, and produced by Compagnia Produttori Cinematografici and Panda Cinematografica. The movie was based on the song *Zappatore* (1929), lyrics by Liberio Bovio and music by Ferdinando Albano, originally adapted in 1930 in a staged *sceneggiata*, starring Salvatore Papaccio at Teatro Trianon in Naples.
[48] *'O re d' 'a sceneggiata.* Lyrics by Mimì Giordano, music by Eduardo Alfieri, 1982.