Abstract:
Re-shaping Distances: the Documentaries La quarta via and Aulò

La quarta via. Mogadiscio, Italia (ITA, Kimerafilm, 2012, 38 Eng. Sub.) and Aulò. Roma postcoloniale (ITA, Kimerafilm, 2012, 48 Eng. Sub.) is a duology of documentaries on Italian colonialism and migration to Italy from its former colonies, directed by Simone Brioni, Graziano Chiscuzzu and Ermanno Guida. In his introduction to this collaborative project, Simone Brioni clearly states that this project took its origin from the need to debunk the absurd idea that colonialism was an overall positive phenomenon; the need to stand up against the distorted views of immigration in Italian mainstream media, by sharing the first person experience of two intellectual African women currently living in Italy.

La quarta via is based on Kaha Mohamed Adens eponymous oral tale and was awarded the Mediaeducazione-Libero Bizzarri prize in 2010. The movie reconstructs the story of Mogadishu a town completely destroyed by an ongoing civil war - in Pavia, where Kaha currently lives. Kaha Mohamed Adens story takes us down four different but parallel roads, visually represented by different colours, which correspond to specific period of the Somali history. The first road is coloured in green, and it is the road of the Arabic commerce. The second road, coloured in black, describes the fascist domination and the Italian trusteeship administration of Somalia from 1950 to 1960. Kahas description of colonialism in Somalia shows the common history between Italy and its former colonies. The third road describes the hopes for a new Somalia during the 1960s and their collapse when Siad Barre imposed his dictatorship. This road is coloured in red. The fourth road is grey, a colour that deletes everything, and it describes the present clanic war (1991-2012). Kaha argues that knowing the history of Somalia is important in order to build up a peaceful future, a fifth road.

In one of the most beautiful sequences of the documentary, Kaha stands in front of San Michele church in Pavia, and she recites a buuraambur, a traditional form of female poetry, which incites Somali people to abandon weapons and to stop fighting each other. This majestic scene clearly shows Kahas aim to provide with a new meaning to the symbolic places of Pavia. Moreover, Kaha clearly creates a new urban imaginary both of Pavia and Mogadishu, creating a space for cohabitation. La quarta via is in itself a first step towards a fifth road: hope can be envisioned by showing that history is a process of movements and encounters between men and women of different cultural backgrounds.

The movie has been released in 2012 together with a bilingual booklet (in Italian and English), Somalitalia and a 52 video, with selection of extracts from the festival of Italian migrant writings OLTREilMaRginE, which was held in Brescia in 2010. These materials allow to better understand the documentary itself and to have a clearer idea about the colonial and post-colonial relationship between Italy and Somalia.

Brioni, Chiscuzzu and Guidas 2010 documentary Aulò narrates Italian colonialism through the personal story of Ribka Sibhatu, an Italian writer of Eritrean origins who lives in Rome. The documentary is attached to a booklet of Ribkas poems, translated in English by André-Naffis Sahely, and with an introduction by Graziella Parati.

Aulò opens up with Ribka Sibathu reading aloud her poem So bella nera [I am Black and Beautiful] in Roman dialect. In this poem Ribka affirms to be proudly black, and she asks her Italian audience not to call her coloured because black does not have a negative meaning on its own. By magnifying the beauty of her skin colour in an Italian dialect, Ribka affirms her own identity in the language of a former colonizer.

Ribkas story of migration intertwines with the recent history of the Horn of Africa. Ribka was persecuted and imprisoned in Eritrea. She then escaped to Ethiopia, hiding at her relatives places. Later, she left Africa with her French husband to live in France. After divorce, she moved to Italy with her daughter Sara. In Rome, where she currently lives, she finally felt at home, despite many Italians discriminate her because of her skin colour.
Like *La quarta via*, *Aulò* provides with new symbolic meanings to some monuments and places in Rome. For instance, Ribka talks of the monuments that celebrate the Italian colonial wars such as Piazza dei Cinquecento, which celebrates the Italian soldiers fallen during the battle of Dogali (1887). In one of the most significant scenes of the documentary, Ribka recites an Aulò (a traditional poem in Tigrynia) against the Italian racial laws in front of the Vittoriano. Ribkas narration is interspersed with some interviews to Italians, sunbathing at a popular beach of Rome, who cannot even place Eritrea on a map. The documentary raises some questions about who can be really considered out of place in Rome, as Ribka is fully aware of the history and the toponimy of the city, while most people interviewed are not.

Reminding Italians of their colonial past, this collective project invites to listen to the voices of two intellectual women from the Horn of Africa, and to look at Italian history and cultures from a postcolonial perspective. *La quarta via* and *Aulò* are extremely important educative tools in order to know the Italian colonial past and to find new paths for communication and co-habitation in todays multicultural Italy.

**Cast & Credits:**

*Simone Brioni (ed.),* Somalitalia: Quattro Vie per Mogadiscio (Somalitalia: Four Roads to Mogadishu). Con allegato il documentario *La quarta via: Mogadiscio, Italia*

Con allegato il documentario *Aulò: Roma postcoloniale*
a cura di Simone Brioni