



I giovani raccontano gli anziani. Il contributo del Video Concorso Francesco Pasinetti alla riflessione su invecchiamento, dialogo intergenerazionale e trasmissione culturale in Italia

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Rita Caviglioli (2010) *I giovani raccontano gli anziani. Il contributo del Video Concorso Francesco Pasinetti alla riflessione su invecchiamento, dialogo intergenerazionale e trasmissione culturale in Italia.*

As has been consistently shown in demographic studies, net of immigration flows, the Italian population is rapidly aging. Added to this, and as a consequence of the imbalance of the generational contract at the basis of the Italian welfare system, a number of scholars have suggested that, in the near future, Italian society might be characterized by a strong conflict between generations over the redistribution of economic resources. Given this context, it is essential that studies of Italian society pay adequate attention to the analysis of intergenerational relations. In particular, age studies are greatly needed in order to understand not only how intergenerational relations are changing, but also how social images and stereotypes associated with the different age groups are changing.

Rita Caviglioli's book is an interesting contribution to this field of

research. The author, analyzing short films from the archive of the VideoConcorso Francesco Pasinetti, provides us with an insightful exploration of Venetian students' images and stereotypes of the elderly. Clearly, the iconic value of Venice for the study of aging places and societies adds to the value of this study. The separation between age groups in the city, in fact, largely overlaps with the physical separation between the touristic and elderly 'ghetto', represented by the historic center, and the active and younger city of Mestre.

An introductory chapter provides the reader with a brief introduction to the field of age studies, a description of the research strategy and the VideoConcorso Francesco Pasinetti. In the five chapters that follow – which constitute the first main section of the

book – the author presents some of the most salient social, demographic and economic characteristics of the Veneto region and the city of Venice. The aim of this first section is to describe the social context from which the images of the elderly described in the shorts of the VideoConcorso emerge. Unfortunately, the space devoted to this part of the book is quite limited and the analysis is mainly based on a rather restricted amount of sociological and demographic research previously conducted on the Veneto region.

The second section of the book concentrates on the analysis of the contents and technical characteristics of a number of different short films from the VideoConcorso Pasinetti in the years between 2004 and 2008. This part of the book is organized in eight chapters, each considering a selection of shorts that deal with one specific aspect of intergenerational relations, and young people's images and stereotypes of the elderly. Thus, the first chapter considers four shorts, which, by interviewing elderly and

young people in Venice, aim to provide an overview of what young people think about the elderly, and vice versa. The second concentrates on interviews in which elderly people tell their life stories; while the third analyzes a collection of shorts whose subjects are historical places – places of memory – or the city of Venice, such as the ‘Ghetto’ and the ‘Ospedale al mare’. The fourth chapter focuses on four different contributions that aim to provide a picture of old crafts and the difficult intergenerational transmission of traditional professions such as those of Venetian plasterer and glassmaker. The shorts in the fifth chapter, deal, instead, with the relation between creativity and old age. The sixth chapter, one of the most valuable of the book, analyzes in great detail three shorts in which the main subject is the relations between different generations of women within the family. The seventh chapter concentrates on two films exploring the relation between physical conditions of later life and the degrading situation of a post-industrial city. The eighth, focuses on two cartoons presented at the Concorso. In this case the commonality between the shorts has more to do with the technique adopted by the authors, than with the specific topic dealt with in the movies.

Overall the book is quite successful in providing scholars interested in Italian society with rich material on the images and stereotypes about the elderly among young people living or studying in Venice. However, one possible criticism relates to the weakness of the sociological analysis conducted in the first section of the book, and to the fact that the two parts of the book are scarcely related. The loose connection between the analysis of the shorts from the VideoConcorso Pasinetti and the sociological analysis of the Veneto region is also at the basis of a second limitation of this book. As a matter of fact, despite conducting an excellent descriptive analysis of the images of the elderly emerging from the movies presented at the

VideoConcorso, the author is less successful in suggesting social, economic, cultural or historical factors that can explain her findings. This said, it is worth underlining that this book has the great merit of establishing a dialogue between cultural, historical and sociological studies of aging and intergenerational relations. Next, it also sheds light on a rich 'database' for the analysis of images and stereotypes of the elderly and aging in Italian society.