

ABSTRACT PRIN 2017

Italian Na(rra)tives: The International Circulation of “Brand Italy” in the Media

Claudio Bisoni, Principal Investigator, University of Bologna
Associated Investigators: Giovanni Turchetta, University of Milan; Matteo Tarantino, Università Cattolica in Milan; Andrea Minuz, Sapienza University of Rome

DOI <https://doi.org/10.54103/2036-461X/22506>

Italian Na(rra)tives examines a series of contemporary Italian audio-visual and literary products that have gained success through international circulation, and the cultural impact of the images and models of “Italianness” that they promote. Its chronological framework is from 2000 to 2017 and it contextualizes the object of study in relation to contemporary changes in the cultural industries, following advances in digital technology and the corroboration of convergent culture. It focuses on a sample of cultural products that have been selected according to the parameters of their international circulation within this time span.

The project has been realized through the following stages of analysis:

1) the sampling and classification of cultural products;

2) content analysis of the narrative components and forms of representation. This textual analysis employs various methodological tools, the most important of which are: a) narratology, both in its classical use, i.e. the morphological study of narrative texts, and in its more recent developments in cognitive psychology and

neuroscience; b) rhetorical analysis intended in the broadest sense, taking into account argumentation theory, the study of enunciation, and its appropriation in Critical Discourse Analysis; and c) the prevalently thematic critical approach of Cultural Studies;

3) analysis of the translation/adaptation strategies of cultural products in various national contexts, and of curation, production and distribution processes at national and international levels;

4) analysis of the branding and celebrification strategies of products and characters related to the TV series, films and literary texts in the sample;

5) analysis of the cultural impact of the case studies at national and international levels. This phase employs various methodological tools. Principally this includes: a) reception studies, to investigate critical responses to these products and the tendencies through which they are inscribed in the public sphere, generating debates and other reactions in the media; b) audience studies and the ethnography of consumption, to study the responses of specific audiences to the cultural products.

Overall, this project is made innovative by its interdisciplinary approach, which integrates the analysis of texts and their fruition with the study of the cultural industries and their structures. This approach is increasingly urgent in view of today's globalized media system, yet it has been only partially employed in previous scholarship.

In terms of the academic impact of this project, the study of both the cultural influence of Italian media products in various nations and the ways in which images of Italianness circulate abroad: 1) provide a systematic perspective on transmedia and at times global processes, revealing their formation at various levels (in terms of production, text, politics and consumption); 2) provide national cultural institutions with "nation branding" models in the context of the media, therefore helping to develop protocols to reinforce Italian cultural production in that area; 3) improve awareness in the public organizations and national agencies that promote the Italian cultural industry abroad, and of European policies relating to cultural diplomacy.

The project's outputs include a series of collective publications, the organization of thematic conferences and seminars, and public meetings with authors and industry professionals.