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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the reasons Italian women migrate to other countries. The paper asserts that, historically, women have been virtually ignored in the study of migration patterns. A growing consensus among experts is to consider migrations as a social phenomenon of global importance and under the banner of international cooperation. The reasons one leaves their country of origin are: to look for work, to escape poverty, to improve social status, to pursue a spirit of adventure, to avoid adverse political situations and natural calamities, to study, or to reunite a family. For women in particular one could add to this list leaving to sustain the migratory project of the husband. The study analyzes various migration patterns and the assimilation in the cultures of the immigrant groups. The paper includes the following sections: (1) "The Woman Who Emigrates"; (2) "The Describers of Emigration"; (3) "Values of the Woman Who Emigrates"; and (4) "The Challenge to Intercultural Education." Contains 10 references. (EH)

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Intercultural Education and Migrant Women: An Italian Perspective.

by Sandra Chistolini

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INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND MIGRANT WOMEN :
An Italian Perspective

Sandra CHISTOLINI

The woman who emigrates

From the historical point of view the ancient migrations took place normally in groups and the same family units moved together, while the contemporary migrations are predominately individual, one moves as an individual person or as a family unit, and can assume the character of "migratory chain": emigration is favoured by primary social relations (family members, relatives, friends) with the preceding migrants.

In the '800 the emigration of the Italian woman, in comparison to that of man, was a submerged, indirect and dependent social reality since oftener than not it was man who parted and only later invited his wife to come to him. Rarely have studies dwelt on "feminine" characters, so to say, of emigration. More often the scientist has observed the migrant man and from the processes in which he has been placed as the protagonist, he has scraped the section on the woman. The same historical reconstruction *a posteriori* moves from the general to the particular; it is noteworthy that in the modern, contemporary history it is possible to find selected pages of events in which the socio-political life of the emigrant reveals the social life of the mother, wife and sister left behind in the motherland.

At the beginning of '900 the emigration to North America (Canada, USA) was described as the greatest phenomenon of the time from the point of view of demographic impact on economy, moral conditions, on the level of criminality and deviance, on the state of public health of the population. Since then, both in the country of immigration and of emigration, historians have produced ample literature on the demographic and economic questions concerning the migratory event, without overlooking the effects on class structure and the positioning of the subject within a precise social stratification. Little attention was paid to the implications of emigration on the morals of the population and to the condition of the woman not subordinate to the status of man. During that period one speaks often of "men without women".

If on the one hand the destructive consequences of the movement of population from one country to another is underlined, in terms of racism and of emargination, on the other hand pathological manifestations, even of a violent nature, in subjects of different age, sex, educational and professional qualification, is more or less emphasized.

There is a growing consensus among experts and scientists to consider migrations as a social phenomenon of global importance and under the banner of international cooperation. It follows that all countries are interested in this even if in different measures, and one would articulate well the evaluation of the structural

and relational implications also in reference to the man-woman difference. The migratory event changes the distribution of the population and provokes specific collective and individual dynamics which have an effect not only on the urban-rural order, on the demand/supply of services, but also on the collective, family and group psychology, on the definition of the woman's role in the contemporary society and on the education of children.

The describers of emigration

The central issue of emigration in general and that of the woman in particular, is represented by the reasons because of which one decides to leave the country of origin. One emigrates to look for work, to come out of poverty, to improve socially, due to a spirit of adventure, for political reasons, due to natural calamities which assail the country where one is living, to study, for reuniting the family. To these motives one could add others and in the case of the woman it is underlined that the emigration, understood traditionally, refers not only to the state of poverty and to the family tie seen as a reunion with the spouse, or to the family, or to a part of the parental group, but also to the initiative of the woman who emotionally sustains the migratory project of the husband by leaving with him or while staying back in the motherland.

In the past different emigrations abroad, for example to Great Britain, were foreseeing forms of security offered by one who was already living in the foreign country and was inviting the relative or his friend, to join him. In other words, the foreign authorities were asking for assurance on the moral and social quality of the person who was intending to enter into the country and work. In the course of time such requirements have undergone a change and one cannot say that they have disappeared completely. From the formal point of view there still exists the collection of information directed towards assuring the reception, from more diversified aspects - from touristic visit to carrying out of working activity, from staying for studies to exercise of prostitution - of the person who emigrates.

Certainly in no case one emigrates to remain in conditions worse than that which one had before parting, and the terms of comparison for the first generation, is the society left behind. For example, the classic emigrant of the inferior social class who leaves Europe for the United States of America, does not compare himself to the American manager, but to the one he has left behind in Europe. That is, one notices a state of "relative deprivation" which is lower for the first generation which compares itself with Europe and is higher for the second generation of children which compares itself to the American society.

The Italian woman who emigrated to North America in the beginning of the twentieth century wanted to escape from poverty, and in general has not transmitted a positive picture of the Italian economic society, instead often pushing them to stand out in the American society. The second adult generation has inserted itself well in the American or Canadian context and looks at Italy as a land for holidays and retirement of the parents. The third generation regains the social, cultural, economic image of Italy because there is a consolidated separation from

the condition of poverty lived by the grandparents, and a progressive approach, also from the point of view of culture and values, to their contemporaries living in Italy.

The discriminating element is always the emigrant condition at the first impact with the society of immigration. Infact, the Italian woman who emigrates in the eighties to North Europe, is not very different from the woman who was emigrating in the preceding decades as far as the desire for an ascending economic fluidity of the family is concerned: one works in a frantic way in order to stand out and succeed, for wellbeing and for success in business. Instead, it is in the second generation that comes the recovery of the human dimension of life even if this means slowing down of the process of accumulation of money and riches.

Signs of dissimilarity are seen partly in today's African (Capoverde, Ethiopia, Somalia) and Asian (Philippine) feminine emigration in Italy. This happens to correspond to a personal project of social growth and of economic progress more than to the recomposition of the family nucleus. In this sense it appears rich with a dose of initiative unusual in its diffusion, and of courage in the intercultural situation which deserve greater attention to understand the eventual specific and distinctive characters compared to the past and foresee the hypothetical developments on the level of national services and on that of international cooperation.

Without doubt the available information on actual movements of population allow us to single out a new feminine migratory model either from the structural or from the relational point of view. Structurally too it is the woman who today engages the migratory chain. On the level of relations the woman shows a great psychological and physical strength working or/and studying in a foreign country, for example Italy, whereas the rest of the family, parents, husband and children live in Asia or Africa. Therefore the question of the family does not dissuade from emigrating, it stimulates instead to make the stay as short and profitable as possible and to work for the reunion. The other is the case of the woman who from a partially stable emigration passes on to a permanent one and who confronts the complex problems of social insertion and acculturation, also in the order of education and schooling of children.

Such a change of migratory model by sex necessarily involves a redefinition of the explicative paradigms of emigration. Why are in some countries the emigrated women superior in number to that of men? Do the women dare more, risk more to form themselves professionally, or are they simply more disposed to self-sacrifice? Are they once again responding to the economic demands of the family or trying to imitate the process of emancipation of the Western, Christian woman? In the dominant economic structure and in the western culture does the idea still prevail that a woman employs and settles herself better, creates less problems, accommodates herself more easily and that greater occupational possibilities can be offered to her especially in the domestic life? Within what limits can it be true that the foreign family collaborator occupies an area of work left vacant by the Italian family collaborator? How does one reconcile this proposition with the masculine and feminine unemployment in Italy?

Values of the woman who emigrates

In the experience of many women who live in the situation of migration, the family is the principal point of reference endowed with indisputable importance and is a fundamental value to be respected, safeguarded and transmitted. The family is the economic and emotive-affective system which requires the satisfaction of essential needs and in it the interiorization of the norms of behaviour with the necessary styles of life takes place.

If in general such assumptions result "true" for the emigration of older women, in the case of the emigration of younger women something begins to vacillate as regards the eventual ambition of the family to be able to exhaust the world of needs and of personal expectations. Nevertheless, studies on the emigrated woman do not seem to give sufficient space to the thesis of the "implosion of the family", rather they show a tendency towards search for new family arrangements so as to guarantee room for creativity in a socio-ethical-cultural context which is extremely hybrid and many-sided.

On the one side the women are guarantors of traditional values, on the other side they must suppress their own aspirations, even if they are culturally coherent with the more diffused models of behaviour in the urban-industrial area. Aware of their vital role in the bosom of the family they do not always succeed to articulate their own eventual dissatisfaction in constructive argumentation. Much more is demanded from the woman to create and maintain the cohesion, solidarity, unity of the family, to educate children to peace and brotherhood than to liberty and independence. Such demands assume superlative and deterrent validity to violence in the case of the situation of migration which is such as to diffuse, potentially and when unsatisfactory, socially unaccepted conflict.

In most cases education serves as an instrument which leads the woman to the acquisition of subjective self-consciousness and to social participation, with a more possibilist view of the normative-religious principles, but at the same time not fully secularized. Marriage is charged with communitarian responsibility and in its success all participate, not only the spouses. This fact, however, has become problematic in the last few years due to the relative increase in the separations which are more among couples of different nationality, at times of different religion. From this point of view the model of double morality, one for the man and one for the woman, especially in cases of non-acceptance, on the part of the woman, of the husband's infidelity.

As an emigrant the woman continues, in all the countries of the world, to live the ambivalence of her personal identity, due to her imperfect belonging to many cultural environments which cannot be expeditiously translated into the category of the subculture. But by the side of such fragmentation there exists the possibility of

the proposal of models of behaviour and of supranational ethical-social values. From the migrant women, especially from those who have higher levels of education, one can expect an interesting intercultural operation capable of creating a balance between values and behaviours of different cultures.

The challenge to intercultural education

In the condition of the emigrant the women face much difficulty at "being taken seriously", difficulties which in their human and professional growth are often interposed by the family and by the ones who believe to "love" them more. Perhaps due to an excess of protectionism or through an education to disinterest for the economic production of the woman, it happens that the family and social sensitivity to discrimination of the woman is still very low at the more varied levels.

And yet some women, the emigrants not exempted, are so rich in potentiality that if they were to be well employed and not instrumentalized, they would be a concrete alternative to the "discomfort of the contemporary civilization". The young generations of women will at times reproach the career woman of assuming behaviours and styles of being married to the "male" and of not being able to combine perfectly the binomial family-work, partly the case of the woman teacher, this last role being traditionally accredited to her.

Compared to the traditional migratory streams, since the end of the eighties in Italy one notices an opposite tendency, especially on the social perceptive level: for the substantially young subjects the country of emigration becomes the country of immigration, with medium-high grades of education coming from North Africa, from South-East Asia, from East Europe. From the point of view of the provision and demand for education the compulsory school should equip itself intellectually and technically to relate well to the multiethnic society, even starting off from the initiative for intercultural education and from the university formation of teachers.

The observable fact is that today many worlds, in themselves coherent and endowed with internal significance, meet with great ease through the high intensity of international communications, through self-improvement and through the degree of the intensity of migratory flows, through the upgrading of the levels of education, through the heightened social and civil conscientization of the ever greater strata of the population, through the global economic crisis, through the increased awareness of cultural interdependence.

The challenge for the world of the school and of the market of labour, is especially that of taking in serious consideration the manifold possibilities which the contemporary society accommodates, and of translating them in the sense of the qualification and of competence to set apart from and also to start from the ethnic membership, of race, religion, sex, nationality. How can one "set apart from" and "start from" at the same time?

One can ^{"set apart from"} in the sense that the fact of being man or woman of this or that ethnic group should not be used as stereotype for the attribution of value and of the responsibility to be measured, instead, on the information of concrete facts regarding certain objectives clearly predisposed. A Philippine boy and a Philippine girl are easily absorbed in the domestic services, but the same does not happen with an Indian boy or a Moroccan girl. Therefore, starting from this reality means employing controlled forms of experimentation for showing the eventual possibility of the use of persons of a different culture who fulfil the required tasks.

Parallely, one "starts from" when one remembers that inspite of the policy of equal opportunities, discriminatory forms continue, of professional selection of the woman from whom is expected a production twice more consistent, in quantity and quality, than what is required of a man for achieving the same professional level; and if the woman happens to be an African and a Muslim the problem can complicate and in the face of this fact the possible experimentation could become that of predisposing different professional expectations considering the disadvantageous starting position.

The research therefore can open to the philosophical reconsideration of the migration and ^{conceive} to the idea of forms of life founded on cooperation and solidarity.

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