

Naples as a literary place: Tourism and cultural entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This study examines how the city of Naples has been both a literary site and a cultural symbol through different narratives from the Middle Ages to the 21st century. It focuses on the cultural representation of the city through literature, detective narrative, theatre and film. Particular emphasis is placed on the use of the Neapolitan dialect as a vector of collective memory, but also on the polysemousness of the image of the city as the 'unconventional capital' of Italian cultural identity. Through the study of works by writers such as Giovanni Boccaccio, Anna Maria Ortese, Eduardo De Filippo and Elena Ferrante, the project attempts to highlight Naples as a cultural microcosm that reflects on the relationship between history, language and collective identity, while examining the possibilities of cultural entrepreneurship and literary tourism.

Keywords: Naples; Literature; Cultural Identity; Dialect; Ferrante; De Filippo; Mediterranean; Cultural Entrepreneurship; Literary Tourism

1 Introduction

Naples is not only a city of great geographical and historical significance but also a literary space imbued with rich symbolism and vivid imagery. From the medieval Decameron to Ferrante's contemporary Neapolitan Novels, the city serves as a narrative canvas where cultural tensions, class disparities, linguistic nuances, and existential dilemmas are portrayed.

The city, with its deep-rooted history and strong cultural identity, is marked by a remarkable blend of the ancient and the modern. Its vibrant popular traditions, intertwined with the ongoing social contradictions, create the image of a city that remains alive and dynamic, even in the face of the many upheavals and challenges it has faced throughout the years.

The literature of Naples, as seen in works by writers such as Calvino, bridges the gap between reality and fantasy, portraying the city as a living organism. Here, human stories and personal experiences unfold through its neighborhoods and landscapes, each telling a tale of resilience and transformation. Writers like Sciascia have chronicled these contradictions, exploring the city's constant struggle to define and redefine its identity through time.

Naples is not limited to its physical landscape alone; it develops a distinctive "culture of the people" that sets it apart. The social, political, and cultural dynamics of the city are reflected in the narratives of its inhabitants, illustrating how they navigate the transitions and contradictions inherent in their environment.

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As Naples continues to inspire literature, cinema, and the arts, it remains an essential part of the cultural imagination. The city's history, with its mythical dimensions, captures both a vibrant past and a promising future, continuing to motivate travellers and creatives alike in their exploration of the human experience

2 Naples as a literary landscape

Naples, as a literary landscape, is a multidimensional space where the city is not just the setting for narratives, but an active subject that shapes and is shaped by the stories it hosts. Its literary representation reflects social tensions, cultural traumas and personal narratives, making it a place where reality and imagination coexist.

Matilde Serao, in her work *Il ventre di Napoli*, examines Naples through the prism of Orientalism and superstition, revealing the social inequalities and cultural particularities of the city. Her approach offers an anthropological look at the daily life of the inhabitants, highlighting the challenges they face (Ricciardelli, 2024; Mangravite, 2023). Naples in her narrative becomes the setting of a world full of contradictions, where social reality is combined with the supernatural dimension of the city.

Anna Maria Ortese, with her work *Il mare non bagna Napoli*, creates a dreamlike and transcendental image of the city, combining lyrical observation with social critique. Naples is presented as a place full of contradictions, where beauty and decadence coexist (Re, 2012).

Elena Ferrante, in her tetralogy *L'amica geniale*, presents Naples as an environment where poverty, violence and class differences shape the everyday life of the characters. The neighbourhood becomes a symbol of confinement and the need to escape, reflecting the pressures experienced by women in their attempt to escape from predetermined roles (Calheiros, 2019). Through the narrative of friendship and social difficulties, Naples becomes a site of social critique and personal quest.

Roberto Saviano, in *Gomorra*, reveals the dark side of Naples, focusing on the crime and corruption that permeate the social fabric of the city. His approach offers a realistic and relentless depiction of everyday life, highlighting the challenges faced by the inhabitants (Saviano, 2006; Examining the Apocalyptic in Roberto Saviano's *Gomorra*, 2018).

Overall, the literature of Naples depicts the city as a complex and dynamic landscape, where writers' narratives shape a collective memory and identity. The city acts as a mirror of social and cultural transformations, offering a rich field for the exploration of the human experience.

3 Historical and cultural context of Neapolitan literature

Neapolitan literature constitutes a unique and multi-layered cultural universe in which language, space and social experience interact in a unique way. It is not only a system of texts; it is a living organism that embodies the contradictions, aesthetics and worldview of Naples itself. The city is not just a backdrop or background; it is a dramatic subject.

Matilde Serao's contribution is decisive. With her play *Il ventre di Napoli* (1884), she inaugurates a realistic, almost anthropological approach to popular Naples, illuminating invisible poverty, women's everyday life and the experience of the marginal (Ricciardelli, 2024). This work remains fundamental to the understanding of the 'internal geography' of the city, its psychosocial 'gut'.

Of similar importance is the voice of Anna Maria Ortese, who, with *Il mare non bagna Napoli* (1953), captures a dreamlike, almost transcendental Naples, in a style that balances between lyrical observation and social critique (Re, 2012). Ortese's style is differentiated from Serao's realism, suggesting a melancholic introspection and a sense of temporal suspension that gives the city a literary uniqueness.

Roberto De Simone, composer and ethnomusicologist, played a key role in the emergence of the oral and popular Neapolitan tradition. In his work *La Gatta Cenerentola* (1976), he combines paralogical motifs and folk tales in a music-theatrical form that reclaims the Neapolitan dialect, music and myths of the South as a form of cultural resistance. Although no DOI is available, the work is a cultural landmark

Eduardo De Filippo's contribution to theatre is also noteworthy, with plays such as *Filumena Marturano* and *Napoli Milionaria!* sensitively incorporating class oppositions, moral dilemmas and orality, projecting the cultural autonomy of the dialect. Despite its lack of DOI, its importance is undeniable in the cultural field.

Through these examples, the dynamics of a constantly transforming literature can be seen: from folk song to the contemporary novel and from social reportage to theatrical narrative, the Neapolitan tradition constitutes an antagonistic memory within the Italian cultural field.

4 Tourism and literary pilgrimages in Naples

Naples, one of Italy's most vibrant and historically charged cities, combines ancient classical heritage with modern creativity. Tourism in Naples is not only a visit to historical monuments or natural landscapes, but also a discovery of literary spaces, filled with the pages once typed by great writers and creators. Literary pilgrimages in this city combine the experience of travel with the discovery of the world created by words. (Tsatalbassoglou, 2019; Manola et al., 2023; Ikonomou et al., 2024; Tsatalbassoglou et al., 2024)

Naples has been a source of inspiration for many great writers. Since the 19th century, the city has been the setting for works that tell of its social, political and cultural life. Descriptions of the city are not limited to simple scenes, but embody the complexity of the Neapolitan character, contradictions and everyday life that combine history with contemporary life (Morelli et al., 2020).

The house of Tommaso Campanella: This house, owned by the famous philosopher and theologian, was one of the first places associated with literary tourism in Naples. Campanella wrote his famous work *The City of the Sun* during his stay in the city, and his house is now a point of interest for philosophers and history lovers (Sciascia, 2002).

The D'Avino Court: located in the Dipartimento di Filosofia in Naples, it is related to philosophy and literature. Various writers and thinkers passed through here, and the area is still associated with important literary movements (Morelli et al., 2020).

The house of Vittorio Alfieri: In Naples, Alfieri, one of the greatest Italian dramatists of the 18th century, lived and wrote plays that influenced the literature of his time. Tourism to his home offers visitors an experience that combines his literary heritage with the historical significance of the site (Holroyd, 2003).

The contemporary approach to literary sites in Naples starts from the constant interaction between the literary work and the real space. The relationship between literature and the geography of the city is a distinct tourist phenomenon, where visitors can follow in the footsteps of the writers by visiting the houses, neighbourhoods and cafés that inspired their works. The tourism around Riccardo Rosi's XYZ book series allows visitors to follow the characters' journey through the streets of the city and discover the places that inspired the story (Rosi, 2020; Manola et al., 2022; Manola & Tsatalbassoglou, 2021; Manola, 2020),

Literature in Naples is not only an academic subject of study but also a living part of the city's tourist identity. As has happened in many other regions of the world, literary texts are being transformed into tourist products and guides to the city. The historic buildings, houses and cafés described in various works of literature are being turned into destinations. Naples' tourism industry recognizes its literary wealth and promotes the places associated with great authors and works (Eco, 1980; Tsatalmpasoglou et al., 2024; Tsalbasoglou et al., 2024a)

Another dimension of literary tourism in Naples comes from the film industry. The films made in the city, based on literary works, reinforce the link between tourism and literature. For example, the film *Il Giovane Favoloso* about Vittorio Alfieri allows viewers to discover Naples through the life of one of Italy's greatest literary figures (Holroyd, 2003).

5 Cultural entrepreneurship and Neapolitan literature

Cultural entrepreneurship and Neapolitan literature are inextricably linked through the cultural heritage highlighted by literary works, as well as through the tourism dynamics resulting from the dissemination of these works. Naples, with its history, culture and specificity, has been a source of inspiration for many writers, from Serao to Ferrante, who use the city as a backdrop to portray social and cultural themes.

Cultural entrepreneurship refers to the ability to use cultural goods and creative works as resources to develop business activities that combine the protection of cultural heritage with the promotion of economic growth. In Naples, this is manifested through tourism, cultural events and the development of the cultural products sector, supporting local businesses and exploiting the history and literary works mentioned in the city. Maniou,2024; Maniou et al.,2024; Maniou et al.,2024a; Maniou,2024b Maniou et al.,2024c).

Naples, due to its wealth of cultural monuments, museums and historical buildings, as well as its literary heritage, is a central destination for cultural tourism. The works that refer to the city, such as Serrao's 'The Body of Naples', Camilleri's 'Bus of Pink' and the works of Ferrante, create a strong combination of cultural identity and business activities around it.

Neapolitan literature has traditionally transformed the city into a living text that highlights social and political conditions. Writers from Serrao to Ferrante to Camilleri create images of the city, linking social contradictions and historical changes to the everyday lives of its inhabitants. This literary framework has contributed to the creation of thematic tours and tourist itineraries that attract visitors from all over the world.

Cultural entrepreneurship benefits from this literary tradition, as the translation of the literary representation of the city into reality creates new forms of tourism, such as literary tours, exhibitions and book festivals. These initiatives combine cultural tourism with the preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of local businesses. Maniou et al., 2024d; Maniou et al., 2025; Maniou & Mitoula,2025; Maniou et al., 2025).

To conclude, we emphasize the significance of digital technologies in education domain and for cultural entrepreneurship training and education. ICTs support education for everyone, give new methods for efficient teachers training, improve knowledge retention, encourage collaboration, improve transparency, create learner-centered approaches, invent new teaching methods, and accelerate knowledge acquisition. Moreover, provide new tools for knowledge representation and endorse the education activities and methods via virtualization, mobilization, artificial intelligence, and through new learning environments- worlds. More specifically in entrepreneurship training ICTs are very productive and successful, facilitate and improve the assessment, the intervention and the educational procedures via Mobiles which brings educational activities everywhere [33-34] and through various ICTs applications which are the core supporters of education [35]. The exploitation of AI, STEM & ROBOTICS raise educational procedures into new levels of adaptability, innovation and performance [36-37], while games transform education in a multisensory, very friendly and enjoyable interaction [38]. Additionally, the adoption, enhancement and combination of ICTs with theories and models of metacognition, mindfulness, meditation and emotional intelligence cultivation [39-45] brings the mental abilities to the core of the education procedures and policies, and accelerate and improve even more the educational practices and results, especially in business and new entrepreneurs training [46-52].

6 Conclusion

Naples, through its multifaceted literary representation, is a fundamental site of cultural perception. Its polysemy, its linguistic diversity and its connection to issues of gender, power and collective memory make it an ideal example for the analysis of the relationship between city and narrative. Tourism in Naples, when linked to literature,

takes on a special dimension. Visitors do not just tour a place, but relive the stories that have shaped the city and its cultural identity. Literary pilgrimages offer a unique opportunity to explore Naples through the eyes of the writers who loved it and used it as a setting for their works.

Neapolitan literature and cultural entrepreneurship are directly and dynamically linked. Literature offers a rich and unique way of representing the city, which is used in cultural entrepreneurship to attract tourists and boost the local economy. The coupling of cultural product and business activity in Naples demonstrates the dynamics of this relationship and the role of literature as a key tool in the development of cultural and tourism initiatives.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The Authors proclaim no conflict of interest.

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