

PROLOGUE

Three women are sitting on the bench. The youngest is dressed in the traditional costume of Picinisco or another Italian village at the beginning of 1900, her name is Terza donna, the middle one is dressed 1930, her name is Seconda donna, the eldest is dressed 1950, her name is Prima donna. The three women come from three different historical periods of time.

Terza donna: Mi chiamo Teresa come Santa Teresa. Sono nata nel 1894 il giorno in cui si festeggia Santa Teresa. Tengo diciotto anni. I was born in a little village up in the mountain nel cuore dell' Italia, in the middle of nowhere. In mezzo al niente. Mia madre says that she has been waiting so many years for me after five boys "che la Madonna le ha fatto la grazia". Così mi chiamano Teresa della Grazia nel paese. Oggi è festa nel nostro paese e si balla e si canta fino a notte. L'ultima pizzica prima della partenza. Domani parto per la Scozia. My husband is waiting for me. We have a child of two... Sono due anni che non vedo mio marito. I will travel up with my son con il treno. Prima con il carro e poi con il treno. Io spero che la Madonna ci fa la grazia pure a noi e che staremo bene.

Seconda donna: Mi chiamo Philomena, but everyone called me Mena. I was born in Grassmarket, Edinburgh in 1905 from two Italian parents. My father was a shoemaker, a very fine shoemaker, and my mother teneva la casa. I got married to Vincenzo who has an ice cream shop in Portobello. We are not doing bad. Last summer we bought an ice cream tricycle. Vincenzo is an artist, he plays the accordion like his father... la sera facciamo la musica con gli amici. I sing, uncle Joseph plays the guitar and Pietro, my cousin plays the mandolin. We played last night to celebrate il Battesimo of my nice Lucietta. Chiedo la grazia di vedere l'Italia prima di morire.

Prima donna: Mi chiamo Maria Concetta e sono l'ultima di sette figli. I was born in Manchester in 1923 and got married there with Carlo from Frosinone. I was sixteen then and Carlo forty three. I ran away the day of the wedding but my father caught me and I got married with a black eye. We came to Glasgow to work in my uncle's fish and chip shop. I had four children with Carlo. Then he disappeared. Someone said that he went back to Italy. I didn't care. I soon remarried with John, Giovanni. I had another three children with him. John was a barber and I worked with his sister as a hairdresser. Well, at the beginning I just helped out, capisci, clean the shop, wipe the floor, wash the towels... a bit of everything... and now I run the shop as my husband did not come back after the war. La Madonna mi guarda sempre, che tiene un occhio sui mei figli, che stanno sempre bene.

