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### **Capital of Culture: Milo Rau's *The New Gospel* (2020)**

The paper discusses the political aesthetics of Milo Rau's 2020 film *The New Gospel* [Das Neue Evangelium]. The film was realized in the Southern Italian city of Matera as part of the city's designation as European Capital of Culture in 2019 and displays the city both as a capital of film history and as a capital of agricultural exploitation. Matera's archaic cityscape, a UNESCO world heritage site, which shows topographic similarities with Jerusalem, served as a film set for two of the most famous Jesus films: Pier Paolo Pasolini's *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964) and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004). In the present, the outskirts of the city have become a poor refuge for thousands of migrants who crossed the Mediterranean sea. Many of them end up working on large tomato or orange plantations under exploitative conditions held up by mafia structures. Rau's film portrays the migrants' fight for dignity through the Christian Passion narrative and its local film history. My paper shows how the film uses aesthetic strategies of contradiction and layering to create a complex political Passion play for the present and to emphasize the role of agriculture for fundamental cultural and political questions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.