Making the (Post)colonial Man: Male Sacrifice and National Redemption in Fascist Era "Dramas of Conversion" and Recent Italian Films of Migration[1]

Introduction

This article is about onscreen fathers and sons. More precisely, it investigates the enduring relation between the trope of paternal sacrifice and the 'making' of desirable male citizens. Numerous examples of the salvific function of embracing fatherhood abound in Italian cinema. Yet the identification of personal sacrifice as necessary for national salvation, as well as the articulation of proper masculinity, is most apparent in those films produced under Italian Fascism, in particular during the regime's pursuit of a colonial empire (1936-1943). Put simply, Fascist-era "dramas of conversion,"[2] like *Il grande appello* (Mario Camerini, 1936) and *Luciano Serra, pilota* (Goffredo Alessandrini, 1938), center on the narrative of an errant dad, who, through his altruistic actions in an Italian colony, atones for previous indiscretions, renews his patriotism, and makes way for the inauguration of a new, disciplined kind of male identity. Recent films of migration that chronicle the experiences of male migrants hailing from former Italian colonies, among them *Saimir* (Francesco Munzi, 2004) and *La prima neve* (Andrea Segre, 2013), also correlate the sacrificial act of a subpar father with his child's securement of civic belonging and acceptable masculinity. Here, too, troubled father-son assemblages undergo processes of political and cultural (re)socialization in foreign spaces. And, more often than not, these processes recall those present in "conversion dramas" of Italian Fascism. They also necessitate "sacrifice and transcendence of the body for the nation" (Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* 103), that being the 'death' of a paternal protagonist to ensure Italian sovereignty, as well as survival of his son.

"Making the (Post)colonial Man" begins with a succinct overview of the historical and theoretical underpinnings that intersect gendered expectations of a desirable male identity and the future of Italy. Following this introduction, I provide a concise summary of the intertwined motifs of onscreen father-son reconciliation and paternal redemption in Mario Camerini's and Goffredo Alessandrini's "conversion dramas," focusing in particular on the filmmakers' similar approaches to producing a man fit for Fascist Italy's empire. The latter half of this piece contributes to the

growing body of work examining connections between Italy's colonial past and migration trends in contemporary Italian media.[3] Treating *Saimir* and *La prima neve* as case studies, I assert that recent films put forth male migrant characters who mimic, but also modify, the behaviors performed by Italian protagonists of Fascist era features. Through my analyses, I show that fashioning the (post)colonial man often involves processes of control enforced during Italian Fascism's foray into imperial expansion, such as securing borders, adhering to (hetero)normative standards of time and space,[4] and eradicating ethno-racial differences in order to safeguard the nation's supposedly homogeneous identity.[5]

Masculinity in/and Italy

Women are conventionally identified as the symbolic and material (re)producers of the nation. Yet, historically, the male body has functioned as an extension and/or a metonym of the Italian body politic. Italy's Civil Code, approved in 1865, regulated legal claims to belonging with biological and gender criteria (Bussotti 145). Along with following the law of *jus sanguinis* (by blood)—a practice that continues to be upheld by Italian nationality law in the present day—citizenship was transmitted through a patrilineal genealogical system,[6] and this system was inflected with assumptions about ethnicity, race, and the biologically reproductive body—what Alys Eve Weinbaum refers to elsewhere as "the race/reproduction bind" (5). 'Biology'—better still, preoccupations about the reproductive body—played a key part in the ongoing project of constituting a coherent male identity. In the late nineteenth-century and throughout the Liberal period (1870-1911), race was considered *the* primary element of nationality (*la razza è il precipuo elemento della nazionalità*), and it assumed a decisive role in determining appropriate behaviors of Italian masculinity.[7] Under Italian Fascism, the male leader's body (Mussolini's body) came to physically incarnate the national body. *Il Duce* was an icon of virility, genetic superiority, and paternal acuity to be emulated by ordinary men. To be sure, carrying out the regime's directive, Italian fathers were praised and publicly recognized for their "insatiable sexual cravings" (*insaziabili brame sessuali*) (De Grazia 105). They also enjoyed financial incentives, which increased with the birth of each child, including: marriage loans, family allowances, and career advancements. Since non-reproductive behavior was perceived as anti-patriotic, childless men were socially ostracized and financially

penalized.[8] When the Mussolini administration began to invest in plans of colonial expansion, links among sexual reproduction, asserting patriarchal masculinity, and safeguarding an ethno-racially 'pure' Italian identity took on an increasingly xenophobic orientation.[9] Discursive and legal measures were taken to "limit the reproductive activity of individuals [considered] noxious to the [Italian] race" at home and abroad (Wolff 187). Mobilizing pseudoscience to discourage miscegenation, Fascist functionaries educated the Italian public about the degenerative genetic qualities and deviant behaviors of the 'African race.'[10] Contrasted with the biologically (and morally) superior 'white' Italian male subject, African men were labeled as barbaric savages and sexual predators; and the 'black masculinity' they rehearsed was associated with cultural taboos and criminal prurience (poor hygiene, rape, incest, polygamy, masturbation) (Pinkus 22-81; Giuliani 31-43; Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop 21-60). Essentially, the non-national 'black' male body functioned as a kind of visual repository upon which sympathizers of Italian Fascism could project concerns about preserving the fantasy of a uniform, genetically superior masculinity, paternity, and patrimony.

Since the fall of Fascism, biological reproduction (becoming a father) of an ethno-racially 'pure' lineage has not been explicitly regarded as an act of patriotism. The Italian nation has been continuously reconstituted by a combination of demographic trends: emigration, internal migration, colonial expansion, a low birth rate, and immigration. These population shifts have been the cause and effect of significant social, cultural, and economic changes, including a rise in women's independence and autonomy, the country's flagging industry, the lack of childcare and social welfare programs, and the increased visibility of minority masculinities (e.g., homosexuals, trans* subjects, migrants) (e.g., Deriu 147-66; Bellassai, "La mascolinità post-tradizionale" 123-46; Ruspini, "Educare alle nuove mascolinità" 285-314). In turn, the myth of an ideal and/or monolithic model of masculinity has been dispelled in Italy. Nevertheless, traditional family structures (husband-wife constellations), as well as stereotypes about the unsavory lifestyles of non-Italians (their proclivity for violence, criminality, and sexual deviance), persist—thereby making plain the nation's unwavering "nostalgia for [an imagined] monocultural homogeneity" (Duncan, "Double Time" 1). Becoming a father continues to be envisaged as a normative, and normalizing,

milestone of Italian masculinity ("Italian Forms of Masculinity" 123; Ruspini and Tanturri 101-02), as does the belief that embracing adulthood usually coincides with adhering to "heteronormative temporality." Putting into practice the hegemonic notions of gender, sexuality, belonging, geography, and time theorized by Jack Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman, young Italian men generally perceive "settling down" (*mettere su casa*) and "starting a family" (*fare famiglia*) as measurable markers of success, maturity, and proper masculinity (Rosina 169). Male migrants and second-generation Italian men are routinely excluded from mastering behaviors of patriarchal masculinity and participating in (hetero)normative conventions of community. Underscoring the enduring impact of Italian Fascism's racist legacy, anthropologists Elizabeth Krause and Milena Marchesi disclose that migrants who arrive in Italy today tend to be stigmatized as "reckless parent[s]" engaged in "immoral reproductive practices" (Krause 595), i.e., a "population of reproductive excess" (Marchesi 179). Skin color (race rendered visible) inherently stereotypes male migrants hailing from African countries as inferior men, unfit companions, and substandard fathers (Giuliani 1-15; 209-24; Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop 117-30). Eastern European men, like the Albanian protagonists in Munzi's film, are equally, if not increasingly, threatening. Their physical proximity and physiological similarity to Italian citizens manifests into anxiety about the potential for the 'invisible' contamination of an untainted lineage, and, by consequence, the debasement of desirable masculine traits.[11] With the arrival of Masculinity Studies in Italy, scholars such as Sandro Bellassai, Maria Malatesta, Stefano Ciccione, Lorenzo Benadusi, Elena Dell'Agnese, and Elisabetta Ruspini have begun to critically examine behaviors—both authentic, lived behaviors and those constructed, often compensatory, comportments projected in Italian media—affiliated with men, masculinity, and male identity. On one hand, these academics are deeply indebted to the Anglophone scholars who pioneered the field of Masculinity Studies (e.g., Connell and Kimmel). By this I mean that they, too, characterize masculinity as a malleable, continuously evolving social construct that defies straightforward definition. Conversely, authorities on Italian masculinity produce scholarship informed by cultural specificity. Along with studying the manifold expressions of manhood circulating in contemporary society, they meditate on Italy's inclination to reproduce a hegemonic model of masculinity

that conjures up memories of the country's Fascist history. Researchers integrating theories of gender and sexuality into analyses of media representations of (male) migrants identify a corresponding relation between the cinematic body and the national body. Derek Duncan, who investigates sexuality and gender in postcolonial Italy, names Italian cinema "[the] cultural crucible of Italian national identity" ("Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 196). In her 2019 monograph, *Migrant Anxieties: Italian Cinema in a Transnational Frame*, Áine O'Healy avers that recent features involving stories of immigration are concomitantly concerned with the topic of Italian 'whiteness' and its reproduction. Building on Duncan's and O'Healy's assertions, I uncover continuities and ruptures in the formation of a (post)colonial male identity in Fascist-era "dramas of conversion" and contemporary Italian films of migration.

Fascist-Era "Dramas of Conversion"

Returning to my earlier point that 'gendered' lines of inclusion and exclusion for men were meant to be resolute under Fascism, unsurprisingly, during this period linkages between visual media and the cultivation of a national Italian identity began to self-consciously materialize. Mussolini, who envisaged Italian cinema to be a "service of national [re]generation" (Gundle 25), intended for media to serve an integral role in the formation of a coherent, nationalistic Italian identity. The effectiveness of his objective has been debated by Italian film scholars and historians (Brunetta 89; Zagarrio 60; Landy ix). There is, however, a definitive propagandistic and pedagogical bent to Fascist-era "dramas of conversion." Frequently set abroad, these films treat Italian colonies as sites of atonement and redemption. They also correlate the survival of young men with a prosperous future for Italy. Typically, "dramas of conversion" feature a rudderless soldier who sublimates his inappropriate attraction to a woman (usually an exotic woman) into patriotic service and male companionship (*L'Esclave blanc*, Jean-Paul Paulin, 1936 and *Sotto la croce del sud*, Guido Brignone, 1938). As I illustrate in greater detail in the sections that follow, these films can also center on the narrative of a disenfranchised dad, who, through his death, regains his family's respect, renews his patriotism, and validates a version of masculinity in line with Fascist values of discipline and sacrifice (*Luciano Serra, pilota* and

Il grande appello).

Il grande appello

Together with "position[ing] Italy as a diasporic-imperial nation," *Il grande appello* "[r]einforc[es] marital and authoritarian values" of masculinity (Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* xxiii; 4). This film transposes the age-old narrative of troubled father-son filiation to the context of colonization. Italian expat Giovanni Bertani (Camillo Pilotto) is an "itinerant laborer" and a "deterritorialized nomad," whose transcontinental wanderings indicate his lack of allegiance to a singular country (84; 99). Dissimilar to the devoted father and citizen propagandized by Mussolini, Giovanni forsakes his paternal and patriotic duties, opting to settle in Djibouti. Giovanni's son, Enrico (Roberto Villa), starkly contrasts with his dad. The young man performs a militarized masculinity steeped in ideologies of Italian Fascism. He is a highly disciplined radio operator for the Italian armed forces, who, after an extended separation, reunites with his father in Ethiopia.

Due, in large part, to his association with the Hotel Orient, Giovanni is spatially, temporally, and ethno-racially unhinged from a Fascist vision of masculinity. This locale, which anticipates the escapist culture promulgated by Italy's *Grand Hôtel* magazine, defies order and discrete boundaries. Firstly, in terms of its geographic coordinates, the Hotel Orient is situated in a French-controlled territory of an African country (Djibouti) that borders an Italian colony (Ethiopia). Next, regarding its clientele, an assortment of persons of diverse nations, social classes, political affiliations, and ethno-racial ancestries, intermingle in this venue. They speak a variety of languages (Italian, German, Spanish, French, and Amharic), and, untethered from the discriminating practices that were beginning to gain traction in mainland Italy and its colonies,[12] in the Hotel Orient, interracial couples congregate on the dance floor. The patrons' bodies ebb and flow freely, echoing their transient positionalities, as "[soldiers], refugees, exiles, merchants, and travellers" (84), and symbolically freeing them from (hetero)normative notions of belonging, space, and time. Accordingly, the Hotel Orient, and the type of hybrid culture it accommodates, threatens Italian Fascism's mission to (re)produce a

homogeneous, civic-minded identity abroad.

Different from his stateless dad, Enrico is, in the words of Mario Soldati, "completely closed in and ardent for his nationalistic ideals" (cited in Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* 89). The radio operator displays unwavering allegiance to his fellow cadets and birth country. In brief, Enrico's military career requires the young soldier to quiet any lingering impulses of individualism so that he may ensure the safety of his unit. The officer dons headphones to sharpen official communications and drown out ambient sounds; he displays no interest in pursuing ethno-racially inferior women; and he is not tempted by a lucrative business offer. Enrico also purposefully dissociates himself from his misguided dad. During an exchange with Giovanni, the young man appears agitated and disinterested in the potential for father-son reunification. For the duration of their interaction, Enrico concentrates on repairing malfunctioning radio equipment, his back turned towards Giovanni. The unforgiving son also refuses to entertain his dad's proposal to abandon his post, relocate to Djibouti, and manage the Hotel Orient. Lastly, upon learning of Giovanni's plans to traffic arms for Ethiopian forces in exchange for a substantial profit, Enrico moves to permanently sever all ties with his father. He characterizes Giovanni as an enemy of the Italian nation and its fledgling colonies ("against Italy"/*contro l'Italia*) and shouts "Out! Out! Get out of here!" (*Fuori! Fuori! Via di qui!*), while forcefully shoving the hotelier from the communications barrack.

Giovanni, a celluloid scapegoat for the regime's pedagogical agenda, and a father resolved to make amends with his estranged son, shapes up and submits to the teachings of Fascist dogma. When Enrico is injured in an ambush, the formerly self-interested businessman performs the ultimate sacrificial act. Giovanni blows up a shipment of arms intended for the Ethiopians, thereby saving his son and preventing further Italian casualties. This paternal gesture results in his premature passing; Giovanni will not recover from the grave injuries he sustains. However, as indicated by his dying declaration "Italy" (*Italia*), the once restless transient can rest easy knowing that he has restored a respectable male identity and renewed a sense of belonging via civic duty. Explained differently, by fulfilling the destiny intimated by the film's title (his inevitable demise), Giovanni manages to atone for his earlier transgressions and transforms into "a devoted father and martyr for

the national cause" (81). Quickly worth mentioning, too, is *Il grande appello*'s overt integration of patriotic symbolism into the trope of male filiation. Indeed, as conveyed in the film's conclusion, it will be Enrico's commanding officer, who, in fulfilling the now-available role of 'surrogate' father, actively molds a member of the up-and-coming generation of men and secures the nation's future.

Luciano Serra, pilota

Luciano Serra, pilota also reveals itself to be a "journey of political [and paternal] re-socialization" (99). Starring Amedeo Nazzari, who Mary Wood (161) identifies as the quintessential father figure of Italian cinema, this "drama of conversion" follows a similar narrative structure to *Il grande appello*. To summarize, separated for more than a decade, the title character and his adult son Aldo (Roberto Villa) reunite during a deadly ambush on Italian troops stationed in Ethiopia.

The film protagonist's anti-patriarchal, thus inferior, masculinity is signified by deficiencies in his parenting. Early episodes depict Luciano as a sympathetic, albeit unfit, father. The young man works long hours offering wealthy tourists scenic flights over Lake Maggiore. Unfortunately, the pilot does not earn enough to provide his family with financial stability. Influenced by Italian Fascism's conflation of the 'patriarch-provider' identity with 'masculine capital,' Luciano's wife, Sandra (Germana Paolieri), equates her husband's financial insolvency to failed masculinity. During a heated exchange, she insinuates that Luciano lacks the qualities of a proper (Italian) male subject: "You *believe* you are a good husband and a good father" (*Tu* credi *di essere un buon marito e un buon padre*, my emphasis). Unnerved by Luciano's refusal to renounce his unprofitable career and work for her comfortably positioned father, Sandra undermines the patriarchal notion of man as "master of the household" (Pozzo 604). She leaves her husband and moves, with Aldo, to her parents'. Dissociating himself further from normative practices of paternity, Luciano relocates to South America and begins a career in commercial aviation. Prior to departure, the errant dad shares with a then-prepubescent Aldo his plans to acquire the wealth and status he perceives as necessary to reclaim his diminished masculinity and repair his fractured family. Nonetheless, as foreshadowed by the large iron fence that surrounds his in-laws' extensive property, father-son separation is inevitable,

and Luciano's access to hegemonic masculinity is unreachable. The second half of this "conversion drama" centers on the title character's redemption as a devoted dad and Italian citizen. Dissimilar to Giovanni (*Il grande appello*), for Luciano, extended time away from his birth country does not minimize his Italian identity and the superior representational economy of 'whiteness' it symbolizes. The pilot's only friend appears to be another Italian expat eager to return home; he shows no interest in mastering Portuguese; and he remains faithful to his estranged wife, never pursuing a romantic relationship with an exotic woman. More importantly, Luciano seizes an opportunity to flee South America and serve Italy. Exchanging his dreams of financial prosperity for collective fraternity, Luciano enlists in the Italian army under a false identity. En route to an Italian-occupied territory in Ethiopia, he completes a key phase of what Emilio Gentile calls the regime's "anthropological revolution" (*rivoluzione antropologica*) (235). Luciano, now aware that active participation in collaborative military efforts could facilitate his (re)constitution of a proper male identity, confesses to the army chaplain: "The War has saved many. It also saved me" (*Ne ha salvati tanti la guerra. Ha salvato anche me*). As expected in a propaganda feature, immediately after this 'confession scene,' the profit-oriented pilot-turned-selfless soldier is presented with a kind of *deus ex machina* that allows him to simultaneously correct his misguided paternity and prove his allegiance to Italy. When Luciano learns that Aldo—the son he has not seen in more than fifteen years—has been gravely injured, he reacts with the instincts of a protective dad and selfless serviceman. Reminiscent of the conclusion to *Il grande appello*, Luciano's altruistic actions ensure his son's survival, and they prevent further Italian deaths. They also seal the pilot's own moribund fate. In a dying declaration of sorts, Luciano expresses his concern for the well-being of Aldo, and he warns army officials about advancing enemy forces. Following Luciano's passing, Aldo accepts his father's medal of honor, and he embraces Colonel Morelli (Mario Ferreri)—yet another mouthpiece of Fascist ideology—as a 'surrogate' paternal figure. Thus, here too, bodily sacrifice serves three intersecting functions: the redemption of an improper father, the 'making' of the next generation of Italian men, and the safeguarding of Italy's future.

Recent Italian Films of Migration

Saimir

"Above all[,] *Saimir* is a story of a father-son relationship" (Saimir *è soprattutto il racconto di un rapporto padre-figlio*) (Zanardi). It recounts the domestic dramas of a disenfranchised dad, Edmond (Xhevdet Feri), and his fifteen-year-old son (Mishel Manoku), from whom the film takes its title. The "neorealist noir" (*noir neorealistico*) also makes plain the bleak reality of marginalized subjects (Rosa)—Munzi's leading men hail from Kavajë, a coastal city of Albania—struggling to survive, let alone correct their (ethno-racially) inferior masculinity in Italy. As indicated by the male characters' failure to secure lasting romances with their respective Italian love interests, Edmond and son never quite manage to acquire social acceptance in their host country. Furthermore, for reasons of their clandestine status, the Albanian pair cannot access financial resources reserved for documented arrivals. Initially, the men earn a living by transporting irregular migrants to Italy. Saimir begrudgingly, yet dutifully, assists his father with this task. However, upon discovering Edmond's embroilment in a more sinister enterprise, that being an underage prostitution ring run by members of the Albanian mafia, the disapproving teen seeks to disconnect himself from his allegedly subpar parent and heritage. What transpires—in addition to the complete, irreversible dissolution of male filiation between Edmond and Saimir—is the swift incarceration of a single father, and the callous (re)socialization of an orphaned son who may never be granted full inclusion in Italy.

The milieu inhabited by Edmond and son corresponds with their legal, social, and ethno-racial marginality.[13] Firstly, not only does the pair reside in a municipality peripheral to *Centro Storico* of Italy's capital city, but the Ostia they inhabit is completely unrecognizable.[14] Stripped of landmarks that could pinpoint an exact setting, the environ occupied by Munzi's migrant men is "anonymous" (Duncan, "Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 207), a "non-place" (Caminati 126), and an "invisible Italy" (125). Even the typically pristine Apennine passes are visually altered; filmed through metallic yellow and blue filters of a super-16 mm camera, these topographical features assume a gritty and somber aesthetic of a "denaturalized Italy" (126).

Munzi also dislodges his Albanian characters from conventional, future-oriented institutions of nation and family. Saimir and his dad socialize chiefly with non-Italian men who exhibit a fondness for sexual deviance, violence, and criminality—qualities the Italian media continues to associate with populations of a supposedly inferior ethno-racial heritage. Saimir passes an evening at a seedy strip club managed by an Albanian cousin, and he commits a series of petty thefts with a gang of Roma and Sinti 'gypsies.' Edmond, too, participates in unlawful acts of exceptional cruelty. Though he is described as "a character devoid of malice" (*un personaggio privo di cattiveria*) (Pedroni 189), the single father assists in the Albanian mafia's operation of an illegal prostitution ring trafficking undocumented female minors. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, Munzi's co-protagonists seek to remedy their exclusion from dominant society by disaffiliating themselves with marginalized masculinity. In response to Saimir's aversion to their "shitty life" (*vita di merda*) in Italy, Edmond assures his son, "After summer everything will be different. I promise" (*Dopo l'estate tutto sarà diverso. Te lo prometto*). The Albanian dad perceives his involvement in mafia crime as a temporary, but also necessary, means to attain the financial stability of an honorable male patriarch. What is more, keenly aware that intimacy with an ethno-racially 'pure' companion could fast track his acquisition of legal and social acceptance, and in turn grant him access to legal avenues of employment, Edmond announces his intention to wed his Italian girlfriend (Anna Ferruzzo). Yet, the couple's official union is left unconsummated. For reasons inferred, though never plainly articulated—Saimir's unwavering allegiance to his absent Albanian mother—the fifteen-year-old rebuffs his father's plan. He picks a fight with Edmond that escalates into a physical altercation—an openhanded slap delivered by his dad—which is diffused through father-son separation.

In the wake of Edmond's aggressive outburst, Saimir retreats to his bedroom. This location illustrates father-son dissonance through physical distance.[15] It also conveys the Albanian teen's marginal status in Italy. The bedroom's interior, a kind of symbolic extension of its occupant, houses design elements imbued with properties of 'queer space' and 'queer time' as defined by Halberstam and Freeman. First, on the wall opposite Saimir's bed, a large, open window looks upon an Ostian beachscape (see **Figure 1**). The unobstructed maritime view, coupled with sounds of a

dynamic sea current, brings nature, and its revitalizing forces, inside the otherwise cramped residence.[16] It also extends Saimir's personal geography beyond the wood-paneled walls of his bedroom. Visual and acoustic stimuli of an aquatic allure inspire an openness to alterity; they stimulate within Saimir a desire for travel, exploration, and interaction with the outside world. Secondly, in keeping with the theme of travel, above the teen's bed hangs an oversized canvas of a world map (see **Figure 1**). By associating a print of a global terrain with Saimir—a restless youth who not only finds comfort in long moped rides, but also candidly announces his intentions to leave Ostia by the close of summer ("After summer, I'm leaving"/ *Dopo l'estate me ne vado*) less than fifteen minutes into the film—the director suggests travel, or at least the possibility of travel, could remedy the title character's angst.

Saimir's bedroom Fig. 1[17]

The third and final element involved in 'queering' normative conceptions of space and time rests upon a bedside table: it is a photograph of a fair-haired woman posing in the foreground of a seascape (see **Figure 2**). Neither the identity of the female subject, nor the location where this snapshot was taken is ever revealed. However, owing to her unexplained absence in the film narrative, the spectator presumes the celluloid woman is Saimir's mother. When analyzed according to this line of reasoning, the

framed photo unbinds Saimir from regulatory structures of space and time. Finding a complement in the world map and waterfront window, this image creates a "more personal geography of belonging" (Duncan, "Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 207) for the wayward teen—one that uses affect to yoke together Albania and Italy. To borrow from Freeman's remarks on the 'queer' potential of photographic and multi-media, the framed polaroid not only memorializes Saimir's mother, but it also compels the male migrant to renegotiate conventions of linear time. Her portrait, visible in many bedroom compositions, "refuses . . . a purely futural orientation that depends upon forgetting the past" (xvi). In more exact terms, the material memory of Saimir's missing mother reinforces the fifteen-year-old's ties to his Albanian history and heritage.

Photo of Saimir's mom Fig. 2

The mise-en-scène of a third 'queer space,' the abandoned shack-turned-clubhouse frequented by Saimir and his migrant pals, stages further examples of the teen protagonist's "bad timing," "junk inheritance," and incongruity with hegemonic (Italian) masculinity.[18] The building's interior has fallen to decades of neglect: layers of unevenly stripped paint coat irregular plaster walls; the attic, which was never wired for electricity, is covered in dust and debris. Antediluvian objects, too, among them a collection

of goods stolen by Saimir and his migrant gang, litter this upper room. In place of a sleek stereo system or portable mp3 player—technologies that would have been cutting-edge during the release of this film—a clunky 1980s Boombox with tape deck fills the frame of one shot. In another take, cinematographer Vladan Radovic pans a table overflowing with broken, discarded, and/or antiquated wares. Saimir, who ascribes irrational value to these obsolete items obtained via theft, is, by extension, affiliated with marginalized masculinity and rendered 'temporally backward,' disjointed from the progressive, future-oriented narrative of his host country.

The breakup scene that occurs here between Saimir and his Italian love interest, Michela (Lavinia Guglielman), further exposes the Albanian teen's ethno-racially inferior masculinity. Early on, the couple nurtures feelings of excitement that routinely accompany a fledgling relationship: they interlock hands in front of watchful eyes, share a tender embrace, and enjoy an impromptu dip in Ostian waters. Nevertheless, like so many onscreen romances between migrant men and Italian women, this interracial coupling is doomed to run its course,[19] ultimately dissolving during Michela's visit to the clubhouse. Prior to entry, Michela voices her concern about the unwholesome appearance of the building ("I don't like it here; I'd rather leave"*/Qui non mi piace; è meglio andare*). Saimir, who proudly describes the structure as "his place" (*questo è il mio posto*), dismisses his girlfriend's concerns. He leads the brunette beauty to the dimly lit attic and presents her with a material token of his affection. Saimir's gesture, while faithful to dating etiquette in the West, does not appeal to his Italian girlfriend. Surrounded by a collection of stolen goods, Michela deduces that her boyfriend is a morally bankrupt outlaw with whom she cannot build a socially acceptable future. She rebuffs Saimir's gift (a gold necklace, which, she is correct to assume, he finances through crime), ends their fling, and flees the clubhouse. In doing so, Michela maintains the "bourgeois respectability" that Halberstam pegs as central to (hetero)normative practices of identity, association, and belonging. Her Albanian ex-boyfriend, by comparison, is "undone by his adherence to the conventions of [western and] heterosexual romance" (Duncan, "Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 209). Reversing the gender dynamics at play in the doomed interracial affairs chronicled in Fascist era "dramas of conversion" (*L'Esclave blanc* and *Sotto la croce del sud*), and returning to my earlier point about Italy's long-standing fixation on ethno-racial 'purity,' Saimir can

neither be assimilated into the national Italian body nor can he participate in its reproduction. Once Michela—an analogical representation of Italy—discovers the Albanian teen's unsavory lifestyle, his masquerade as a viable mate invariably crumbles: Saimir's inferior biology made 'visible' via deviant behavior, the male migrant is further excluded from producing dominant masculinity.

Post breakup, Saimir reacts with increasing aggression to the rejection of his non-national, ethno-racially inferior identity. In one episode, the teen reprimands Michela in front of her classmates. Fueled with ire, Saimir gestures violently in her direction while repeatedly screaming: "What have I done to you? What am I? Shit? Shit?" (*Che ti ho fatto, io? Che sono io? Merda? Merda?*). The Italian teen responds coldly to her former flame's hysterics. She sits in silence and fixes a blank stare in Saimir's direction. School officials quickly intervene. They forcefully escort the Albanian teen, a menacing interloper who has managed to gain entry into a space of dominant Italian culture, from the premises. In another scene, Saimir sublimates emotional distress about his abject Albanian identity into an act of self-harm. Leg steadied on the bathroom sink, the fifteen-year-old drives a straight razor into his calf. Radovic's camera, performing a zoom-in on the incision, sets its gaze on the fresh blood that pools onto Saimir's skin (see **Figure 3**).

Saimir performs an act of self-mutilation Fig. 3

This instance of self-mutilation signals a decisive turning point in the film narrative, what Duncan names the title character's

"conscious rejection of his father" ("Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 201). Saimir, along with escalating verbal aggression into corporeal violence, redirects his rage: the teen's irreconcilable heritage and history, rather than close-minded citizens of his host country, are now the primary targets of his vitriol and disdain. Explained in a different way, Saimir's decision to pierce his own skin derives from an intense, unyielding desire to break bonds with (what he perceives to be) an inferior biology so that he may finally assimilate to the ethno-racially superior Italian masculinity. After all, this crude act precedes the boy's confession of his father's complicity in an illegal prostitution ring to Italian authorities.

The final scenes of *Saimir* recycle themes of sacrifice, father-son friction, and masculine and national redemption previously circulated in Fascist-era "dramas of conversion." They see the incarceration of Edmond—a kind of symbolic death of an errant dad—and capture the initial steps towards political, cultural, and ethno-racial (re)socialization enacted by his son. Reworking the acerbic exchange between Saimir and Michela, in the penultimate episode, two Italian police officers strong-arm Edmond down a hallway of the local prison. The single father, surprised to catch sight of his son in an interrogation room, calls out to him, and, in an effort to shake his captors, wildly thrashes his arms—a histrionic gesture evocative of those performed, just a short while ago, by Saimir. Saimir, mimicking the icy behavior his Italian ex-girlfriend (silence and flat affect), ignores Edmond's pained cries. To this end, the title character unhinges himself from the criminal legacy and abject Albanian identity he stands to inherit from his ill-fated father.

Yet, as suggested in the final sequence, neither Saimir nor his father access the national and masculine redemption that sacrifice purportedly engenders. Borrowing from Lee Parpart, who writes on male identity in Canada's colonial cinema, by affiliating Edmond with criminality and Italian men with authority, Munzi shores up the "deeply problematic assumption that hegemonic masculinities […] are desirable and a credit to the nation, while non hegemonic, or subordinate, masculinities […] constitute a threat to the maturity and stability of the nation" (177). Additionally, different from the Italian men in "conversion dramas," whose rehabilitation in far-off colonial spaces allows them to recuperate their male vigor and sense of belonging, Saimir is never fully indoctrinated into the culture of his host country. Nor is he, in the words of O'Healy, granted "compensatory symbolic inclusion in a

transnational Mediterranean fraternity" ("Mediterranean Passages" 14). Accompanied by a pair of *carabinieri*, Saimir returns once more to his family home. He hastily packs a few personal effects (among them, the photo of his mother) and obediently files into a waiting police cruiser. Juxtaposed with the opening sequence, which captures a restless Saimir navigating his *motorino* across miles of asphalt and rugged terrain, the film closes with this character crouching in the backseat of the officers' vehicle. Physical change begets psychological transformation. Saimir, presently subdued in a confined, interior space, is recorded in close-up: His body, regulated by the tight dimensions of an unfamiliar setting, immobile; his expression, no longer animated by a rebellious spirit, impassive; his gaze, directed towards the floor mats, submissive. The male migrant has taken on the role of compliant passenger, and, in some sense, detained prisoner. In the rear window of the sedan, the reflection of a nearby fence covers a portion of Saimir's face. The silhouette of metal chains symbolically shackles the male occupant. It also mirrors the prison-like milieu of an earlier episode set just outside Michela's school. Calling to mind the function of the iron gate situated at the perimeter of the school, which deters infiltration of unwanted visitors, in this final scene, the refracted image of the chain-link fence restrains the title character within the car (see **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**). Moreover, unlike the senior officers in *Il grande appello* and *Luciano Serra, pilota*—who share personal histories with the young men they mentor—the policeman operating the sedan will not serve as a paternal figure for Saimir. This government employee is an anonymous and temporary intermediary. He will transport Saimir to a Center for Identification and Deportation (*Centro di identificazione ed espulsione*), then disappear from the undocumented minor's life. Saimir will grow up as a ward of the Italian state, fingerprinted, processed, and surveilled by social service agents until his eighteenth birthday, upon which he may be deported from Italy.

Reflection of a chain-link fence Fig. 4

The iron gate surrounding Michela's school Fig. 5

La prima neve

La prima neve can be interpreted both as a rehabilitative counterexample to Munzi's film and as a modified take on the paternal sacrifice trope common to Fascist-era "dramas of conversion." This feature intersects the lives of Dani (Jean-Cristophe Folly), a twenty-six-year-old migrant man fleeing violence in Libya, and Michele (Matteo Marchel), the ten-year-old

grandson of his Italian employer (Peter Mitterrutzner). The unlikely pair passes hours together in the woods of an Apennine valley, a 'queer' time/space continuum in which wounds of recent pasts begin to heal, previously unimagined father-son pairings materialize, and new masculinities are nurtured.

Initially, Segre's co-protagonists appear to have little in common. Beyond differences in race, age, and religion,[20] the twosome hails from contrasting geographies. Whereas Dani originates from Togo, an industrialized nation of more than seven million inhabitants (Decalo, Pedanou, and Deschamps), Michele resides in the sparsely populated periphery of the *Valle dei Mòcheni*, a territory nicknamed the "enchanted valley" (*valle incantata*) for its natural, untouched scenery. Furthermore, owing to his northwest African origin, Dani is accustomed to palm tree-lined beaches and a tropical climate, not vertical mountain peaks, nor the impending winter season of Michele's northeastern Italian region. Indeed, as indicated by the film's title, the African refugee experiences his first snowfall at the summit of the *Valle dei Mòcheni*.

These dissimilarities aside, Segre puts forth a pair of co-protagonists who lead complementary, quasi-parallel lives.[21] Dani is newly widowed; Layla, his expectant wife, struck fatally ill en route to Italy. Michele recently lost his father in a routine hunting expedition gone awry. Both characters, overcome with grief, believe themselves to be responsible for their respective tragedies: the African man, for insisting his wife travel at such a late stage of pregnancy; the Italian adolescent, for not returning sooner with life-saving aid. Unable to work through the trauma of their loved-ones' demise, the co-protagonists sublimate feelings of guilt into those of contempt and rage: Dani neglects Fatum, his infant daughter and a painful, living reminder of his departed wife;[22] Michele antagonizes his mother, whom he deeply resents for pursuing a new love interest. Most significant, and assuring, of all, the migrant man and Italian minor unite in the woods of the *Valle dei Mòcheni*—a 'queer' site where fractured families are unified, meaningful connections transcend blood ties, and male-male intimacy is dislodged from violence.

Segre places his co-protagonists in a setting that is both agreeable to extended interracial exchanges and unbound from normative (and normalizing) assumptions about masculinity, space, and time. Mature mountains and trees are documented in down-tempo panning—a favored technique of cinematographer Luca

Bigazzi—stretching the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the verdant scenery. In effect, Dani and Michele are associated with a receptiveness to new experiences—a position that ruptures the oppressive boundaries of a patriarchal society. Together with a carefully staged mise-en-scène, Bigazzi's camerawork uncouples the African man and the Italian adolescent from linear temporality. Folding the past into the present, the cinematographer sets his camera's gaze on a makeshift raft, which, for Dani, conjures up the memory of his wife's untimely death (see **Figure 6**). He also captures, via slow zoom-in, a headstone positioned in the exact location where Michele's father lost his life (see **Figure 7**).

Dani remembers his wife Fig. 6

Michele remembers his dad Fig. 7

Beyond untethering the co-protagonists from standard configurations of place and time, such imagery validates a model of manhood missing from the films previously examined in this article: "affective masculinity." Tasked with confronting painful recent pasts, Dani and Michele cultivate a homosocial bond based on shared experiences of tragedy and recovery. The single dad and fatherless son lend each other emotional support, participating in a kind of male-male intimacy that subverts hegemonic notions of fraternity and masculinity. Citing from Eric Anderson, the social process of "hegemonic masculinity" defined by R. W. Connell necessitates "emotional stoicism, willingness to accept and inflict violence on other men, and participation in masculinized endeavours like sport, the military, and other fraternal organizations" (245). These aggressive behaviors derive from fear about same-sex friendships transforming into homoerotic entanglements, what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick terms "homosexual panic" in her assertion that physical aggression is one of the few avenues of bonding available to American and British soldiers that self-identify as heterosexual (186). For the Italian servicemen in Fascist-era "dramas of conversion," military life and its accouterments (the uniform as symbolic armor and lethal weapons) sublimate potential impulses of homoerotic desire into socially acceptable male camaraderie (Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema* 129; 162-63). Munzi's film also captures fraternal bonding through the prism of violence. The only scene that depicts homosociality is one in which Saimir and his ragtag crew of male migrant delinquents loot and damage a luxurious villa. Along with engaging in acts of brute aggression, male characters in *Il grande appello* and *Saimir* practice the "emotional stoicism" of hegemonic masculinity. Enrico and Saimir reject their respective dads through dismissive body language (turn away, ignore) and gestures (being forcefully escorted from communications barrack, close bedroom door), thereby disallowing the emotional intimacy crucial for father-son reconciliation. Episodes of male-male bonding via violence are absent in *La prima neve*. As I already mentioned, the co-protagonists develop a rapport of trust and unity through mourning. Further still, Dani concedes his initial opposition to emotional vulnerability within a broader male community; he seeks counsel about solo parenting from an older man, Michele's grandfather. To this end, the film characters' conduct debunks two myths

disseminated by hegemonic masculinity. First and foremost, it verifies that behavior is not inherent to biology; masculinities are instead shaped by male peers and the dynamics of a particular culture. Furthermore, it overturns the belief that certain qualities (i.e., emotional attentiveness, intimacy) are undesirable, feminine, and weak. Ultimately, then, Segre's feature endorses alternative masculinities and affective models of paternity beginning to gain traction in Italy (e.g., "Né assente né mammo"; *Nuovi padri*?; "Educare alle nuove mascolinità").

The conclusion to *La prima neve* proposes alternative notions of paternal sacrifice and masculine redemption. In contrast to other directors of Italian films of migration,[23] Segre puts forth a non-Italian male character who, along with candidly expressing his lack of *desire* for Italy ("I didn't want to come here"/*Non volevo venire qui*), wrestles with the idea of abandoning (and effectively orphaning) his infant daughter in an unfamiliar country. Yet, as Dani sublimates lingering feelings of anger and inadequacy into taxing labor (emotional and physical) and industry, he comes to understand the value in fostering a supportive community. Heeding the advice of Michele's grandfather, the African man carves a wooden bust of Layla and places it next to Fatum (see **Figure 8**). This gesture revivifies a deceased wife and mother, and it restores, symbolically, family unity. Different from the photograph in *Saimir*, which reveals itself (and its subject) to be a source of unspoken tension between father and son, Dani's creation and placement of the wooden bust suggests that this piece will facilitate, through memory, meaningful connections between the single dad and his daughter. Lastly, in addition to repairing his splintered biological family, for Dani, the chance encounter with a fatherless Italian child reveals itself to be a welcome opportunity for correcting improper paternity and envisioning a future in Italy. Revising the unsettling finale of Munzi's film, which sees the elimination of a disenfranchised migrant dad and the (re)socialization of his racially inferior son, *La prima neve* closes with an anti-patriarchal model of family reunification and "possible integration" (*integrazione possibile*) (Finos): in the final film frame, a man of foreign origin honors a fallen Italian father by comforting the departed's melancholic son (see **Figure 9**).

A bust in memory of Layla Fig. 8

Interracial father-son reconciliation Fig. 9

Conclusions

This article examined the theme of sacrificial fatherhood as a recuperative salve to improper masculinity and compromised national stability in Fascist-era "dramas of conversion" and recent Italian films of migration. Following a succinct description of the narrative conventions that structure Camerini's and Alessandrini's 1930s features, I argued that *Saimir* reinforces now controverted suppositions about reproduction and masculinity nurtured under Italian Fascism, i.e., that gendered behaviors are inextricably conditioned by biology. In brief, due to his abject Albanian heritage and unsavory lifestyle, Edmond neither manages to repair the fractured relationship with his teenage son, nor does he make

amends with his host country. This ethno-racially 'impure' character's repeated attempts to access (re)productive domesticity (e.g., marriage to an Italian woman, restored father-son filiation) are doomed to fail in Italy. For Saimir, who "neither feels completely at home[,] nor feels fully foreign" (*né a casa propria né del tutto straniero*) and is "no longer an adolescent and not yet a man" (*non più adolescente, . . . e non ancora uomo*) (Nepoti), more inclusive articulations of masculinity, belonging, and citizenship cannot come to fruition. The Albanian teen desires hegemonic masculinity and in fact displays chief qualities of this model of manhood (aggression and emotional stoicism). However, his inferior biology betrays him. Saimir's violent outbursts are not affiliated with heroism as they are for Italian soldiers in Fascist-era "dramas of conversion." Rather, they are associated with criminality, an inherent part of his genetic legacy.

La prima neve was proposed as a productive counterexample to Fascist-era "dramas of conversion" and Munzi's migration film, to the extent that this feature reworks the paternal sacrifice trope, uncouples biology from gender traits, and ushers in alternative visions of masculinity. To summarize, in Segre's film, salvation does not hinge on the death of a disenfranchised dad. This is not to claim that Dani's fatherly redemption is without setbacks and sacrifice. The season changes depicted in *La prima neve* mirror the co-protagonists' ongoing processes of restoration, renewal, and transformation. I would argue, in fact, that Segre's decision to conclude with the advent of winter (the first snowfall) signals that the widowed dad and fatherless son must work through a trying period before they can fully recover. The final episodes of *La prima neve*, which include Dani's 'reanimation' of his deceased wife and his paternal comforting of Michele, verify that 'making' the (post)colonial man and safeguarding a favorable future for Italy do not invariably require processes of sexual reproduction. Indeed, to quote from Jaspir Puar, who writes on sexuality, counterterrorism, and nationalism through the lens of Foucauldian biopolitics, because "[processes of regeneration…] are found in all sorts of registers beyond heteronormative reproduction" (207), the biologically unrelated African father and Italian son can work towards the cultivation of an anti-patriarchal family and alternative masculinities.

At the same time, Segre's vision of harmonious interracial cohabitation, as well as his promotion of transnational masculinity

in Italy, is grossly over-simplified. Dani's ability to perform a kind of 'surrogate' paternity to Michele, and thereby access a sense of belonging in his host country, depends on a convenient disavowal of former and current events that link Libya and Italy. With the exception of the opening title slide, *La prima neve* makes no reference to the impact of unresolved civil strife in North African countries on mass migration flows to Italy.[24] Segre's "p.c. family film" also forsakes an opportune occasion to intervene in discussions on the correlative relation between migratory 'crises' and sentiments of xenophobia and racism in Italy (Young). Referencing a recent opinion piece authored by Ruth Ben-Ghiat, by neglecting to point out that GreenStream, an underwater pipeline supplying natural gas from Libya to Gela, runs on the same axis where thousands of migrants perish en route to Italy (among them, one could speculate, the wife of Dani), *La prima neve* fails to acknowledge how the present-day 'immigration crisis' echoes Italy's colonial history ("How Italy's Fascist Past Echoes in Migrant Crisis"). Moreover, Segre's feature ignores right-wing parties' attachment to racist, Fascist-era assumptions about reproduction and ethno-racial identity, their "*italiani si nasce non si diventa*" ideology. To what end, then, do Italian films shape national understandings of identity, paternity, and masculinity?

Cinema can be an effective pedagogical tool for educating the masses and mobilizing change. Segre, operating with a different objective than Mussolini, names this medium "a fundamental element in the education of a nation" (*il cinema è un elemento fondamentale dell'educazione di un paese*) (Grigion). Turning her attention to the particularities of national films and masculine traits,[11] Italian media studies scholar Jacqueline Reich maintains, "there is no better window into the image of contemporary Italian masculinity than its representation in cinema" (xii). In their respective monographs on masculinity and Italian cinema, Sergio Rigoletto and Catherine O'Rawe similarly claim that male characters' comportments mirror and/or respond symbolically to socio-cultural conditions of Italy. And, a handful of protagonists they analyze perform behaviors that call to mind the "affective masculinities" defined by Masculinity Studies scholars.

These advancements aside, Italian cinema's long-standing correlation between male characters' race identity and representational economy should not be ignored or minimized. Meditating on the re-emergence of Fascist-era exclusionary

practices in post-war Italian cinema (the peplum, spaghetti westerns), Maggie Günsberg observes that 'whiteness' denotes moral and/or physical superiority (97-118; 173-214). Duncan agrees. In an article that identifies *Saimir* as a cogent example of Italy's postcolonial cinema, he asserts: "[r]ace is a critical element of an idealized masculinity that needs to be purified of, and protected from, any element encoded as menacing" ("Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 199). Of greater significance, still, Reich's, Rigoletto's, and O'Rawe's studies on national Italian cinema and masculinity show a tendency to privilege 'whiteness'—even when 'white' masculinity is in crisis. In the first chapter of *Beyond the Latin Lover*, Reich provides a brief summary of filmmakers' shared practice of articulating Italy's changing national identity through repeated reconfigurations of masculinity (10-17). She cites examples from films of silent cinema—in which the 'whitening' of strongman Maciste symbolized the "newly integrated Italian nation"—to films of the early 1960s—in which male protagonists were largely characterized by weakness and defect. (11). In the chapters that follow, Reich turns her attention to the career of Marcello Mastroianni, arguing that the conceptualization of this Italian actor as exotic, sexually potent Latin lover is at odds with the anti-hero, "*inetto*" (inept man) frequently portrayed by this actor. In his project on masculinity and Italian cinema of the 1970s, Rigoletto connects the onscreen male body to the national Italian body. Rigoletto's argument is twofold: Films of this period complicate the normative framework of masculinity (i.e., the "heterosexual, heroic, virile, predatory and aggressive" ideal), and these masculinities function as "a charged allegory for many of the [then current] socio-political lacerations of the Italian nation" (6; 9). In addition to questioning "definitional boundaries demarcating a socially acceptable male identity[,]" 1970s features probe "the exclusions inevitably produced by such boundaries" (1). Through close readings of films that convey father-son friction via Oedipal stories (*Strategia del ragno*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970; *Il conformista*, Bernardo Bertolucci, 1970), chapter three in particular revisits the national memory of Italian Fascism "in the light of the post-1968 critique of parental authority and a symbolic rejection of the nuclear family" (12). Notably, though, Rigoletto's study makes no mention of race. O'Rawe's *Stars and Masculinities* is a seminal text on models of manhood in post-2000 popular Italian films. Contrasted with the works analyzed by Rigoletto, which illustrate a

receptiveness to non-hegemonic visions of masculinity, the contemporary features examined by O'Rawe privilege a return to, if not mourning of, a glorified Italian past; they "foreground[] nostalgia and the recuperation of prior models of masculinity" (7). Recent comedies and melodramas whose male protagonists grapple with anxieties related to paternity, aging, and (single) parenting is the topic of chapters two and three; these features acknowledge race insofar as this identity marker re-centers 'white' Italian masculinity. Drawing, specifically, on the examples of *Femmine contro maschi* (Federico Moccia, 2010) and *Lezioni di ciccolato* (Claudio Cupellini, 2007) O'Rawe explains that the presence of non-white men is "peripheral" and ultimately serves to consolidate an image of Italian masculinity as 'white,' heterosexual, and fragile (61-68). Complicating, further, the limited engagement with race in Italian films and scholarship on masculinity and national Italian cinema.

I close "Making the (Post)colonial Man" with a rhetorical exercise. In a 2017 article, Alan O'Leary takes on the task of outlining the defining elements of Italian cinema. His comparative table on the thematic and topical categories of three recent companions to Italian cinema points to an inclination toward intersectional, transdisciplinary research, i.e., a future Italian screen studies (in an Anglophone context) that seeks to structure film study within gender, sexuality, post-colonial, post-national, and/or global frameworks (9-10). Rephrasing the question that titles O'Leary's piece ("What is Italian cinema?"), I query: What can Italian cinema be? Better yet: How can Italian cinema reflect, respond to, and educate the viewer on complex, ever-changing idiosyncrasies of (trans)national masculinities?

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NOTES

[1] Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.
[2] I borrow this term from Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Fascism's Empire Cinema*.
[3] For reasons of space, I list a handful of key texts: O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties*; Vanoli; Fiore; Nathan;
Schrader and Winkler; De Franceschi; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo; Greene; Di Carmine; Bullaro; Andall and Duncan; Cincinelli, *Senza frontier*e; Cincinelli, *I migranti nel cinema italiano*.
[4] Following Jack Halberstam and Elizabeth Freeman, I understand (hetero)normative time and space as structured by those routines that produce and govern traditional incarnations of gender, sexuality, family, nation, and belonging.

Narrowing my focus to the context of Italy, I share and build on Derek Duncan's observation that male migrant characters in recent films of migration are often 'queered' through their exclusion from a "reproductive trajectory of heteronormativity" in order to illustrate the "inassimilability" of foreign bodies into the national Italian body ("Loving Geographies" 178). See also Duncan, "Double Time" 10.

[5] Presently, there exists a substantial and growing body of work on race, racism, and society (e.g., Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Studies, Black Studies). In this article I define 'race' and 'ethno-racial' identity as social constructs that are intended to denote and maintain unequal power relations. Following Richard Dyer, I refer to 'whiteness' as a representational economy and a racialized position of privilege. Other terms that appear in single quotation marks (e.g., 'white,' 'black,' 'black masculinity,' 'African race') are intended to convey the constructed quality (artificiality) of these identity markers. For a more focused discussion of the unacknowledged race privilege currently enjoyed by Italians (relative to migrants and non-white Italians) and evocative of the constructed homogeneity of *italianità* under colonialism see Lombardi-Diop, "Postracial/Postcolonial Italy" 175-190.

[6] This patrilineal genealogical system was not overturned until 1948.

[7] This declaration is found in the first Civil Code of unified Italy (*il codice Pisanelli*) (cited in Re 5). All translations are mine.

[8] Such opposition to impotence prevailed, in fact, that Alberto De' Stefani, a member of the Fascist Grand Council, declared the 1926 "bachelor's tax" ineffective. The Fascist functionary called for the imposition of harsher penalties against non-reproductive masculinities, and he sought to make marriage and procreation obligatory. See Salvante 107.

[9] On the relationship between 'biology' (pseudoscience) and racism during Italian Fascism, see Maiocchi; Labanca 145-63; Esposito 44-45; Giuliani 65-86; Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop 67-112.

[10] Consider, for example, those essays published in *La difesa della razza* (1938-1943) that addressed issues of race in the Italian colonial empire, as well as the Racial Laws themselves, which would move to exclude mix-raced children conceived in Italy's colonies from accessing rights to Italian citizenship.

[11] In "Double Time," Duncan draws on the practice of 'cloning' in the science fiction genre, as well as research on the stigmatization of Albanian migrants in Italian media (e.g., Vehbiu and Devole; Romania). Writing, specifically, on 'white' female migrants in *Alza la testa* (Alessandro Angelini, 2010), *La sconosciuta* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 2006), and *La doppia ora* (Giuseppe Capotondi, 2009), Duncan argues that the genetic and geographic proximity of these 'white' European women to 'native' Italian citizens inflames anxieties about reproducing a homogeneous national identity (20-22).

[12] The Italian racial laws (*Leggi razziali*) were in effect from 1938-1945.

[13] On the few occasions in which Saimir occupies dominant Italian cultural spaces (e.g., Michela's school, a villa) criminality and/or general disorder ensues.

[14] *Saimir* was filmed just twenty miles outside of Rome. However, the offseason Ostian beachscape is unidentifiable, even to locals. See Duncan, "Italy's Postcolonial Cinema" 206-208; O'Healy, *Migrant Anxieties* 119-21; Caminati 127; Toscano 330; Pedroni 188-89.

[15] Edmond, who moves freely throughout communal home spaces, never enters Saimir's bedroom. He either occupies the threshold of its entrance or leans stoically against the locked door. Radovic's camerawork illustrates further the Albanian

men's fractured father-son relationship. The cinematographer records numerous exchanges between Saimir and Edmond with a shot/ reverse shot combination, a film technique that intensifies characters' emotional detachment by keeping them in separate frames.

[16] These winter waters cultivate an agitated, rather than calming presence. In doing so, they anticipate Saimir's tragic undoing, while also recalling the depiction of offseason Italian beachscapes as sites of violence and criminal activity in other recent films of migration (e.g., *Alì ha gli occhi azzurri*, Claudio Giovannesi, 2012 and *Elvjs e Merilijin*, Armando Manni, 1998). See Dolasinski, "Precarious Masculinity" 125; 132; Duncan, "Loving Geographies" 174.

[17] All images are reproduced for the sole purpose of scholarly discussion.

[18] I borrow both of these phrases ("bad timing" and "junk inheritances") from Freeman 52-89.

[19] See Dolasinski, "Media-ting 'Sterile Masculinity'" 93; Duncan "Loving Geographies."

[20] *La prima neve* opens with Dani reciting a prayer in Ewe (*Evegbe*). This language, spoken principally in Ghana and southern Togo, is associated with the Voodoo religion. See Shoup 89-91.

[21] Other recent Italian films of migration make use of this same narrative stratagem (drawing unexpected parallels between Italian and migrant characters) in order to combat racism and discredit the flawed notion of a superior Italian 'biology' (*Terraferma*, Emanuele Crialese, 2011; *Good Morning, Aman*, Claudio Noce, 2009; *Cover boy: l'ultima rivoluzione,* Carmine Amoroso, 2006). Alternatively, Mohsen Melliti's *Io, l'altro* (2007) bears witness to the dissolution of a multi-decade fraternity when the co-protagonists (an Italian fisherman and his Tunisian peer) are compelled to confront previously unexamined differences of race, religion, and cultural identity.

[22] Confiding in Pietro, Dani implores: "Do you know how it feels to continue seeing Layla in Fantum's eyes? Do you know?" (*Sai cosa significa continuare a vedere Layla negli occhi di Fatum? Lo sai?*).

[23] Italian films of migration from the 1990's (*Lamerica*, Gianni Amelio, 1994; *Elvjs e Merilijin*) to more contemporary times (*Riparo*, 2007; *Cover boy*; *Good Morning, Aman*) introduce, then undermine, the myth of Italy as a *desirable* place to settle. *La prima neve*, by contrast, introduces a migrant protagonist who is initially opposed to constructing a new life in Italy.

[24] *La prima neve* does not directly engage in ongoing discussions on Italy's 'immigration crisis.' Dani's story arc is, however, grounded in reality. Dal Monte et al. estimate that during the Arab Spring (2011), more than 10,000 refugees fleeing civil war in Libya arrived in Italy (18).

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