

THE DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH & ITALIAN PRESENTS

Lisa Dolasinski

Screening "*Sterile Masculinity*": On Male Migrants, Italian Men, and the Future of Italy



La Prima Neve

Present-day Italy finds itself in a perfect demographic storm. The nation's designation as a "dying country" stems

from an alarmingly low birthrate, the mass exodus of young people, and a fast-aging population. Concurrently, unprecedented numbers of migrants make their way onto Italian soil. Right-wing politicians decry this "invasion" with xenophobic rhetoric, pro-natalist and pro-nationalist propaganda, and anti-immigration policies inculcated in an idealized colonial memory.

Keeping present the paradoxical perception of Italian and migrant reproductive trends, while drawing on scholarship in Masculinity Studies and Disability Studies, particularly Edelman's (2004) concept of "reproductive futurity," this dissertation examines mediated representations of "sterile" migrant men. On one hand, I argue that directors co-opt the migrant body in order to revisit the broader, unresolved "crisis of masculinity." Films like *Saimir* and *Ali ha gli occhi azzurri* put forth male migrant characters who struggle to parent and/or consummate romantic relationships—issues traditionally confronted onscreen by "white" men. Albeit in an alternative way, male crisis narratives advanced in films of migration often re-center masculine qualities inherited from the authoritarian pater familias and the virile, Fascist man. At the same time, I understand the trope of the impotent male migrant as symptomatic of Italy's current socio-political climate. Many recent films cast male migrants as sexually and civically non-reproductive in order to convey these characters' incompatibility with Italy (*Saimir*, *La giusta distanza*, *Ali*). There are, however, a few exceptions in which "sterile" male migrants partake in scenarios of regeneration and renewal (*Io sono Li*, *La prima neve*). For these celluloid protagonists, and their Italian host country, "sterility" (a) challenges patriarchal conventions of heterosexual romance, (b) legitimizes claims to belonging unbound from genealogical intimacy and/or racial affiliation, and (c) envisages cross-cultural, "surrogate" paternity as a viable expression of masculinity.

If you would like to attend, please contact the chair at ancvitti@indiana.edu

Thursday, November
2nd, 2017
9:30am, GISB, 1060

Committee Members:

Antonio Vitti, Chair
French & Italian
Andrea Ciccarelli
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