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ITALIAN CINEMA DURING THE FASCIST DICTATORSHIP

This course looks at Italian commercial cinema made during the fascist dictatorship. We examine the tensions between nationalist ambitions for that cinema and the internationalist influences and transnational realities of the interwar film industry; the challenge film professionals faced of reconciling profit and propaganda mandates, and auteurist impulses with political pressures. I have included multiple films by several major directors to facilitate study of the development of auteurial signatures during the different political and cultural phases of the dictatorship. A main subtheme of the course is gender, and how different genres articulate the tensions surrounding different models of manhood and womanhood. Finally, we will study the intertextual relationships of these commercial films with fascist documentaries and newreels.

Course materials

The course is conducted in English, but students will find knowledge of Italian essential for both readings and film screenings. Many, if not most, of the films we see have no subtitles, and some readings are available only in Italian. Jacqueline Reich and Piero Garofalo, eds., *Re-Viewing Fascism* is available for purchase at the NYU Book Store. All other course readings are contained in a customized reader, "Italian Cinema During the Fascist Dictatorship," which can be consulted on Blackboard or purchased from Advanced Copy Center on La Guardia between Bleecker and West 3rd Streets (338-1001). Complete citations for all readings are given on the last page of the syllabus.

Note: all LUCE newsreels and documentaries can be accessed at www.luce.it: go to "archivio storico" then "cerca" by typing in the number of the film (given in the syllabus) and then click on "invia ricerca". Scroll to the title, click, and choose between modem, dsl and broadband speeds. Mac users may find that the Safari browser works best.

Course grade

Final seminar paper, 80%; class participation, 20%. Seminar papers may be written in either English or Italian and from any disciplinary perspective. Students must meet with me to discuss their topics. Class participation is judged by your attention during the seminar and your interventions in class debates. Since weekly readings are sometimes divided up among students, the active participation of every one of you is vital for the success of the seminar.

LIST OF TOPICS AND READINGS

- Sept 10** **Introduction**
Credere, obbedire, combattere (LUCE, 1939, see in class).
- Sept 17** **Contexts**
 Reich, "Mussolini at the Movies," in Reich
 Zagarrio, *Cinema e fascismo*, 13-39
 Fanchi and Mosconi, *Spettatori*, 7-22
- Sept 24** **Early Italian Cinema**
 Bertellini, "Dubbing l'arte muta," in Reich (excerpts)
 Guccini, "Note intorno all'interpretazione di *Assunta spina*"
 Meneghelli, "Cabiria e il film storico italiano"
Films: *Assunta spina* (Bertini and Serena, 1914), *Cabiria*
 (Pastrone) DVD 1258 (see all *Assunta spina*, and first
 hour of *Cabiria*)
Guest speaker: Giorgio Bertellini
- Oct 1** **The 1920s: Transnationalism and Italian Cinema**
 Shohat, "Gender and the Culture of Empire," 45-59, 62-
 78
 Hansen, "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and
 Female Spectatorship"
Films: *Kif tebbi* (Camerini, 1928); *The Sheik* (1921,) VCA 9428
- Oct 8** **No class: Readings on Genre**
 Fanchi, "I generi"
 Tudor, "Genre"
 Bourget, "Social Implications in the Hollywood Genres"
- Oct 15** **Cinema and Modernity/
 The Sentimental Comedy and the New Woman**
 Mosconi, "La commedia italiana"
 Zagarrio, "La commedia non riconciliata"
 Landy, "Gli uomini, che mascalzoni"
Films: *Gli uomini, che mascalzoni* (Camerini, 1932)
Madri d'Italia (LUCE, Francisci, 1935),
 see in class).
- Oct 22** **Cinema and Modernity/Redeeming Manhood,
 Returning to the Land**
 Landy, *Fascism in Film*, 118-126

Reich, *Beyond the Latin Lover*, 2-14
 De Berti, "Cinema e identità nazionale,"
Films: *Terra Madre* (Blasetti, 1931); *Pane nostro* (LUCE, 1932)

Oct 29

Cinema and Modernity/Stardom

Gundle, "Film Stars and Society in Fascist Italy," in Reich
 Valentini, "Modelli, forme e fenomeni di divismo," 108-116
 Landy, *The Folklore of Consensus*, 237-242
 Fischer and Landy, *Stars*, 1-9
Film: *La signora di tutti* (Ophuls, 1934) VCA 11585
Guest Speaker: Marcia Landy

Nov 5

Mussolini as Divo

Hay, *Popular Film Culture*, 222-232
 Argentieri, *L'occhio del regime*, 86-99
 Bernagozzi, *Il mito dell'immagine*, 103-116
Films: *Il Duce trebbia il grano* (LUCE, 1932): review *Credevo, obbedire, combattere* (LUCE, 1939).

Nov 12

Historical Films and the Search for Origins

Rosenstone, "Introduction"
 Ben-Ghiat, "1860"
 Hay, *Popular Film Culture*, 150-168
 Landy, *The Folklore of Consensus*, 144-150
Films: *1860* (Blasetti, 1933) VCA 13627

Nov 19

The Colonial Film

Hay, *Popular Film Culture in Fascist Italy*, 181-188; 197-199
 Ben-Ghiat, "Modernity and Masculinity in the Italian
 Colonial Cinema"
 Coletti, "Il cinema coloniale tra propaganda e melò"
 Celli, "Le guerre del LUCE"
Films: *Il grande appello* (Camerini, 1936); *Il cammino degli eroi*
 (D'Errico, 1936, see in class)

Nov 21

The Combat Film

Argentieri, *Il cinema in guerra*, 7-20, 68-73
 Stone, "The Last Biennale Film Festival," in Reich
Films: *Bengasi* (Genina, 1942); *Africa settentrionale*
 (LUCE C0140, May 1941); *Africa settentrionale*
 (LUCE C0221, Feb 1942)
(special Wednesday meeting as per NYU schedule)

Nov 26

The Schoolgirl Comedy

Forgacs, "Sex in the Cinema," in Reich
 Reich, "Reading, Writing, and Rebellion"

Landy, *Fascism in film*, 33-37, 46-57

Films: *Maddelena zero in condotta* (De Sica, 1940);
Amazzoni della GIL (LUCE, n.d.)

Guest speaker: Jacqueline Reich

Dec 3

The Family (Melo)Drama

Landy, *Fascism in film*, 66-71

Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury"

Film: *I bambini ci guardano* (De Sica, 1942) VCA 13732

Dec 10

Towards an Italian Realism

Landy, *Fascism in Film*, 308-312

Films: *Quattro passi fra le nuvole* (Blasetti, 1942); *Venezia minore* (Pasinetti, 1942)

Last day of class

Dec 20

Papers due in hard copy in my box on 4th floor of the Casa by 5 pm. Emailed papers will not be accepted.

References for Works Listed in Syllabus

Argentieri, Mino. *Il cinema in guerra. Arte, comunicazione e propaganda in Italia 1940-44*. Roma: Riuniti, 1998.

----- . *L'occhio del regime*. Rome: Bulzoni, 2003.

Argentieri, Simone. "Il ridicolo e il sublime," in *Risate di regime*, ed. Mino Argentieri. Venezia: Marsilio, 1991, 19-33.

Ben-Ghiat, Ruth. "Modernity and Masculinity in the Italian Colonial Cinema" (unpublished paper; to appear in Ben-Ghiat, *Italian Films, Italian Histories*)

Bergfelder, Tim. "National, Transnational, or Supranational Cinema: Rethinking European Film Studies," *Media, Culture, and Society*, vol.27, no.3 (2005): 315-331.

Bernagozzi, Giampaolo. *Il mito dell'immagine*. Bologna: CLUEB, 1983.

Bourget, Jean-Loup. "Social Implications in the Hollywood Genres," in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry K. Grant. Austin: Univ of Texas Press, 2003, 51-59.

Casadio, Gianfranco. "Il cinema dei telefoni bianchi," in *Telefoni bianchi*, eds. Casadio, E. Laura and Filippo Cristiano. Ravenna: Longo, 1991, 12-30.

Celli, Silvio. "Le guerre del LUCE," in *Storia del cinema italiano*, ed. Orio Caldiron, 62-70

Coletti, Maria. "Il cinema coloniale tra propaganda e melò," in *Storia del cinema italiana*, ed. Orio Caldiron. Venezia; Marsilio, 2006, 354-362.

De Berti, Raffaele. "Cinema e identità nazionale," in Fanchi and Mosconi, eds. *Spettatori*, 88-100.

Elsaesser, Thomas. "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," in *The Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry K. Grant. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003, 366-395.

Fanchi, Mariagrazia. "I generi: identità, trasformazioni e pratiche del consumo," in *Storia del cinema italiano, Vol. 4 1934/39*, ed. Orio Caldiron. Venezia:

- Marsilio, 2006, 277-293.
- Fanchi, Mariagrazia e Mosconi, Elena. *Spettatori. Forme di consumo e pubblici del cinema italiano 1930-60*. Venezia: Marsilio, 2002.
- Guccini, Gerardo. "Note intorno all'interpretazione dell'*Assunta Spina*," in *Francesca Bertini*, a cura di Gianfranco Mingozzi. Bologna, 2003.
- Hake, Sabine. *Popular Cinema in the Third Reich*. Austin: Univ of Texas Press, 2001.
- Hansen, Miriam. "Pleasure, Ambivalence, Identification: Valentino and Female Spectatorship,," *Cinema Journal*, vol.25, no.4 (summer 1986).
- Hay, James. *Popular Film Culture in Fascist Italy*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ Press, 1987.
- Higson, Andrew. "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowder, eds., *Transnational Cinema*. New York: Routledge, 2006, pp.15-25.
- Landy, Marcia. *Fascism in Film. The Italian Commercial Cinema, 1931-1943*. Princeton: Princeton Univ Pres, 1986.
- . *The Folklore of Consensus*.
- , ed, with Lucy Fischer. *Stars. The Film Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Meneghelli, Andrea. "Cabiria e il film storico italiano," in *Cabiria & Cabiria*.
- Mosconi, Elena. "La commedia italiana: consumo e industria culturale," in *Spettatori*, eds. Fanchi and Mosconi, 62-87.
- Mosconi, Elena and Cavadini, Nicoletta, "La sala cinematografica tra le due guerre..." in *Spettatori italiani*, eds. Francesco Casetti and Elena Mosconi. Roma: Carocci, 2006, pp. 60-83.
- Reich, Jacqueline. *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- . "Reading, Writing, and Rebellion: Collectivity, Specularity, and Sexuality in the Italian Schoolgirl Comedy, 1934-43," in *Mothers of Invention. Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, 220-252.
- Rosenstone, Robert. "Introduction," in *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, ed. Robert Rosenstone. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 3-14.
- Shohat, Ella. "Gender and the Culture of Empire" in *Otherness and the Media*, ed. Gabriel Naficy. New York: 1993.
- Toschi, Deborah. "Elementi per una genealogia del pubblico rurale," in *Spettatori italiani*, eds. Casetti and Mosconi, pp.90-108.
- Tudor, Andrew. "The Idea of Genre in the American Cinema," in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry K. Grant, 3-11.
- Valentini, Paola. "Modelli, forme e fenomeni di divismo: il caso Vittorio De Sica," in *Spettatori*, eds. Fanchi and Mosconi, 108-133.
- Zagarrio, Vito. *Cinema e fascismo*. Venezia: Marsilio, 2004.
- . "La commedia non riconciliata," in *Risate di regime*, ed. Mino Argentieri. Venezia: Marsilio, 1991, 275-287.