

Enclaves of Whiteness: Disquieting Presences and Domesticated Territories in the Sicilian Archipelago

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INTRODUCTION

In September 2016, upon receiving an Emmy Award for his comedy series *Master of None*,¹ screenwriter and producer Alan Yang pointed out the lack of Asian American representation in Hollywood. Importantly, he did so by highlighting the peculiar double standard by which Italian Americans, with a comparable portion of population in the US, get much more Hollywood representation than Asian Americans:

There's 17 million Asian Americans in this country, and there's 17 million Italian Americans. They have *The Godfather*, *Goodfellas*, *Rocky*, *The Sopranos*, we've got Long Duk Dong. So we've got a long way to go, but I know we can get there, I believe in us, it's just going to take a lot of hard work²

Yang's open polemics against the racist politics of white-dominated showbiz industries is absolutely relevant and necessary. His resort to a comparison with Italian cinema is also appropriate and effective in reiteratively demonstrating that this imbalance in screen representations of ethnic minorities is imbricated with whiteness and Eurocentrism. Certainly, in other words, Italian Americans get more Hollywood coverage because they are whiter than Asian Americans. In this sense, the validity of Alan Yang's point is unnegotiable.

While totally agreeing with Yang, however, I want to reflect for a moment on his terms of comparison. Of the four titles he mentions, all of them are based on characters of Southern Italian ancestry – safely assuming that Stallone's character in *Rocky*³ has the same Apulian descent of his nonfictional alter ego. Apart from *Rocky*, all the three other screen productions mentioned by Yang are about criminal organisations, that is, mainly the Neapolitan camorra in *The Sopranos*⁴ and mainly the Sicilian mafia in both *The Godfather*⁵ and *Goodfellas*.⁶ Furthermore, if one considers that *The Sopranos* contains various secondary characters of Sicilian lineage, it is possible to conclude that at least three of the four titles mentioned by Yang as paradigmatic examples of Italian American Hollywood presence are about Sicily and Sicilians. Unfortunately, though, none of these three screen products succeeds in representing Sicilians (or indeed Southern Italians) without reproducing the trite cliché of the gang criminal. As a matter of fact, Rocky Balboa, the only protagonist in Yang's list who is not involved in the organised crime, has to literally work his way through the several films of the saga by literally punching and knocking out people.

What is then the advantage of being comparatively overrepresented in Hollywood? In fact, not only are Sicily and Sicilians – as much as Southern Italy and Southern Italians – abundantly represented in US productions: we are in fact ever-present in Italian as well as in international screen production and debates. However, we should ask ourselves what kind of representation is this. Reiteratively, this does not involve challenging Alan Yang's claim as to the implicit privilege we experience if compared with underrepresented Asians. Rather, it involves grasping the complexity and ambivalence embedded in the very issue of representation. In her

¹ *Master of None*, written by Aziz Ansari and Alan Yang (Los Gatos CA: Netflix, 2015).

² Alan Yang cited in Clarisse Loughrey, "Emmys 2016: Master of None writer Alan Yang calls on Hollywood for better Asian representation", *The Independent*, 20 September 2016, <https://goo.gl/P8Ep6y> (Accessed 28 July 2018).

³ *Rocky*, directed by John G. Avildsen (Beverly Hills CA: United Artists, 1976)

⁴ *The Sopranos*, created by David Chase (New York City NY: HBO, 1999).

⁵ *The Godfather*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (Hollywood CA: Paramount Pictures, 1972).

⁶ *Goodfellas*, directed by Martin Scorsese (Burbank CA: Warner Bros, 1990).

discussion of “women” as the fundamental category and subject on which feminism is based, Judith Butler stresses precisely on this ambivalence:

On the one hand, representation serves as the operative term within a political process that seeks to extend visibility and legitimacy to women as political subjects; on the other hand, representation is the normative function of a language which is said either to reveal or to distort what is assumed to be true about the category of women⁷

Transposing Butler’s elucidation to the imbalanced regime of visual representations of ethnic groups exposed by Yang, I can admit that certainly “Italians” enjoy a big deal of visibility in screen productions worldwide, and that undoubtedly this comes with some form of legitimation. However, thinking about representation as a “normative function of language” I can also claim that while we are visibilised and legitimated, we are also identified and stereotyped by means of trite images of organised crime, amoral familism, hyper-masculinity, aggressiveness, etc.

A further critical point needs to be made here, as the multiple godfathers, goodfellas and sopranos that populate our visual culture constitute a triumph for Italy’s worldwide recognition as much as they bear shame and discrimination to Sicilians and Southern Italians. In other words, when it comes to the ambivalent concept of representation, “Italy” and the “Italians” arbitrarily and selectively dissolve, so that I am likely to be legitimised as Italian, while I am equally likely to be stereotyped and shamed as a Sicilian. The Italian South, and Sicily within it, are constantly signified and represented as the “Other” of the Italian nation,⁸ and as the “negation” of its ideal, North-centred norm.⁹

Filmic representations of Sicily and Sicilians often cast them as peripheral supplements within the general action. In the case studies I examine in this chapter, entirely based on films set in the minor islands of the Sicilian archipelago, this peripherality corresponds customarily to exoticised, racio-gendered Otherness. In this context, these discontinuous portions of Sicilian land are characterised as purified enclaves of whiteness at the exclusive disposal of the white characters. There, Sicilians only function as silenced servants, obedient helpers that mediate communication with the locals, or disquieting presences that are always on the brink of acting mischievously against the protagonists.

Before proceeding to the core of my analysis, I need to make clear that by no means these dynamics are limited to the minor island of the Sicilian archipelago. When the action takes place in mainland Sicily, or when it does not take place in Sicily at all, Sicilian characters might still emerge as menacing presences, naturally imbued with violent and criminal subjectivities. In *Belluscone: Una storia siciliana*,¹⁰ Franco Maresco simply relies on displaying moustached men wearing flat caps against the backdrop of non-diegetic *marranzanu* (Jew’s harp) music, in order to prove the trite cliché of the criminal atavism of Sicilians. In *A tu per tu*,¹¹ zooming in on a car plate from Palermo (PA), is sufficient to prepare the audience for an incipient disruption in the plot.

STROMBOLI AND L’AVVENTURA

Examining the representations of Sicilians as racio-gendered supplements within the general filmic action involves identifying the specific geopolitical visions of Sicily that permeate these regimes of visualisation. In order to unveil these visions, it is useful to focus on productions set in the minor islands of the Sicilian

⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Troubles* (New York; London: 1990), p. 1.

⁸ John Dickie, “The South as Other: From Liberal Italy to the Lega Nord,” *The Italianist*, no.14 [Special Issue - Culture and society in southern Italy: past and present] (1994): 124-140.

⁹ Gabriella Gribaudi, “Images of the South: The Mezzogiorno as seen by Insiders and Outsider,” In *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited*, eds. Robert Lumley and Jonathan Morris (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 83-113.

¹⁰ *Belluscone: Una storia siciliana*, directed by Franco Maresco (Palermo; São Paulo: Ila Palma, 2014).

¹¹ *A tu per tu*, directed by Sergio Corbucci (Rome: Adige Film 76, 1984).

archipelago, as they often function as eloquent metonyms of the general fears and desires that white Italian/European/North American characters attach to the general concept of Sicily. As condensed, circumscribed and isolated spaces, these smaller islands function both as aggregators of a set of toxic and/or exoticised images of Sicily and Sicilians and as objects of a constant desire of sovereignty over Sicilian land.

In *Stromboli, Land of God*,¹² Karin (Ingrid Bergman) ends up in the volcanic island of Stromboli with her husband Antonio, a local “simple and nice” fisherman, whose “English doesn’t make sense”.¹³ Soon after arriving in the island, she declares that she wants to leave “this [cursed] island”:¹⁴

I’m different. I’m very different from you. I belong to another class. I can’t live like this in this filth. This is no life for civilised people. [...] I’m a civilised human being and I’m used to other things, better things [...] Here, everything, everything must be changed!

While in the original English version Karin deploys the signifier “class”, in the Italian version, she actually says that she belongs to another “razza” (“race”). Here race is, even more than class, key to understand the proud demarcations of exceptional whiteness declared by Karen: “It’s not my fault if I’m different, I look different and I feel different!”. The local women, with their heads wrapped in black scarves, silently stare at her with a mixture of intrusiveness and hostility. The scarves are here to be understood in the context of what Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker define as the “somatechnics of race and whiteness”:¹⁵ they are biocultural paraphernalia that mark racialized difference and indicate an unresolvable geopolitical caesura between these bodies, with their suspicious looks, movements, aspirations and possibilities, and the always self-determined body of the white protagonist. These Sicilian ladies with their angry faces are always identifiable as a disruption, as racial debris that is there only to complicate the life of the white protagonist.

Karin also indicates the male counterpart to these women: it is a group of “little old men who speak about America all the time”. Here the comment about these characters’ limited physical height functions, again, to mark somatic superiority over their bodies. Furthermore, the adjective “little” can hardly be separated from the subordinate clause, that is about the old men’s accounts of their experiences as diasporic subjects in the US. These histories of traumatic dislocations, that frequently result in the decision to come back and “morire a Stromboli” (“die in Stromboli”),¹⁶ are completely overlooked by the protagonist, who dismisses them as insignificant stories of “little old men”.

Importantly, at some point the community starts to believe that Karin is too flirty. Antonio is thus insulted and mocked by the other male islanders, who call him “cornuto” (“cuckold”). Antonio then goes home and beats Karin. Here, again, Antonio as a character is constructed around common tropes of Sicilian men as violent monsters obsessed with marital honour and reputation.

Karin’s exasperation with the islanders goes hand in hand with her fear of the constant volcanic activity in the island and with her distress with its barren lavic landscape. What is in operation here is the trite cliché of the colonized land as a living hell, with an impetuous, scary and undomesticated nature.¹⁷ At the end of the film, Karin challenges the impervious geography of the island by attempting to climb the volcano and descend on the other side, in order to reach the village of Ginostra, which lies on the other side of the island and is normally only reachable by boat. Her attempt to dominate and domesticate the island’s geography is

¹² Original version in English: *Stromboli, Land of God*, directed by Roberto Rossellini (New York City NY: RKO Radio Pictures, 1950). Italian version: *Stromboli, terra di Dio*, directed by Roberto Rossellini (Berit Film, 1950).

¹³ In the Italian version, Karen says that Antonio “parla uno strano dialetto” (“speaks a strange dialect”).

¹⁴ English language version: “I want to leave this island and go away, far away!”. Italian version: “Voglio andare via da quest’isola maledetta!” (“I want to go away from this cursed island!”).

¹⁵ Joseph Pugliese and Susan Stryker, “Introduction: The Somatechnics of Race and Whiteness”, *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 1 (2009): 1-8

¹⁶ The wording is slightly different in the English version.

¹⁷ Cf. Francesco Benigno e Salvatore Lupo, “Mezzogiorno in idea: a mo’ di introduzione”, *Meridiana*, no. 47-48 (2003): 9-21.

triggered, in the first place, by an urge to leave the island. While obviously rooted in a situation of crisis and emergency – she is pregnant and is trying to save her baby from the both brutal violence of her husband and the dreadful volcanic activity of the island – her desperate attempt to violate the very rules of traversability of the island, something that the locals would never do, obeys a white fantasy of omnipotence.

However, this attempt fails: disrupted by a discharge of volcanic ash and steam, she faints; when she wakes up, she gives up her escape plan decides to go back to the village, in order to save her baby: “They are horrible, it was all horrid, they don’t know what they’re doing. I’m even worse. I’ll save him, oh, my innocent child. God! My God! Help me! Give me the strength, the understanding, the courage!”. Here it is necessary to look at the lexicon of warfare in order to read the womb as a strategic territory in the context of this geopolitical conflict between Karin and the islander. Impregnated by “the enemy”, by one of the “horrible” people she is trying to flee from, Karin is literally “occupied” and has her political and “reproductive self-determination [...] eviscerated”,¹⁸ and that is why she gives up her hopes and decides to stay.

The “horrible” people that populate Karin’s dreadful permanence in Stromboli momentarily disappear at the beginning of Michelangelo Antonioni’s *L’avventura* (Eng. Title *The adventure*).¹⁹ Here the protagonists’ boat trip around the smaller islets of the Aeolian archipelago reproduces the old adage of the *terra nullius*: for the first forty minutes, not a single indigenous soul crosses the path of the protagonists, who are all part of the national haute bourgeoisie. While navigating amongst the islands, these white, wealthy characters oscillate between the fear of the deep sea and the sharks and the desire to attach the mark of their conquest on these small pieces of land: “Patrizia, se mi dai la bandiera del tuo yacht la pianto sull’isola” (“Patrizia, please give me the flag of your yacht and I’ll plant it on the island”). Here the vision of these apparently deserted lands is inscribed by a colonial fantasy that exists in the liminal space between the terror of the unknown and the desire of possession.

After the party lands on the islet of Lisca Bianca, one of the protagonists, Anna, disappears. They split up: while most of the group goes to the main islands to seek for help, three of them stay in Lisca Bianca. They find shelter in an apparently uninhabited hut in the middle of the islet. Suddenly, a man appears, leaving the three friends astonished. He immediately wonders who these people are: “Cu siti? Che fate?” (“Who are you? What are you doing here?”), but his questioning is immediately reverted to him by Sandro, Anna’s husband, who asks: “Siete voi il padrone?” (“Are you the owner of this place?”). The man, who is a local fisherman, immediately feels on himself the burden of proving that he is not an intruder. He shows some photos that are hanging on the wall: “this is my brother [...], my sister in law, my friends...”, but even this demonstration is not enough, as he gets interrogated again by Sandro: “Ma da dove saltate fuori?” (“Where did you jump off from?”). The power relationships established between the subjects involved in this conversation are clearly imbalanced in favour of Sandro who, even as a trespasser, feels entitled to be suspicious of the fisherman. The locals in general are immediately deemed as suspects, and it does not take long for the local police to interrogate a group of Aeolian fishermen, who – not surprisingly – are absolutely extraneous to Anna’s disappearance. As I have shown elsewhere, criminalisation is a naturalized device employed in films in order to alienate Southern Italians from the audience.²⁰ What is more, in *L’avventura* interrogating these fishermen and even labelling them as “smugglers” seems the most natural thing to do. As Lara Palombo puts it, Italian citizenship is predicated on a “northern form of white sovereignty”:²¹ these

¹⁸ Siobhan K. Fisher, Occupation of the Womb: Forced Impregnation as Genocide. *Duke Law Journal* 46, no. 91 (1996): 91-133.

¹⁹ *L’avventura*, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni (Rome: Cino Del Duca, 1960).

²⁰ Cf. Marcello Messina. “Matteo Garrone’s *Gomorra*: a politically incorrect use of Neapolitan identities and queer masculinities?.” *Gender/sexuality/Italy*, 2 (2015), 179-187. Also cf. Marcello Messina, “The demonization of the South and the Southernification of evil in contemporary Italian cinema: Belluscione and Qualunqueente.” *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* 6, no. 2 (2018): 193-207.

²¹ Lara Palombo “The drawing of the sovereign line.” In *Transmediterranean: Diasporas, Histories, Geopolitical Spaces*, ed. Joseph Pugliese. (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010): 39-58.

fishermen, in fact, can only appear as obvious suspects as they are always conceived as being on the other side of an imaginary border that separate Italian-ness from Otherness. Now, the films examined in this chapter demonstrate that this border is not always fixed around a specific North/South territoriality, as it does, for instance, travel together with these northern subjects who travel to Sicily and its archipelago.

IL COMMISSARIO LO GATTO AND PANAREA

As this border travels, the trope of the barren, isolated islands depicted in different terms in *Stromboli* and in *L'avventura* is soon replaced by opposite visions. Thanks to the tourism industry, these small islands are quickly turned into enclaves of whiteness, where the locals act only as gregarious servants and/or as background elements – when they are not represented as menacing presences altogether. The transformation of these islands is cyclical, and happens only during the high season, whereas, during the rest of the year suspicious and bizarre Sicilians take over again as the dominant component of the island.

This is certainly the case of *Il commissario Lo Gatto* (“Police Commissioner Lo Gatto”),²² the story of a police chief, Natale Lo Gatto (Lino Banfi), that is sent in punishment to the island of Favignana. Lo Gatto and his officer Gridelli land in Favignana while hearing the songs of the *mattanza* (traditional tuna fishing) from a distance.²³ The *tunnaroti* (fishermen), however, only appear in the film via this aural hint, and the rich patrimony of the *mattanza* that historically characterizes the island is totally erased. Upon landing in Favignana, Lo Gatto and Gridelli are immediately met by hostile locals. A kid asks “Cchi mminchia viniti a fari a Favignana?” (“What the fuck are you coming in Favignana for?”), while a fisherman starts a long tirade against Lo Gatto. Incidentally, these sort of landing scenes are a characteristic mark of these films. For example in the film *Vulcano* (*Volcano*),²⁴ starring Anna Magnani and notably held as *Stromboli*’s rival, the protagonist’s landing in the island is met, again, by the angry looks of the local women wearing black scarves. Even in *Stromboli* the landing is a crucial part of the narrative: right after landing in the desolate, scary island of Stromboli, Karin decides she does not want to live there. The first encounter with the recalcitrant locals or with the inhospitable land is crucial in setting the terms of settler colonial control over the territory.

In *Il commissario Lo Gatto*, up until the arrival of a plethora of tourists from all corners of northern Italy, Favignana is presented as a boring place, inhabited by bizarre people. The three sisters who host Lo Gatto in their inn are presented, again, in terms of the very same cliché of priggish, sexually repressed, sanctimonious Sicilian women that always dress in black: even their three names Immacolata, Addolorata and Annunziata (literally, “immaculate”, “sorrowful” and “announced”) evoke religious prudery in the most stereotypical fashion. Most of the other islanders are not locals: among them, there are a Neapolitan barber, a Friulian priest and a Ciociarian pharmacist. The only other Sicilian among the characters who have a substantial role in the film is the baron Fricò, a rich nobleman who, in line with the most stereotypical representations of Sicilian men, is a notorious womanizer and is later identified as a mafia suspect.

One of the three innkeeper sisters, Immacolata, starts dating officer Gridelli, displaying her fervent desire in the face of the prudish façade to which her elder sister Annunziata forces her. The same Annunziata, on the other hand, is immoderately attracted by Lo Gatto: towards the end of the film, he surrenders to her courtship and lets her in his bedroom. While going out with Immacolata, Gridelli also plans a rendezvous with a lascivious German tourist. Lo Gatto warns him against rousing Immacolata’s anger: “Attenzione, questa è gente gelosa! Sono siciliani, hanno il coltello facile!” (“Careful, this are jealous people! They are Sicilians, they are stab-happy people!”). Here, again, the film exploits both the polarities of a clichéd racio-gendered

²² *Il commissario Lo Gatto*, directed by Dino Risi (Rome: Medusa Distribuzione, 1986).

²³ The traditional songs of the *mattanza* are known as *cialomi*. The traditional *cialomi* heard in this scene are *Aiamola* and *Lina, Lina*. Cf. Elsa Guggino, “I canti della memoria”, In *La pesca del tonno in Sicilia*, ed. Vincenzo Consolo. Palermo, Sellerio, 2008, pp. 83-99. Also cf. Marcello Messina, “Identity, Dialogism and Liminality: Bakhtinian Perspectives on the *Cialomi*”. *Quadrivium, Revista Digital de Musicologia*, no. 6 (2015): 1-10.

²⁴ *Vulcano*, directed by William Dieterle (Rome: Panarìa Film, 1950).

dichotomy that, depending on the need, casts Sicilian women as sexually dominated subject and/or as undomesticated and recalcitrant creatures, “lawless, immoral, vindictive, violent and murderess”.²⁵ Taking a cue from Glória Anzaldúa, I might say that Lo Gatto’s racist fantasy projects Immacolata (and Sicilian women in general) as being the “Shadow-Beast”:

woman is carnal, animal, and closer to the undivine, she must be protected. Protected from herself.
Woman is the stranger, the other. She is man’s recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast.
The sight of her sends him into a frenzy of anger and fear.²⁶

While Lo Gatto warns Gridelli as to the criminal jealousy of Sicilians, Immacolata chops vegetables loudly with a big kitchen knife, as if putting in practice Lo Gatto’s premonition about her bloody vengeance. She then tries to follow Gridelli after he leaves, but is sonorously stopped by her sister Annunziata. In line with Anzaldúa’s Shadow-Beast, Immacolata is both a helpless doll who needs to be “protected from herself” by her elder sister, and a “nightmarish” feral creature, always on the brink of unleashing her vengeance on her adulterous lover. This same ambivalence predicts the geopolitical representation of Sicily and of the minor islands of its archipelago: they are both inhospitable lands with impervious geographies, and spaces that are not deemed capable of self-governing, and thus are constantly in need of other-directed interventions and mainland protection.

After this brief jealousy scene, which comes roughly fifteen-twenty minutes into the film, Immacolata and her sisters, as well as the rest of the locals, substantially disappear from the movie. It is high season, and entire crowds of tourists coming from all over northern Italy invade the island. Suddenly, the film focusses on spaces and bodies that are considerably different from the spaces and bodies that had been shown so far. A murder is committed in Favignana’s holiday village, and through the lens of Lo Gatto’s investigations, we are able to penetrate the parallel dimension of this shielded space, an authentic enclave of whiteness – in the form of northern Italianness and northern Europeanness – within the island. Coming from a set of different places in Northern Italy (Milan, Bolzano, Emilia Romagna, etc.), the subjects interrogated by Lo Gatto seem to all know each other very well, as if their presence there was constant or habitual, and not limited to the few days they are spending in the island, or as if they were used to interact outside the circumstance of the holiday. The quality of their interactions is also worth mentioning, as they happen almost exclusively within the premises of the holiday resort and the adjacent beaches, and are strongly based on libertine and polyamorous sexual intercourses. Taking advantage of the beach settings, these different subjects proudly exhibit their naked or semi-naked bodies, and some of them even try to seduce Lo Gatto, who appears to be absolutely mesmerized/aroused by this gratuitous display of flesh. Here these statuary bodies stand as living emblems of an ableist, body-normative whiteness that is set against the always covered and policed bodies of the three innkeeper sisters.

Set side by side with the stunning landscapes of Favignana, these white subjects seem to be there to literally reclaim their sovereignty over the island and its beaches, which emerge as *loci* of whitewashing of the local Sicilian/Arabic/Maghrebi/Mediterranean identities. For the first twenty minutes of the film, when commissioner Lo Gatto and officer Gridelli had only interacted with the locals, we were not shown a single shot of the beach. Up until the mass arrival of northern tourists, Favignana had only appeared to us through the “inland” surroundings of the town square²⁷ and of some inner rural areas. In the economy of the film, the beaches only make sense when the tourists arrive and take ownership of them; the beaches come into existence thanks to the presence of these white, semi-naked, statuary bodies. These beaches are not there

²⁵ Lara Palombo, *The racial camp and the production of the political citizen: A genealogy of contestation from Indigenous populations and diasporic women*, Ph.D. thesis (Sydney: Macquarie University, 2015), 194.

²⁶ Glória Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco CA: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), 39.

²⁷ In reality, Favignana town square is not very far from the beaches at all, but this is not evident to the audience who does not know the island.

for the racialised islanders: they exist exclusively to be enjoyed by a racially and financially privileged class of northern people.

In her important book *Australia and the Insular Imagination*, Suvendrini Perera discusses the 2005 Cronulla pogroms by revealing how the association between white bodies and beaches assisted the perverse colonial task of securing white Anglo-Celtic sovereignty over Australian land:

In print advertisements and cinematic promotions designed to attract “new Australians,” primarily from the United Kingdom, in the 1950s and 1960s (as in present-day tourist commercials), the beach is presented as the locus of the everyday pleasures constitutive of Australian life, of what it means to be Australian. A perfect correspondence is implied between the territorialized body of the beach as the figure of the nation and the imagined collectivity of the white bodies sunbathing on its sands and swimming in its waters. [...] Everyday Australianness and its racialized pleasures are constituted precisely by the exclusion of those bodies that are *not seen* in these promotional pictures.²⁸

Drawing upon the work of Isobel Crombie,²⁹ Perera goes on to suggest that these white bodies functioned to contrast the “degenerate, inbred, and diseased bodies of racial others within the nation, especially Aboriginal bodies”.³⁰ Pretty much as on the Australian shores, in the Sicilian archipelago the massive arrival of white, northern Italian tourists serves to symbolically and physically neutralize the menacing, unbearable, suspicious, hostile subjectivities of the locals. Here my transcontinental analogy between Anglo-Celtic Australia and North-centric Italy is not inappropriate nor incidental, in that Sicilians and southern Italians in general represent, here and there, a pivotal racial other, a disruption in the way of a project of racial purification initiated and sustained by both countries.³¹

One can even watch *Il commissario Lo Gatto* after *Stromboli*, and identify, *mutatis mutandis*, a broader intertextual allegory that builds up along these films. In *Stromboli*, Karin/Ingrid Bergman, who had arrived on her own on a dreadful volcanic island inhabited by “horrible” people, ended up having to remain there and conform to the local way of life; in *Il commissario Lo Gatto* boatfuls of white tourists arrive, take ownership of the island and set their own rules of social interaction, with minimal or no contact with the locals. Although the two films are set in different islands, *Il commissario Lo Gatto* redeems a settler colonial fantasy of white omnipotence that had failed in *Stromboli*.

Released in 1997, trash film *Panarea* by Pipolo³² takes this same mechanism “to the next level”: the film literally starts when the boatful of tourists arrives on the shores of the Aeolian island of Panarea, and ends when the holiday is over and the boat leaves. If in *Il commissario Lo Gatto*, the arrival of the tourists dramatically reshapes life in Favignana, in *Panarea* we are shown no local life prior to the landing of this crowd of partying youngsters. Once these people arrive, the locals also come into existence in their roles of gregarious servants, innkeepers, cab drivers, boat skippers, etc. In the film, the island of Panarea seems to exist only to host the tourists, and is then wiped out from filmic existence once they are done with it. Here again, we are in presence of semi-naked white bodies that interact lasciviously while populating beaches and pools, and thus marking their unresolvable difference with the locals and their unquestionable sovereignty over the island. Sicilians in *Panarea* often appear as mere living supplements to the general scene. Emblematically, in the film a group of people who play cards on a narrow walkway stand up and move to the side, with their table and cards, every time the action – in the form of a speedy mini cab or of a load of rolling watermelons – crosses their path. Once the action has occurred, they get back to their seats and their card

²⁸ Suvendrini Perera, *Australia and the insular imagination: Beaches, borders, boats, and bodies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, p. 145.

²⁹ Isobel Crombie. *Body culture: Max Dupain, photography and Australian culture, 1919-1939*. Mulgrave: Peleus Press, 2004.

³⁰ Perera, *Australia and the insular imagination*, p. 146.

³¹ Cf. Joseph Pugliese, “Race as Category Crisis: Whiteness and the Topical Assignment of Race”, *Social Semiotics* 12, no. 2 (2002): 149 - 168

³² *Panarea*, directed by Pipolo (Rome: Clemi Cinematografica, 1997).

game – they are not even gregarious characters, they are literally part of the physical scenario of the film, the same as a tree or as a car.

A few, more prominent indigenous characters play roles that involve more than just the provision of local flavour and colour to the island of Panarea: again, a prudish innkeeper (Guia Jelo) who bans any promiscuity between girls and boys in her resort; and Antonio, who works as a servant in the rich mansion of the Bedoni family. Mr. Bedoni, a wealthy entrepreneur with a distinguishable Milanese accent, calls Antonio “Schiavo sudista” (“Southern slave”) and “Africa”. Here the signifier “Africa” associated with the reference to slavery exposes the violent desire of colonial possession that inscribes the perverse, univocal relationship between the landlord and his servant. Violently demarcated by representations of race and class, the “Southern slave” lies at the bottom of a “geopolitical fault line that split the peninsula and its islands along a black/white axis”.³³ Once the wealthy landlord and the landlady are gone, Antonio remains in the villa with Giorgio, son of the Bedonis. Unconcerned with the conservation of the Bedonis’ wealth, Antonio convinces Giorgio to hold a promiscuous and lascivious party at the villa. In this way, Giorgio overcomes his shyness and has his first sexual experience with a woman. Here Antonio’s function is akin to that of the “Magical Negro” in Hollywood movies:³⁴ he only serves to help the white male protagonist achieve his goals, which in turn are often imbued with gendered, patriarchal, racialized desires.

A BIGGER SPLASH

The film *A Bigger Splash*³⁵ is set in the island of Pantelleria, and extends the contrast between white sovereign subjects and local gregarious characters by adding into the (in)equation the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers coming from North Africa, who are being detained in the island. For the rich and famous British, Belgian and North-American protagonists, Pantelleria signifies as a momentary haven away from the hectic routine of their glamorous lives. Famous rock star Marianne Lane (Tilda Swinton), her current partner Paul, her ex-partner, music producer Harry (Ralph Fiennes), and Harry’s daughter Pen constitute the core of the drama with their little tensions, flashbacks, role-plays and psychodramas, consumed mainly at the poolside of their mansion. The locals, again, function as an ideal background to the emotional action of the film. They are not necessarily the same “horrible” people depicted in *Stromboli*, although they still organize their weird village festivals where “music – horrible, dancing – horrible, food – horrible: you can’t stay away!” In the film, the suspicious-looking, menacing Sicilians are now replaced by more domesticated people, whose alterity, however, is still unresolvable. Social interaction with them is not unbearable anymore, and this allows the protagonists to penetrate their spaces, go to the village festivals, crush in local a karaoke bar, etc., with no fear of confrontation or contamination. Still, these subjects are so distant in terms of class, race, culture, from the desirable lives of the protagonists, that social interaction with them does not require any particular effort or etiquette, as the opinion of these people does not matter at all: “find something we’d be embarrassed to sing anywhere else”. A housemaid (Elena Bucci) and a police commissioner (Corrado Guzzanti) are the two local characters that get to interact a bit more in the film – still, their roles are constructed on the very basis of the linguistic incommunicability with the protagonists.

In the minds of the protagonists, the island of Pantelleria is apparently “too hot for white people”. The whiteness card, as a professedly omnipotent *laissez-passer* that secures a privileged status over the island and the islanders, awaits another, scarier, more monstrous, more unassimilable geopolitical subject to be played against: “Some are on the island now, hiding. Last year, one of the boats was spotted and the smugglers just threw everybody overboard and tried to flee, whilst the coastguards did the rescues.” At first narrated as ghostly presences, “racial phantasmata” populating “the tacit knowledges that antedate the

³³ Joseph Pugliese, “Whiteness and the Blackening of Italy: La guerra cafona, extracomunitari and provisional street justice,” *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 5, no. 2 (2008): 3.

³⁴ Cf. Cerise L. Glenn and Landra J. Cunningham. “Black magic: The magical Negro and White salvation in film”, *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 2 (2009): 135-152.

³⁵ *A Bigger Splash*, directed by Luca Guadagnino (Los Angeles CA: Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2016).

actual process of catching sight of somebody in the field of vision”,³⁶ the hiding refugees materialise about an hour into the film, engaging in a quasi-silent face to face with the protagonists Paul and Pen, and perturbing for a moment their idyllic walk in the fields. Towards the end of the film, we then see some refugees near the local police station, literally locked up in an open-air cage. We then overhear stories about people drowned in the sea, and we are told about the dramatic situation in Lampedusa. The deaths, drownings, sufferings and incarcerations that we witness in the background of the film clash with the much more frivolous concerns that characterise the main plot. In considering Lampedusa, Pugliese notes that

the ‘epoch of simultaneity’ articulates the possibility of temporally juxtaposing two absolutely dichotomous figures – the wealthy tourist from the Global North and the utterly disenfranchised refugee from the Global South – within the same geographical space³⁷

In *A Bigger Splash*, this juxtaposition is undeniably met with indifference by the protagonists. Reviewers of the film are in disagreement as to whether the film condemns or endorses this indifference. David Sims of *The Atlantic* argues that the film’s shift “into more nakedly political territory” is to be intended as a “chilly reminder of the heavy investment viewers have in the splashy lives of the rich, and our disinterest in the opposite”.³⁸ Similarly, on *AnOther Magazine*, Carmen Gray suggests that the film urges the spectator to ask themselves how much can “these privileged luxury vacationers [...] get away with”, while the refugees are criminalized and seen as threats.³⁹ I am not convinced by these reviews: I contend that the indifference of the protagonists is endorsed by the film, that quickly and repeatedly draws the audience away from the refugees to focus back on the poolside dramas of the protagonists. In this sense, I agree with the critique issued by Nigel Andrews, who wrote on the *Financial Times* that

the European migrant crisis is deployed as offstage sound effect, a *marginalium* to the turmoil — much more important or self-important — of the main characters: four Narcissi gazing into the piscines of their souls with all the intent and caring profundity they fail to inspire in us.⁴⁰

After all, this superficial and instrumental usage of the refugees and of their tragedies is confirmed by a preview article published by *The Guardian* on the occasion of the film’s world premiere at the Venice Film Festival 2015. The article offers first-hand views on the film from the director Luca Guadagnino and of the actress protagonist Tilda Swinton:

A Bigger Splash, which Guadagnino said was named after the David Hockney painting that “helped me understand art”, also touches on the refugee crisis currently gripping Europe, with shots of a just-visible Tunisia on the horizon some 60km away, and the presence on the island of refugees a reminder that Italy has been at the frontline of the crisis for some years. Guadagnino said that Pantelleria was “a sort of border place” and that bringing the refugees into his story was a way of forcing his characters to “confront reality” and “understand who they really are”. To considerable applause, Swinton asked reporters: “Can we get out of the habit calling people in this situation migrants; they are war refugees.”⁴¹

³⁶ Joseph Pugliese. “Compulsory visibility and the infralegality of racial phantasmata.” *Social Semiotics* 19, no. 1 (2009): 9-30 (26).

³⁷ Joseph Pugliese, “Crisis Heterotopias and Border Zones of the Dead”. *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 23, no. 5 (2009): 663-679 (664).

³⁸ David Sims, “A Bigger Splash: A Dark, Sensuous Romantic Drama”, *The Atlantic*, 6 May 2016, <https://bit.ly/2LYQaeG> (Accessed 28 July 2018).

³⁹ Carmen Gray, “A Deeper Dive Into A Bigger Splash”. *AnOther Magazine*, 10 September 2015, <https://bit.ly/1iztOwa> (Accessed 28 July 2018).

⁴⁰ Nigel Andrews, “A Bigger Splash – film review: ‘High-toned hokum’”. *Financial Times*, 11 February 2016, <https://goo.gl/vQR2FH> (Accessed 28 July 2018).

⁴¹ Andrew Pulver, “Tilda Swinton: my Bigger Splash character doesn't speak because I had nothing to say”, *The Guardian*, 6 September 2015, <https://bit.ly/2v5d7GG> (Accessed 28 July 2018).

Condensed in this short passage, I recognize all the trappings of a decadent imagery engaged in the preservation of an entrenched white privilege. Guadagnino identifies the universal category of “art” with a painting that, regardless of Hockney’s intentions, is permeated by bourgeois indulgence and white asepsis.⁴² He then shamelessly admits that the refugees shown in the film function primarily to trigger a cathartic shift in the conscience of the privileged protagonists: as if these disenfranchised, oppressed, incarcerated, multiply deported, tortured, raped and drowned people had no existence outside of the frivolous, decadent, self-pitying and egotistic psychodramas of the protagonists; as if it was ethically acceptable to parasitize their sufferings and their hopes in order to foster the self-celebrating exposures and nurture the already hypertrophic egos of white celebrities. To top all of this off, we get to the final comment by Tilda Swinton, the spoiled celebrity who plays the role of the spoiled celebrity and, from the moral highness of her superhuman quintessence, pretends to right all the world’s wrongs by correcting the language of the journalists, and gets even cheered for it. Regardless of its general validity, Swinton’s terminological rectification appears as a hypocritical, empty exercise in political correctness, considering the violence that her film gratuitously exerts on the same refugees she pretends to be protecting. From the glamorous premises of the Venice Film Festival, Swinton plays the white saviour who arrogates the right to speak on behalf of the racialised people from that “sort of border place” (as in Guadagnino’s above words) where she has been at one point to act in a film – in doing that, as Katherine Bell would put it, she “generates a cultural authority that recentres whiteness, and in turn burnishes the celebrity brand”.⁴³

Back to the film, a chain of events that happens to the protagonists roughly after the first hour of the film – heralded, perhaps, by Paul and Pen’s “uncanny” encounter with the hiding refugees – raises the tension of the film slightly above the frivolous fusses that characterised the first hour. Paul and Pen arrive at a lake at the end of their walk, and have sex there. Harry, who is now alone with his ex-partner Marianne, tries to have sex with her – despite her not being fully consentient –, and then, before desisting, abundantly crosses the border between consensual intercourse and rape. After the four protagonists reunite for dinner, late at night Paul and Harry have a jealousy fight in the pool: accidentally, Paul kills Harry by drowning him. Interrogated by the police, Marianne is reticent about Paul’s guiltiness, despite being aware of it.

Here I need to stop and interrogate myself as a member of the audience. Even as a Sicilian, I am not immune from the virulent criminalization of Sicilians of which the narratives I am regularly exposed to are replete. In view of this, had Harry been Sicilian, would I be assessing the sexual violence he commits against Marianne in different terms? Would I not be immediately thinking about stereotyped images of hyper-masculine, monstrous Sicilian rapists? What if the rapist was one of the refugees? Am I likely to assess the violent beating to which Antonio subjects Karin in *Stromboli* and Harry’s rape of Marianne in *A Bigger Splash* as being on the same level of despicableness? What if Paul was a Sicilian or a refugee? Would I still sympathise with him and trust the accidentality of the murder? Would I not think about something on the lines of *Il commissario Lo Gatto’s* remarks on the “jealous”, “stab-happy” Sicilians one has to be wary of? How would I assess Marianne’s refusal to incriminate her partner Paul, had she been a Sicilian woman? Would I possibly manage to not contemplate the signifier *omertà* in assessing her behaviour? I believe the answers to each of these questions are unfortunately too obvious – both for me and for any other spectator worldwide – to be discussed.

In fact, one of the things that *A Bigger Splash* does is crystallising the already perceived entitlement to impunity that distinguishes these white and rich characters. During the police interrogation, the Commissioner briefly touches upon the dramatic situation with the several drownings in the sea, and Marianne cynically tries to inculcate the refugees:

⁴² For a very brief note on Hockney’s fascination with whiteness, cf. David Greven, “The dark side of blondeness: *Vertigo* and race”, *Screen* 59, no. 1 (2018): 59-79 (64).

⁴³ Katherine M. Bell, “Raising Africa?: Celebrity and the Rhetoric of the White Saviour”. *PORTAL Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies* 10, no. 1 (2013): 2.

[Commissioner]: “Sono altri gli annegamenti di cui mi debbo occupare”. [Interpreter] “He must take care of other drownings”. [Commissioner]: “Solo ieri ne sono morti sette in mare”. [Interpreter]: “Yesterday, seven immigrants died in the sea”. [...] [Marianne]: “when did you find them?” [...] [Commissioner]: “dodici, arsira, e sette, mischini, affogati a mare”. [Interpreter]: “Twelve, yesterday, and seven drowned in the sea” [Marianne]: There is a path... at the house... it comes up by the pool... you saw it... anybody could... come up there... when Mr. Hawkes was swimming and... we would never have heard them. [interpreter]: Sta pensando agli extracomunitari (“She’s thinking of the immigrants”) [Commissioner]: “E noi ce lo chiediamo, picché nno?” [Interpreter]: “He will ask them” [Commissioner]: “Ce lo chiediamo pure a loro. Tanto, offenderli piú di quanto non siano già offesi, non è che possiamo” [Interpreter]: “They cannot be offended more than they already are”. [Commissioner]: “Mischini” (“poor things”).

The disgraceful scapegoating of the refugees to which Marianne (and the film, with her) resorts in order to escape her difficult situation is to be read in terms of the aforementioned parasitic relationship that regulates the white-centred exploitation of these tragedies, operated both in the film, as in what I call “diegetic violence”, and by the film, as in what I call “non-diegetic violence.”⁴⁴

Diegetic and non-diegetic violence also concur in offering, as abundantly pointed out by various commentators, a “portrayal of the Italian police [that] is flippant”.⁴⁵ The Sicilian police commissioner interpreted by Roman actor Corrado Guzzanti, in fact, astonishingly decides to give up his investigations in exchange for an autograph from Marianne. As declared by the film’s screenwriter David Kajganich:

You have this police detective who probably has everything he needs to arrest all of them, but he also might understand that what happened wasn’t intentional. And in addition to that, the woman at the center of this is a woman he’s been fetishizing his entire life. This rock star. [Marianne] realizes that there can be a transaction here. “I can maybe sign an autograph and maybe this goes away.”⁴⁶

Again, here I urgently need to argue that Guzzanti is not necessarily impersonating the prototype of the Italian police officer here. A Roman comedian who abundantly impersonates southern Italian and Sicilian characters in his sketches, often endowing them with dishonest and immoral subjectivities, Guzzanti is here building his character around the trite stereotype of the southern European public servant, “wedded to interminable public procedure which will be set aside only if you know him personally or pay him if you do not”.⁴⁷ Transposed to the Italian national space, the southern European public servant becomes southern Italian. As if acting in a minstrel show,⁴⁸ Guzzanti stereotypes Sicilians and Sicilian police officers, appropriates their language and accent, assigns bad consciences and dodgy professional behaviours to them.

After all, Guzzanti’s “blackfacing” of Sicilians is not an isolated occurrence in these films. The movies analysed in this chapter are literally replete of non-Sicilian actors that play Sicilians, usually embodying the worst stereotypes that are nationally and internationally associated to the islanders. Antonio, Karin’s violent husband in *Stromboli*, was actually interpreted by Mario Vitale, a non-professional actor from Salerno. The three priggish innkeeper sisters from *Il commissario Lo Gatto* were interpreted, respectively, by Renata Attivissimo, from Basilicata, Nicoletta Boris, from Tuscany, and Antonella Voce, from Rome. In the same film, the aristocratic womanizer, baron Fricò, was interpreted by Tuscan actor Galeazzo Benti. In *A Bigger Splash*, the actress Elena Bucci, who interprets the housemaid, is from Ravenna. These actors, and those who put them in these roles, appropriate and humiliate Sicilian identity in order to please national and international

⁴⁴ Cf. Messina, “The demonization of the South”, 196-201.

⁴⁵ Dave Calhoun, “Ralph Fiennes steals the latest melodrama from Tilda Swinton and ‘I Am Love’ director Luca Guadagnino”. *Time Out*, 9 September 2015, <https://goo.gl/ZHXkhY> (Accessed 29 July 2018).

⁴⁶ Meghan Gilligan, “Ask the Screenwriter: David Kajganich on ‘A Bigger Splash’”. *ScreenPrism*, 4 May 2016, <https://bit.ly/27BfXzu> (Accessed 31 July 2018)

⁴⁷ Tim Bale, *European Politics: A comparative introduction*, 4th Edition, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, 81.

⁴⁸ On minstrel shows and blackfacing, and on their present-day equivalents beyond the representations of Black Americans, cf. Jack Harbord, *Representations of Blackface and Minstrelsy in Twenty-First Century Popular Culture*, Ph.D. thesis (Salford: University of Salford, 2015).

audiences. Taking a cue from Frederick Douglass's 19th century condemnation of minstrel shows, I can say that these mock-Sicilian characters dress as they think we dress, talk as they think we talk, behave as they think we behave, in order "to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens".⁴⁹

Conclusions: UNASSIMILABILITY AND DELINKING

A renowned passage from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* explains how the young Antilleans think they are white. They identify "with the explorer, the bringer of civilization, the white man who carries truth to savages—an all-white truth".⁵⁰ This confidence in their own whiteness lasts up to the point when they go to Europe, and understand they are seen as black.⁵¹ They then immediately feel that "in the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality".⁵² They therefore start feeling immoral and ashamed.

Part of what I have tried to show in this chapter is that this, in different terms and with different degrees of criticality, happens with Sicilians, too. Sicilians are not less exposed than anybody else to films like *L'avventura*, *Panarea* or *The Bigger Splash* – still, when we Sicilians watch these films, we need to come to terms with the fact that we live in an "ambiguity that is extraordinarily neurotic".⁵³ We are in fact expected to identify with the white heroes while at the same time our subjectivities, costumes and lands are the object of toxic representations and unjustifiable appropriations.

In this sense, the entrenched colonial imagery, thoroughly imbricated with discourses of race and whiteness, that permeates these films should function to trigger, for us, an enlightening epiphany in terms of recognizing the narratives of unresolvable otherness and racial anomaly that mark our bodies, and that go hand in hand with the continuous and specular attempts to efface these same racialised demarcations and co-opt us in a global project that has to do with such impalpable notions as "the West" and "Europe".⁵⁴ These same narratives, we should acknowledge, also cast our lands as both inhospitable hells and paradisiac *terrae nullius*, reiteratively effacing our self-determined, sovereign presence on them.

As seen above, these settler colonial fantasies are often introduced by a meaningful landing moment, that articulates the unresolvable difference with the often unwelcoming, recalcitrant locals, and that, in the very act of displaying this recalcitrance, announces the very project of its domestication.⁵⁵ Now, the white gaze that inescapably characterises these landings should be reverted, and looked through the prism of our own gaze, as a Fanonian "first encounter" that should incommode us "with the whole weight of [our] blackness".⁵⁶ By elaborating the racial unassimilability and the desires of domestication that mark the ways our bodies and lands are signified worldwide, we can set the premises for our self-determination, not necessarily as a project of political separation, but rather in terms of autonomous assertion and representation. In the language of decolonial thought, this is what Walter Mignolo calls "engaging in epistemic disobedience and de-linking from

⁴⁹ Frederick Douglass, "Hutchinson vs. Minstrels". *North Star*, 27 October 1848. <http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/minstrel/miar03bt.html> (Accessed 29 July 2018). Also cited in Eric Lott, "The Seeming Counterfeit": Racial Politics and Early Blackface Minstrelsy". *American Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1991): 223-254 (223).

⁵⁰ Frantz Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks*. (Sidmouth: Pluto Press, 2008), 114.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 114.

⁵² *Ibidem*, 149.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, 148.

⁵⁴ Cf. Stuart Hall. "The West and the Rest: Discourse and power". In: *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (Malden, MA : Blackwell, 1996): 184-227. Cf. also Marcello Messina and Teresa Di Somma. "Ocidente." In *Uwa'kürü: Dicionário Analítico*, vol. 2, eds. Gerson Rodrigues de Albuquerque and Agenor Sarraf Pacheco (Rio Branco: Nepan Editora, 2017): 272-286.

⁵⁵ Cf. Bhabha's concept of "mimicry" in Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse." *October* 28 (1984): 125-133.

⁵⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 116.

the magic of the Western idea of modernity, ideals of humanity and promises of economic growth and financial prosperity".⁵⁷

The urgency of such undertaking is metaphorically embedded in Corrado Guzzanti's performance of the police commissioner in *A Bigger Splash*. Fascinated by the remote promise of participating – even tangentially, indirectly, from the outside – in the bliss of privileged, Eurocentric whiteness, we literally trade the respect and solidarity we owe to the people who seek asylum and refuge in our lands (and even die trying), in exchange for a mere celebrity autograph. Film metaphors aside, we are co-opted by whiteness to think and act as if their wars against their big "Others" were also our wars. We are flattered by the (chronically unattended) promise of being assimilated (or only just approximated) to Europeaness, and in return we docilely play the game of protecting Europe's (and, reiteratively, "the West's") imaginary borders.⁵⁸ In this game, it needs to be said, their imaginary borders are our lands. We then accept to turn our very islands into "sort[s] of border place[s]" (to appropriate again Guadagnino's words)⁵⁹ and witness drownings, deaths and incarcerations, only to then spare a (crocodile) tear or two for these sufferings: "Mischini!" ("Poor things!"), as the police commissioner interpreted by Guzzanti says in the film.

Unassimilability it shall be, and proudly. We should "no longer [be] claiming *recognition by or inclusion in*"⁶⁰ the white-centred projects of Europe and "the West". We may not be the "horrible" people portrayed in *Stromboli*, but we could still find useful to appropriate the angry faces and the resentful tirades of the locals in *Vulcano* and *Il commissario Lo Gatto*. In these films, such subjects may stand as local racial debris, recalcitrant to the "bringer[s] of civilization" who "carr[y] the truth"⁶¹ to them. For us though, they might just be local people who stand with their bodies and defiant agencies in the way of sneaky projects of colonial appropriation. Watch out Italians, Europeans, North-Americans, as we might even be mad at you: "Cchi mminchia viniti a fari a Favignana?" ("What the fuck are you coming in Favignana for?").⁶²

⁵⁷ Walter D. Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom", *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, no. 7–8 (2009): 1–23 (3).

⁵⁸ Cf. Jordi Reig Bravo. "Espais de convivència a la Mediterrània", *Quadrivium: Revista digital de musicologia*, no. 6 (2015): 1–12, (9). Also cf. Messina and Di Somma, "Occidente".

⁵⁹ Pulver, "Tilda Swinton".

⁶⁰ Mignolo, "Epistemic Disobedience", 3. Original emphasis.

⁶¹ Fanon, *Black Skin*, 114.

⁶² From *Il commissario Lo Gatto*, cit.

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