

Book of Abstracts

Workshop 'Postcolonial/Decolonial Italy: interventions, alliances and contestations'

(19 January 2024 13-18.30 pm)

Valentina Amenta (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Title

Queer South: Exploring the Intersections of Queerness and Southernness in Italy through a Postcolonial and Decolonial Perspective

(language presentation: Italian)

Abstract

The concept of Southern Queer represents a new political, theoretical, and methodological perspective that challenges the colonial and cis-heteropatriarchal world-system, highlighting the intersections between queerness and southernness. This integrated approach employs a postcolonial and decolonial lens to examine the Italian South, and manages to shed light on both queerness and critical thinking about the South. Southern Queer not only presents a methodological and theoretical framework but also endeavors to organize the political impulses that have surfaced in diverse political, social, and cultural spheres in recent years, that are engage in a shared reflection on the Southern Question through a decolonial, postcolonial, and gender perspective.

This presentation aims to offer a concise overview of Southern Queer, exploring its meanings, reviewing the current state of studies, and outlining the political, social and cultural entities that have emerged in recent years in Italy. The objective is to stimulate reflection on the epistemology of Southern queerness and feminism, asserting its right to recognition as an autonomous political subjectivity in the international landscape of gender, queer, postcolonial, and decolonial studies.

Bio

Valentina Amenta graduated in Classical Literature at La Sapienza University and specialized in Modern, Comparative, and Postcolonial Literatures, as well as Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Bologna and Granada. Currently, she is a doctoral candidate in Historical-Literary and Gender Studies at La Sapienza University. Her research focuses on Southern queer feminist practices and theories, examining the "Southern Question" through a decolonial, postcolonial, and queer lens. Her broader research interests include Gender Studies, Queer Theory, Postcolonial Studies, Border Critical Thinking, Contemporary Italian Literature, Comparative Literature and Memory Studies.

She recently published an article on Maria Occhipinti (2023, ETS) and has an upcoming work exploring Giovanna Vivinetto's poetry (2024, Ledizioni). She won the "Liana Borghi Award" (2023) research grant from the ETS publishing house with an editorial project on Southern Queerness.

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Dr. Giulia Fabbri (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Titolo

Ripensare la “crisi” ambientale. Prospettive post/decoloniali e intersezionali sull’Antropocene
(language presentation: Italian)

Abstract

Between 2000 and 2002 the term and concept of the Anthropocene was formulated and officially proposed in hard sciences by the two scientists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, and it denotes a new geological era in which human activities modify planetary processes. In the last ten years the Anthropocene concept has also been widely adopted in the humanities, and currently it constitutes a working term not only in the academic context but also in mainstream media and popular culture that allow to analyze the connection between environmental devastation and current social and cultural changes. Nevertheless, this concept has also been widely criticized, since it is often used as a universalizing term that merges all of humanity into a single, homogeneous *Anthropos*, without recognizing substantial differences in terms of historical responsibilities and power imbalances among social groups and countries. In this paper, I explore how this concept can be rearticulated through a post/decolonial and intersectional approach and the potential lines of inquiry that such an approach offers. In the analysis of climate change it is essential to consider the differential impact it has on different social categories and the close interdependence between ecological crisis and social inequalities based on different factors (gender, race/ethnicity, class, species, etc.). In this contribution I analyze how a post/decolonial approach to the Anthropocene allows considering the historical and scientific dimension of environmental change while, at the same time, taking into account issues of inequality, environmental racism, and (neo)colonialism. I also investigate how this theoretical and methodological framework can be applied to the Italian context and what specificities such an operation highlights.

Bio

Giulia Fabbri is a Be-For-ERC Postdoctoral Fellow at Sapienza University of Rome, where she completed a Ph.D. in gender studies in 2020. She is the author of *Sguardi (post)coloniali. Razza, genere e politiche della visualità* (ombre corte 2021), she co-edited with Caterina Romeo *Intersectional Italy*, Special Issue of the Journal of Postcolonial Writing, and she published articles in Italian and international journals. Currently she is conducting the research project “A gender-based analysis of Italian climate fiction. Representations of climate change and undesirable futures in contemporary women’s writing”. Her research is positioned within the fields of gender studies, postcolonial studies, critical race theory, environmental humanities, ecocriticism, and critical animal studies and her interests include gender and racial representations in the Italian colonial and postcolonial context, the cultural productions of Italian women of African descent, and the cultural and social dimensions of the Anthropocene.

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Serena Fiorletta (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Titolo

Agire la prospettiva postcoloniale. Il femminismo transnazionale e le Conferenze mondiali delle donne (language presentation: Italian)

Abstract

Partendo dalla mia ricerca di dottorato vorrei esplorare la complessità della ricezione di una prospettiva postcoloniale e decoloniale da parte del femminismo italiano, sia nell'attivismo che nella produzione teorica, in particolare in relazione agli anni di emersione degli studi postcoloniali. Prendendo come spunto il femminismo transnazionale, come luogo fisico e simbolico di incontro globale, vorrei soffermarmi sugli anni Ottanta come momento centrale per l'emersione di una prospettiva femminista postcoloniale agita prima della sua effettiva sistematizzazione. Quando parliamo di femminismo transnazionale non possiamo non fare riferimento alle Conferenze sulle Donne, organizzate dalle Nazioni Unite tra il 1975 e il 1995, nonché alla forma organizzativa che prese l'attivismo in questo contesto, ovvero quello delle reti femministe transnazionali, animate soprattutto dalle donne del Sud Globale. Queste ultime portarono e agirono una incarnata instersezionalità, nonché uno sguardo e un'analisi che possiamo attualmente definire postcoloniale, nel dibattito interno al femminismo internazionale e presso le Nazioni Unite. Ritengo che il reale momento di svolta in tal senso sia stata la Conferenza delle donne di Nairobi, nel 1985, che verrà letta e analizzata come un momento fondante per il femminismo transnazionale.

Se ancora oggi questa complessità fa parte del contesto femminista e, nonostante siano state colte le possibilità e le sfide del postcolonialismo e/o della decolonialità come sguardo per leggere e comprendere le dinamiche contemporanee, si fece fatica all'epoca e forse si fa fatica ancora oggi, ad abbandonare uno sguardo prettamente nazionale e avere una prospettiva più ampia che si faccia davvero globale e quindi capace di misurarsi concretamente con le sfide di una effettiva decolonizzazione dello sguardo, delle teorie e delle pratiche.

Bio

Serena Fiorletta, antropologa culturale, è attualmente dottoranda in Scienze sociali ed economiche presso Sapienza Università di Roma. Suoi interessi e aree di ricerca sono i femminismi transnazionali, postcoloniali e decoloniali, i diritti e le politiche internazionali delle donne, la globalizzazione; si è inoltre occupata di colonialismo italiano e politiche del patrimonio. È parte del comitato direttivo e docente del Master in Studi e Politiche di Genere dell'Università Roma Tre.

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Dr. Giulia Grechi (Accademia di Belle Arti di Napoli)

Title

The skeletons in the closet, and in display cases. Haunted museums and decolonial "exhibition"

(language presentation: English)

Abstract

'How to heal the colonial wound? - Kill the museum! - declared Alpha Konarè" (Deliss, 2018, p. 117).

The museum, a historical institution rooted in the European tradition, born in the midst of the colonial era to fulfill the imagination of the nascent nations, constructs its object through the all-but-innocent act of exhibiting: a process founded on the we-other, mind-body oppositions that structure all of our modernity, and that crystallizes racializing and racist imaginaries into a set of norms and knowledge that are naturalized and/or presented as scientific. This epistemological structure shapes not only ethnographic museums (which also deal with objects stolen or acquired within colonial relations), but the museum in general, declining in specific forms depending on the type of museum. How do contemporary museums deal with this difficult and violent legacy today? How to reverse the sign of a violent and colonial appropriation, in forms of de-mystification, de-canonisation, re-appropriation, re-mediation, re-signification, reparation? How to give body to colonial ghosts, making visible what has been repressed, erased, invisibilised in the ordered space of the museum? Is it possible to heal the colonial wound in a museum?

Bio

PhD in Theory and Social Research (La Sapienza University of Rome), I am interested in cultural and post-/de-colonial studies, museology, with a focus on the cultural legacies of colonialism and contemporary artistic practices that re-discuss and re-mediate these imaginaries. I am Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Anthropology of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Naples. I co-curate the online journal *roots&routes* (with A. C. Cimoli and V. Gravano) and the Routes Agency association, recently merged into *Attitudes_space to the arts*. I have participated in European and international projects, including: *Transnationalizing Modern Languages. Mobility, Identity and Translation in Modern Italian Cultures*, in which I curated (with V. Gravano) the exhibition *Beyond Borders - Transnational Italy*, (2016-2018 Rome, London, New York, Melbourne, Addis Ababa, Tunis); *Transcultural Attentiveness*, a project of the Goethe-Institut in Rome, curated with V. Gravano in collaboration with the Museum of Civilisations and AMM - Archivio Memorie Migranti (artist residencies, exhibition, podcast, educational workshops).

Publications: *Decolonizzare il museo. Mostrazioni, pratiche artistiche, sguardi incarnati* (Mimesis, 2021), *La rappresentazione incorporata. Una etnografia del corpo tra stereotipi coloniali e arte contemporanea* (Mimesis 2016), *The Ruined Archive* (with I. Chambers e M. Nash, Politecnico di Milano 2014), *Presente Imperfetto. Eredità coloniali e immaginari razziali contemporanei* (with V. Gravano, Mimesis 2016).

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Prof. Miguel Angel Mellino (Università di Napoli L'Orientale)

Title

What do we do with all we know? Notes on the removal of the national colonial removal
(language presentation: English)

Abstract

Nowadays our relationship with colonialism, and with Italy's colonial past, it is not like that of thirty years ago. Starting from this point of view allows us to reflect in a more specific way, even more creative or experimental, about the relationship we have today with the colonial experience. It seems to me necessary to break with a certain common sense, on the relationship between the present and the colonial past, conveyed by the public-academic discourse. Our approach to colonialism is driven by concepts that we did not have thirty years ago, and that were not in current use in the national socio-historical scenario. I argue in my intervention that thanks to studies and research of the last 20 years on Italy's colonial past, nowadays it is no longer possible to speak of colonial removal. The absence of a critical reflection on Italy's colonial past in a large part of institutional and knowledge production then is not due to what Angelo del Boca called 'colonial removal', but to a conscious political choice. We already know all we need to know about the Italian colonial experience, the question becomes what to do with it. What to do with all that we know about the Italian colonial experience?

Bio

Miguel Mellino is Associate Professor on "Postcolonial Studies and Interethnic Relationships" at the University of Naples "L'Orientale". His field of research is on migration, racism and antiracism. He is the author *Marx nei Margini. Dal marxismo nero al femminismo postcoloniale* (Alegre 2020, with Andrea R. Pomella), *Governare la crisi dei rifugiati* (Deriveapprodi 2019, translated into Spanish); *Stuart Hall: Cultura, razza e potere* (ombre corte 2015), *Cittadinanze Postcoloniali. Appartenenze, razza e razzismo in Italia e in Europa* (Carocci 2012), *La Critica Postcoloniale. Decolonizzazione, capitalismo e Cosmopolitismo nei Postcolonial Studies* (2005, translated into Spanish *La Critica poscolonial. Descolonizacion, capitalismo y cosmopolitismo en los estudios poscoloniales*, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 2008), *La Cultura e il Potere. Conversazione sui Cultural Studies* (2006, with Stuart Hall, translated into Spanish *La cultura y el poder*, Buenos Aires, Amorrortu, 2010), *Post-Orientalismo. Said e gli studi postcoloniali* (2009). He is the editor of the Italian translations of Frantz Fanon's *Ecrit Politiques, Pour la Révolution Africaine* (2006) and *L'an V de la révolution algérienne* (2006), Aimé Césaire's *Discours sur le colonialisme* (2010) and Cedric Robinson's *Black Marxism. The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (2023).

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Dr. Angelica Pesarini (University of Toronto)

Title

Future in the Past. Critical Fabulation and Counter-stories of resistance

(language presentation: English)

Abstract

The idea of the Archive and its connection with power and knowledge has been widely theorized. Intended as a metaphysical location, historically, the Archive has been dominated by normative whiteness embodied by the agents of the colonial authority who had the power to decide what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. In an attempt to respond to the limits of official archives and incomplete historical records, Saidiya Hartman has proposed the idea of “critical fabulation”, namely the use of creative storytelling and semi nonfictional narration as a means of redressing history’s omissions and bringing silenced voices to the fore. In this intervention I expand on critical fabulation and imagination by focusing on the anthology “Future. Il Domani raccontato dalle voci di oggi”, the first anthology written by a group of Italian women of African descent. I argue that critical fabulation and imagination can be seen as acts of resistance able to challenge and subvert the “fantastic hegemonic imagination”. By reading colonial sources against the grain and focusing on the gaps, the unwritten and the untold, we can excavate counter-stories of resistance able to counteract the official sources and to unveil hidden dynamics of power embedded in ideas of knowledge rooted in colonial paradigms.

Bio

Angelica Pesarini is an Assistant Professor in Race and Cultural Studies/Race and Diaspora and Italian Studies at the University of Toronto. After obtaining a PhD in Sociology and Gender Studies at the University of Leeds, she worked at Lancaster University and at NYU Florence, where she designed and taught the course "Black Italia". Her work focuses on dynamics of race, gender, identity, and citizenship in colonial and (post)colonial Italy. On this topic, she is currently writing a monograph on the lived experience of Black "mixed race" Italian women born during Italian colonialism in East Africa, and the use of oral sources as forms of counter-narratives. She is interested in the racialization of the political discourse on immigration in Europe, and with The Black Mediterranean Collective, of which she is a founding member, she co-edited "The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders, and Citizenship" (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021). Angelica is among the authors of "Future. Il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi" (Future. Tomorrow narrated by today's voices, 2019), the first anthology written by eleven Italian women of African descent. She is also involved in projects of decolonial translation and, in this regard, she co-translated into Italian "Undercommons. Fugitive Planning and Black Study" (Moten and Harney), and "Blues Legacies and Black feminism" by Angela Y. Davis. As a scholar activist, she is engaged in the Italian anti-racist movement and collaborates with grass-roots organizations focusing on social justice and human rights.

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Prof. Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz (Università degli Studi Roma Tre)

Titolo

Saperi femministi decoloniali: genealogie, sfide e possibilità nel contesto italiano
(language presentation: Italian)

Abstract

Il termine decoloniale, benché con un certo *décalage* temporale, si è diffuso anche nella società e nelle università italiane. Come hanno segnalato Bolla (2019) e Falquet (2022) la circolazione della nozione di decolonizzazione è all'insegna di un salto geopolitico che inverte la tradizionale direzione che va dal centro del potere economico e intellettuale verso le periferie, producendo così cambiamenti, ma attivando anche meccanismi di cooptazione. Così come per altri concetti, anche per il termine decoloniale è necessaria quindi un'attenzione particolare alla tendenza, presente nelle università, a trasformare in "mode" alcuni progetti di critica radicale dei rapporti di potere e delle epistemologie dominanti ad essi connessi. L'uso che propongo di decoloniale cerca dunque di tenere conto dei rischi e dei meccanismi di cooptazione, in particolare lavorando a partire dalla produzione del femminismo decoloniale che opera una critica all'androcentrismo e alla naturalizzazione della categoria "sesso". A partire da una genealogia geo-politica del femminismo decoloniale che ne restituisce l'origine nei movimenti sociali, mi soffermerò sull'importanza di riconoscere i legami tra Europa e America latina/Abya Yala osservando la disseminazione della colonialità e della bianchezza euro-androcentrata, sull'ineludibilità del legame tra pratiche e teoria (Espinosa Muñoz 2019), e sulle sfide metodologiche che questo legame comporta all'interno dell'università. In particolare, mi interessa riflettere su quali sono le possibili metodologie che dentro l'università pubblica possono trasformare l'organizzazione del sapere e l'insegnamento in chiave decoloniale femminista, tenendo conto del carattere orale e collettivo di tali produzioni.

Bio

Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz è professoressa associata di antropologia culturale presso l'Università degli Studi Roma Tre. Ha conseguito il Dottorato di ricerca in antropologia in cotutela Università di Siena e École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales di Parigi. Conduce ricerche sul campo in Brasile dal 1996 su razzismo, sessismo e diseguglianze di classe e sulla loro articolazione in diversi ambiti, tra cui formazione dell'identità nazionale, classificazione razziale, bianchezza e mascolinità, lavoro domestico e lavoratrici domestiche. In Italia ha lavorato su migrazioni e razzismo e sull'intersezione tra razzismo e sessismo. In tutte i suoi lavori combina analisi femminista e antropologica. Attualmente le sue ricerche si concentrano su Lélia Gonzalez, femminista nera e antropologa, e sulla decolonizzazione dell'insegnamento dell'antropologia nell'università. Coordina insieme a Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh il ciclo di seminari universitari *Razzismo e antirazzismo in Italia. Percorsi tra passato, memoria e presente*. Ha pubblicato le sue ricerche in numerosi articoli su riviste italiane e internazionali, monografie in Italia, Francia, Brasile e Stati Uniti. La sua ultima monografia è *White middle-class men in Rio de Janeiro. The making of a dominant subject*, Lexington Books (2018). Ha curato insieme a Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh "Razzismo e antirazzismo in Italia. Saperi e pratiche decoloniali attraversano l'università italiana", in *From the European South*, numero 12, 2023.

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Prof. Caterina Romeo (Sapienza Università di Roma)

Title

Postcolonial, Decolonial, and Transnational Approaches to Italian Studies: Conjunctions and Disjunctions

(language presentation: English)

Abstract

The deployment of postcolonial studies to read the Italian past and contemporaneity has played a pivotal role in starting and then consolidating a process of decolonization of Italian history, culture, and society since the beginning of the third millennium. In particular, a postcolonial approach to the study of Italian literature and culture has consistently provided a symbolic representation of the numerous social changes that have taken place in Italy as a result of transnational migrations, and has encouraged Italian society to rethink itself, to question the very concept of a monolithic and immutable national identity, to highlight the continuity existing between different kinds of migrations – old and new, outgoing and incoming – that have characterized Italian history, and to conceive of migrants and their descendants in ways that go beyond rejection and victimization. Postcolonial studies as applied to the Italian context has recently come into dialogue with decolonial studies and, most recently, with transnational studies, highlighting existing (dis)connections. The present talk will analyze the relevance of applying a postcolonial perspective in the process of decolonizing Italian studies and examine its conjunctions and disjunctions with decolonial and transnational studies.

Bio

Caterina Romeo is an Associate Professor at Sapienza Università di Roma, where she teaches Literary Theory, Migration Studies, Postcolonial Studies, and Gender Studies. In 2019, she was Academic Visitor at the University of Auckland (NZ) and was invited to be Visiting Professor at the University of Hong Kong (HK). She is the author of *Interrupted Narratives and Intersectional Representations in Italian Postcolonial Literature* (2023), *Tra follia e realismo magico. La produzione narrative di Domenico Dara* (2023), *Riscrivere la nazione. La letteratura italiana postcoloniale* (2018), and *Narrative tra due sponde. Memoir di italiane d'America* (2005). She has co-edited, among other publications, a special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* titled *Intersectional Italy* (2022) with Giulia Fabbri, which is now becoming a book published by Routledge, and the volume *Postcolonial Italy* (2012) with Cristina Lombardi-Diop. She has translated into Italian the work of numerous Italian American women writers and published essays on the memoir and autobiography, Italian postcolonial literature, intersectionality, representations of Italian Blackness, and Italian American literature and culture in national and international journals and edited volumes. She is currently working on a project on Italy's new mobilities and exploring fields of research such as the environmental humanities

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