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Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity,
and Italian Cinema (review)

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Italian Culture, Volume 23, 2005, pp. 205-208 (Review)

Published by Michigan State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/itc.2006.0006>



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their editing (on more than one occasion, citations are missing page numbers and are not traceable in footnotes or endnotes, and typos are also somewhat frequent), the book is undoubtedly praiseworthy. It is a necessary volume for any scholar who wishes to pursue a more in-depth analysis of Benigni and his work.

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Jacqueline Reich. *Beyond the Latin Lover: Marcello Mastroianni, Masculinity, and Italian Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004. Pp. xvi + 225.

The primary merit of Jacqueline Reich's book is that it deals with questions of gender and sexuality in Italian culture that have traditionally received a modest critical attention. More specifically, Reich examines the representation of masculinity, also a relatively uncharted field of inquiry in Italian studies in Italy and abroad, through the analysis of some of the films interpreted by Marcello Mastroianni in his long and distinguished career.

What is "beyond the Latin lover" for which Mastroianni is often remembered? The most convincing answer that emerges from Reich's study is that at the heart of this "mystique" there is a palpable contradiction. As she so eloquently notes in the introduction to her book, "although Mastroianni, as commodity, was often marketed as the quintessential Italian man, his characters betrayed instead a much more conflicting image of Italian masculinity than the category of Latin lover allowed" (xi). The book proceeds to unpack precisely this seeming contradiction by analyzing some of the most remarkable roles played by Mastroianni, in films like Fellini's *La dolce vita* (1959), *8 1/2* (1963), *Città delle donne* (1980), and *Ginger e Fred* (1986); Bolognini's *Il bell'Antonio* (1960); Germi's *Divorzio all'italiana* (1961); De Sica's *Ieri, oggi e domani* (1963) and *Matrimonio all'italiana* (1964); Scola's *Una giornata particolare* (1977); and Tornatore's *Stanno tutti bene* (1990), among others. In all of these films, Reich identifies a common thread in the representation of a flawed and inadequate masculinity, albeit for different reasons and circumstances: "underneath the façade of a presumed hypermasculinity is really the anti-hero, the Italian *inetto* (inept man), a man at odds with and out of place in a rapidly changing political, social, and sexual environment" (xii).

The first chapter, titled "In the Beginning: Mastroianni, Masculinity and Italian Cinema," proceeds to introduce some of the theoretical and critical

tools that will enable Reich to anchor her argument. Here Reich also provides a historical framework within which Mastroianni's characters are seen as representatives of unstable and conflicting gender roles in the postwar period. Drawing from a variety of fields ranging from literature and anthropology to film and star studies, the chapter offers an overview of the approaches and issues covered in the rest of the book. A discussion of the *inetto* in twentieth-century Italian culture, or, as she clarifies for an American audience, "the particularly Italian incarnation of the schlemiel or anti-hero" (1), must necessarily make reference to Italo Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno*, and Luigi Pirandello's *Il fu Mattia Pascal* and influential essay "L'umorismo," where "il sentimento del contrario" complicates any easy approach to what might at first be perceived as simply comical. Indeed, many of Mastroianni's roles as the *inetto* expose precisely "the clash between the real and the ideal, with the latter ultimately revealing itself to be illusory" (8).

How did Mastroianni come to be perceived as an icon of Italian masculinity, a role he so reluctantly accepted and most often tried to eschew in public interviews? And especially, how did he get this label when most of the characters he played strayed from the ideal male? In the second chapter, entitled "Undressing the Latin Lover: *La Dolce Vita*, Fashion, and Italian Masculinity," Reich argues that perhaps no other film was as effective as *La dolce vita* in casting Mastroianni as the Latin lover par excellence on the international scene, for reasons that, as she remarks, in fact had far less to do with the character he played than with "the commodification of Italy at an international level" (25). Reich compellingly argues that "what was being consumed in *La Dolce Vita* in 1959 was [. . .] an Italian style, based on the emergence of Italian design, Italian sensuality, Italian fashion on the international scene" (25). As a result of the rise of an international Western consumer culture, the Italian Latin lover became the "'imagined' embodiment" of an unrestrained sexuality, thriving in contrast to the civilized American counterpart (26). From this perspective Italian cinema and the Latin lover mystique surrounding Mastroianni are as much a product of an international culture industry, American in particular, as they are internal to Italy and related to the representations of masculinity Mastroianni portrayed on screen. Indeed, it seems as if Mastroianni was labeled a Latin lover in spite of the *inetto* characters he played. More so than other chapters in the book, the one on *La dolce vita* offers an insightful contextualization into Italian mass culture, in this case of the 1950s and 1960s. Reich makes the convincing claim that the fashionable clothes worn by Mastroianni's character, which set off a national

and international trend, served in fact as camouflage to mask his emotional impotence and spiritual alienation.

In chapter 3 Reich tackles two of the most successful roles played by Mastroianni: the Sicilian males of *Il bell'Antonio* and *Divorzio all'italiana*. In both cases, albeit through different genres (i.e., a melodrama of male impotence and a comedy where the cunning husband is eventually cuckolded) Reich contends that what is being exposed is "the fragility of Sicilian masculinity and the contradictory constructions on which it was based" (50). Reich prefaces the discussion of the films with anthropological research conducted on the island in the 1960s and 1970s that not only exposed the rigid rules governing Sicilian masculinity but also its dependence upon the control of female sexuality to maintain family honor. In her compelling analyses of the films, Reich shows how, in both *Il bell'Antonio* and *Divorzio all'italiana*, Mastroianni played against type, that is to say, against the aura of his extracinematic persona, to masterfully reveal "the *inetto* underneath the masquerade of sexual potency" (76).

In her fourth chapter, "Remember, It's a Comedy," Reich engages, as the full title reads, "Mastroianni in the films of Federico Fellini," where irony, jokes, and slapstick are often employed to disguise male anxiety about performing in accordance with an idealized notion of masculinity (79). Reich goes at great length to show how Fellini's films, specifically *8 1/2* and *Città delle donne*, far from being misogynist and sexist, reveal the psyche of a director in touch with his own conscious and unconscious fears. Reich supports her views by arguing that the jokes are ultimately on Guido and Snàporaz. Still, one cannot avoid noticing how the mostly disparaging treatment of women and feminism in Fellini's films, even when metaphorical, need to be constantly interrogated and revisited not just in light of the director's own views and insecurities on the matter, but especially as representations of larger societal attitudes.

The fifth chapter, "The *Inetto* versus the Unruly Woman," provides further examples of Mastroianni's unlikely masculine roles, particularly in Scola's *Una giornata particolare*. In this chapter, Reich also explores the character of the unruly woman played by Sofia Loren and examines its cultural meaning in postwar Italy. Defined as excessive in "body, speech and behavior," the unruly woman is typically "loud, androgynous or masculinized, prone to loose sexual behavior," but also powerfully in touch with her own desire and therefore threatening to men (107). With this framework Reich offers interpretations of Vittorio De Sica's films starring Sofia Loren and Marcello

Mastroianni, from *Peccato che sia una canaglia* (1954) to *Ieri, oggi e domani* and *Matrimonio all'italiana*.

In the sixth and final chapter, "Remembrance of Films Past: Mastroianni and the Aging Male Body," as well as in the conclusion, Reich explores not only some of the films that the actor made in the last stages of his career, but also those in which he allowed makeup to purposely age his body. What emerges is a graceful portrait of a man who, far from shying away from the effects of time, courageously embraced them in his life as much as in his art. However, Reich's analysis goes beyond the biographical to show how the characters Mastroianni played in *Stanno tutti bene* and *Ginger e Fred* acquire a symbolic representation of "Italian Cinema as Fossil," wherein "aging masculinity comes to symbolize loss on a personal as well as a national/cultural level" (146).

Reich's book makes a significant contribution to several fields, including Italian, film, gender, and cultural studies. Mastroianni, as an Italian as well as an international icon, offers a point of entry for a study that exceeds the construction and commodification of the actor on the international scene, only partially tackled, and focuses primarily on the representation of unstable masculinity that Mastroianni embodied in some of his most memorable films. Scholars in the fields mentioned above will find ample film discussions and historical contextualization supported by substantial bibliographical references.

In sum, Reich's book raises as many questions about Italian culture and sexuality as it tries to answer. For instance, one line of inquiry would involve the interrogation of the persistence of gender imbalances in society despite the obvious exposure, in many of Mastroianni's films, of the fragile and unstable construction upon which masculinity and femininity are based. This and other questions will have to be pursued by scholars in future research, for which Reich has certainly sown the seeds.

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Peter Bondanella. *Hollywood Italians: Dagos, Palookas, Romeos, Wise Guys, and Sopranos*. New York: Continuum, 2004. Pp. 352.

This book is indispensable for anyone who has an interest in the history of Italian American cinema. It is a great read and a wonderful reference book, in which one can find nearly all films whose subjects deal with the representation