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Circulation and *Chiamami col tuo nome*: Worldly desires, historical efflorescence, and Italy
By Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover
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Critics of *Chiamami col tuo nome* (Luca Guadagnino, 2017) have accused the film of being inauthentic. In venues in Italy and internationally, we find the complaint that the film is not really Italian, does not include authentic gay sex, or that it is not authentically gay at all. For some, its bourgeois class fantasy renders it inauthentic in the sense of not being gritty enough, not a true representation of Italy's class and ethnic diversity. For others, the way Elio's family are open to his sexuality is implausibly liberal. Regardless of what aspect of the film is being attacked, this problem of authenticity seems to center the negative press. Some of these issues will be crucial to us in this essay – mainly the film's relationship to Italianicity and its representation of homosexuality.¹ But before we turn to these particular issues, we find it noteworthy that authenticity – a rather old-fashioned measure of cinematic value – is being called into play so insistently with this film. Although cries of inauthenticity often serve simply to bolster a conservative approach to cinematic value, setting up a “real” and “true” identity against which a film might fail to measure up, we think this debate over *Chiamami* exposes a fraught intersection of Italian cinema and gay histories. In this essay, we explore *Chiamami*'s engagement with Italianicity and ask what this question of national identity reveals about the film's queerness. In doing so, we consider how the film's evocation of both an experience of time and a point in time – a *durée* of desire situated alongside the historical concerns of the 1980s – attempts to give form to the evanescent political and cultural modes of being that were foreclosed upon by the coming of the Second Republic in Italy and by HIV/AIDS.

One of our central questions, then, is to ask whether *Chiamami* is an Italian film. Certainly, it was represented as Italian at a number of queer film festivals including the globally renowned BFI Flare festival in London. If it is Italian, then how? Where is Italy in

this film and what version of Italy is represented? Or, if we want to insist that it is not an Italian film, then why does the film need Italy? What does it do with Italy and what does Italy allow the film to say that another setting would not? At the core of these questions about Italian identity lies another query: why is an early 1980s Italy chosen as a setting for the efflorescence of gay desire? The Italian countryside creates a site of gayness for a film that nevertheless seems unable to offer a representation of Italian queer people or indeed any space for gay Italianness. Thus, the emergence of queer desire and the question of Italian identity and representation are closely linked in the film, but in a curious way that entails some striking gaps and dissociations.

Guadagnino once called *Chiamami* a mostly American film and has said “I don’t do Italian Cinema.”² Meanwhile, Italy hasn’t done Guadagnino’s cinema, at least up until the international success of this film. *Chiamami* made almost \$4 million in Italy, but his earlier films were not wildly popular domestically, often regarded simply as features made for an export market. For instance, *A Bigger Splash* (2015) made only \$189,000 in Italy, and *Io sono amore* fared only slightly better with \$285,000. By contrast, both films performed strongly overseas: *A Bigger Splash* made a cumulative \$7.5 million worldwide, and *Io sono l’amore* (2009) made over \$5 million in the United States alone and was released across Europe, Latin America, Oceania, and East Asia for a total worldwide gross of almost \$11 million. Until *Chiamami*, these two films were Guadagnino’s best known works internationally, where they were received as global art cinema. The only one of his earlier feature films to do significantly well at the Italian box office was *Melissa P.* (2005), which provides something of a counter example, since it made over \$7 million in Italy but did not circulate widely internationally. Its popularity could be argued to be less about Guadagnino and more a reflection of the international cultural phenomenon of the erotic novel *100 colpi di spazzola primi di andare a dormire* by Melissa Panarello, on which it was based. Nonetheless, that film’s nexus of sexual awakening, transgression, adaptation, and Italian

setting resonates with *Chiamami* in ways that suggest that Guadagnino's choices of project—up to and including *Suspria* (2018)—cannot be so easily detached from their national location.

On the one hand, Guadagnino has spoken of *Chiamami* as outside of Italian cinema. On the other hand, when asked by *La Stampa* if it was an Italian film, Guadagnino responded without hesitation, that it is a “profoundly Italian film ... 100 percent.”³ He recounts how he was first brought to the project as a cultural consultant on things Italian, including, matching scenes in the script to specific locations. In another interview, when asked if he thought of himself more as the lead character Elio or Oliver, he responded that he's “a Mafalda.” In other words, one of world cinema's most prominent gay auteurs identifies not with the cosmopolitan queer men who center the story but with a secondary character, an Italian domestic laborer who is not shown as same-sex desiring. In this anecdote, Italianicity and gayness appear incommensurate, at least in Guadagnino's self-deprecating self-presentation.

So, why would critics dismiss the film as not-really-Italian? Well, from the outside, *Chiamami* proclaims itself as transnational. It was co-produced by Italian, French, and American companies, and these perspectives are strongly felt in the text. Various nationalities are represented in its fictional world and several languages are spoken. Anthony Lane in the *New Yorker* says that the film is, “among other things, an exercise in polyglottery.”⁴ Elio's family is proudly multilingual, speaking Italian, French, and English with such ease that their national origins are hard to pin down. In one scene, he and his parents snuggle while reading German literature out loud together *in German*, a language we never see them speak in more everyday exchanges. Guadagnino has spoken about the cosmopolitanism embodied in the film as connected to his own coming of age, being raised by an Algerian-French mother, and we read Italianicity as always in tension with this worldlier perspective. Critics have raised concerns about the film's classed-based presumptions around character and audience. Several writers have argued that the film is narrated from the bias of privilege, that its

cosmopolitanism is one that is associated with wealthy people with significant cultural capital and the capacity to move about the world freely, people accustomed to long summer vacations and the constant presence of servants. In other words, not only is the film set in atmosphere of grand summer villas, art history post-docs, teenagers without summer jobs, swimming pools and lazy afternoons reading literature, but the film's POV also takes such a life as a baseline. For example, in his scathing critique of the film in the *New York*, Richard Brody claims that film "treats [its central characters'] intelligence like a club membership, their learning like membership cards, their intellectualism like a password."⁵

The weight granted to the perspectives of these cosmopolitans could be seen to come at the expense of marginalizing more ordinary Italians. Both the family and the film primarily use American English as their *lingua franca*. Elio's Italian is very good but he doesn't sound like a native speaker.⁶ As comfortable as these cosmopolitan characters are in Italy, the ease with which they inhabit Italian space can only push the film's Mafaldas to the sidelines. The narrative's principle agents appear as non-Italian, and indeed no Italian could be nominated according to the Oscars' definition of best supporting actor. The narrative is thus not anchored in an embodied Italian point of view with one or two momentary exceptions. If we think of *Chiamami* as an Italian film, one which performs Italianicity, then it is one which does not provide narrative space for a certain kind of Italian subjectivity. Rather, we propose that its Italianicity emerges through the setting, style, and historicity of its narrative.

A great deal of criticism of the film from US critics has been that it participates in a tourist logic, one in which Italy primarily functions to provide an escapist backdrop for fantasies of sexual longing and conquest. Brody, for instance, likens its use of landscape to the "superficial charm of picture postcards," while suggesting that the film never gets close to the characters because it's too focused on "the expensive architecture, the lavish furnishings, the travelogue locations."⁷ All that's missing, he quips, is "a website offering Elio-and-Oliver tours through the Italian countryside."⁸ According to this critique, such a backdrop distracts

us in the same way that heritage film uses landscape, working to suspend what might otherwise be our discomfort with the class-based pleasures it depicts. The film surely does provide a fertile ground for touristic subjectivity, as can be illustrated by the fact that there exist actual tour packages for wealthy Britons wanting to experience the locations of the movie firsthand, or by the fact that when you buy the film on iTunes in the UK it is accompanied by an extra entitled “Snapshots of Italy: The Making of Call Me by Your Name.”⁹ Some sense of the touristic is undoubtedly at play in the film’s pleasures, as these marketing strategies demonstrate.

Yet, while we are not interested in defending *Chiamami* from its critics, we do feel there’s something illuminating in its use of locations, and specifically its evocation of Italy. If we simply read its Italian locations as “touristic” and hence as reactionary, then we miss several ways in which the film deploys the pleasures of place to more complicated ends. Its locations are not always obviously touristic. For some critics in Italy, the film exemplifies a kind of cinema that Italy should be making: outward facing but resisting pandering to a touristic gaze, that is, “un cinema che riesce a essere internazionale senza puntare sull’Italia cartolinesca.”¹⁰ To foreign eyes, the film lacks the iconic monuments, attractions, and buildings that can easily be located on a map, on a tour, or in the imagination, such as Florence’s Duomo in *A Room with a View* (James Ivory, 1985). The shooting of *Chiamami* carries a located-ness, but its camerawork does not frame locations as specific tourist views. Like the novel, the film refrains from naming locations—the book merely identifies places with initials. The villages may appear typically Italian but they don’t repeat the mode of tourist appropriation that *A Room with a View* was so key to cementing in the mind of foreigners who came in droves to Northern Italy in the late 80s, across the 90s, and into the 00s: a period bookended by *A Room with a View* on the one hand and *Under the Tuscan Sun* (Audrey Wells, 2003) and *Eat Pray Love* (Ryan Murphy, 2010) on the other. A few tropes of the tourist imagination of Italy exist here, but there are no steaming bowls of pasta or

cappuccino, epiphanies in front of renaissance masterpieces, or Fiat 500s speeding through Tuscan hills.¹¹

Moreover, if we were to perceive this film as simply instantiating the tourist gaze, we would overlook the subtlety of one of the world's most nuanced cinematographers of landscape, Sayombhu Mukdeeprom, who is best known for his work on Apichatpong Weerasethakul's *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010), *Syndromes and a Century* (2006), and *Blissfully Yours* (2002), as well as Miguel Gomes's *Arabian Nights* (2015). Mukdeeprom's cinematography frequently deploys camera movements that have an apparently deliberate direction but are not motivated by the attention or activity of characters. They mark a clear trajectory across places without plotting or mapping in the service of narrative disclosure. Setting—and in particular rural landscape—takes on a significance that is not easily reducible to narrative motivation. His camerawork evades a nostalgic and touristic framing of the Italian countryside to use setting in very different ways. Take for instance the much-discussed sex scene, in which the camera pans away from the lovers to look out of the window at the garden. Prominent Italian film critic Paolo Mereghetti describes this pan as part of the film's delicacy. Although Mereghetti attributes the movement to Guadagnino instead of Mukdeeprom, he captures something crucial about its hesitancy and almost overt anachronism.

Quello che colpisce e affascina in queste vicende è l'assoluta mancanza di scabrosità o compiacimento, è la delicatezza con cui Guadagnino fa muovere la macchina da presa, quasi esitante di fronte ai corpi che si spogliano: una volta si concede anche una "anacronistica" panoramica dal letto alla finestra aperta sugli alberi, quasi fossimo in un pudico film hollywoodiano degli anni Quaranta.¹²

Rather than viewing this movement as a gesture of turning away, closeting, or repression, as some critics have suggested, we could understand it as a wandering contemplative camera. Like similar camera movements in Mukdeeprom's films with Apichatpong, this pan enacts

certain radical instabilities of queer looking. This wandering is inattentive or coy only in relation to the impulses of the patriarchal desiring gaze, its probing compulsion toward revelation, declaration, fetishism, and reification. Mukdeeprom's cinematography enables the film to summon a particular moment without making it retrievable as a commodity of global tourism. In fact, the specificity of *Chiamami*'s "localization" (by which we mean its attitude toward landscape more as site, locale, or community space than as tourist destination) is also key to the film's particular recalling of a historical period. We will return to historicity, but for now we note that *Chiamami* is set in the moment just before hyper-tourism hits Italy.¹³

Closely connected to this criticism of *Chiamami* as inauthentically Italian is a claim that its heritage aesthetic is also not queer enough. Spencer Kornharber says that the film has been rebuked for its "prettiness," which he connects to a failure to be politically queer.¹⁴ DA Miller makes an expansive critique of the mainstream gay movie, in general, for being "a thing of beauty."¹⁵ He calls this "aesthetic laminate"--i.e. something shiny and superficial, that covers up the thing itself. Here, he is using a rhetoric that Rosalind Galt's work has critiqued as anti-pretty, assuming an aesthetic that is rough and ugly, or austere and simple, to be intrinsically superior to one that is beautiful, carefully-composed, and decorative.¹⁶ He goes on to argue that a cinematic look at landscape or architectural setting is, in and of itself, an avoidance of gay bodies or sex. Miller sees this as an international problem – he cites American films like *Moonlight* also – but he also sees something particularly Italian in it. He switches momentarily into Italian to complain about the film's "*bella vista*," linking a cinematic beautiful view – a long shot – to a beautiful life. (Although the latter phrase is written in English, it retains a ghost of the assonance on *bella vita*.) For Miller, the so-called "beautification campaign" is not only bad in aesthetic terms but is also actively homophobic. In avoiding showing gay sex, Miller argues, *Chiamami* considers the beautiful life to be fundamentally repulsed by queerness and demanding of a closet. Miller switches momentarily back to Italian to name what he sees as the film's opposite term to *la bella vista*:

la via rettale. These are terms, for him, of beauty and ugliness as defined by a homophobic aesthetic.

The pan during the sex scene and a later dissolve exemplify for Miller the film's homophobic impulses: to extradite the details of same-sex desire from the field of vision, to erase the disturbing brute facts of male bodies penetrating each other, and to cleanse away any apparently messy evidence of homo sex.¹⁷ Debates around this shot reveal a persistent anxiousness about the monstration of gay sex, a demand and indeed a pressure for queer films to show sex acts in a declarative fashion. This anxiousness coexists alongside an irresolvable instability in the image's capacity to represent queer desire in history. We have written of this tension in relation to queer world cinema, arguing that although the act of showing queer sex on film can be liberatory and radical, in some cultural contexts, not showing entails an equally radical force.¹⁸ This instability has particular valence in the Italian context, as Sergio Rigoletto insists in his tracing of the unstable visibility of queers in Italian film history.¹⁹ From our current moment, and given the rise of mainstream images of LGBT people in Italian visual culture, it is easy to forget this history. Rigoletto urges us to ask "what conditions underpin the present regime of queer visibility, and what queer experiences have been simultaneously either obscured or marginalized"?²⁰ For Rigoletto, this question asks us to make demands not only of present Italy but also of the past and of how we represent its queerness. Writing just before the release of *Chiamami*, Derek Duncan similarly surveys the contradictions and discontinuities in thinking about queer visibility in Italian film history.²¹ Building on Teresa de Lauretis's influential definition of queer representation, he writes that we should "appreciate the value of de Lauretis's proposition, which envisages sexuality as a sphere of possibility rather than prescription. Queer is not about the reiteration of the already known, but rather the apprehension of what has not yet been articulated."²² For Duncan, de Lauretis enables us to read texts as queer precisely because of their ability to imagine something beyond mere visibility: "From [de Lauretis's] perspective, then, queer functions as

the ‘heterotopic’ space of the drive: ‘it is the space of transit, a displacement, a passage and transformation, not a referential, but a figural space’ (246).” In a moment that we have also found to be crucial, Duncan notes, “Also missing from [de Lauretis’s] definition is any direct invocation of sex itself. For de Lauretis, ‘a queer text carries the inscription of sexuality as something more than sex’ (244).”

In such a theoretical context, the refusal of what we have termed “queer monstration” in this pan shouldn’t be taken as a turning away from queerness. In fact, quite the opposite: the shot prompts a confrontation with the heterotopic and anti-reifying forces of queer desire, where queerness resists any stable mapping of bodies to identities. Moreover, it presents us with the sheer difficulty of writing those desires into history, and perhaps accounts for the simultaneously delicate, historical, and anachronistic hesitancy that Mereghetti notes. We would argue that the strange trajectory of this shot, in its progression from the referential to the figural, forms a kind of allegory of queer desire for historical representation. In David Greven’s response to Miller, he accuses the critic of a certain numbness to the emotional tenor and tension built by the film.²³ For Greven, the film is about gathering and maintaining a sense of restless longing, and the pan is crucial for keeping the spectator in that affective register of longing. Parceled-out anticipation dominates how many contemporary world filmmakers describe queer desire, including Apichatpong, but also Tsai Ming-liang, Zero Chou, and Julián Hernández. One of the most prominent proponents of this trend is Marco Berger, whose films maintain this gradual unfolding of anticipation without evading the explicit depiction of the naked body. In two of his most recent films, *Taekwondo* (2016) and *Hawaii* (2013), pent-up desires simmer in the intimate bodily spaces of homosocial rituals. However, the films never seem coy, and they refuse the narrative of the closet that characterized an earlier period of gay cinema. These corollaries ask us to think differently about *Chiamami* and about this pan in particular. Is it possible that a more overt description of their sex would diffuse the longing we feel and threaten to empty out the anticipatory force

of desire that the film goes to great lengths to make palpable? And in the pan's extension of longing, might we find a deferral that reflects the larger stakes of historical representation, and the success of the film to speak of a moment ripe with potentialities that would be so soon foreclosed? It is hard from our historical perspective to do justice to the contingency of queer sex in that moment. This pan thus captures our relationship to the evanescence of queer desire, in a moment sealed away from us by HIV/AIDS. It asks whether the experience of pre-AIDS sex can be visible to us at all.²⁴

This question of queer representation leads to issues of genre. The problem of visibility and figuration repeats exactly the way that arguments against the heritage film historically rejected the prettiness of this feminized and often-queer genre. Andrew Higson's influential dismissal of British heritage films such as *Maurice* (James Ivory, 1987) – also written by Ivory – illustrates how the desire for worthy working-class narratives, which we also see in Brody's review, can only see gay films as superficial and apolitical.²⁵ So what would it mean to flip this rejection and to see the film's pretty and picturesque aesthetic as both part of its *italianità* and its queerness? Consider the film's navigation of queerness, a journey that posits the origins of gay desire in the Italian landscape and in the sunken history of the peninsula. In the scene in which archaeologists pull a classical sculpture out of the bottom of a lake, Guadagnino echoes Ingrid Bergman's famous encounters with classical figures in Roberto Rossellini's canonical meditation of italianicity and the touristic gaze, *Voyage to Italy* (1954). The heritage of Italy seems to be a sculpture of a beautiful male body, one that simultaneously evidences the homosexual desire of Roman society and who in this moment bears an immediate and striking resemblance to Elio. With the rhyming of these bodies across decades and millennia, the film links contemporary longing to ancient queer desires, while simultaneously raising the specter of a violently heteronormalized history in the interim centuries, and all through a particularly Italian cinematic idiom.²⁶

One way to reposition this intersection of Italian cultural heritage and queer desire might be to consider the middlebrow pleasures of the heritage film – both the Italian landscape and the bourgeois romance – as having a place in queer cinema and, moreover, as articulating something otherwise inexpressible about the politics of representing historical desires. As we have argued elsewhere,

Reference to national culture is one recurring mode of accessing middlebrow textuality, through literary adaptations, stories about high cultural forms and biopics... However, there are relatively few possibilities for queer narratives in national literary, political and cultural histories and so queer films often find their cultural capital elsewhere. One of the places they do this is via concepts of worldliness or cosmopolitanism – queer films garner middlebrow status by purporting to provide insight into foreign cultures through conventionally individualized queer stories.²⁷

Here we can see the queerness of the film's adaptation of heritage style. Although *Chiamami* is based on a novel, it doesn't have the high cultural capital of an adaptation of a canonical work of literature, and though it circulates romantic ideas about Italy, it doesn't quite form a tourist gaze. Instead, the queer subject is inserted into the middlebrow as a transnational figure, like Elio's family, never quite at home in national narratives.

Moreover, even if we agreed that there is something picturesque and touristic about this version of the middlebrow we would argue for the political potential of such representations. Both the picturesque and the touristic describe a form of representation based on the overtness of looking relations; the picturesque image is like a picture, framed for the perspective of the spectator, and the touristic similarly conjures a geographical image shaped for the eye of the foreign visitor. But where more radical accounts of self-reflexive visibility are culturally prized (for instance modernist strategies of distancing), these pleasurable self-conscious images are historically attached to less sophisticated viewers. The consumer of the picturesque postcard or the touristic view is semiotically imagined as sentimental, often feminized, and without the authenticity of the real traveler. However, we understand the pleasurable, sentimental, inauthentic, and spectacular as terms consistently associated with feminist, queer, and other politically-engaged readings of film. Thinking of the popular but

critically hated Italian films of the 1980s and 1990s such as *Il postino* (Michael Radford, Massimo Troisi, 1994) and *Nuovo Cinema Paradiso* (Giuseppe Tornatore, 1994), for example, it has been argued that their sentimental nostalgia evoked the political losses of the Italian left, both in the postwar moment of their fictional stories and in the 1980s.²⁸ How might we view *Chiamami*'s version of historical Italianness with this potential in mind?

One response is to think about what it means to set such a beautiful and romantic gay story in the year 1983. While the novel was set in 1987, Guadagnino moved the film back a few years, explaining that "'83 is the year—in Italy at least—where the '70s are killed, when everything that was great about the '70s is definitively shut down."²⁹ Setting the film in 1983 allows it to evoke for Italian audiences in particular a moment on the brink of significant changes. It is, as we mentioned, right before mass tourism brings radical transformations. In 1987, Franco Bruschi, Elisabetta Pagnini, and Paola Pinzauti theorize the "cultura turistica," in Italy, the emergence of a new kind of space in which large numbers of tourists interact with locals, changing the character and use of public space. By the end of the decade, geographers are examining "the large scale development of international tourism" in Italy in relation to environmental impact and irreversible transformation.³⁰ Elio and Oliver's mode of inhabiting Italian space is profoundly of its time and would become increasingly unfeasible as the number of foreign tourists visiting Italy doubled over the next two decades. The film allows us to feel this absence of la cultura turistica in scenes such as the disco in the small comunità, which is not staged with foreigners in mind, and within which very carefully evoked Italian historical location their desire can emerge in embodied form.

The mid-1980s bookends two major periods of turmoil and compromise. It follows the protest, instability, and violence of 1970s, culminating in the 1980 Bologna Massacre. (The violence and assassinations attributed to the Red Brigades continued through the 1980s but with dramatically less frequency.) Meanwhile, the film's periodization represents the final era before the First Republic fell alongside the scandals of the early 1990s. In fact, 1983

is the year that the PSI comes to power for the first time, with Bettino Craxi becoming Prime Minister, a new formation of coalition politics, and the demise of a certain vision of left potential. The shift facilitated the emergence of Berlusconi as a major force in Italian society, allowing his 1984 acquisitions of television stations Italia 1 and Rete 4. Also in that year, Craxi *de facto* legalized the national transmission of regional and privately held stations, enabling Berlusconi's subsequent rise to power and consolidating Berlusconi's political and cultural purchase on Italian national life.³¹

The film's historical positioning asks that we not only look back to the ending of a period of political and sexual radicalism in Italy but that we also anticipate the beginning of a period of reaction. The latter is referenced with stealth historical allusions within the world of the film, but these references are easily missed. Instead, it is the visual narration that cues us to feel the imminence of political transformation as foreclosing on certain political, cultural, and personal affiliations. In other words, the film describes its own historical situatedness not simply through contextual details but by positioning its viewer on the precipice of a completely new epoch for Italy, giving that viewer the sense that something is about to shift, about to happen. Consequently, the film makes the coming of the Second Republic felt to us narrationally. Emiliano Morreale's review of the film for *La Repubblica* describes the film's relationship to history as a mode of suspension:

...i segni del tempo (Sammy Barbot, *Paris Latino e Words*, Craxi e... Beppe Grillo) rimangono quasi sempre sullo sfondo. Questa educazione sentimentale, piana e fatta di piccole increspature, si svolge in una giovinezza mitica, senza rabbia e senza ombra di rivolta. Ma forse proprio questa sospensione, questa lunghissima estate, finisce con l'essere metafora di un'epoca che si sognava fuori dalla Storia.

Writing on Guadagnino's next film, *Suspiria*, Morreale again identifies the director's particular relationship to history, "... qui la Storia preme da tutte le parti (come spesso in Guadagnino)." Later in this same article when Morreale asks Guadagnino about cinema's

capacity to speak to history and to the present, the director responds, “Il cinema batte il tempo ma non segna l’attualità”.

Of course, 1983 also locates the beginning of the AIDS crisis, and some critics have commented on the historicity of the film’s setting in a moment just before it would become impossible not to mention it. Kornhaber writes that,

The queer utopia Elio and Oliver built is poignantly temporary and limited—both for reasons that the movie spells out, and conceivably for historical reasons that go unmentioned but perhaps not unconsidered. In his sermon, Mr. Perlman invites his son to live his truth, but emphasizes that doing so inevitably means opening oneself up to pain. ... ‘When you least expect it,’ he says, ‘nature has cunning ways of finding our weakest spot.’³²

Although nobody in the film seems to be thinking about HIV-AIDS, the film itself is keenly aware of its historical setting and so are its spectators. Consider the Mapplethorpe poster in Elio’s bedroom, which Gary Needham has pointed out is a strange historical anomaly.³³ It is highly unlikely that such a poster could have found its way into a teenager’s bedroom in Italy in 1983 but the audience can be touched by the queer history to which it refers. We know the world that Elio will come of age into, and the ending of the film is melancholic and affective precisely because Elio looks forward into a future that is completely unknowable to him but replete with historical knowledge to us. In the film’s extended final shot, Elio stares into a fireplace, and the spectator is asked to pay attention to his gaze, to watch closely the process of him looking but not seeing. Unbeknownst to him, he is on a precipice, and the anticipatory structure in which we look back at him looking forward, is heart-breaking because we can imagine what will happen to the people, the spaces, and the utopian possibilities of his youth.

This temporal shuttling of looking back at looking forward, and of looking without necessarily seeing the object of our desire, is replicated throughout the film. In his early days with the Perlmans, Oliver is mocked by the family for his repeated use of the word “later” as

a salutation, and with this phrase, and the film's attention to it, he sets the tone of a projective temporality. *Later* there will be AIDS, *later* there will be Berlusconi, *later* there will be hetero marriage. That there is such a looming social, cultural, and legal apparatus of pathologizing homosexuality in Elio's immediate future does not, we would argue, invalidate the film's romantic vision, but it forms a crucial part of its historical view.

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¹ A note about language, we have opted to use "Italianicity" over the bland and clunky adjective "Italian-ness," as the former evokes the Italian word "italianicità", bringing with it a history of semiotically-inflected cultural studies and discussions of what is now referred to as "Brand Italy". For a canonical example of this usage see Roland Barthes' analysis of an advertisement of Panzani foods in his essay "Rhetoric of the Image" in *Image/Music/Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977, 32-51, see in particular, 33-7), In his definition of "Italianicity," pioneering US semiotician Robert Scholes considers both "the external representations of Italy and things Italian."

² "Call Me by Your Name press conference with Armie Hammer, Timothee Chalamet, Luca Guadagnino," October 9, 2017, The *Upcoming* channel, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Daw1fLvvdII>.

³ "Guadagnino: 'Chiamami col tuo nome è un film profondamente italiano,'" *La Stampa*, January 24, 2018, accessed August 18, 2018, <http://www.lastampa.it/2018/01/24/multimedia/spettacoli/guadagnino-chiamami-col-tuo-nome-un-film-profondamente-italiano-AolKgTQXtfSRfg8MaMf17L/pagina.html>.

⁴ Anthony Lane, "'Call Me by Your Name': An Erotic Triumph," *The New Yorker*, December 4, 2017, Accessed March 12, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/04/call-me-by-your-name-an-erotic-triumph>.

⁵ Richard Brody, "The Empty, Sanitized Intimacy of 'Call Me by Your Name'" *The New Yorker*, November 28, 2017, Accessed March 12, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/richard-brody/the-empty-sanitized-intimacy-of-call-me-by-your-name>. At the same time, Emiliano Morreale's review of the film for *La Repubblica* sees the film's constant referencing of works of high culture as so excessive as to be ironic, stating, "Guadagnino ha anche un certo distacco ironico, e gioca con un profluvio di riferimenti sul filo della parodia". Emiliano Morreale, "L'educazione sentimentale secondo Guadagnino," *La Repubblica*, 25 January 2018: 37.

⁶ One Italian review refers the Perlman as a "famiglia ebrea italoamericana." Nicola Falcinella, "Un'estate liquida in una ricca villa padana," *L'Eco di Bergamo*, 26 January 2018: 66. *Il Messaggero*

identifies Chaumet as simultaneously raised in “una cosmopolita famiglia d’art” and “il nostro” Antione Doinel, referring to the iconic star of François Truffaut’s coming-of-age film *The 400 Blows* (1959). Gloria Satta, “Guadagnino ‘Vince la compassione’”, 25 January 2018: 23.

⁷ Brody, “Empty, Sanitized Intimacy.”

⁸ Brody, “Empty, Sanitized Intimacy.”

⁹ Rob LeDonne, “Explore the Italian Film Locations of ‘Call Me by Your Name,’” *Marriott Traveler*, Apple News, accessed August 18, 2018, <https://apple.news/AFe4raKF2RsyuaQrCEDGOkA>. This same feature appeared on Apple News on March 30, 2018 under the title “See Northern Italy Through the Enchanting Lens of ‘Call Me by Your Name.’”

¹⁰ Mariarosa Mancuso, “Guadagnino non è un fuoriclasse ma è un professionista.” *Il Folgio*, XXIII: 21 (25 January 2018): 1.

¹¹ Surveying the critical reception of Guadagnino’s films in the USA, Damiano Garofalo and Dom Holdaway identify the two opposing trends: a fetishization of their Italianicity and a celebration of their universalism. Included in the allusions to things Italian, they catalog references to exoticism, food, design, art, and the traditions of auteur cinema. Interestingly, Garofalo and Holdaway argue there’s been a historical shift from an emphasis on Italianicity in the earlier films to increased emphasis on the universal that culminates in *Chiamami*. “Tra italianità e universalità: La ricezione critica statunitense di Luca Guadagnino” (Conference presentation) American Association for Italian Studies Annual Conference

Sant’Anna Institute, Sorrento, June 2018.

¹² Paolo Mereghetti, “Il fascino della scoperta del sesso nel racconto di una dolce estate,” *Corriere della Sera*, 22 January 2018: 31.

¹³ Foreign tourist numbers visiting Italy almost doubled from 22 million in 1980 to 41 million in 2000. See Bill Bramwell, ed. *Mass Tourism, Diversification and Sustainability in Southern Europe’s Coastal Regions* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2004), 7; and the European Environment Agency’s Fact Sheet 2001, <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/indicators/tourism-intensity/tourism-arrivals>, accessed 8 December 2018.

¹⁴ Spencer Kornhaber, “The Shadow Over *Call Me by Your Name*,” *The Atlantic*, January 3, 2018, accessed May 25, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/01/the-shadow-over-call-me-by-your-name/549269/>.

¹⁵ D. A. Miller, “Elio’s Education,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, accessed August 16, 2018, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/elios-education/>.

¹⁶ Rosalind Galt, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Miller has similar concerns about *Moonlight* (Barry Jenkins, 2016) and suggest both films represent prominent examples of an “exasperating tradition” by recent films that mainstream queer desire “by averting our eyes from the distinctive gay male sex act”.

¹⁸ Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt, *Queer Cinema in the World*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016): 14, 17.

¹⁹ Sergio Rigoletto (2017) “Against the Teleological Presumption: Notes on Queer Visibility in Contemporary Italian Film,” *The Italianist*, 37:2, 212-227.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 214.

²¹ Duncan, Derek. (2017). “The Queerness of Italian Cinema.” In *A Companion to Italian Cinema*, F. Burke (Ed.). 467-483.

²² *Ibid*, 478.

²³ David Greven, “Unlovely Spectacle: D.A. Miller on *Call Me By Your Name*” *Film International* (March 13th, 2018) <http://filmint.nu/?p=23937>. Accessed 26 January 2018.

²⁴ The recent French film *120 BPM* (Robin Campillo, 2017) wrestles with this same historical period, and the problematic of representing gay desire, sex, and AIDS in a very different way.

²⁵ Andrew Higson, “Re-Presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film,” in *British Cinema and Thatcherism*, ed. Lester Friedman (London: UCL Press, 1993): 109-129.

²⁶ Across the Italian reviews of the film, there are many mentions of Bernardo Bertolucci. Garofalo and Holdaway document how frequently the press refer to the canon of Italian cinema as an inspiration for the director, including references to Rossellini and Bertolucci but also Luchino Visconti, Marco Bellocchio, and Michelangelo Antonioni.

²⁷ Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover, “Hypotheses on the Queer Middlebrow,” *Middlebrow Cinema*, ed. Sally Faulkner (London: Routledge 2016): 202.

²⁸ Rosalind Galt, *The New European Cinema: Redrawing the Map* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 26-87.

²⁹ Andre Aciman, *Call Me by Your Name* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007); Stephen Garrett, "Director Luca Guadagnino on Why 'Call Me by Your Name' Is Making Everyone Cry," *Observer.com*, October 13, 2017, accessed August 16, 2018, <http://observer.com/2017/10/interview-luca-guadagnino-on-why-call-me-by-your-name-makes-people-cry/>.

³⁰ Franco Bruschi, Elisabetta Pagnini, and Paola Pinzauti, *Cultura Turistica* (Milano: Hoepli, 1987); E. Bevilacqua and E. Casti, "The Structure and Impact of International Tourism in the Veneto Region, Italy," *GeoJournal* 19/3 (1989): 285-287.

³¹ Detailed accountings of this history include Stephen Gundle and Noelleanne O'Sullivan 'The Crisis of 1992-1994 and the Reform of the Italian Broadcasting System', *Modern Italy* 1(1) 1995: 70-81; Dunnage, Jonathan. *Twentieth Century Italy: A Social History*, Routledge, 2002: 197-234; and Paul Statham "Television News and the Public Sphere in Italy: Conflicts at the Media/Politics Interface" *European Journal of Communication* 11(4): 511-556

³² Kornhaber, "The Shadow."

³³ Gary Needham, "Youth, Contemporary Queer Cinema, AIDS," lecture, "Retrenching/Entrenching Youth" conference, University of Liverpool, June 5, 2018.