

Blaxploitation Italian Style:

July 13, 2010 marked the death of director Luigi Scattini, the creator of the blaxploitation trilogy, *La ragazza dalla pelle di luna* (Moonskin; 1972), *La ragazza fuoristrada* (Off-Road Vehicle Girl; 1973) and *Il corpo* (The Body; 1974), that established Eritrean top model Zeudi Araya as an erotic icon in Italian culture. Though Scattini's success is often underrated, his trilogy exhumes the image of the colonial black Venus, a figure deeply rooted in the Italian imagery since the nineteenth century whose exotic sexuality had been historically portrayed alongside a sense of danger and fear of cannibalism. Caponetto will discuss the degree to which the notion of cannibalism applies to Scattini's trilogy in terms of the associations between black femininity and anthropophagy, as well as the scopophilic relationship between Italian male spectators and the female black body.

On a larger scale, Caponetto's talk examines the ability of Luigi Scattini's cinematic trilogy belonging to the so-called filone erotico esotico, starring Eritrean model Zeudi Araya and set in exotic places, to tap into the social and political crises of 1970s Italy. Drawing on Barbara Grespi and Vincenzo Buccheri's earlier studies on this Italian exotic soft-core cinematic cycle, I show how the representation of a modern black Venus in *La ragazza dalla pelle di luna* (1972), *La ragazza fuoristrada* (1973) and *Il corpo* (1974), is embedded in a network of social and cultural discourses that exploit colonial imagery to disallow greater independence to women in Italy. Scattini's trilogy addresses the anxiety of change that swept across Italian society during the 1970s when Italian women's mobilization for implementing a number of reforms led to the legalization of divorce (1974) and abortion (1978). In this climate of change fostered by feminism, I argue that Scattini's beautiful, obliging, black woman was meant to provide a new domestic space in which to reassure the Italian male spectator of his dominant role.

**Exhuming and Consuming the Colonial
Black Venus in 1970s Cinema in Italy**

**Wednesday
February 29, 2012
3:00 pm
WGHL-201**

Sponsored by:

School of International Letters and
Cultures Italian Language Program
African and African-American Studies
Women and Gender Studies
Film and Media Studies

ASU COLLEGE of
LIBERAL ARTS
& SCIENCES
ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY



Born in Mogadishu (Somalia) and raised in Italy, Rosetta Giuliani Caponetto is Assistant Professor of Italian at Auburn University. She received a *laurea* from the University of Bologna and a PhD in Italian from the University of Connecticut. Her areas of interest include literature and cinema of the Fascist period, Italian Colonialism in the Horn of Africa, African diaspora literature and film in Italy, as well as Postcolonial theory, race and ethnic studies. Caponetto is completing a book-length study titled *Out of Stock. Mulattoes and Levantines in Fascist Culture*.