



# GRACELESS PASOLINI'S

## POSTCOLONIAL BODY

*Presented by the George L. Graziadio Center for Italian Studies, The LGBT Task force & The Department of Film and Electronic Arts*

**By Derek Duncan**

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In 1973 Pasolini published a short essay, 'Post-script to "The Eritreans' Grace"' in which he retracted all the praise he had lavished on the inhabitants of Italy's former colony in a piece written some five years before. His sharpest comments are targeted towards one boy in particular who had mistakenly believed that a relationship with the director would, amongst other things, facilitate the acquisition of a passport. Pasolini had visited Eritrea in the course of his preparations for his *Arabian Nights*, the third film in his 'Trilogy of Life,' and subsequently commented quite extensively on this visit to a place that still bore the strong imprint of Italy's colonial past. While it is commonplace to assert that after the fall of Fascism and the rapid loss of the territories it had occupied in Africa, Italy 'forgot' colonialism, Pasolini's account of Eritrea indicates quite clearly that this claim is overstated. The aim of this paper is to revisit Pasolini's conflicted enthusiasm for the 'Third World' explicitly as an instance of Italian colonial memory. It will focus on his descriptions of Eritrean bodies tracing a trajectory of fascination that moves from amorous exaltation to bitter repudiation. While there are obvious structural links with Pasolini's earlier enthusiasms for the adolescents of Friuli and Rome, I will argue for a particular postcolonial take on the version he gives of Eritrea and its inhabitants to reflect on the black African body as an element of Italian colonial memory of which Pasolini is symptomatically part.

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