Fire and Ice: Northern Nature, Southern Neighbors, and the Environmental Humanities in Paolo Sorrentino’s *Youth*

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**Wednesday, September 20, 2017 12:30PM-1:30PM Rm. 2339 F/A Bldg**

Paolo Sorrentino, an award-winning director from Naples, has twice left Italy to film on location in Alpine Switzerland, once to make the film *The Consequences of Love* (2004) and later to make the film *Youth* (2015). The Swiss Alps happen to be a landscape of global financial power (the World Economic Forum is held each year in Davos, Switzerland, setting of *Youth*), and these Swiss films seem, at first glance, to be about privileged, isolated individuals experiencing existential crises. In an ecocritical reading of *Youth*, I suggest that this quirky film can also help us trace anxieties about the future of the planet, about climate change, and about cinema’s possible role in a climate-changed future. I think through the back-and-forth between elemental, social, and political forces, focusing on the petroleum fires that fuel cinema and the melting ice of the Alpine glaciers. Ultimately, I propose that we can follow our contemporary environmental crisis through all kinds of art forms. In the age of the Great Acceleration, it is time to change everything, as Naomi Klein urges: even the way we read media that may not intend to say anything at all about climate change.

Elena Past is Associate Professor of Italian and Associate Chair of the Department of Classical and Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. Her research includes work on the toxic waste crisis in Naples, Mediterranean cinema and ecocinema, and Italian crime fiction and film. She is currently finishing a book, *Italian Ecocinema* (under contract with Indiana University Press) and is co-editing a volume, *Landscapes, Natures, Ecologies: Italy and the Environmental Humanities*, with Serenella Lovino and Enrico Cesaretti (forthcoming with University of Virginia Press).

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