



Dickinson

<http://www.gendersexualityitaly.com>

g/s/i is an annual peer-reviewed journal which publishes research on gendered identities and the ways they intersect with and produce Italian politics, culture, and society by way of a variety of cultural productions, discourses, and practices spanning historical, social, and geopolitical boundaries.

Title: Film Review: *Drive Me Home* by Simone Catania

Journal Issue: gender/sexuality/italy, 7 (2020)

Author: Samantha Gillen

Publication date: February 2021

Publication info: gender/sexuality/italy, "Reviews"

Permalink: <https://www.gendersexualityitaly.com/30-drive-me-home>

Keywords: Film Review

Copyright information

g/s/i is published online and is an open-access journal. All content, including multimedia files, is freely available without charge to the user or his/her institution and is published according to the Creative Commons License, which does not allow commercial use of published work or its manipulation in derivative forms. Content can be downloaded and cited as specified by the author/s. **However, the Editorial Board recommends providing the link to the article (not sharing the PDF) so that the author/s can receive credit for each access to his/her work, which is only published online.**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

Drive Me Home. Directed by Simone Catania. Screenplay by Simone Catania and Fabio Natale.
Inthefilm, 2018. 94 minutes.

Simone Catania's first feature-length film opens over the parched, Sicilian hills of Blufi. Antonio "Antò" and Agostino "Tino" are two teenagers who long for something beyond that weary landscape. Throughout the film, Catania presents their idyllic childhood: harvesting olives with Antò's family, playing in the garden, and tumbling down the hills. As teenagers, Antò and Tino begin to realize that Blufi has little to offer them and that many of their neighbors have left it behind. Both end up leaving Sicily: Tino's father, a local politician, sends his son to school in Switzerland and Antò departs to make a life for himself in various western European capitals. Fifteen years from their adolescence, the story between the two almost-brothers is picked up in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, where the slow reconstruction of their friendship begins. The practical purpose of their journey is to bring Antò back to Sicily, where he must sell his childhood home and confront the emptiness of the house that reflects his mother's death.

Drive Me Home is a road movie, featuring both an outward, physical journey as well as an internal, moral one. The external journey involves multiple countries and nearly two thousand kilometers in a black semi-truck christened Vulkaan (a reference to the electric bike Tino rode as a teenager, Volcano). The internal one involves the re-exploration of a relationship after years of absence. Catania's film joins other twenty-first century Italian road movies like Edoardo Leo's *Diciotto anni dopo / 18 Years Later* (2009), Rocco Papaleo's *Basilicata Coast to Coast* (2010), and Giovanni Consonni and Marco Bellone's *AmeriQua* (2012). *Drive Me Home* brings a contemporary phenomenon into the genre: the emigration of millions of young Italians like Tino and Antò who have pursued a life outside of Italy.



Fig. 1 Tino agrees to give his old friend Antò a ride. Still.
All images are reproduced for the sole purpose of scholarly discussion.

Marco D'Amore (center), pictured above with co-star Vinicio Marchioni (left), is the strength and heart of Catania's film. His initial resistance to reconnect with his old friend stems from a fear of being

judged. He approaches the burdened character Tino with gentleness and subtlety, an intensity in his dark eyes that draws you into his world. Although both actors have excellent chemistry, D'Amore shines throughout the film. Marchioni as Antò has less to develop, as his character is more one-dimensional. He is sometimes portrayed as a stereotype of a man who hides his pain and solitude behind nonchalance and a pair of sunglasses. I found it difficult to feel sympathy for Antò until the final scene when he finally does return “home” to sell the house because it is then that we see Antò’s ghosts and the fact that he is unprepared to confront them.

Antò and Tino are burdened by their solitude and it is in that lack of belonging that they rebuild their bond. Their friendship is arguably the most attractive aspect of Catania’s film and at the Torino Film Festival in November of 2018, Marchioni referred to it twice as a “*storia d’amore maschile*” (male love story).¹ The discussion sparked from this label confirms that the friendship between Antò and Tino was always the principal plotline. While Tino’s sexuality does become important in understanding why he left Blufi and why he and Antò did not speak for several years, it is treated as a sub-plot. The scene in the bathhouse, for example, where Tino reveals his sexuality, is never addressed. Instead, the friendship that is redeveloped between the two men is *Drive Me Home*’s greatest contribution as a road movie and as a film with LGBTQ+ content. This refreshing exploration of masculinity does not feature typical male homosocial behavior, such as telling lewd jokes or insulting one another. While Antò does stage a crass incident to get out of paying at a restaurant (obtaining an expensive bottle of champagne in the process), it is an attempt to recreate his adolescent bond with Tino. His efforts pay off, as the next scene shows Tino, who has let his guard down, bringing Antò into the bathhouse.

Perhaps the most interesting technical aspect of *Drive Me Home* is Catania’s use of space. Beginning as early as the first scene, Antò is often dwarfed by his landscape, whether in the rolling hills of his childhood home in Blufi, as he hitchhikes from along a Belgian highway to the truck stop in Nijmegen, or as he tends to the animals on the communal farm in Trentino. His character is often presented in these vast expanses of sunlit land. A charismatic jokester, he is the opposite of Tino, who is quieter and more cautious. Whereas Antò is spontaneous and uninhibited, Tino is meticulous. The spaces Tino occupies reflects this in their intimacy and darkness, like that of the cab of his truck or the long and dimly lit hallway of the bathhouse. There is even a small allusion to his preference for discreetness when Tino rests after his injury at the farmhouse in northern Italy. Sunlight from his window stretches across the wall above the headboard, bathing the room in light. Tino, as he sleeps peacefully, remains in a sliver of the shadow. Appropriately, he does not appear until dinner to eat with the others, after night has fallen.

The title *Drive Me Home* reflects both characters’ desire to find a place to call their own: Tino cannot return to Blufi because he knows his sexual identity will not be accepted. Antò can (and does) go back, but he is welcomed only by childhood memories. The abstract concept of “home” in Catania’s film is further reiterated when Tino and Antò have their first real conversation in Venice’s Port Marghera about why Tino left Blufi. After days of traveling south from the Netherlands, it is symbolic that they share a meaningful conversation about family, relationships, and identity in their motherland. While Tino’s life is determined by the routes of his job, it is uncertain what the future holds for Antò. Catania’s film demonstrates that “home” is not a fixed place, but a state of tranquility, tethered by the relationships that we choose to build with those close to us.

SAMANTHA GILLEN

¹ Simone Catania, “TFF36 Conferenza stampa di presentazione DRIVE ME HOME di Simone Catania #Pressconference,” Torino Film Festival, November 28, 2018, YouTube video, 31:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDW-0q81huI>.

University of Pennsylvania