ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

POSTCOLONIAL ITALY

Challenging National Homogeneity

Edited by

CRISTINA LOMBARDI-DIOP and CATERINA ROMEO

Italian and Italian American Studies

Stanislao G. Pugliese
Hofstra University
Series Editor

This publishing initiative seeks to bring the latest scholarship in Italian and Italian American history, literature, cinema, and cultural studies to a large audience of specialists, general readers, and students. I&IAS will feature works on modern Italy (Renaissance to the present) and Italian American culture and society by established scholars as well as new voices in the academy. This endeavor will help to shape the evolving fields of Italian and Italian American Studies by reemphasizing the connection between the two. The following editorial board consists of esteemed senior scholars who act as advisors to the series editor.

Queer Italia: Same-Sex Desire in Italian Literature and Film
edited by Gary P. Cestaro, July 2004

Frank Sinatra: History, Identity, and Italian American Culture
edited by Stanislao G. Pugliese, October 2004

The Legacy of Primo Levi
edited by Stanislao G. Pugliese, December 2004

Italian Colonialism
edited by Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, July 2005

Mussolini's Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City
Borden W. Painter Jr., July 2005

Representing Sacco and Vanzetti
edited by Jerome H. Delamater and Mary Anne Trasciatti, September 2005

Carlo Tresca: Portrait of a Rebel
Nunzio Pernicone, October 2005

Italy in the Age of Pinocchio: Children and Danger in the Liberal Era
Carl Ipsen, April 2006

The Empire of Stereotypes: Germaine de Staël and the Idea of Italy
Robert Casillo, May 2006

Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861–1911: Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora
Aliza S. Wong, October 2006

Women in Italy, 1945–1960: An Interdisciplinary Study
edited by Penelope Morris, October 2006

Debating Divorce in Italy: Marriage and the Making of Modern Italians, 1860–1974
Mark Seymour, December 2006

A New Guide to Italian Cinema
Carlo Celli and Marga Cottino-Jones, January 2007

Human Nature in Rural Tuscany: An Early Modern History
Gregory Hanlon, March 2007

The Missing Italian Nuremberg: Cultural Amnesia and Postwar Politics
Michele Battini, September 2007

Assassinations and Murder in Modern Italy: Transformations in Society and Culture
edited by Stephen Gundle and Lucia Rinaldi, October 2007

Piero Gobetti and the Politics of Liberal Revolution
James Martin, December 2008

Primo Levi and Humanism after Auschwitz: Posthumanist Reflections
Jonathan Druker, June 2009

Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans
edited by Luisa Del Giudice, November 2009

Italy's Divided Memory
John Foot, January 2010

Women, Desire, and Power in Italian Cinema
Marga Cottino-Jones, March 2010

The Failure of Italian Nationhood: The Geopolitics of a Troubled Identity
Manlio Graziano, September 2010

Women and the Great War: Femininity under Fire in Italy
Allison Scardino Belzer, October 2010

Italian Jews from Emancipation to the Racial Laws
Cristina M. Bettin, November 2010

Anti-Italianism: Essays on a Prejudice
edited by William J. Connell and Fred Gardaphé, January 2011

Murder and Media in the New Rome: The Fadda Affair
Thomas Simpson, January 2011

Mohamed Fekini and the Fight to Free Libya
Angelo Del Boca; translated by Antony Shugaar, January 2011

City and Nation in the Italian Unification: The National Festivals of Dante Alighieri
Mahnaz Yousefzadeh, April 2011

The Legacy of the Italian Resistance
Philip Cooke, May 2011

New Reflections on Primo Levi: Before and After Auschwitz
edited by Risa Sodi and Millicent Marcus, July 2011

Italy on the Pacific: San Francisco's Italian Americans
Sebastian Fichera, December 2011

Memory and Massacre: Revisiting Sant'Anna di Stazzema
Paolo Pezzino, translated by Noor Giovanni Mazhar, February 2012

In the Society of Fascists: Acclamation, Acquiescence, and Agency in Mussolini's Italy
edited by Giulia Albanese and Roberta Pergher, September 2012

Carlo Levi's Visual Poetics: The Painter as Writer
Giovanna Faleschini Lerner, October 2012

Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity
Edited by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, December 2012

Postcolonial Italy

Challenging National Homogeneity

Edited by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo

palgrave
macmillan

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-1-137-28145-6

First published in 2012 by PALGRAVE MACMILLAN® in the United States—
a division of St. Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Where this book is distributed in the UK, Europe and the rest of the world, this is by Palgrave Macmillan, a division of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

Palgrave® and Macmillan® are registered trademarks in the United States, the United Kingdom, Europe and other countries.

ISBN 978-1-349-44817-3 ISBN 978-1-137-28146-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137281463

Although the editors conceived and developed this volume together, Cristina Lombardi-Diop wrote the three sections of the introductory chapter titled "Defining Postcolonialism," "Uneven Decolonization," and "Immigration and Postcolonial Consciousness" and chapter 11, and edited Part I and II of the collection; Caterina Romeo wrote the three sections of the introductory chapter titled "Colonialism, The South, Emigration," "Postcolonial Studies in Italy," and "Methodology and Scope" and chapter 14, and edited Parts III and IV of the collection.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available from the Library of Congress.

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

Design by Scribe Inc.

First edition: December 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents

11

Postracial/Postcolonial Italy

Cristina Lombardi-Diop

Postracial Italy

In the wake of the historic election of the first black president of the United States, the ex-prime minister of Italy, Silvio Berlusconi, in greeting the event, made an uncanny remark that shocked the world. Smilingly, he referred to Barack Obama as "young, handsome, and also tanned."[1] Berlusconi's ambiguous reference to Obama's racial identity was intended as a humorous compliment, he later explained. In his view the remark, which derided Obama's racial identity in an attempt to erase it, was indeed comical since it supposedly revealed that the power of the state cannot possibly be embodied in a black body which, by definition, the state power seeks to exclude. Consequently, Berlusconi reduced Obama's blackness to a cosmetic trick—a blackened face, a burned face, a form of whiteness in disguise, a tan, something to be laughed at.

The following chapter analyzes contemporary Italy as a postracial society, a society where widespread racism permeates the political discourse, the societal behavior, and popular culture, yet race is often unnamed and ultimately silenced.[2] In today's Italy, the interrogation on race and racial identity seems "literally 'whitened'" in everyday consciousness (Pinkus, "Shades of Black" 135; Mellino in this volume).[3] As a crucial dimension of Italian colonialism in East and North Africa, race has undergone a process of removal akin to the one described by Angelo Del Boca with regards to Italy's colonial crimes (and the memory of colonialism tout court) that he views as "a product of the total denial of colonial atrocities, the lack of debate on colonialism, and the survival, in the collective imaginary, of convictions and theories of justification" (34). Alessandro Portelli argues that Italians deny their own whiteness and such an act of denial constitutes the basis of the national discourse on race. White identity, according to Portelli, coincides with Italy's Catholic identity. Portelli identifies in the historical lack (at least until contemporary migrations) of a sizable black community and in the forgotten

dimension of Italian colonialism some of the reasons why Italians "do not see themselves as 'white' but rather as 'normal, as human by default'" (29).

While an engagement with the memories of colonialism is fundamental to the intellectual and political agenda of postcolonial criticism worldwide, in Italy such an engagement signals an attempt to counteract a distinctive colonial nostalgia that pervades contemporary literature and popular culture in works that evoke, quite uncritically, the aspirations, fears, and desires of Italian settlers in the Horn of Africa (see Triulzi in this volume). Similarly, the scholarly reevaluation of the racial dimension of colonialism and its racist practices—at least since the end of the 1980s—has been prompted by the eruption of violent, racially motivated attacks against black African immigrants in the peninsula (Balbo and Manconi; see Romeo in this volume). Initially, most scholarly attention was focused on colonial and anti-Semitic racial thinking in an effort to unearth the body of positivist theories that underpinned the institutionalization of racism against colonial subjects in the former colonies and Jewish citizens in the peninsula (Centro Furio Jesi; Burgio; Maiocchi; Sòrgoni "Racist Discourses"; De Donno; Bonavita et al.). Most recently, a new wave of scholarship has extended the study of racism beyond the Fascist period to contemporary forms of institutional discrimination and individual racist practices against immigrants (Dal Lago; Mezzadra; Curcio and Mellino, *Challenging*). In order to articulate an antiracist response to Italy's new racism, this approach has looked at the European dimension of institutional forms of discrimination and has demonstrated an enhanced awareness of the global dynamics that link new capital mobility and labor production to immigration patterns and legal restrictions. In spite of this scholarly output, on the whole, today's social critique of racism has dedicated little attention to the ways in which race, as a system of differentiation, "shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses" (Frankenberg 519). Moreover, studies on the construction of modern Italian identity have paid little attention to the impact of racial self-definitions and self-perceptions. Scholars, with few exceptions,[4] have not interrogated the racial assumptions that have structured and supported the idea of Italianness as racially coded. Yet whiteness has constituted for Italians a form of representational cohesion at different historical moments, providing an ideological and discursive tool for national identification and self-representation before, during, and after colonialism. Notwithstanding a "self-reflexive color-blindness" (Portelli 30), race has been a pivotal element in Italy's cultural discourse. Theories on and references to the racial identity of Italians as white have cemented the project of nationhood since Unification,[5] while the idea of the racial superiority of Italians, in scientific and mainstream literature, has been a *leitmotif* in Italian nationalist discourse during the interwar period, as well as in colonial propaganda (Maiocchi; Labanca; Wong). This neglected aspect of national history highlights the highly ubiquitous yet invisible nature of whiteness for contemporary Italians, who often view themselves as racially unmarked and are rarely aware of their position of race privilege in relation to foreigners and nonwhite Italians. Such oblivion to race characterizes, I argue, the nonraciality of postcolonial Italy.

Following a visual and discursive trajectory, the following chapter takes into consideration the formation of the idea of cleanliness and its ideological ties to the

larger, more subliminal project of the self-representation of Italians as white. Historically, I contend, this project of identity formation in relation to whiteness and associated with beauty and modernity, was carried forth through a "redemptive hygiene" (Ross 75) that was in turn mediated by what Stephen Gundle calls the "Americanization of daily life" ("L'americanizzazione" 561–94) and the influence of its racialist models. In the postwar period, as Italy came to regard itself as clean, sanitized, homogeneously white, and ordered according to principles of modernizing rationality, many contradictory aspects of its uneven national cohesiveness were partially reconciled. In particular, the containment of southern peasantry, which bore the shame of a racial Otherness long felt as a burden; the removal of the memory of the colonial experience, marked by high levels of interracial sociality; and a certain disdainful disregard for the social transformations brought by decades of emigration and the ensuing transnationalization of Italianness, were all made possible by a modernization that promised a different temporality, a fresh and novel start, a blank slate.

Working against the grain of the perceived lack of continuity between the interwar and postwar period, my analysis draws some of its key elements from the medical discourse of the mid-1930s, moves to the reconstruction period, and takes into consideration how the dichotomy black/white is articulated in one specific advertising figure taken from 1960s television culture. It then briefly examines the influence of racialized thinking on the Italian youth of the mid-1990s, and ends with an analysis of the 2006 and 2007 video commercials titled "Happy Housewife" that advertise a specific product used for black dyes. My tentative hypothesis is that Italy's democratic postfascist society was predicated on the consolidation of whiteness as a category of racial identification. The sense of aspiring to a privileged status identifiable with being white was—for the first time—no longer limited to the middle-class and intellectual elites (as it was during Fascism). In the postwar years, it extended to and began to affect a larger pool of average, petit-bourgeois Italians, and ultimately mass society. Under the new visual regimes of booming advertising and TV broadcasting, the consolidation of the new identity of Italians as homogeneously white facilitated the erasure from public awareness of past relations with race and blackness. The whitening up of Italians was a process of elevation to wealth, health, social privilege, access to resources, commodities, and technologies, all associated with whiteness at the expense of the exclusion, the restrictions, the marginalization, and the economic deprivation associated with blackness. In this sense, the process of race formation was also a process of class formation.[6]

Prior to considering the specific Italian case, it would be useful to determine the general meaning of the postracial. In the simplest of terms, the postracial (like the postcolonial) does not mean the end of something, that is, the end of race. The complexities that lie behind such terms cannot be reduced to a conception of linear time according to which the preposition "post" signals the definitive disappearance of what came before (McClintock). In the United States, the genealogy of the postracial is rooted in the extension of the legal principle of colorblindness in the post–civil rights movement era. A theorization of the postracial is particularly relevant in the US context, where the election of Barack Obama has prompted

many white commentators to affirm that the country has entered a "post-racial era" when "race is no longer a central factor determining the life changes of Americans" (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich 191). The contradictory and paradoxical aspect of postracial America is that the so-called end of race witnesses, nonetheless, persistently high rates of residential segregation patterns, housing and job discrimination, school segregation levels, racial profiling, and incarceration rates seven times higher for blacks than for whites (Bonilla-Silva and Ray).

In Europe, the postracial is an emanation of the racial amnesia linked to the demise of the colonial state and based on the false assumption that racial homogeneity is an internal condition of the nation-state while heterogeneity is a characteristic of the past, confined to the colonial period. According to David Theo Goldberg, this picture obfuscates the heterogeneity of Europe's continuous exchange and contacts with Otherness since early modernity and the fact that the colonial condition helped produce demographic heterogeneity. In historical accounts and official histories, however, race is invoked to deny such heterogeneity. The postracial is thus a constitutive element of the European postcolonial condition. The exclusion from legal rights and citizenship, labor exploitation, residential segregation, the public media denigration, police profiling, and educational and social exclusion, are nonetheless always imputed to economic disparities, cultural and religious differences, or the discontent emerging in Europe as a result of the new immigration, and never to racism (see Mellino in this volume).

The Washing Away of Blackness

In Italy, the condition for such denial of race is rooted in the very articulation of racial difference in terms that implicitly and constantly affirm the demographic and social hegemony of whiteness. As scholar Karen Pinkus observes, race is blackness, while whiteness is the nonracialized norm ("Shades of Black"). The exceptionality of blackness is a distinction that requires a series of social reconfigurations and adjustments. In popular culture, the melodramatic and the comic genres are forms of readjustment to the exceptional disruption brought about the emergence of blackness.[7] In Berlusconi's joke, for instance, the pleasure of laughter, while reinforcing social norms and assumptions about the hegemonic role of whiteness, is predicated on the whitening out of Obama's blackness. In the history of European ideas around blackness as in the popular imagination, an original moment of comic excess—also present in the history of the black-faced minstrel shows—is often linked to the possibility of the washing away of race. Pinkus mentions a line in Henri Bergson's famous 1900 essay on the meaning of the comic, where the French philosopher states that a Negro makes us laugh because his black face strikes the eye as "unwashed" (Henri Bergson qtd. in Pinkus, "Shades of Black" 135). The nexus between racial authenticity, blackness, and dirt is at the core of my interest in the legacy of forms of racialization which, as a result of the institutionalization of racism in the late 1930s, permeated the larger domain of Italy's public culture and eventually spread to postwar popular culture. The connection between the "protection of race" and health prophylaxis pervaded many aspects of

Italy's racial culture of the mid-1930s, and especially the sphere of the family, of domesticity, and womanhood.[8]

In the mid-1930s, theories of blackness as dirt began to inform the eugenicist conception of racial abjection. Eugenics, as an academic and disciplinary discourse, gave rise to a series of "social-technical interventions" that targeted the family to secure the welfare and expansion of the population against declines in fertility and to protect the stock (Horn 66). After 1927, a series of pronatalist measures were implemented through legislation that immediately found resonance in eugenic medical and scientific literature.[9] While the 1930 Penal Code (also known as the *Codice Rocco*) penalized the private behaviors of Italians on the basis of a new series of crimes against the integrity and health of the stock, the expansion of the human biopolitics elaborated by eugenicist Nicola Pende in the early 1930s, inaugurated a *biologia politica* ("biopolitics") that conceived the medical practice as a form of social control and management of the domestic realm, children, and labor, as well as of women's sexuality and family life. In pamphlets, medical literature, and in the visual and written campaigns against contagious diseases such as syphilis and tuberculosis, the need to protect the Italian race against contamination and degeneration was considered dependent upon the sanitary conditions of the domestic environment, which was the ultimate domain of women (Maiocchi 41–79; Mignemi 65–89).

The battle against the contamination of the blood targeted women as defenders of the genetic purity of the Italian race. A 1936 pamphlet distributed by the *Federazione nazionale fascista* in support of the battle against tuberculosis and authored by professor Gioacchino Breccia addressed Italian women as those on whom the nation bestowed "a sublime mandate: to create the health and strength of the new generations; renovate the household, and confer upon it dignity, and moral and material healthiness" (qtd. in Mignemi, 70). Breccia, a stern supporter of medical biopolitics, gave expression to a vision that had been, at least in part, already implemented through fascist mass organizations. From the mid-1920s, the *Opera nazionale maternità e infanzia* (ONMI, founded as early as 1925) began promoting the safeguarding of maternity, social hygiene, and the health of children and women. Of major relevance were its campaigns against tuberculosis, which was considered as a highly contagious social disease. The ONMI antitubercular campaigns focused on the role of mothers as guarantors of the cleanliness of the domestic environment. Children's health highly depended on a sanitized and hygienic home. In order to achieve the goal of domestic prophylaxis, the central government relied on the medical apparatuses that operated through local and regional administrative offices.

Such bureaucratic institutions soon contributed to a fairly rigid control of public health, the household, and the management of women's domestic sphere. Yet I would like to suggest that the imperative of hygiene as a form of social control was achieved also through the consolidation of a more private and individualized idea of cleanliness, understood as a normative condition, a conception that required less institutionalized venues and relied more on consumer and commercial culture in order to reach all Italians. It is in the shift from the public to the private sphere and the realm of the daily practices of bodily care that the transition from

the political project of fascist racism to the racialized project of postwar Italy took place. Such shift also occurred for the visual tradition of hygienic messages, which from the realm of medicine spread to the sphere of the domestic as well as the realm of the body, beauty, and consumption. In the culture of advertisement of the Fascist *ventennio*, the curative and hygienic benefits of water and swimming were soon accompanied by the practice of sunbathing, which began, in the 1930s, to be separated from the idea of providing a cure against tuberculosis and various other diseases (Triani 140–73). Before the war, in advertising for skin products, paleness was still a sign of nobility, but the advertisement of lotions to protect the skin from sun rays also began to associate sunbathing and tanning with the realm of travel and pleasure, regardless of class affiliation, and thus detached from the rural and agricultural world that had characterized it.[10] Cosmetics for women, such as Lux soaps and Pond's skin creams, began to be manufactured and marketed as inexpensive goods, fulfilling the expectations of modern young consumers, especially in the northern urban milieu, attracted by Hollywood films, American consumer goods and brands, and organized less around geographical and regional affiliations and more around the media system (Arvidsson 19–37).

Journalist, writer, and critic Umberto Notari, famous for his commentaries on female beauty and his campaigns for a truly autarchic approach to female consumption against the corrupting effects of foreign modernity, explored the crucial nexus of whiteness, racial superiority, and femininity in his "Panegirico della razza italiana" (1939), where he praised the beauty of Italian women as transcending historical contingencies. Given its classical perfection, it was comparable to the iconic aesthetic tradition of Renaissance paintings: "It does not matter if the clothes are different, simpler or more worn. The physical nature is the same. Complexions have the same smooth whiteness, the eyes the same softness, the mouths the same sparkle, the neck, the shoulders and the bust the same design" (Umberto Notari qtd. in Gundle, *Bellissima* 102). As Stephen Gundle argues, that such classical beauty could be classified as white and Mediterranean and thus ultimately Italian and as such, superior to Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, and Slavic races, was functional to Notari's intended reclaiming of an antique and antimodern patriotic image of female Italianness.

But what is of interest for our argument is how Notari's emphasis on qualities of female beauty (the smooth whiteness of the complexion, the softness of the skin) diverges considerably from the stereotype of Italian female beauty as "dark, passionate, instinctive" and "antique and primitive, close to nature and uncivilised" (*Bellissima* xxiii–xxiv) that Gundle identifies as the ubiquitous trope of national femininity. It seems, rather, that Notari's "Panegyric" was coated in the language of the novel anthropological concept of an Aryan-Mediterranean *Romanità*, propagated after 1936 by racial theorists such as Giulio Cogni, in what was then a new approach to the idea of the homogeneity of the origin of Italian racial identity. As Gaia Giuliani argues, such "whitening" of the female characteristics signifying sensual fertility, which the regime attributed to *le massaie rurali* ("rural housewives"), reconfigured the particular signification of Mediterraneanness as darkness and aligned it with the fascist project of incorporating southern Italians into the nation through pronatalism and ruralization (Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop).

In light of the celebration of rural, antimodern traditionalism, the value of white *Romanità* that Notari praises here mediates between the classical and the modern and as such provides an alternative to the "sterilizing" effects of the industrial city, where poor hygienic conditions and factory work were considered detrimental to the reproductive strength of both men and women (Horn 96).

After 1936, the rationalization of the household according to scientific managerial principles was extended to Italian East Africa and became intimately complicit with eugenics and particularly instrumental to segregationist policies in Libya and East Africa. While the opinion of hygiene experts resonated in the discussions for the urban planning of Tripoli, one of the centerpieces of the imperial propaganda at the time of the invasion of Ethiopia was the lack of *civiltà* of the Ethiopians, considered backward and underdeveloped on the basis of the "filth" and lack of hygiene of their dwellings and cities. The need for the isolation of the natives in their quarters was regarded, according to one urban planner, as a protection against the unhygienic life of the indigenous population (Fuller 197–99). And while in the peninsula *massaismo* ("female ruralization") promised a new rationalization of managerial practices and the formation of a new female leadership within the household, in the colonies home economics played a key role in defying racial consciousness and divisions.

Eugenic literature continued to associate the realm of medicine and genetics to female sexual behavior, but after the conquest of Ethiopia in 1936 the application of such theories directly impinged upon the sexuality and dwelling behaviors of both Italian and African women. While the work of Giorgio Chiurco on the sanitary politics in Ethiopia advocated for the betterment of the hygienic conditions of the colonial subjects according to the principles of a *civilizzazione sanitaria* ("sanitary civilization," Chiurco 429), eugenicist Gaetano Pierraccini's theory of the "centralizing action of woman" (Sòrgoni, *Parole* 198) established that women's genetic code was less prone to variations and therefore more capable of transmitting the hereditary characters of the race, a theory that reversed previously held ideas about patrilinearity as the central principle of the transmission of racial traits.[11] These "scientific" notions were immediately incorporated in the propaganda literature meant for all Italians, and especially for a female audience. In the 1937 manual conceived for female colonial settlers it is stated that "the most illustrious anthropologists have demonstrated that the woman represents the conservative element of the blood, as well as the link and the symbol for the continuity of the race" (Istituto Coloniale Fascista 117).

As a consequence of these new trends, African women were gradually removed from the daily practices of interaction with Italian men and children. Colonial medical manuals began to encourage breastfeeding by mothers as the best solution for Italian children's growth and for their adaptation to the colonial environment, and discouraged the recourse to indigenous wet-nurses, considered dangerous for sanitary reasons, including the fact that milk was deemed a potential carrier of diseases (Sòrgoni, *Parole* 199).[12] The role of the *lettè*, that is, the Eritrean women performing domestic work and childcare for wealthy Italian families, was no longer central to the domestic economy of the colony.[13] The imperial domestic space had to erase the presence of African women in order to offer white women both

a frontier space and a "proper" place as they settled in it to create modern Italian homes.[14]

The Moral Imperative of Whiteness

The visual tradition that associated national morality and racial identity with the power of cleaning agents continued in a similar direction when the advertising industry moved from billboards and illustrated magazines to TV commercials. In the 1950s, well-funded detergent campaigns for such brands as OMO and Sunil began to appear in the Italian illustrated press and women's magazines, most of which were created by the big American advertising agency J. Walter Thompson (JWT) for Uniliver. These ads began to instill in women the idea of "the perilous consequences of not-white-enough laundry" as a form of moral imperative (Arvidsson 67). This type of campaigns, which Uniliver ran worldwide, borrowed their motivational pattern from the experience already developed for the "American Housewife" advertising market. JWT understood that detergents, products that outlined the domestic work of women as a labor power that equated the labor of men, could open the Italian market and simultaneously spread in Italy the ethical and motivational behaviors of American consumer culture (Arvidsson 67–78).

In the 1950s, with the mechanization of domestic work and the increasing use of electrical appliances, advertising found in the alliance with TV broadcasting a national resonance of unsurpassed capacity. While in 1954 only ninety thousand Italians owned a TV set, in 1955 there were nine million of them who watched TV, even if they did not own a set or did not watch it regularly (Dorfles 9). Together with the disappearing of the *bucato a mano* ("hand wash") ritual, the idea of the opacity of whiteness and the moral imperative of a "bianco che più bianco non si può" ("white that cannot be whiter," Dorfles 43) became one of the leading themes of soap advertising. From 1957 to 1977 *Carosello*, a hybrid TV broadcast daily on Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), dominated Italian TV culture, although the state-controlled channel imposed rigid codes on its format. This was made of 100 minutes of TV programming followed by 35 seconds of advertisement. While women were often absent from the main shows, they were almost invariably there in the so-called *codino*, the closing advertisement, signaling their primary role as targets of the commercial campaigns that featured laundry detergents, household appliances, furniture, and cooking ingredients.

As a dominant format of Italian state TV broadcasting, *Carosello* soon became a cultural institution in Italian domestic and advertising culture, reaching an audience of one million Italians as early as 1958 (Giaccardi). A hybrid program, made of many mini-ads within one format, *Carosello* experimented with the diversification of consumer target audiences—children, parents, grandparents—while continuing to address the family in its entirety (Scaglioni). Its end coincided with the end of state monopoly on national TV in 1976, when a Constitutional Court decision sanctioned the opening of the broadcasting sector to private investors (Pittèri).

At the beginning of the 1960s, the iconic TV figure of *Calimero, il pulcino nero* ("Calimero, the black chick") appeared for the first time as one of the recurrent and ritualistic sketches of *Carosello* and dominated Italian advertisement for more than forty years, becoming a TV series in 1972 and nurturing the collective imaginary of Italians for generations. As its creators, the brothers Nino and Toni Pagot, explained in the weekly magazine *La Domenica del corriere*, in order to sell the product "one must stimulate women's interest. And what interests women the most? Children and animals. So then, the prototype for a helpless child is the chick. If we make it sad and wretched, it will inspire sympathy. If we make it black, we immediately begin to introduce the idea that it needs a good cleaning" (qtd. in Di Marino, 185). Conceived as a product image for sponsoring the washing-machine detergent AVA, the *Calimero* video narrative featured a black chick in search of his putative mother, who abandoned him because of his black color. When he finally finds her, he asks "If I were white, would you like me?" Abandoned again, he eventually meets a Dutch girl (the famous *olandesina*) who assures him that he is not black, but only dirty, washes him with the AVA product, and brings him back to its pure, socially acceptable white origin. Ultimately, *Calimero* shows that the affirmation of Italy's booming consumer economy as a gendered female economy was predicated again, as during Fascism, on the pivotal idea of the hygienic cleansing of the stigma of blackness from Italy's household culture.

Postcolonial Italy

The ubiquity of the culture of advertising explains the persistence of the moral injunction of whiteness attached to racial self-perception in the decades that followed the mass triumph of TV commercials and the dominance of *Carosello* culture in Italy. At the beginning of the 1990s, sociologist Paola Tabet conducted a national survey among Italian school children aged 7 to 13. The study aimed at understanding the legacy of Fascism on Italian contemporary society and on children's racial perceptions. This particular generational target was, obviously, not directly exposed to Fascist propaganda and neither were, as Tabet seems to assume, their parents. They are, rather, the progeny of the children of the economic miracle whose parents grew up watching *Carosello*.

Children in Tabet's survey were asked to respond in writing to hypothetical questions such as "If your parents were black, what would you do?" or "If your neighbors were black, what would you do?" The answers are alarming, to say the least. Fear, shame, and rejection dominate in the responses. Stereotypes, many of which seem to hark back to colonial propaganda, attribute to Africans a constitutive savagery and a pervasive lack of civility. One particular set of responses caught my attention in this study. It describes possible solutions to the hypothetical event of having black parents. These solutions are not as violent or drastic as others, but are nonetheless disconcerting and revealing. An example, among others, comes from a fourth grader who writes, "If my parents were black, I would assume that they are from Africa. I would put them in the washing machine with Dasch, Dasch Ultra [sic], Omino Bianco, Atlas, Ace detersivo, Ava, Dixan 2000, Coccolino, Aiax,

[laundry detergent name-brands] to make sure that they would return to being normal" (113). The coerced return to normalizing, epidermal whiteness in this response brings us full circle back to the fascist legacy of the societal fear of contamination and dirt associated with blackness. Yet the idea that such fear needs tons of different and equally potent name-brand detergents to be washed away comes straight out of an advertising culture that refers no longer to biopolitical categories to define race but privileges the quotidian, diffuse language of commercial name-brands in order to affirm the cleansing of its domestic, familial, and national heritage. Under neoliberalism, thus, as Goldberg aptly demonstrates, race is understood in terms of "geo-phenotypes" (7) that mark national belonging: those who do not belong are considered a polluting element of the national space that must be cleansed away with the potent products of late capitalism.

My final example of the washing away of race in contemporary Italy comes from the 2006 and 2007 video commercials produced by the Italian company Guaber (see their site "Welcome to Guaber"), which were created to advertise a specific product, marketed by Guaber's brand *Coloreria Italiana*, used for black dyes, one among a series of sophisticated liquid dyes for fabrics. Founded in 1961, in 2006 the Guaber company signed a series of agreements that led to the creation of a large Franco-Italian holding, the Spotless Group, with branches in several European countries. The Spotless Group specializes in the sale of fabric care products, cleaning products, insecticides, and plant care products. The 2006–7 campaign, titled "Happy Housewife," was made by Filmmaster, a dynamic and highly creative film production company based in Rome, and first released in March 2006.

The 2006 video (Part I) depicts a white Italian woman doing laundry. She is interrupted by the arrival of her white partner, in his underwear, who tries to seduce her. She is obviously unimpressed and responds by throwing him into the washing machine, pouring some of the advertised *Coloreria Italiana* product, and slamming the lid shut. Once the cycle is over, out of the machine comes an athletic black man—naked except for a tight, colored slip—flexing his perfectly shaped abdominals in front of the incredulous yet gleeful white woman. The white woman of the commercial is indeed the "Happy Housewife" of the title, who fantasizes about the potential consequences of applying the potency of the dye product to transforming her daily, uninspiring sexual partner into a hyperracialized, hypersexualized black man. His appearance from the machine as the Genie from the Wonderful Lamp is comical in its blatantly sexual and racial excess and it is accompanied by a blasting US hip hop beat that disrupts the traditional tango played on the accordion during the opening domestic scene. In its combined use of the black "masculine hero" as rapper and of the "naturalized and commodified body" of the black athlete, the video displays black heterosexual masculinity in ways similar to those conjured up in American visual culture (Gray 402). Contrary to what happened in the United States in the 1990s, though, when black rappers re-signified the masculine (hyper)sexuality of the black body with new tropes that challenged the policing and domestication of black masculinity, the hyperblack man of *Coloreria Italiana* activates an interracial sexual fantasy that is no longer menacing and disruptive as it is entirely depicted from the standpoint of dominant white sexuality and female consumerism.

By departing from past models of interracial prohibition belonging to the forgotten time of fascist segregationist policies, the 2006 video distances itself from anxiety-ridden representations of the threatened inviolability of the white female body. Its narrative fantasy displays a postracial visual variation that suppresses the more threatening aspects of a stereotypically insatiable black maleness. As the desiring subject is now the Italian housewife, the black man-out-of-the-machine provokes desire without evoking dread (Jackson). By simultaneously portraying the white woman as both the desiring subject and the dominant consumer, the Guaber video commercial validates Italy as a white consumer nation where black people can only be objects of sexual and material consumption. In the face of contemporary demographic changes, the commercial reestablishes the dominance of white womanhood as consumerism within the national domestic economy. Within this national model, the Italian housewife's fantasy strengthens rather than weakens the notion of an Italian white family by positioning black male sexuality as disruptive of heterosexual and monoracial normativity.[15]

The second commercial, broadcast in 2007, enacts a different narrative. This is a much more familiar terrain, at least for Italian viewers. The opening of the video recalls Part I, yet now it is the white male partner who is activating interracial fantasies by peeping through a soft-porn magazine, whose cover displays a black woman scantily dressed, while his white female partner is doing laundry. Annoyed by his behavior, she takes the magazine away from his hands. In retaliation, the white man throws her into the washing machine, adds the advertised product, and slams the lid shut. As the reversal of the first, this second commercial is the real return of the past—as the title says, "il ritorno"—that attempts to reestablish the colonial interracial model (white men/black women) so abruptly disrupted by the first. This time, it is the white woman who undergoes a punitive washing. The desired result, that is, the scantily dressed black woman of the magazine cover, is nonetheless unavailable to her white partner. In place of a black woman, out of the machine comes the same iconic black man, this time posing a visible threat to the white man's interracial heterosexual desire, as he blows a kiss to the visibly intimidated man standing in front of him. The queering of the black male body in the second commercial seems indeed meant to reinscribe within a colonial logic the process of desire and repulsion linked to the possibility of racial and sexual mixing. In this ad, interracial desire appears to reactivate, in order to refute it, one of the most silenced aspects of colonial sexuality: interracial homosociality and homoerotic desire.[16] This time, though, it has apparently severed its link with the colonial context, since the conditions it references have been obscured. In the face of the increasing heterogeneity of Italian society, both commercials hint at the possible mobility of racial Otherness, where race is distributed and dispersed as commodity, yet whiteness is triumphant as blackness has gained no power over its position and its representations.

Infused with apparently progressive meaning and ironic undertones, both commercials hint at the possibility of the "removal of the stigma from interracial sociality" (Goldberg 189) while leaving intact a series of distinctions drawn less from the colonial archive and more from the American popular imagination, where "contemporary expressions of black masculinity work symbolically

in a number of directions at once; they challenge and disturb racial and class constructions of blackness; they also rewrite and reinscribe the patriarchal and heterosexual basis of masculine privilege (and domination) based on gender and sexuality" (Gray 402). The first commercial, for instance, visualizes the washing away of white masculinity through the use of a product that fixes and reifies the stereotypical notion of black sexual potency while leaving free reins to white, feminine interracial desire. In the second commercial, blackness as disruptive sexuality becomes functional to the reinstatement of racial and sexual heteronormativity. Both commercials show the return to a racial framework where the visual inscription of white desire for blackness is again possible, certainly as a function of its subordination and consumption.

In conclusion, the Guaber commercials attend to one of the most salient aspects of postracial/postcolonial Italy, that is, the apparent deflection from the binary oppositions of racism such as black vs. white, colonized vs. colonizer, subaltern vs. dominant. The emphasis is on a new affectivity that takes the form of interracial/interethnic desire and stresses mixture and the creation of social intercourses linked to the arousal of new desires, all in the name of a new and global logic of exchange. While commercial culture plays with the simultaneous affirmation and prohibition of interracial desire, its display of interracial *jouissance*—confined within a national, domestic frame—is acceptable until contained, until the logic of mixture does not exceed the limits of state security and control. In the face of the racist attacks and brutal killings of black African immigrant men, accompanied by the repressive measures implemented to keep black Africans out of the southern borders of Europe, the Italian postracial is only, apparently, about the liberation from race. In our time, the obsession with cleanliness takes on another important, yet subtler, function: in washing the body in and out of race, the postracial contributes to diffusing and making invisible the many occurrences of racism in postcolonial Italy.

Works Cited

Arvidsson, Adam. *Marketing Modernity: Italian Advertising from Fascism to Postmodernity*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Balbo, Laura, and Luigi Manconi. *I razzismi possibili*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1990. Print.

———. *I razzismi reali*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1992. Print.

Barrera, Giulia. "Patrilinearity, Race, and Identity: The Upbringing of Italo-Eritreans during Italian Colonialism." Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 97–108. Print.

Ben-Ghiat, Ruth, and Mia Fuller eds. *Italian Colonialism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.

"Berlusconi: 'Obama, bello e abbronzato.'" *Corriere della sera*. 6 November 2008. Web. 24 May 2012. <http://www.corriere.it/politica/08_novembre_06/berlusconi_obama_abbronzato_141c1e10-ac16–11dd-9d45–00144f02aabc.shtml>.

Bonavita, Riccardo, Gianluca Gabrielli, and Rossella Ropa, eds. *L'offesa della razza. Razzismo e antisemitismo dell'Italia fascista*. Bologna: Pàtron Editore, 2005. Print.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, and David Dietrich. "The Sweet Enchantment of Color-Blind Racism in Obamerica." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 634 (2011): 190–206. Web. 9 May 2012. <http://ann.sagepub.com/content/634/1/190>.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, and Victor Ray. "When Whites Love a Black Leader: Race Matters in Obamerica." *Journal of African American Studies* 13 (2009): 176–83. Web. 10 May 2012. <http://www.springerlink.com/content/dl7g722448k35614>.

Burgio, Alberto, ed. *Nel nome della razza. Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999. Print.

Calimero pulcino nero by AVA. Advertisement. Web.

Canova, Gianni, ed. *Dreams. I sogni degli italiani in 50 anni di pubblicità televisiva*. Milan: Mondadori, 2004. Print.

Centro Furio Jesi. *La menzogna della razza. Documenti e immagini del razzismo e dell'antisemitismo fascista*. Bologna: Grafis, 1994. Print.

Chiurco, Giorgio. *La sanità delle razze nell'Impero Italiano*. Rome: Istituto Fascista dell'Africa Italiana, 1940. Print.

Curcio, Anna, and Miguel Mellino. "Editorial. Race at Work. The Rise and Challenge of Italian Racism." *Challenging Italian Racism*. Ed. Miguel Mellino and Anna Curcio. Special issue of *Darkmatter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture* 6 (2010). Web. 7 May 2012. <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2010/10/10/editorial-race-at-work-the-rise-and-challenge-of-italian-racism>.

———. *La razza al lavoro*. Rome: Manifestolibri, 2012 . Print.

Dal Lago, Alessandro. *Non persone: L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2004. Print.

De Donno, Fabrizio. "La Razza Ario-Mediterranea." *Colonial and Postcolonial Italy*. Spec. issue of *Interventions* 8.3 (2006): 394–412. JSTOR. Web. 20 March 2011.

Del Boca, Angelo. "The Myths, Suppressions, Denials, and Defaults of Italian Colonialism." Palumbo 17–36. Print.

Dell'Oro, Erminia. *Asmara addio*. Milan: Mondadori, 1993. Print.

Di Marino, Bruno. "Testimonial di cartone. Animazione e cartoons nella pubblicità televisiva italiana." Canova 185–89. Print.

Dorfles, Piero. *Carosello*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1998. Print.

Frankenberg, Ruth. "White Women, Race Matters." *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader*. Ed. Les Back and John Solomos. London and New York: Routledge, 2006. 519–33. Print.

Fuller, Mia. *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities, and Italian Imperialism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. Print.

Giaccardi, Chiara. "Immagini d'identità. Pubblicità televisiva e realtà sociale." Canova 82–95. Print.

Giuliani, Gaia. "Fantasies of Whiteness in Federal Australia." *Studi culturali* 7.1 (April 2010): 141–60. Print.

Giuliani, Gaia, and Cristina Lombardi-Diop. Bianco e nero. *Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani*. Florence: Le Monnier, forthcoming 2013. Print.

Goldberg, David Theo. *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Print.

Gray, Herman. "Black Masculinity and Visual Culture." *Callaloo* 18.2 (Spring 1995): 401–5. JSTOR. Web. 19 May 2012.

Guglielmo, Jennifer, and Salvatore Salerno, eds. *Are Italians White? How Race Is Made in America*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003. Print.

Guglielmo, Thomas. *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890–1945*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. Print.

Gundle, Stephen. *Bellissima: Feminine Beauty and the Idea of Italy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007. Print.

———. "L'americanizzazione del quotidiano. Televisione e consumismo nell'Italia degli anni Cinquanta." *Quaderni storici* 62 (1986): 561–94. Print.

Happy Housewife by Coloreria Italiana. Advertisement. Web. 11 March 2010.

Horn, David. *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.

Istituto Coloniale Fascista. *Corso di preparazione coloniale per la donna*. Naples: Alfredo De Frede, 1936. Print.

Jackson, Peter. "Black Male: Advertising and the Cultural Politics of Masculinity." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 1.1 (1994): 49–59. Print.

Labanca, Nicola. "Il razzismo coloniale fascista." Burgio 145–63. Print.

Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. "Pioneering Female Modernity: Fascist Women in Colonial Africa." Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 145–54. Print.

Maiocchi, Roberto. *Scienza italiana e razzismo fascista*. Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1999. Print.

McClintock, Anne. "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism.'" *Third World and Post-Colonial Issues*. Spec. issue of *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 84–98. JSTOR. Web. 26 April 2012.

Mehaffy, Marilyn Maness. "Advertising Race/Raceing Advertising: The Feminine Consumer(-Nation), 1876–1900." *Signs* 23.1 (Autumn 1997): 131–74. JSTOR. Web. 19 May 2012.

Mezzadra, Sandro. *La condizione postcoloniale. Storia e politica nel presente globale*. Verona: Ombre corte, 2008. Print.

Mignemi, Adolfo. "Profilassi sanitaria e politiche sociali del regime per la 'tutela della stirpe.' La mise en scéne dell'orgoglio di razza." Centro Furio Jesi 65–89. Print.

Nani, Michele. *Ai confini della nazione. Stampa e razzismo nell'Italia di fine Ottocento*. Rome: Carocci Editore, 2006. Print.

Palumbo, Patrizia, ed. *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Italian Colonial Culture from Post-Unification to the Present*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003. Print.

Patriarca, Silvana. *Italian Vice: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.

Patriarca, Silvana, and Lucy Rally, eds. *The Risorgimento Revised: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy*. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. Print.

Pende, Nicola. *Bonifica umana razionale e biologia politica*. Bologna: Cappelli, 1933. Print.

Pickering Iazzi, Robin. "Mass-Mediated Fantasies of Feminine Conquest, 1930–1940." Palumbo 197–224. Print.

Pinkus, Karen. *Bodily Regimes: Italian Advertising under Fascism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. Print.

———. "Shades of Black in Advertising and Pop Culture." *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*. Ed. Beverly Allen and Mary Russo. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 134–55. Print.

Pittèri, Daniele. "Le relazioni pericolose. Economie politiche ed economie simboliche nella pubblicità televisiva." Canova 55–69. Print.

Polezzi, Loredana. "The Mirror and the Map: Italian Women Writing in the Colonial Space." *Italian Studies* 61.2 (Autumn 2006): 191–205. JSTOR. Web. 16 May 2012.

Portelli, Alessandro. "The Problem of the Color Blind: Notes on the Discourse on Race in Italy." *Crossroutes—The Meaning of Race for the 21st Century*. Ed. Paola Boi and Sabine Broeck. Hamburg and London: LIT, 2003. 29–39. Print.

Pugliese, Joseph. "Race as Category of Crisis. Whiteness and the Tropical Assignation of Race." *Social Semiotics* 12.2 (2002): 149–68. Print.

Romeo, Caterina. "Il colore bianco: la costruzione della razza in Italia e la sua rappresentazione nella letteratura di scrittrici migranti e postmigranti." *L'italiano lingua di migrazione: verso l'affermazione di una cultura transnazionale agli inizi del XXI secolo*. Ed. Anna Frabetti and Walter Zidaric. Nantes: CRINI, 2006. 79–88. Print.

Ross, Kristin. *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995. Print.

Scaglioni, Massimo. "Il dèmone del linguaggio. Cinquant'anni di televisione e (quasi) altrettanti di pubblicità." Canova 31–46. Print.

Sòrgoni, Barbara. *Parole e corpi. Antropologia, discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali interrazziali nella colonia Eritrea (1890–1941)*. Naples: Liguori, 1998. Print.

———. "Racist Discourses and Practices in the Italian Empire Under Fascism." *The Politics of Recognizing Difference: Multiculturalism Italian-Style*. Ed. Ralph D. Grillo and Jeff Pratt. Farnham: Ashgate, 2002. 41–57. Print.

Stefani, Giulietta. *Colonia per maschi. Italiani in Africa Orientale: Una storia di genere*. Verona: Ombre corte, 2007. Print.

Stoler, Ann Laura, and Karen Strassler. "Castings for the Colonial: Memory Work in 'New Order' Java." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 42.1 (January 2000): 4–8. JSTOR. Web. 26 April 2012.

Sympa, Lorenzo. *Igiene del bambino e della razza. Testo di puericultura per le scuole medie inferiori*. 6th rev. ed. Rome: Editrice Perrella, 1942. Print.

Tabet, Paola. *La pelle giusta*. Turin: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 1997. Print.

Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta*. Rome: Manifestolibri, 1993. Print.

Triani, Giorgio. *Pelle di luna, pelle di sole. Nascita della civiltà balneare, 1700–1946*. Venice: Marsilio Editori, 1988. Print.

Welcome to Guaber. Web. 12 May 2012. <http://www.guaber.it>.

Williams, Linda. *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black & White from Uncle Tom to O. J. Simpson*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002. Print.

Wong, Aliza S. *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861–1911: Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.

Notes

The ideas for this chapter were first developed on the occasion of the *Language, Space and Otherness in Italy since 1861* Conference held at the British School in Rome in June 2010. I would like to thank its organizer, David Forgacs, as well as Chiara Fabbian, Robin Pickering-Iazzi, Gabrielle Verdier, Laura Fantone, Carla Freccero, and Deanna Shemek for inviting me to share my early findings at their institutions. Special thanks go to Barbara Spackman and Margie Waller for their unflinching support. An early version of this chapter was published in *California Italian Studies* 2.1 (2011). Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to Albert R. Ascoli, Randolph Starn, Marisa Escolar, Gaia Giuliani, and to the graduate students in Italian Studies at the University of California at Berkeley for being the best of readers and critics.

1. This remark was made on November 6, 2008, during a political summit with the Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. For the Italian coverage of the event see "Berlusconi" in *Corriere della sera*. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
2. Miguel Mellino and Anna Curcio have recently argued that, although racism has been operating as a master discourse since the inception of Italy's modern capitalism, the

memory of its historicity is often denied and it is dangerously absent both from the individual and the political consciousness of Italians. See Curcio and Mellino.

3. I owe to Karen Pinkus the discovery of the nexus between the fading away of racially conscious thinking and Italian advertising culture. See *Bodily Regimes* and "Shades of Black."
4. The very first articulation of whiteness studies in relation to Italy's cultural history has arisen across the Atlantic and the Pacific from scholars interested in the emigrant and settler communities of Australia and the New World. See Guglielmo and Salerno; Guglielmo; Romeo, "Il colore bianco"; Giuliani, "Fantasies of Whiteness"; Pugliese. For a comprehensive history of the formation of the racial identity of Italians from Unification to the present see Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop.
5. For further discussion on the Risorgimento period, see Teti, Nani, Patriarca, Patriarca and Rally.
6. Goldberg describes a similar process in relation to Latin American white identity. See Goldberg 239.
7. Given the limited scope of this chapter, further research would be necessary in order to determine how the comic, as a genre, reveals itself to be highly enmeshed in the process of whitening race in Italian popular culture. For an illuminating interpretation of this crucial link in the US history of melodrama and the comedic genre, see Williams.
8. The visual linking of dark skin color with dirt and dirtiness highly affected advertising artifacts of the American post-Reconstruction period and featured predominantly in women's magazines up until the late 1910s. Most notably, a late 1880s advertising trade card for the product Fairy Soap depicted a tattered, barefoot black child standing next to an eager, neatly dressed white child in the act of addressing him with the daunting question, "Why doesn't your mamma wash you with Fairy Soap?" See Mehaffy 136–37.
9. For an exhaustive discussion of the relationship between science, medicine, and racism during Fascism, see Maiocchi.
10. For an illuminating reading of the relation between consumer culture and bodily perceptions, see Pinkus, *Bodily Regimes*.
11. On patrilinearity and racial identity in colonial Eritrea, see Barrera.
12. A chapter of the 1942 *Igiene del bambino e della razza* manual is entirely dedicated to the pernicious consequences of the "allattamento innaturale" (unnatural breastfeeding) and is a monitor to young women to breastfeed their children. "It is a natural law for a mother to breastfeed her child," the manual reads, and thus the use of "mercenary" breastfeeding (50) is highly discouraged. See Sympa.
13. In her narrative of colonial and postcolonial daily life in Eritrea, Erminia Dell'Oro describes the figure of the *lettè* in great details. See Dell'Oro.
14. Studies on the domestic culture in the former Italian colonies are scant perhaps because "in contrast to nation-centered narratives, the domestic occupies a space that is neither heroic, nor particularly eventful, nor marked by the brash violences in which colonial relationships are more often thought to be located" (Stoler and Strassler 9). For a discussion of Italian women's presence in colonial Africa, see Lombardi-Diop, Pickering-Iazzi, and Polezzi.
15. Peter Jackson describes a similar mechanism at play in the British advertisement of the mid-1980s, when athletic black bodies began to appear on television, cinema ads, and billboards as symbols of sexual prowess. See Jackson.
16. For a discussion of this unexplored aspect of colonial society, see Stefani.