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Vital Subjects

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Epilogue

This book began with a discussion of how Italian cultural production during the liberal period and scholarly interpretations of it have either attempted or neglected to confront racialization as a critical part of the discursive formulation of Italians as modern political subjects. Subsequent chapters illustrated how biopolitics opens up the interpretative field, allowing readers to “see” race at the intersection of a variety of problem areas that preoccupied post-Unification thinkers. In calling for a biopolitical reading of Italian racial discourse, I have been taking implicit aim at two commonplaces in studies of modern Italy: the first concerns the origins of Italian state racism and the second concerns the ideological and rhetorical splitting of projects of nation- and empire-building. First, many genealogies of Italian state racism either explicitly or implicitly figure its spontaneous inception within the fascist “parenthesis.”¹⁵ This positioning is often accompanied by a(nother) narrative of Italian belatedness, in which Nazi Germany is figured as the sinister inventor of state racism and fascist Italy is depicted as merely having jumped on board an ideological train that was already in motion.¹⁶ Such perspectives grew out

15 In 1994, as a response to this ubiquitous narrative, scholars from the Departments of History and Philosophy at the University of Bologna began a series of genealogical studies of Italian racism, organizing their pursuits under the heading: “Seminario permanente per la storia del razzismo italiano” (Burgio and Casali).

16 By 1945, as she was drafting what would become *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Hannah Arendt had already dismissed this conventional appraisal, though few seemed to have heeded her precocious insight. “If race-thinking were a German invention, as it has sometimes been asserted, then ‘German thinking’ (whatever that may be) was victorious in many parts of the spiritual world long before the Nazis started their ill-fated attempt at world conquest. Hitlerism exercised its strong international and inter-European appeal during the thirties because racism, although a state doctrine only in Germany, had been a powerful trend in public opinion everywhere. [...] The historical truth of the matter is that race-thinking, with its roots deep in the eighteenth century, emerged

of political necessity. At the close of World War II, anti-fascist intellectuals who had been silenced during the fascist *ventennio* (those, that is, who did not perish in prison or exile) began to emerge from the figural and literal wreckage in order to ask how such a political tragedy could have found in Italians such an accommodating cast of characters. Historical, political, and even literary studies produced in this climate seemed to have a choice among a finite number of explanations for the rise of fascism: their answers ranged from trivialization to condemnation, from casting blame on others to parodic self-loathing. And one thing was sure: fascism, and all of its familiar and bulky apparatuses, had to be purged not only from public offices, but from public consciousness.¹⁷ The racist persecution of Italian Jews (not to mention the colonized) was for many one of the most horrifying expressions of fascist violence, and as such, some intellectuals were eager to salvage the remnants of the Italian liberal democracy, distancing it from its nefarious successor. It was in this context that Italy's preeminent historical materialist philosopher Benedetto Croce famously proclaimed fascist Italy as a "parenthesis" in Italian history. Critical to this project of distancing was the scapegoating of Nazi Germany, particularly when it came to state racism, and thus a depiction of Mussolini as a reluctant racist, a second-rate copycat (e.g. Spinoza and Perfetti). Whether there may be a grain of truth in such accounts is less of interest than identifying what sorts of new silences or blurred vision such interpretations provoked. One explanation that gained significant ground and that continues to shadow how scholars have approached Italy's relationship to race thinking, was that Italian nationalism was primarily and inherently voluntaristic, and thus founded upon ideals of patriotic choice, of a decidedly social rather than biological contract. In contrast, German nationalism was from its inception organicistic, rooted in ideals of blood belonging and natural territory, and thus

simultaneously in all Western countries during the nineteenth century." Arendt's rich discussion proceeds, like those of Morrison and Gates mentioned below, by addressing the emergence of race thinking and racism in France, Germany, and England, though it regrettably makes no mention of these processes in Italy or Spain. See "Race-Thinking Before Racism," in Arendt's classic study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (158).

17 The scholarship on Italian memories of fascism and the World Wars is immense. One recent study in English by John Foot examines the polarization of memory in Italy from World War I to today, in particular around traumatic events such as war and terrorism, but also extending to other areas of cultural life. Giovanni Contini, Luisa Passerini (*Fascism in Popular Memory*; "Memories of Resistance"), and Alessandro Portelli (*L'ordine è già stato eseguito*; *The Order Has Been Carried Out*) are three of the most active and prolific archeologists of memory working in Italy.

by definition more amenable to a genocidal politics.¹⁸ This is not to say that there are not significant differences between the two nationalisms, nor that the Italian state has always been covertly racist, but instead, that the historical and political exigency that gave rise to such interpretations should be taken into account, and that the implications of such interpretations should be critically reexamined for the way in which they construct what Barbara Spackman has called the “black box” of fascism. Spackman writes: “[F]ascism is represented as a black box whose contents are unspecified but whose moral significance is given in advance” (*Fascist Virilities* 116). According to the logic that structures the binding of (immoral) racism to the (immoral) fascist state, if Italian state racism did not precede the fascist state and if, even better, fascist racism can be chalked up to junior Nazism, all can then be uncritically dumped into the trash bin of fascist aberration. Rather than a repositioning of an explicitly racist state discourse at an earlier point on a chronological plane (although this may prove to be a side-effect), this book’s chapters have attempted instead a sustained analysis of what Foucault has called the “polyvalent mobility” of racial discourse across a variety of fields.¹⁹ For Foucault, identifying a point of origin in racial discourse is impossible and futile; instead, by insisting on its adaptability and the diversity of its articulations, Foucault emphasizes the processes by which it has gained authority, and continues to do so, in diverse moments and contexts.

Another tendency in how scholars have tended to approach modern Italy has been to concentrate on processes of nation building, while holding Italian colonialism in reserve as an epiphenomenon, or an afterthought. The risk of such an approach is that in order to do this, the Italian nation-state is presented as a consolidated juridical and social body that, having achieved a degree of

18 See Federico Chabod, *L'idea di nazione* (Rome; Bari: Laterza, 1974) 68 (discussed and cited in Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento* 56). Banti challenges this reading of the Italian nation as essentially voluntaristic by pointing out that in order to willingly submit itself to this social contract, the (organic) community must already have been formed. In his survey of the Risorgimento poetic and political canon, he argues that an Italian community was already formed on the “natural” bases of divine ordination—such is the case in the writings of Giuseppe Mazzini and Vincenzo Gioberti, for example—and/or blood belonging (63).

19 Stoler writes: “We need to understand that racial discourses, like those of the nation, have derived force from a ‘polyvalent mobility,’ from the density of the discourses they harness, from the multiple economic interests they serve, from the subjugated knowledges they contain, from the sedimented forms of knowledge they bring into play” (*Race and the Education of Desire* 204).

territorial and/or administrative unity, then turns its gaze outward in order to absorb additional territory. Periodization insulates the humble, liberal-democratic ideals of the Risorgimento from the raucous and less palatable “imperial age,” even in the absence of a fascist alibi. The nation-state forged by the Risorgimento is thus distanced temporally and ideologically from the project of empire. This narrative recurs throughout modern Italian historiography, and it erroneously depicts colonial enterprise as a sort of prosthesis, rather than as integral to the ideological fantasy of the unified national body.²⁰ This disposition is typified in Jared Becker’s article on D’Annunzio’s orientalism, as Becker charges that legible within *Maia* is D’Annunzio’s “[return] to the model of Carduccian civic poetry” wherein “he expands its scope from modest nation-building to a much more grandiose dream of empire” (“D’Annunzio, Orientalism and Imperialism” 1–2). Here, the liberal nation-state is figured in opposition (inasmuch as it is staged as a precursor) to the imperial nation-state. Putting pressure on the notion of a phantasmagorical shift from the “modesty” of liberal nationalism to the “grandiosity” of empire has been the task of this book by keeping in mind, as Miguel Mellino puts it, the “underlying coloniality” of various modes of Italian nation formation (87).

For over a quarter century, an increasingly vast field of postcolonial scholarship has begun to explore more fully the extent to which the great European nation-states and their colonies were shaped by their imperial encounters.²¹ Though the Italian case is an admittedly “minor” example (although the Introduction explored the risks of such a designation),

20 The minimization of the role that Italian colonialism (as a set of practices) played in Italy’s consolidation as a nation-state is characteristic of many histories of modern Italy. For a few examples of the splitting of liberal nationalism from projects of empire, see: Croce, *Storia d’Italia*; Banti, *Il Risorgimento italiano*; Davis, *Italy in the Nineteenth Century*; Hearder, *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento*. An exception to this historiographical trend can be found in De Bernardi and Ganapini. This omission may be due at least in part to the lack of access (until the 1960s and 1970s) to archival materials, inhibiting scholars in their research of Italy’s colonial past. For an account of this phenomenon, see the introduction to Ben-Ghiat and Fuller. For examples of contemporary scholarship that take the reciprocal enunciation of nationalist and imperialist projects as a point of departure, see: Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*; Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*.

21 For a general introduction to the field of postcolonial studies, see: Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin; and Young, *Postcolonialism*. Foundational texts include Edward Said, *Orientalism*; and Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies*. On the pitfalls of the *Subaltern Studies*’ critique of Eurocentric universalism, see Chibber. The formal introduction of the field of “postcolonial Italian studies” to the English

or perhaps precisely because of this reason, it stands to offer something important about comparative European modernities and colonialisms. While perhaps ever less frequently today (as Turkey and Greece take its place), Italy has long been hailed as Europe's "internal other" (Van den Abbeele). From its depiction by northern Europeans during the Grand Tour as a land of romantically decaying excess to its enduring representation as either a locus of spiritual and sensual reawakening (of the *Under the Tuscan Sun* or *Eat, Pray, Love* variety) and/or a beautiful landscape teeming with corrupt (and/or inept) politicians and *mafiosi*, the Italian nation-state has always been perched somewhat awkwardly at the geographic and symbolic threshold of Europe and Africa. Its liminal status stands to help us to nuance understandings of racial representation as merely the ideological tools of the dominant, as Italy has long suffered an inferiority complex, and never more vociferously than when it came to what it figured as territorial dispossession (the "unredeemed" and/or "lost" lands of the Roman Empire) in the years between its coming into being as a modern nation-state and World War I.²²

In post-Unification Italian racial discourse, rhetorics of territorial and corporeal loss are used fetishistically to discursively "mend" a fundamental absence (Stewart-Steinberg) or constitutive fracture (Esposito) in the modern Italian subject. These textual mechanisms of disavowal—the texts under consideration 'know' very well that there is no unitary, modern, racialized Italian (or "vital") subject, but all the same they 'behave' as if there is—bring up larger questions about collective memory that Dominick LaCapra identifies as a conflation between loss and absence in the context of historical trauma ("Trauma, Absence, Loss"). Whereas losses are the result of traumatic historical events, and are therefore amenable to resolution, or working through, absence is transhistorical and constitutive, and is therefore difficult or impossible to resolve. A conflation between loss and absence lies at the heart of much of the so-called liberal Italian racial discourse we have been analyzing, and arguably has implications for its ongoing effects today. The rhetorical deployment of loss as a means of disavowing a constitutive absence causes something nefarious to emerge: "Paradise lost could be regained, at least at the end of time. One might ask," speculates LaCapra, "whether the conversion of absence into loss is essential to all fundamentalisms or

reading public occurred in 2012, with the publication of Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo's volume *Postcolonial Italy*.

22 For a recent analysis in English of the derogatoriness of Italian national character, see Patriarca, *Italian Vices*.

foundational philosophies" (702). One may therefore detect in these lines, as well as in the pages we have been reading, the specter of fascist racial discourse.

As Stewart-Steinberg claims in *The Pinocchio Effect*, and as the texts under consideration in this book have further demonstrated, anxiety characterized the post-Unification moment and was, far from an impediment, constitutive of Italian modernity. "[T]he formulation of an Italian national self was predicated on a language that posited marginalization and powerlessness as fundamental aspects of what it meant to be modern Italians," writes Stewart-Steinberg (2). For LaCapra, anxiety, "the elusive experience or affect related to absence," often leads to the identification of a specific thing or object to be feared, enabling the potential for a mastery of that fear. As LaCapra suggests:

The conversion of absence into loss gives anxiety an identifiable object—the lost object—and generates the hope that anxiety may be eliminated or overcome. By contrast, the anxiety attendant upon absence may never be entirely eliminated or overcome but must be lived in various ways. [...] Avoidance of this anxiety is one basis for the typical projection of blame for a putative loss onto identifiable others, thereby inviting the generation of scapegoating or sacrificial scenarios. In converting absence into loss, one assumes that there was (or at least could be) some original unity, wholeness, security, or identity which others have ruined, polluted, or contaminated and thus made 'us' lose. (707)

And yet, as Esposito cautions, the very grounds upon which the human community is posited are tenuous, as community has long been both threatened and subtended by its inverse: immunity. The fetishistic mechanisms that conflate loss and absence, along with the immunological logics that I have argued shaped Italian racial discourse in post-Unification Italy may thus be read as providing fertile rhetorical terrain for the emergence of fascist racial discourse. As I will argue by way of conclusion, this conflation of loss and absence also helps to explain why scholarly and public debate about Italy's imbricated histories, race thinking, and colonialism remained for many years and until quite recently in relative obscurity.

Race Critical Italy

The great force of feeling and imagination needs much
nourishment, living aid, the sustenance of real things.

Giacomo Leopardi, "Discorso sopra lo stato
presente dei costumi degl'italiani" (672)

The specificity of modern racism, or what gives it
its specificity, is not bound up with mentalities,
ideologies, or the lies of power. It is bound up with the
technique of power, with the technology of power.

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (258)

Notwithstanding the proliferation of racial representation throughout turn-of-the-century Italian literature, anthropology, political discourse, and visual culture (to say nothing of its preponderance during the fascist era), two somewhat recent theoretical reflections on race and literature in the United States include the same conspicuous and provocative omission: in passing references to scholarship on race within the national literatures of Europe, Toni Morrison (7) and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (3) name nearly all western European national literatures but that of Italy. This exclusion of Italy from the pantheon of racializing European literatures presents a variety of interpretive possibilities. Is Italy's literary history not sufficiently "national," a question that has occupied authors and critics alike since Dante? Does Italy's paltry position in the colonial contest, or its relatively late experience of immigration, erase the relevance of race to its literary history? What, then, do we make of the fact that the process of national canonization in Italy has enshrined the works of not only Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, but also Tasso, Ariosto, and perhaps less markedly Basile, none of whose masterpieces would be possible without the presence—shadowy or thunderous—of physiognomic, chromatic, and/or physiological, in short racial, difference? The refusal of Italy's pertinence to Europe's history of racial representation enacted by these two preeminent thinkers paradoxically and, we might safely imagine, quite inadvertently, reinforces the very rhetoric of absence that has long diverted the gaze of critics from the politics of race in Italy.²³

23 It is of note that in the Italian context, the very expression "politics of race" has

My goal here is not to bemoan the marginalization of poor little *Italietta* vis-à-vis her more powerful European neighbors (a move which would risk recalling many justifications for Italian colonialism) as much as it is to call attention to rhetorics of absence irrelevance, and/or minor status that threaten to obscure and interrupt the way scholarship on modern Italy approaches the structures of racialization that shape Italy's literary canon, as well as the vast political and cultural landscapes on which Italian modernity has successfully or otherwise attempted to ground itself.²⁴

I was motivated to write this book in part to respond to the fact that the textual production of race in Italy had, it seemed to me when I began writing, too often and quite perilously been either underemphasized for its relatively negligible impact when compared with American and other western European traditions, or dismissed as the clumsily racist stuff of an emphatically bygone (fascist) era. This relative lack of emphasis on racial thinking in Italy, resulting from the appraisals mentioned above (not unequivocally “national” enough? Not big enough of a player at the colonial conference table? Not racist enough?), is paradoxically inscribed within a colonial logic: race is more or less relevant to a given national context based upon the size or greatness of its (ostensibly former) empire. In pursuing this line of inquiry, it became clear that, far from a marginal comment in the annals of Italian history, race has been an enduring and powerful idea for generations of Italians, and it is deeply enmeshed with its history as what historian Mark Choate has quite effectively dubbed an “emigrant nation,” a nation constituted at least as much by its emigrants as by those residing within the borders of the nation-state. What's more, precisely *because* of its perceived irrelevance or absence from public space and discourse (again, until the arrival of increasing numbers of racially marked immigrants beginning in the 1980s), race thinking seems to have enjoyed a relatively extended post-colonial afterlife in Italy. For evidence of this, one need not look much further than the feverishly publicized and suspiciously well-wrought “gaffes” of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi (about U.S. President Barack Obama's “suntan” and the “superiority of Western civilization”). Indeed, Berlusconi's “jokes” may well express a collective amnesia or a repression

fascist connotations, as *la politica della razza* was a euphemism for the violent and persecutory racial laws of 1938–1939.

24 Here, I use “minor” in its common sense usage, rather than in the revolutionary sense theorized by Deleuze and Guattari. For a discussion of their minor literature in relation to Italy, see Parati 54–103.

of Italy's colonial past (Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*).²⁵ Cristina Lombardi-Diop has argued that the implications of this absence or amnesia have shaped contemporary Italy as a "postracial" society, "where widespread racism permeates the political discourse, the societal behavior, and popular culture, yet race is often unnamed and ultimately silenced" ("Postracial/Postcolonial Italy" 175). Far from marking the eclipse or "overcoming" of racial discourse, "postracial Italy" refers instead to a subtle yet omnipresent racial discourse that underpins contemporary social relations in Italy. Similarly, Caterina Romeo conceives of the exclusion of race from contemporary Italian cultural debates not in terms of repression or amnesia, but in terms of an "evaporation," a discourse that is temporarily invisible, though nevertheless pervasive, and always bound to reappear.

The terms of contemporary public discourse on race in Italy suggested by Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, which resulted for many decades in a dearth of scholarly attention to race thinking in Italy, illustrate another important effect of the conflation of loss and absence that LaCapra argues produces "dubious results." In cases in which historical losses (of colonies in Libya and Eritrea, for instance) are conflated with absence (as a result of the collective amnesia about or repression of Italy's racialized colonial encounters), there emerges, "a tendency to avoid addressing historical problems, including losses, in sufficiently specific terms or to enshroud, perhaps even etherealize, them in a generalized discourse of absence" ("Trauma, Absence, Loss" 700). Still, LaCapra continues, "something of the past always remains, if only as a haunting presence or revenant" (700). While historical losses and/or traumas may be redressed by acting out or working through, when loss is generalized as (transhistorical) absence, "one remains possessed or haunted by the past, whose ghosts and shrouds resist distinctions (such as that between absence and loss)" (699). Such is precisely the condition of the "postracial" Italian "evaporation" of racial discourse theorized by Lombardi-Diop and Romeo. The conflation of loss and absence that I argue enables the ideological fantasy of the unified, racialized Italian national body thus to some degree accounts for the unresolved, spectral nature of contemporary Italy's racial politics.

Since the 1990s, scholarship on modern Italy has dealt increasingly with race, some of it in ways that are indebted to the theoretical foundations

25 For a similar reading of Berlusconi's race jokes, see Lombardi-Diop, "Postracial/Postcolonial Italy" 175. Several preeminent scholars of memory in modern Italy have used psychoanalytical models of either amnesia or repression to describe Italy's relationship to colonialism and World War II. See: Fuller, *Moderns Abroad*; Marcus; Triulzi.

laid by, among others, Morrison and Gates (their oversight of Italy's relevance notwithstanding). In both the Anglo-American and Italian academies, a critical interest in genealogies of race thinking emerged in response to the complicity of the fascist dictatorship in explicitly racialized violence (exemplified in fascist demographic policy, inaugurated as early as Mussolini's "Ascension Day Speech" in 1927; the invasion of Ethiopia from 1935 to 1936; and the persecutory racial laws of 1938–1939), leading up to what has been figured as its apex in World War II.²⁶ Conventional scholarly approaches to race in Italy have thereby been primarily anti-fascist, and by extension anti-racist. Viewing race from the postwar perspective of anti-fascism, several scholars widened the terms of the discussion by aiming their inquiries not only at the explicitly racist texts of the fascist era, but at a larger constellation of problems that have preoccupied Italy since well before its albeit tentative entrance into modern nationhood in 1861. A number of works published in English beginning in the mid-1990s reoriented scholarly approaches to Italian fascism by complicating the ideological rigidity that characterized conventional studies of the period by taking into consideration a range of representational practices and theoretical approaches.²⁷ Other important work that engages race in modern Italy has converged around three main areas: the so-called southern question, an ongoing debate circulating in a body of texts ranging from the racial scientific to the poetic aimed at formulating a resolution to the historic dissymmetry between Italy's northern and southern regions in patterns of liberal-democratic/capitalist development; migration to and from Italy; and Italian colonialism. The methodological approaches in each of these three broad fields vary, though generally speaking they all analyze race in terms of objectification, difference, and/or hierarchy. For instance, influential studies of Italy's southern question by Jane Schneider, Nelson Moe, and John Dickie address race vis-à-vis Said's *Orientalism* and the stereotype.²⁸ Recent work on

26 Barbara Spackman offers a reading of Mussolini's reproductive politics and suggests that it is already formulated in the "Discorso dell'ascensione" of 1927. See "Fascism as Discursive Regime," in Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*. Several recent studies in Italian target fascist racism (Speciale; Riccardo et al.; Cuomo; Pisanty and Bonafé; Germinario; Collotti; Israel and Nastasi).

27 For studies of fascism that address the relevance of race via fascist approaches to the body, advertising, and spectacle, see: Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*; Falasca-Zamponi; Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*; Pinkus.

28 See Moe, *The View from Vesuvius*; Dickie, *Darkest Italy*; Schneider; Verdicchio,

migration both to and from Italy by Mark Choate, Donna Gabaccia, Graziella Parati, and Pasquale Verdicchio, among others, also deals either obliquely or explicitly with race, often through the analytic of diaspora studies.²⁹ Finally, an ever-growing number of scholars of Italian colonialism—from pioneering historians Angelo Del Boca, Giorgio Rochat, and Nicola Labanca to cultural theorists and historians informed by postcolonial studies such as Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Derek Duncan, Jacqueline Andall, Mia Fuller, Giulia Barrera, Patrizia Palumbo, and Ruth Ben-Ghiat—have explored how the construction of racial and gender hierarchies was necessary to the subjection and rule of the colonized, with a particular emphasis on these processes under fascism.³⁰ One recent history has addressed the convergence of the southern question, emigration, and colonialism in an analysis of racial thought in Italy before fascism: Aliza Wong's *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861–1911: Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora* (2006). Wong's book traces the origins of Italian racial discourse, which she understands as an ethnocentric mode of producing difference or "othering," to the language of liberal Italy's southern question. She argues that the metaphors and topoi of southern question discourse shaped fields such as racial science (including physiognomy and criminology), colonialism, and Italian emigration after Unification. The result, Wong suggests, is that "the lexicon of the southern question becomes the most familiar, most accessible idiom with which to discuss [these] other discourses of difference" (5).

Within these influential studies of how the southern question, emigration, and colonialism shaped nation building in modern Italy, one of the underlying premises is that nationalist discourse relies upon various models of ethnocentrism or difference. By employing a biopolitical frame, I have been posing a somewhat different theoretical question: how do rhetorics of loss (both territorial and corporeal) function fetishistically to heal or resolve a constitutive absence in the modern Italian racial subject? Similarly, in Foucauldian terms, how does discourse that purports to "make live" concomitantly "let die"? Finally, rephrased in Esposito's immunological language, how do these rhetorics that appear on the surface to affirm and safeguard

"Introduction"; Teti.

29 See Passerini, *Women Migrants from East to West*; Giordano; Parati; Guglielmo and Salerno; Gnisci; Clò and Fiore; Gabaccia; Dal Lago; Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance*.

30 For a representative sample in English, see: Duncan and Andall, *National Belongings*; *Italian Colonialism*; Ben-Ghiat and Fuller; Palumbo; Barrera, "Colonial Affairs"; Matteo.

the Italian national community wind up negating it from within? In order to attempt an answer, I have taken a microscopic approach to racial discourse not in order to rehearse or deconstruct its (erroneous) social-scientific bases, nor to chart the breadth of its articulations across turn-of-the-twentieth-century Italian culture, but instead to explore how racialized Italian subjects are produced in the languages of post-Unification nationalism through biopolitical rhetorics of (re)productivity.

How does this intersection between race and (re)productivity that I have been discussing distinguish Italian racial discourse from other European racializing traditions? In Hannah Arendt's seminal analysis of the origins of European racism, what set French race thinking apart from German or English versions was that in France, racial discourse grew from a struggle between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie and nurtured a civil war (which meant, for Arendt, that in France, racism was not coterminous with nationalism, but was instead "antinational"). In the case of Germany, she writes, race thinking served to fuse a fragmented national population against foreign oppression:³¹ "In contrast to the French brand of race-thinking as a weapon for civil war and for splitting the nation, German race-thinking was invented in an effort to unite all people against foreign domination" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 166). Race was also linked closely to nationalism in England, yet for somewhat opposite reasons. Rather than being used in a rhetoric of struggle against a tyrannous outside force, Arendt argues that English race thinking was tied to the overtly hierarchical structure of English nationalism: "[I]nequality belonged to the English national character" (175). As such, one of the building blocks of English society was, for Arendt, the inheritance of land and, with it, rights. It was within this discourse that race thinking found fertile ground: "The concept of inheritance, applied to the very nature of liberty, has been the ideological basis from which English nationalism received its curious touch of race-feeling ever since the French Revolution" (176). In this schema, the English people constituted "the nobility among nations": "[T]he concept of inheritance was accepted [from feudalism] almost unchanged and applied to the entire British 'stock.' The consequence of this assimilation of noble standards was that the English brand of race-thinking was almost obsessed with inheritance theories and their modern equivalent, eugenics" (176).

Though, like Morrison and Gates, Arendt does not mention Italy in her

31 Both Arendt and Foucault trace the origins of, for the former antinational racism, and for the latter, sovereignty's appropriation of a war between the races, to the early eighteenth-century writings of French nobleman Comte de Boulainvilliers.

analysis of European race thinking, her parameters with regard to the French, English, and German contexts provide us with some important points of comparison. Given that the nationalization of Italians was a racializing project, the Italian case might be said to reside somewhere in between Arendt's German and English models. Italian racial discourse did not aim to insulate the nobility from the bourgeoisie, and much less the laboring (agricultural) masses. Instead, it sought to articulate (in both senses: to produce discursively and to join together) a hard-working Italian population that was scattered across oceans and seas. It did so with recourse to rallying cries, as in Germany, about freedom from the geographical and physiological fragmentation wrought by foreign occupiers *and* the "hereditary genius" so cherished in the English tradition.

Another central claim throughout the readings of Italian cultural production contained in this book has been that viewing this web through a biopolitical lens allows us a perspective that other analytics, primarily that of anti-racism, do not. The multiple but often invisible or even disavowed intersections between race and (re)productivity that these cultural products—drawn from proto-sociological inquiry, popular hygiene novels, decadent novels, political speeches, verse, and film—harness are revealed when viewed in light of the biopolitical. We might say then that while both Esposito (*Bíos. Biopolitics and Philosophy*) and Hardt and Negri (*Commonwealth*) have sought to turn biopolitics away from its negative, thanatopolitical implications by recasting it in a politically affirmative vein, throughout these pages, we have aimed to activate its analytical productivity. By engaging biopolitics on its own terms—productive, life-affirming, vital—we have been able to uncover how it shaped racial subjectification of the past, and can therefore grasp how it continues to invest Italy's present. While, as we have seen, one primary analytical pitfall of anti-racism in Italy has been its inextricability from anti-fascism, and therefore its relegation of racist language to a past-tense aberration, biopolitics enables us to see how these enduring concerns about the proper relationship between life and politics belong to our present. Colonial war as life-affirming, state-sponsored infant cremation as immunizing, regulated reproduction as liberating, aerial conquest as therapeutic, bodily sacrifice and mutilation as healing—these paradoxes are just a few key points on the biopolitical constellation that we have been sketching, and they would be profoundly altered if not obscured altogether if our lens were confined to the one requiring us to scrutinize the page for scenes of racial subjection or persecution, or black-and-white logics of inferiority and superiority. And yet the broad and layered field of racial discourse between Italian Unification

and World War I to which we have attempted to gain access would appear incomplete, or at the very least much more narrow and superficial, without taking these very paradoxes into account.

As Italy joined the ranks of other modern European democracies (however tardily) at the end of the nineteenth century, and as policymakers, doctors, and artists struggled to define the contours (and hues) of Italian citizenship, they cast their nets far and wide, to Italy's southernmost and north-easternmost regions, across oceans and seas, in a desperate attempt to "capture" all the biological beings they could and ensure their participation (physical, economic, ideological, symbolic) in national life. In so doing, these thinkers forged significant rhetorical bonds between Italian bodies and the lands (regional, national, colonial) they inhabited as they tethered Italian citizenship and national belonging to novel and pre-existing understandings about physiology and physiognomy, somatics and chromatics, blood and soil that we can only describe as racial. What has drawn together the texts under consideration in this book is how they produce racialized Italian subjects in line with biopolitical imperatives. I have mentioned that the extent to which this reached its grisly height in the fascist regime's colonial and racial policies of the 1930s has been well documented. And yet, as I suggested at the beginning of this book, we must be careful not to assume that such imperatives vanished along with the totalitarian regimes that brought them to their most murderous extremes.³² The preservation of certain forms of life (which contains the seeds of its own opposite: exclusion and/or the negation of other forms of life) remains at the center of the Italian political scene. As long as former Prime Minister Berlusconi strikes historic "friendship"

32 Esposito rightly warns us not to allow our necessary condemnation of twentieth-century totalitarianisms (Communism and Nazism) to obscure the specificity of Nazism and to shadow over its persistence in contemporary life. Unlike Communism, which Esposito argues grows out of the ideological and lexical underpinnings of western modernity, Nazism changes the conceptual vocabulary of modernity: "[P]recisely because it lies entirely outside of modern language, because it is situated decidedly *after* it, Nazism embarrassingly brushes up against a dimension that is part of our experience as post-moderns" (Esposito, "Nazism and Us," 80). For Esposito, the specificity of Nazism's language lies in the absolute literalization of the biological metaphor (body-politic, state-body) by political officials, the taking up and eventual overturning of the biopolitical imperative to protect life, so that mass murder was understood as a way of healing the German people ("Jews do not *resemble* parasites, they do not behave *like* bacteria—they *are* such things. And they are treated as such," Esposito, "Nazism and Us," 85). And yet, as Esposito compellingly argues, we have not yet fully emerged from such presuppositions and their effects.

deals with former Libyan dictator Muammar el-Qaddafi to return boatloads of asylum seekers to Libya (in violation of European Union laws against *refoulement*, or the forced return of migrants to places in which they risk persecution) and, following a curious logic, does so in the name of an apology for Italian colonial atrocities there; as long as Italians vote overwhelmingly to stop the privatization of water and defend it as a *bene comune*, for the common good, as opposed to a market-driven commodity;³³ as long as Catholic church groups organize public forums on bioethics and offer temporary shelter to migrants; and as long as migrant workers in southern Italy protest their abysmal working and living conditions; in short, as long as politics draws real and imagined boundaries around life, and as long as qualifying life defines the parameters of the political battlefield, these truly are today, as they have been, vital subjects.

33 See: Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*.