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Giuliani, Gaia and Cristina Lombardi-Diop. *Bianco e Nero: Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani*. Milan: Mondadori Education S.p.A., 2013. Pp. 206. ISBN 9788800744157. \$20.45 (Paperback).

While various studies have examined Italian racial discourses and identity formation during specific historical periods, such as the post-unification “Southern Question” or the racial laws of the Fascist era, Gaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi-Diop’s *Bianco e Nero: Storia dell’identità razziale degli italiani* is a comprehensive investigation of the formation of Italian racial identity since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The authors note early in the volume that, while the development of Italian racial identity does not always lend itself to a linear narrative, the study does seek to identify continuities and ruptures in racial identity formation from the Italian liberal, Fascist, and postwar eras. To support their analysis, Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop take a transnational approach, drawing upon academic fields developed and cultivated within specific historical and national contexts, including postcolonial, cultural, ethnic, feminist, critical race, and whiteness studies. In bringing together these various theoretical and methodological approaches, the authors seek to establish Italian racial identity as a “visual and discursive construction” (2) generated by legal, scientific, and cultural texts (films, newspapers, advertisements, television programs) circulated during the periods under examination.

*Bianco e Nero* is divided into two sections, the first detailing the construction of Italian racial identity from the liberal era until the 1938 Manifesto of Racial Scientists, and the second from the immediate postwar era to the mid-1960s. In both sections, the authors examine the centrality of whiteness to the conceptualization of the Italian race. Whiteness studies offer a productive theoretical framework for examining Italian racial identity as a shifting, mutable formation, dependent upon the specific historical period and the exigencies of the ruling government. Like whiteness studies, postcolonial theory also allows for a generative interrogation of both internal (southern and rural Italy) and external (north and east African) Italian colonialism. Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop draw upon the foundational work of Italian scholars Angelo Del Boca, Barbara Sorgoni, and Giulia Barrera, scholarship that allows for a consideration of the “continuità e discontinuità del discorso razziale tra periodo liberale e Regime” (9). Using both postcolonial and contemporary critical race theory as elaborated in the work of Etienne Balibar, the authors put forth Italian racial identity as the product of both an “auto-referential” (Italians assuming the role of the superior race) and a “hetero-referential” process (southerners and African colonial subjects designated as an inferior race). In this way, the authors examine the relation and mutual dependency of the constructions of whiteness and blackness in Italian racial identity formation. Both sections of *Bianco e Nero* are also attentive to the role of gender in relation to the construction of Italian racial identity. Since the discussion of race is indelibly tied to heteronormativity and reproduction, Italian women were responsible for the “defense and purity of the race” in both liberal and Fascist eras, as well as in the postwar consumer society in which hygiene and cleanliness were domestic “feminine” duties tied to the construction of a “white” Italian identity.

In the first section, “L’italiano negro. La bianchezza degli italiani dall’ Unità al Fascismo,” Giuliani traces the shift from a Mediterranean to Aryan Italian identity in the legal and scientific discourses (particularly the work of Cesare Lombroso, Alfredo Niceforo, and Nicola Pende) and cultural texts of the liberal and early Fascist periods. The processes of auto- and hetero-referentiality come to define this period as Italy establishes its first modern colonial settlements in Africa, and at the same time, begin the “reform” of the south. Hetero-referentiality mostly characterizes this early period as an Italian upper class comes to define itself through its difference from groups that are racialized as inferior, namely southerners, Jews, and Africans. Even with the colonial enterprise, whiteness in the liberal period was based upon socioeconomic class and liberal Italy did not incorporate rural and southern Italians into the nation proper.

In terms of Italian whiteness, prior to the late Fascist period, a Mediterranean identity (influenced by the work of Giuseppe Sergi) was circulated within the country, one that was “meno bianco e più meticcio, meno biologico e più storico” (21). In the early Fascist period, the Mediterranean identity still held sway, but was also promoted in relation to the notion of the Italian *stirpe* (stock, ancestry), with an emphasis upon Italian civilization and culture, rather than racial whiteness (21). Giuliani argues that Italian “whiteness” was not explicitly articulated, neither during the liberal nor early Fascist eras. Rather, whiteness was expressed in relation to “esigenze storiche, culturali, geopolitiche e scientifiche assai specifiche” (22). It was only during the Fascist era that rural and southern Italians were allowed entry into the white Italian community not only as a means of asserting racial superiority in the colonies, but also in an attempt to modernize and create racial homogeneity within the nation. In the latter part of the 1930s, Mussolini explicitly shifts from the Mediterranean to the Aryan Italian racial identity, with the insertion of the anti-Semitic race laws of 1938, the establishment of the Italian East African Empire, and the Manifesto of Racial Scientists.

Lombardi-Diop begins the second section, “L'Italia cambia pelle. La bianchezza degli italiani dal Fascismo al boom economico,” with a reading of Ennio Flaiano's *A Time to Kill* (1947). After the rape and murder of the young Eritrean woman, the Italian lieutenant's guilt manifests itself as a fear of contamination in the form of leprosy. For Lombardi-Diop, this fear of contamination serves as metaphor for Italian racial identity formation in the postwar era. The postwar era manifests an amnesia regarding the nation's colonial and Fascist past, but its legacies can be seen in the re-emergence of a racialized north/south divide as southern Italians begin to migrate north to enter Italy's new industrial economy. Unlike the liberal era, southern Italians, through their new social and economic mobility, could now access Italian whiteness, albeit in a limited, contingent manner.

As Italy began its economic boom, a new consumer society emerges, influenced by U.S. popular culture and characterized by the use of modern, domestic appliances and the introduction of cleaning products for both home and body. The Italian fixation on hygiene and cleanliness helped to create “una nuova concezione della nazione” (69). For Lombardi-Diop, the obsession with cleanliness is tied to a desire for the postwar “reconstruction” of the Italian state that attempted to bracket out of public memory Fascism, the liberal and Fascist colonial legacies, as well as the internal colonization of the south. In particular advertisements, such as found in the Fascist and postwar era work of illustrator Gino Boccasile, and the mass medium of television, contributed to the dissemination of the new politics of hygiene and cleanliness as “una condizione normativa e quindi desiderabile” (70) that Lombardi-Diop argues is a legacy of the eugenicist impulse of the Fascist era.

A primary example of the internalization of whiteness within the Italian postwar cultural imaginary is the cartoon character Calimero, the black baby chicken. Appearing on the Italian television program, *Carosello* (1957-1976), Calimero is a hatchling abandoned by his mother due to his blackness. When Calimero finds her, he asks in his rural dialect, if she would want him if he were white. Calimero was also used to sell Ava soap as his blackness was explained as dirt that could be washed away with cleaning products. Lombardi-Diop argues that Calimero encompasses “elementi dimenticati della cultura razziale del Fascismo, integratisi a quelli anticontadini, antimeridionali e paternalistici dominanti nel Settentrione industriale” (116).

In their conclusion, Lombardi-Diop and Giuliani examine the construction of blackness in the contemporary Italian cultural imaginary, offering illuminating arguments for what they identify as the mobility and flexibility of racial identities in contemporary Italy. Once again, the authors turn to advertisements that return not only to the circulation of cleaning products during the Italian economic boom, but are also suggestive of the legacies of colonial racial hierarchies in the Italian postcolonial imaginary. Rather than create a connection between uncleanliness and blackness, the advertisement for Coloreria Italiana places emphasis on the desirability of a virile black masculinity, made possible in part by a global hip-hop culture and its image of the hypermasculine black male

body. In one advertisement, a white Italian male throws a magazine depicting an attractive black woman on its cover into a washing machine. Hoping to receive an actual black woman at the end of the wash cycle, the white Italian male is met by a muscular black man who censures the white male's interracial desire. In this commercial, Lombardi-Diop and Giuliani speculate upon the understudied history of interracial homosexual relationships in the Italian colonies, arguing: "L'operazione di *queering* del corpo maschile nero...voler reinscrivere all'interno della logica coloniale il processo di desiderio e repulsione legato alla possibilità della mescolanza razziale e sessuale" (127-128).

Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop also offer three examples of the operation of racialization in contemporary Italy: the African migrant uprising in Rosarno, Ruby Rubacuori (Karima El Mahroug), and Mario Balotelli. In a nuanced reading of these three mediatized events, Lombardi-Diop and Giuliani demonstrate how the intersectionality of race, color, gender, sexuality, class, and standards of beauty influence acceptance within or rejection from the "imagined community." The Ruby Rubacuori scandal is exemplary of the complexities of examining race in Italy at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when the tropes of colonization become the basis of globalized media spectacle. Even though we see traces of the colonial *madame* in Berlusconi's relationship with Moroccan national El Mahroug, Lombardi-Diop and Giuliani argue that women from the former colonies "non sono dunque solo vittime o semplici riproduttrici del proprio sfruttamento, silenzio materiale e simbolico, o subalternità visiva e materiale: sono piuttosto quelle figure contraddittorie...che nell'atto dell'arraffare quanto più è possibile, svelano le forme di resilienza/opportunismo di cui sono capaci, e nel mostrarsi agguerrite difensori del proprio ruolo di 'cortigiane', svelano assieme alla desiderabilità e popolarità di quel tipo di 'successo', l'esiguità delle risorse in mano alle donne nell'Italia contemporanea" (136). Here, Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop make clear connections to earlier discussions of the role of both African and Italian women in Italian racial identity formation.

The case of the Rosarno migrant uprising resonates with the operation of external colonialism of the Fascist era in which the not-quite white Italian southerners are given *carte blanche* to enter the Italian national fold because of their difference from the "invading" black African immigrants. However, in the case of footballer Mario Balotelli, socioeconomic class and celebrity complicates this inheritance. While Balotelli receives racist insults from Italian soccer fans unable to reconcile his blackness with Italian national identity, Balotelli's blackness is mitigated by his commoditization as a financially viable, globally recognized athlete. The Rosarno migrants, as with many black African and other non-Western European migrants, do not have football or other avenues of socioeconomic mobility, and are thereby rendered "più neri di Balotelli" (136-37).

*Bianco e Nero* is groundbreaking in its examination of racial discourses in Italy. The volume also suggests new areas for innovative research and scholarship, such as studies of race in early modern Italy and the broader use of queer and critical race theory in the study of Italian colonial history and historiography. The text would be a valuable addition to courses in modern Italian history and Italian cultural studies focusing on race, gender, and sexuality. *Bianco e Nero* is a significant contribution to the reevaluation of Italian nation-state formation and the racial discourses that help articulate and sustain that formation.

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