

Chapter 1

Uneven Whiteness: Images of Blackness and Whiteness in Contemporary (Postcolonial) Italy (2010–2012)

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In 2009, the former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi stated that Italy is ‘multiracial, but not multicultural’. Focusing on a series of recent events and figures, the main aim of this chapter is to reveal the role that colour assignment plays within public discourse, re-creating racial stereotypes and white, heteronormative privilege in ‘multiracial’ Italy. These events and figures, in my opinion, point to a number of revealing signs pertaining to the European postcolonial framework in which Italy can be significantly included and understood. In particular, it takes into account the hetero-referential construction of Otherness and Whiteness that Italy shares with many European and largely Western national contexts. With hetero-referential construction of a racialized Other I mean – following French sociologist Colette Guillaumin’s theorization of hetero- and self-referential matrices of racism (1972) and US sociologist Ruth Frankenberg’s idea of unmarked whiteness (2001) – the process of racial construction that marks that which is not white, silently and invisibly builds hegemonic whiteness thereby naturalizing it. The events of 2010, I discuss here, unveil a significant set of similarities between Italy and a wider postcolonial European context in the ways they construct their Others. In the first instance, a ‘hyper-signification’ of black male bodies, which in my chapter is thematized by two cases: migrant workers employed in fields in southern Italy and the offences directed at the famous soccer player, Mario Balotelli. In the second instance, the vested orientalization and sexualization of the internal (the Southerner) and non-European brown Mediterranean women, in line with the European colonial tradition – as in the case of Berlusconi’s go-go girls. Finally, the typical association of brown heterosexual men with public danger and sexual assaults, especially after 9/11, which is exemplified here by the repeated targeting of brown men in the police investigations around the kidnapping of Yara Gambirasio.

While Italy's racializing dynamics is better understood within the European shared colonial and postcolonial hegemonic culture, as I will argue, the racialized and racializing constructions of Self and Other in Italy are specifically related to the symbolic construction of both its cultural and historical past. Constructions of the Self and its Others in Italy derive from an idea of national, cultural, historical and biological heritage that manufactures *italianità* (Italianness) as both white and Mediterranean, as essentially heterosexual, and virile. This self-representation, as I have argued elsewhere, is the result of a slow process of discursive construction that finds its own fundamentals in the Fascist idea of *uomo nuovo* (new man). According to this idea, Italians are animated by two complementary and apparently opposite/polar features inherited by the Romans' fine and military/governing arts, Renaissance's arts and sciences, Catholic moral and patriarchal social rules: passion and rationality. The peninsula's passion derives from Italy's geographical position: belonging to the Mediterranean basin, Italians participate in its 'blackness'. This 'vice' becomes a virtue insofar as it is mastered by rationality. In my view, the long-lasting Fascist narrative of the *uomo nuovo* makes Italians neither completely white nor completely black. Their racial liminality positions them in a very complicated space, in which they cannot neatly distinguish themselves from 'African backwardness and blackness'. This self-representation grounds the many shifts of Italy's internal colour lines that sometimes include, and sometimes exclude, those subjects traditionally positioned at the 'racial margins' of Italianness – like southerners. Berlusconi's 'multiracial but not multicultural' recalls, as he has made clear on a number of occasions, the Fascist idea elaborated by the endocrinologist Nicola Pende (1933), in line with the anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi, that Italians are the 'result of fruitful interbreeding' that occurred at the time of the Roman Empire and which is framed within the same (Roman that is supposedly white, Western and at once Mediterranean) culture. At the same time, Berlusconi's 'multiracial but not multicultural' refers to 'multicultural Italy' as an impossible outcome: many racial backgrounds can be merged with Italian stamina, but Italian culture needs to be crystallized in an ahistorical figure that includes whiteness and Mediterraneanness. In contrast to the 'surgical' idea of the nation in Nazi Germany, the idea of nation Italians have inherited from Fascism is, in my opinion, built on 'racial anthropophagy'. According to a 'surgical idea of a nation', as the Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito highlights (2004), Nazism conceived Germany as a body from which corrupted cells and organs needed to be extirpated. In the case of Fascist Italy 'anthropophagism', domestic differences are swallowed and digested. I borrow the image of anthropophagism from decolonial studies in Latin America and Indigenous studies in the Pacific and Australia, where it refers to the 'cannibalistic approach', respectively, of Spanish and British settler colonialisms

(see, for instance, Banivanua-Mar 2007, for the case of the Pacific and Jáuregui 2008, for Latin America). I use it here as a formula that stands for a ‘digesting’ model of racialized citizenship that transforms phenotypic differences into nutrients for the Italian body politic that assimilates them, neutralizing both their differential cultural purport and political subjectivities. According to the anthropophagic model of the Italian nation, a number of subjects can be ‘assimilated’ insofar as they are considered ‘absorbable’. Hence, their race is not pure, but a particular Italian ideal-typical phenotype that needs to be unconditionally preserved. Here, hetero-referential racism merges with self-referential racism where, as I have argued elsewhere, a precise and assertive cultural and racialized idea of Italianness is forged: whiteness is no longer hidden nor silenced nor constructed ‘by contrast’ through its others. It is instead reappraised as Mediterranean, Roman, (heterosexual) and virile.

While it may still be termed postcolonial, the methodology deployed here, in line with my broader research, can be described as *epistemological uprooting*: in ‘analyzing continuities and discontinuities from colonial times to the contemporary postcolonial world, also outside the conventional colony/empire axis’, my chapter’s methodology consists of making the concealed visible, against the historically rooted idea (appropriated by mass as well as institutional culture since the approval of the Italian Republican Constitution in 1948) that Italians have no race and no racial memories as both racializing and racialized subjects. In fact, as noted by a number of scholars (see in particular Njegosh in Njegosh and Scacchi 2012), one of the popularized excuses brought against accusations of racism by Italian hegemonic and mainstream culture’s agencies (TV, political elites, culture makers) is grounded in the idea that a people who have experienced racism cannot be racist. As many colonial and postcolonial examples sadly testify (most remarkably Rwanda, Israel, post-apartheid South Africa), the in-between position – between racialized and racializing – does not preserve any hegemonic culture and its public institutions from forging, reproducing and enacting racism. In particular, by using critical race and whiteness approaches, jointly with gender and sexuality theories, and postcolonial, decolonial and cultural studies, my chapter investigates constructions of whiteness in contemporary Italy. The texts explored are mostly visual for their power to influence and mould common sense and popular conceptions of racial, gendered and sexual normativity.

In January 2010, the start of the political season was marked by a riot in Rosarno, Calabria, initiated by a group of migrant seasonal agricultural workers (mostly men from sub-Saharan Africa) in response to inhumane working conditions, and the shooting of two of the group by a local. The same year, a new scandal regarding Berlusconi’s sexual habits broke out. This time, it involved Karima el Mahroug, an underage Moroccan girl more commonly known by her nickname ‘Ruby’. In August 2010, Mario Barwuah Balotelli,

a famous Italian soccer player of Ghanaian origins, started playing for the Italian national soccer team. Finally, in November, a young Lombardian girl, Yara Gambirasio, disappeared, possibly kidnapped. Police investigations focused first on a young Moroccan construction worker, then on a number of other 'brown' men as probable culprits.

My investigation is situated in the wake of a recent discussion between a number of Italian and foreign intellectuals coming from a variety of disciplines related to Cultural Studies, regarding the intersectional models of masculinity and femininity, and the cultural and/or racial constructions that populate and structure Italian popular and critical culture. This work is also informed by the examinations of the forms of heterosexual (and homosexual) male and female desire, as well as the interracial fantasies that dominate the collective imagination of Italian men and women (see Barbara De Vivo's and Dufour's 2012, and Colpani 2015). This chapter builds on and extends the analysis I conducted in the volume *Bianco e nero. Storia dell'identità razziale degli italiani* (*Black and White. History of the Racial Identity of Italians*), co-written with Cristina Lombardi-Diop (2013): its aim is to contribute to an interpretative framework that grasps the symbolic matter of which contemporary racial repertoires are made, unravelling the highly complicated intertwining of processes, loci, dynamics and texts of the daily naturalization of cultural, social, gender, race and religious difference in Italy. This interpretative framework will contribute to unpacking the various and multi-layered constructions of particular subjects as 'exploitable', 'subjugable' or 'disposable',¹ and which are part of the discourse legitimizing their actual exclusion, differential inclusion, exploitation and elimination (symbolic or physical) of the racialized Other at the level of society and institutions, both national and European. My chapter, in other words, participates in the larger multidisciplinary- and transdisciplinary and national/international discussion of the relationship between the mechanisms producing racist and sexist stereotypes and 'white heteropatriarchal hegemony' in Italy, and the Italian and European cultural backgrounds that are behind regulations regarding immigration, border control,² division of labour on a national,³ European Union and international levels.⁴

In the media coverage of the Rosarno events following the sub-Saharan African migrant workers' revolt, migrants are described as beastly and lacking decorum and self-control, and their protests were described as the assaults of cavemen. The *La Stampa* article of 8 January 2010, expresses the efforts to reappropriate 'Italians'' wounded pride, ready to defend whiteness, property, women, children and territory from the barbarian invaders who have been 'tolerated for too long':

An Italian city burns, Calabrians shoot at the immigrants injuring some, the foreigners destroy the town, attacking cars with women and children in them,

injuring Italians. And when dark sets in the looting continues, destruction, burning of cars, gutted fixtures, with nine Italians and six foreigners wounded, the people who are terrified and running away spur the officers against the foreigners, ‘Shoot them!’, women in tears, ‘we’ve never seen anything like this even if here we see immigrant protests often’. (A.N. 2010a, author’s translation)

In a video on the broadcasting website *Rainews24*, an implicit reference to the ‘sexual’ threat that the migrants represent for ‘our women’ (Antefatto 2010) appears when a Rosarnian facing the news cameras singles out the nudity of the black labourers as they showered out of sight behind piled up tires as the (unbearable) event that provoked the shooting of the two migrants with an air rifle. The same woman refers to the immigrants as eventual kid-nappers: ‘Because a mother can’t even go to the grocery store that she gets home having left her kid there and doesn’t know if she’ll find him. . . . We will not give in to this violence’ (Antefatto 2010).⁵ The violence which she refers to is evidently both physical and symbolic and revolves around the barbarity injected by the black body of the migrant into the white body of the Rosarnian society.

The statement of the then Minister of the Interior, Roberto Maroni (Lega Nord [the Northern League]), ties together these fragments constructing the Rosarnians as Italians in danger (‘in all these years illegal immigration has been tolerated without anyone doing anything effective which, on the one hand, has fuelled crime and on the other, has created extremely horrible conditions like the situation in Rosarno’, author’s translation), ending by expressing his solidarity with the Rosarnian citizens.⁶ Two days later (10 January),⁷ he restated the distinction between exasperated Italian citizens and the *ndrangheta* (the Calabrian traditional organized crime), which he would further mention in his speech before the Senate (12 January 2010).⁸ The reference to ‘fellow citizens in need of defence’ in a situation in which tolerance had been too high (and exceeded the codes that define the racial balance of the Calabrian countryside) is confirmed by a group of Rosarnians, who, meeting with Minister Maroni and the local officials, request that they ‘finally rid Rosarno of all immigrants’ (*Vi racconto la rivolta degli immigrati a Rosarno* 2010, author’s translation).

The image of a horde of black barbarians, violent, out of control, ‘drunk’⁹ always on the edge of violating the ‘codes of civil society’ (the same paradoxical and racist codes that force them to sleep in sheet-metal huts and large cement tubes), is contrasted with, and constructed against, the image of the Calabrian-as-Italian-in-danger, the honest southern Italian whom Maroni’s words bleach and raise to the status of a ‘fellow citizen’. Against Maroni’s very ideological background, which considers the South of Italy as ‘different (that is inferior) socially, culturally, politically’, and which is in line with a North versus South conception of the nation that has been articulated and

publicly stated by intellectuals, scientists and politicians since the unification (1861). The idea of southerners being ‘culturally’ – and ‘biologically’ – inferior and belonging to Hamitic and Semitic kinships was advocated by important scientists, most notably, the internationally known criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso and his follower, anthropologist Alfredo Niceforo, author of *L'Italia barbara contemporanea* (1898). This discourse was popularized through a number of cultural initiatives and social policies by the state and its elites throughout the Liberal Age (1861–1922) and Fascism (1922–1945) and strongly institutionalized in the first decades of the Republic. While it constitutes the xenophobic background of Lega Nord’s federalist ideological fundaments since its early foundation (1983), it is largely shared especially in northern Italy’s popular culture. But in the Rosarno events, the narrative of ‘inferior’ (corrupted, unreliable, lazy, backward) southerners is no longer serviceable: both Minister Maroni’s role as a representative of the state’s regulating power over highly conflicting situations involving Italian citizens and the institutional discourse legitimizing the repression of the migrants’ revolt in Rosarno as an act protecting Italian citizens need Calabrians and southerners to become (at least temporarily) white.

In the Rosarno episode, where the colour line is written on documented and undocumented migrant bodies, Calabrians are thus fully included within the Italian imagined community. Yet in the media coverage of the disappearance and murder of the young Yara Gambirasio in Lombardy, Calabrians are returned to a racialized criminal status. Following Cesare Lombroso’s positivist frenologist theory, Calabrians are depicted as possible suspects (by their nature) in the disappearance of this teenager in the province of Lombardy, after first one and then another Moroccan, and then a Romanian were identified and dismissed as possible culprits. Here, where the colour line is inscribed on the body of a white northern Italian teenager, the Calabrian is returned to blackness.

The contrast with Ruby’s case is quite evident for a number of reasons, which should be analysed through an intersectional perspective that takes into consideration the following factors: the class dynamics, as well as the social and cultural capital, that characterizes Ruby’s biography in contrast with the condition of ‘Rosarnian migrants’; gender that plays a fundamental role in positioning the two figures differently in the Italian imagination; the numbers that is to say her individual story and presence versus the multitude of black fruit-pickers in ‘besieged’ Rosarno; the places where the two events take place – the rich North of the Berlusconi empire versus the deepest South of Calabria; the people involved – the richest, most powerful, ‘bright white’ men of the political and financial establishments versus the state-abandoned, brown southerner, mafia-sustained citrus fruit growers and their families; the heterosexual-centric redefinition of non-white bodies and finally the very

different stereotypes of the 'black African' versus the (not-so-different or almost-like-us) 'Arab woman'.

As the Italian literary scholar Riccardo Bonavita (2010) and historian Barbara Spadaro (2013) remind us, the body of the Arab woman once belonged relationally to the space of proximity. Although the Arab woman was obviously rendered inferior and loaded with bestial symbology and stereotypes, we can find this 'like-us' image in Fascist era colonial novels as well as memoirs and photographs of the period. This proximity is erased with the establishment of the colonial laws in matters of interracial relations in 1936–1937, and successively with the 1938 *Manifesto degli scienziati razzisti* (Manifesto of racist scientists) and the 1939 racial laws. With what I have defined elsewhere as the 'self-referential (and then Aryanist) turn' of Fascist raciology (see Giuliani 2013b), the traditional tolerance towards interracial sexual relationships in the colonies was permitted, while equality between male colonizers and their colonized concubines was never accepted. The gender and racial superiority of the (white) Italian man over brown women's bodies and colonized cultures were always behind the Italian 'missione civilizzatrice' but never openly stated until the mid-1930s and the declaration of the Fascist empire in 1936.

Associations of the white virginal young woman's body to, on the one hand, the Arab man's body and, on the other, to the black male body are located within entirely different semantics.¹⁰ In the first case, the relationship is marked, especially since the Libyan war (1911–1912), by the idea of the unmasterable Arab warrior, and later by the presence of 'bad and miserable muslim men' who, since the late 1980s, have migrated in high numbers mostly from the Maghreb (see Dal Lago 1997), and finally by the post-9/11 idea of Islamic masculinity-as-dangerous. In the second case, the image of a degraded and brutal black masculinity constructed during colonial time resounds in the Rosarnian comments. Very much the result of the theorization of Italianness by criminal anthropologists, phrenologists, endocrinologists, psychiatrists, archaeologists and linguists (1850s to 1945), the Italian shared idea of the black horde finds its roots in scientists like Cesare Lombroso, Corrado Gini and Salvatore Ottolenghi. Maintained by Fascist descriptions of black barbarians (especially when revolting against the Italian colonial power), this image has been strongly mediated since World War II by American popular culture and its stereotypes, arriving in Italy as movies and TV series, sport and TV shows (see Gilroy 1993; Njegosh and Scacchi 2012; Giuliani 2013c). As W. E. B. Du Bois (1903) first, and then Frantz Fanon (1952) have argued, and scholarly research within black and then Critical whiteness studies have later expanded for a number of colonial, postcolonial and settler colonial contexts, the hyper-signification of black bodies has often worked to produce the clear coding of an indubitably

racial homogeneity of the dominant collective subject. This occurs too in the case of Rosarno: thanks to black immigrants, Calabrians are included to the ideal-typical whiteness to which the ruling elite or the richest northerners belong.

In the case of Yara Gambirasio, the image of the black rapist is extended to the mass of 'brown' men. Yara is described as a 'sweet girl', model daughter from a good northern Italian family. She is always shown with braces, in sweatpants, as a virginal body taken from the pages of a Santa Maria Goretti holy novel,¹¹ unaware of the horrible destiny that awaited her. Wanting revenge for this lost innocence, some community members put up signs asking for 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', from the beginning of the police investigation, in front of Yara's family house.¹² In this second case, the reference to a tribal practice, roughly associated with Arab cultures, indicates the guilty party as not white, or not white enough (in relation to colour, but also social and economic factors). Their diversity marks them as 'potential public enemies', in the position to violate a twelve-year-old girl, and with her, the peace and social order of this small Lombardian town.¹³ The local priest, who was close to the family, appealed for calm and respect, instead of hasty judgements and terrible vengeance (A.N. 2010c). Despite the priest's pleas, part of the community violently reconfirmed its self-representation as white and superior through the condemnation of the 'violence of the less-white'. In an article in the *Corriere della Sera*, 16 March 2011, Yara's is briefly compared to Ruby's figure and story, but then the connection is immediately rejected by the same journalist, finding it impossible that a young Italian girl might resemble Ruby, 'a girl interested in unexpected encounters, [a life] made of dangerous liaisons with strangers'. 'Is it impossible to imagine', continues the journalist, 'in fact quite the opposite happened? Yara Gambirasio ran away from a Romanian and a Moroccan, as described by a witness' (A.N. 2011).

In contrast to Yara Gambirasio, in the case of Karima El Mahroug (Ruby), the image of the prime minister's male virility (and that of those Italians whose manhood rests on this type of definition) is increased through the scandal of their relationship, which appears to contain a subtly familiar, almost naïve colonial touch. As a benefactor who took care of the girl's problems (A.N. 2010b), Berlusconi is sarcastically connoted as the 'good Samaritan', implying that the 'paternal' benefactor can also be openly attracted to his or her protected, exchanges his favours with his or her sexual services. 'Papi' (daddy) Berlusconi establishes thus an unequal relationship (father-daughter) that, besides any emotional context, is placed in an evident relationship of (sex-money) power. Besides, he called himself 'sultan', thus recalling hegemonic constructions of masculinity and tickling the Italian male imaginary of a lost virility, overwhelming male sexuality, women's objectivation

and possession and unbounded masculinity within a strict, heteronormative semantics, which is sometimes seen as perfectly represented by ‘the old colonial Orient’. Berlusconi’s status as self-proclaimed ‘sultan’, while it orientalizes him, also distinguishes him from brown Arabs and black Africans because he is white, ‘tannable’ and therefore ‘always whiteable’. He is depicted as virile and forever young, the icon of Mediterranean male beauty so well described by advertisements like those of Dolce & Gabbana and Giorgio Armani¹⁴ produced in 2013 or movies like *Under the Tuscan Sun* (2003) where the Italian man, the super-white US female beauty (Diane Lane) falls in love with, is featured as a virile, brown-complexioned, well-built, sexy and passionate man (Raul Bova). He is fascinating and seduces all (white) women but at the same time he is engaged with a stereotypically Italian (small, brown, objectified, highly sexualized, southern), Kharima-like brown beauty. The newspapers did not waste many words on the fact that Karima El Mahroug is not white, but this aspect instead tickled the imagination of Italian talk shows and nightclubs, contributing to the questionable attention paid to the exuberant and ‘tanned’ body of the barely-of-age girl. One could reasonably link this case to the common expression during Italian colonialism that described Africa as a ‘virgin land ready to be penetrated’ (see Sabelli 2010: 106). However, in order to better understand the contemporary use of that image in the specific case of the prime minister, it might be more effective to look at contemporary cinema, in particular the images of Caligula in Tinto Brass’s famous film (*Caligula* 1979) depicting the emperor (Malcolm MacDowell) as a Roman (kitch) version of a ‘sultan’, always surrounded by naked beauties swimming in warm water pools, dancing for his pleasure or participating in Bacchic feasts and orgies.¹⁵ One must underline, however, that the girls of the contemporary Caligula-Berlusconi are not helpless, devoid of subjectivity and dependent on the emperor. Instead they reclaim their space and agency within a very particular system of gendered, racialized and sexualized postcolonial power relations. ‘Kharima and the others’ use their ‘residual’ power as best they can, framed and mediated by the same codes provided by the Caligulian television imagery. Yet in the public arena, major cultural agencies (news, TV entertainment shows, political talk shows) obstinately depict them simply as immoral ‘coloured burglars’, participating in the construction of that degraded image of Italian masculinity provided by Berlusconi’s colonial and ‘multiracial burlesque’.¹⁶ This burlesque, as the prime minister stated for the whole of Italy, is ‘multiracial but not multicultural’, a phrase that consolidates the concept of ‘different-is-beautiful’ only in function of the ‘manly and Italian’ desire of ‘young, beautiful, and tanned’ female bodies (see Giuliani 2013c). Multiracialism is good, only if it is framed within a single cultural system – white male desire-centred, labour and sexually exploitative, consumerist, patriarchal and heterosexist.

Because she is a woman, raised in Italy, less black than Balotelli, and young and beautiful, Karima El Mahroug is afforded greater agency with which to negotiate her space and future possibilities. Ruby, in fact, participates in the production of her own image and life. This space is defined by the ‘availability’ and objectification of the female body by various ‘Caligulas’, as in the case of the ‘morette coloniali’ – literally colonial dark-skinned females, an objectifying and inferiorizing expression coined during Italian colonialism in Africa (1882–1961). This space separates and distinguishes her from both Roman-descending and respect-deserving Mediterranean ‘mothers of the nation’ – wives and maternal nurturers, respectable ladies – and young and innocent ‘daughters of the nation’ like Yara.

The level of agency that Ruby can exert in this space depends on the position she takes in relation to power. Ruby’s body is a ‘porno-trope’, to use Sonia Sabelli’s reading (2010) of Anne McClintock’s (1995) work. As in colonial times, like the ‘morette coloniali’, she lets herself be photographed (see Bini 2003: 16–17) and included in the erotic universe of the white man, obtaining her own form of (economic, social, sexual) emancipation from local gender and class rules. The ‘Rubies’ are therefore not just victims or simple reproducers of their own exploitation, material and symbolic silence or visual and material subordination.¹⁷ They are, instead, contradictory figures, such as those described by Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2003). In the act of trying to profit as much as they can from a situation, they reveal their resilience/opportunism. By displaying themselves as fierce defenders of their role as emperor’s vestals, they also reveal the desirability and popularity of this type of ‘success’, within the limited resources provided to women in contemporary Italy. As happens for the black body of Rosarnian fruit-pickers working for Calabrian citizens, Berlusconi’s go-go girls provide the locus on which to reinstate Italian women’s identity in terms of colour, class, morality, sexuality, gender roles and place in Italian society. In contrast to the go-go girls, Italian women construct themselves and are constructed as white and Mediterranean, that is as embodying non-exceeding, controllable and thus acceptable, matrimonially and patriarchally framed passion and sensuality. In that sense, Rubies are thus the ‘epidermalized’ brown non-European Others, following Frantz Fanon, through which, by opposition, Italian women can be ‘de-epidermalized’, whitened, Europeanized and made superior. Included within the space where Italians are gendered, racialized and sexualized, Rubies construct and reinforce the normative whiteness of Italian women and men.

The Rosarno migrants play a very similar role, but from a different position. They are black and they are men. But most importantly, they are illegal migrants. Their absolute Otherness – read within a patriarchal system of representation that includes brown girls as sexualized objects and excludes

black men as monstrous competitors with white virility – makes their relational contribution to the construction of Italian racial identity a very particular one. Their physical and symbolic presence expands Italian whiteness to include its internal and more acceptable Other (the southerner). Embodying the border that identifies absolute Otherness and distinguishes it from acceptable proximity, they materialize the limits of Italian ‘anthropophagic racial citizenship’.

Balotelli, in a much more problematic manner, is ‘one of us’. He is what Nirmal Puwar defines as ‘space invader’ (2004). He is the piece of Otherness that the white body has already swallowed but cannot digest and so wants to expulse: the unabsorbable that is already in. Balotelli is male and his masculinity, within the semantic field of the stadium, intolerably threatens the idea that white viewers have of themselves and of their imagined community.¹⁸ He is not a beautiful young Moroccan woman ‘complicit’ in building Italians’ orientalized male heterosexual sexual desire for objectified not-so-different brown girls.¹⁹ Balotelli’s blackness is in Italy determined by the representational history of inferiority derived not only from the colonial period (see Marchetti 2011) but also from American pop culture (see Njegosh and Scacchi 2012).

Balotelli’s Italian pride, his typical Italian first name, his singing of the national anthem and speaking with a strong vernacular accent, blurs distinctions and recalls the artificial nature of Italian white masculinity. The ambivalence surrounding Balotelli explains events such as the banner hung by Juventus fans during a Tim Trophy match in Turin in 2008 bearing the inscription, ‘There ain’t black Italians’ (D’Ottavio 2010: 170–76). This coexists with racist cartoons in the *Gazzetta dello Sport*,²⁰ bananas thrown²¹ at the football player and the Hulk-Orangutan pose taken by Balotelli at the 2012 World Cup match between Italy and Germany in response to the countless offences suffered on and off the field. Even if Balotelli is described as a ‘champion of Italianness’ in international and national sports newspapers, he is not. On his body the ‘anthropophagic model’ finds its limit: it cannot be assimilated. Its blackness does not function as a mirror, as in the case of Rosarnian fieldworkers. It disrupts white Italians’ identity as white and Mediterranean and fractures an image of it as naturalized, self-reflexive and self-evident.²²

CONCLUSION

The Italian man has ‘dark (tanned) skin’, is ‘passionate and sensual’ and ‘white and Mediterranean’. This is the classical perception depicted in the iconic advertising campaigns of Dolce & Gabbana and Giorgio Armani – always

virile, ‘turned on and eager’ as embodied by former Premier Berlusconi’s public and private performances. Yet he is never a black. It is precisely against blackness, in the hostile embrace of Balotelli’s fans, football spectators and television audiences that this idea of Italian masculinity and race is structured and strengthened. Blackness is not the only construction of racialized Otherness on which Italians’ racialized identity is projected. As many scholars have argued, Asian ‘yellowness’ and ‘brownness’ is also called upon in the ‘construction by contrast’ of Italian whiteness and Mediterraneanness. But blackness has always been something to be confronted with, since Lombroso’s statement that half Italians were Hamitic. When blackness is projected on the Other, all internal racial differences collapses, and the hetero-referential identity of Italians as white is precisely constructed as inclusive and even. It may also include Moroccan (beautiful) girls and Hamitic/Semitic southerners within what I have called an ‘anthropophagic model of racialized citizenship’ (see also Giuliani 2015). Besides blackness, North-African, Arab and Asian brown masculinities also cannot be easily swallowed, digested and assimilated. Their bodies are to be rejected at the frontiers or investigated as suspected culprits of horrible murders. When blackness comes to be too close and familiar as in the case of Balotelli, or even pretends to be representative of Italians’ identity at home and abroad (like in the case of many young Italians of non-Italian background reclaiming citizenship),²³ Italianness as whiteness and Mediterraneanness reveals itself to be another manufactured identity, whose internal homogeneity is nothing but the result of a (not always successful) digesting process. In the picture of Italy as ‘multiracial but not multicultural’, that internal blackness represents the ultimate limit of the anthropophagic model of racialized inclusion, the extreme border that contains and identifies a national identity which is the result of the converging of hetero-referential and self-referential racializations. The first operates by contrast, through and against the Rosarnians and Yara’s kidnappers and murderers; the second is attached to that idea of well-balanced passion and rationality – which includes also the South – physical majesty, arts and science (so perfectly captured by the classic Discus Thrower statue adopted and recast by Fascist iconography) that is supposed to connect Italians to both ancient Roman history of grandeur and northern Europeans’ whiteness and rationality.

NOTES

1. I am referring to the categories developed by Chandra T. Mohanty (2003) and Talal Asad (2007). Regarding the need to investigate stereotypes in order to prevent ongoing racial discrimination in Italy, see Oliveri (2008: 74) and Margiotta (2007: 132–42).

2. As demonstrated by their synthesis in the ‘security package’ (2008). See Margiotta (2012).

3. See Grappi and Sacchetto (2013).

4. Regarding this issue see the work of Sandro Mezzadra, Federica Sossi and her research team, and Enrica Rigo. For an important piece on the relevance of the security systems adopted in border control operations after 11 September, see Pugliese (2010). For a discussion of the effects of the crisis in terms of the constriction of European and Italian citizenship, we refer you to the conference ‘Implications of the Eurozone Crisis for Perceptions, Politics and Policies of Migration’ held in Malmö (Sweden) at the end of November 2012 whose proceedings will soon be available.

5. Published by *antefatto.it*.

6. Statements from 8 January 2010.

7. www.ilsole24ore.com/art/SoleOnline4/Italia/2010/01/rosarno-maroni-immigrati-esplorazione.shtml.

8. See this page on the Ministry of the Interior’s website: http://www.interno.gov.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/sezioni/sala_stampa/interventi/interventi/2100_500_ministro/0984_2010_01_12_informativa_senato_Rosarno.html.

9. As stated by the commentators Xavier Jacobelli e Filippo Cutrupi (*Vi racconto la rivolta degli immigrati a Rosarno* 2010).

10. However, it is important to remember that the small number of white women in the Horn of Africa in combination with the small number of black men in the home country did not stimulate fears regarding contact between black men and white women with the same virulence that is found in other colonial contexts (i.e. France) and racial segregation (i.e. United States).

11. http://www.adnkronos.com/IGN/News/Cronaca/Caso-Yara-parroco-Brembate-e-comesanta-Maria-Goretti_311759698327.html; http://www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/italia/2011/03/14/AOBAGiE-yara_silenzio_corinno.shtml

12. http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2010/12/06/news/razzismo_brembate-9870349.

13. Yara’s is not an isolated case: there was an attempted rape and murder of a white Italian woman, Giovanna Reggiani, in Rome by a Romanian national in October 2007, that resulted in the reinforcement of the same ‘defence of our women’ rhetoric that we found in Rosario, including the explosion of populist and racist violence against the Roma community and a crackdown on Roma camps and immigrants by the provincial magistrate, mayor and police of the capital. This event, in public opinion, represented an important moment in the redefinition of ‘citizenship’, ‘manhood’ and ‘Italian-ness’ in terms of space and bodies. See Ribeiro Corossacz (2013), Bonfiglioli (2010) and, especially, Rivera (2009). Rivera specifies the naturalizing significance in the omission of the ‘whiteness’ of an Italian perpetrator/victim and the implicit blackness of the foreigner, non-citizen and not-white-person in both the position of guilt or victim of a crime such as, for example, rape in Italian public media and political debate.

14. For an example of this, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGWKP8DjHaQ.

15. The Morandini cinema dictionary defines it in this manner: ‘The frantic life, the cruel actions, incest with his sister Drusilla, the follies and the violent death of Gaius Caesar Augustus Germanicus otherwise known as Caligula (12–41 AD),

from Suetonius' perspective, the most vicious and least reliable historian of Greek-Roman times, and that of American Gore Vidal: a child that find the world in his hands, that doesn't know what to do with it and unleashes his destructive instincts on it. . . . [In the] '84 [edition] while purged of its most raw images, a festival of fantapornosodomasolatin kitsch remains, where the fantasy-story combines with porn and violent cinema' (Morandini, Morandini and Morandini 2005: 680–81, author's translation).

16. Silvio Berlusconi himself called the risqué parties and orgies he organized at his home, at Arcore, and at Villa Certosa, burlesque. The image of 'burlesque' is, in fact, perfectly fitting: a striptease in front of the traditional male gaze in a bedroom show. Nowadays, burlesque belongs to an erotic subculture that once again situates the male at the centre of the heterosexual erotic scene. Filtered from the Folies Bergères tradition, burlesque considers the presence of 'colored' bodies positively, as an added value to the variety of 'characters' to be impersonated on the stage. On the image spread by Berlusconi television starting in the 1980s and its proximity to that of burlesque, see Giomi (2012: 3–28). For the expression 'zoo delle differenze' (zoo of differences), see Gribaldo and Zapperi (2012: 42–45).

17. I contest here what is affirmed by critics such as Lorella Zanardo, but also Lorenzo Bernini and Olivia Guaraldo who both victimize women 'enslaved' by images and TV industry and demonize the Italian media's power of representing objectified and 'un-authentic' womanhood. For a critique of the opposition between the media (stereotypes, excess) and reality (the 'proper' woman, white, heterosexual, middle class, simple, complete and domesticated) in these analyses, see Gribaldo and Zapperi (2012: 26–30).

18. It is to this imagined community that Dell'Agnese and Ruspini are also referring when they analyse Italian masculinity. See Dell'Agnese and Ruspini (2007: XVII–XXIII).

19. This follows the same idea that important anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi first and then endocrinologist and racist Nicola Pende – both claiming the idea of Italian race as a set of kinships from the best stocks of the Mediterranean – tried to instil in Italian culture during the era of 'the colonies' and that the Italian citizenship granted to the Libyans confirmed (see Giuliani 2013b).

20. For a critical and transnational reading of these cartoons, see <http://blog.futbologia.org/2012/06/balotelli-lebron-e-gli-stereotipi-razzisti-della-gazzetta/>.

21. www.ilsecoloxix.it/p/multimedia/sport/2012/06/14/APNueyiC-banane_contro_balotelli.shtml.

22. As Angela D'Ottavio notes, the study of sports fan dynamics is essential because football is a 'total social fact', a phenomenon that produces and transforms social tensions and 'on which large material, emotional and symbolic investments are made' (2010: 175).

23. Italian laws concerning citizenship are based on Roman *jus sanguinis* that does not allow people born in Italy to be Italian citizens at birth. A so-called second generation movement (i.e. a social movement composed of young women and men who were born in Italy by non-Italian parents) is campaigning to change the legislation to one based on *jus soli* (according to which citizenship is territorial and assigned at birth).