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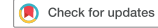
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For a Jewish Italian Literary History: from Italo Svevo to Igiaba Scego

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This article argues that recognizing Jewishness as a crucial part of modern Italian literary history offers one path for discussing the current and historical diversity of Italian culture. The first section discusses key twentieth-century Italian authors — Giorgio Bassani, Natalia Ginzburg, Primo Levi, Elsa Morante, and Italo Svevo — not to assess how Jewish they are, but to illuminate the Jewishness of modern Italian literature, which prompts a reconsideration of the construction of Italian identity. The second section, “Jewish, Black, and Italian: The Archival Fictions of Helena Janeczek, Claudio Magris, and Igiaba Scego,” scrutinizes how these three authors interrogate Italy’s role in the persecution of Jews, racial violence, and colonialism, drawing on historical documents that show the gaps in dominant discourses and asking readers to reflect on how historical narratives have been constructed. Being more cognizant of Jewish Italians, their backgrounds, and their representations in literature contributes to the growing analyses of Italy’s diversity, adding to examinations of Italian literature that focus on belonging, borders, migration, and colonialism.

KEYWORDS Jewish, identity, literary history, Italo Svevo, Igiaba Scego, Claudio Magris, Helena Janeczek

Roberto Rossellini’s *Roma città aperta* (1945) contributed to Italy’s rebuilding process after the Second World War. Epitomizing the aspirations for the country’s new national consciousness, the film’s priest, communist partisans, Catholic housewife, newspaper workers, and children all fight for a non-fascist Italy. With German Nazis as their adversaries, the primary enemies come from beyond the peninsula’s borders.¹ There are no Jews. Their absence and persecution may haunt some of the death scenes, but, if the film represented Italian hopes for the future and the horrors of the recent past, Jewish Italians play a role in neither. Their absent presence takes a different form in William Weaver’s *Open City*, which

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draws on the film's famous title. This 1999 collection showcases writing from foundational Italian authors Weaver knew in postwar Rome: Giorgio Bassani, Carlo Emilio Gadda, Natalia Ginzburg, Carlo Levi, Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia, and Ignazio Silone. Five of the seven authors in Weaver's *Open City* have Jewish heritage but it is only mentioned in passing (Bassani, Ginzburg) or not at all (Levi, Morante, Moravia). *Open City* exemplifies how Jewish Italians play a notable — though at times unacknowledged — role in Italian literary history, as they have in Italian nation building in the nineteenth century, the fascist party before 1938, the partisan resistance, and the reconstitution of Italy after the Second World War. This article foregrounds the multiple representations of Jewishness in Italian authors' works not to essentialize this identity, but to underscore its significance throughout Italian literature and culture (Weaver 1999).²

Scholars, directors, and authors who revisit the persecution of Jewish Italians decades after the war often highlight other elements of marginalization in Italian society as well, including events and people historiography had ignored.³ In contrast to *Roma città aperta*, Ettore Scola's '43-'97 begins with the roundup of Jews in Rome. This short film features a series of important clips from Italian cinema, including a scene from Rossellini's iconic work, that give a sense of the country's national and cultural history. Framing the montage is a Jewish boy who escapes capture by ducking into a movie theater and, by the conclusion of the screening, has aged into an older man. At the end, a Black adolescent who also appears to be escaping from persecution runs into the theater and sees the now older Jewish man. The eye contact between the two men emphasizes parallels between Jewish and Black people's experiences in Italy, as Millicent Marcus shows: "At its most obvious, '43-'97 is about the link between the past and present of racial intolerance, about the urgent need to revisit Holocaust history now; lest the logic of persecution visit itself upon the new Italian 'other' of Third World immigration" (Marcus 2007, 164–165). I argue that recognizing Jewishness as a crucial part of modern Italian literary history offers one path for discussing the historical diversity of Italian culture and identity. The first section describes canonical twentieth-century Italian authors in terms of their representations of Jewishness and their backgrounds, focusing primarily on the cases of Italo Svevo and Elsa Morante to show the Jewishness of Italian literature, rather than to outline the Jewish literature of Italy, of which Giorgio Bassani and Primo Levi are the more obvious examples. This discussion provides critical context for the second section, which examines how three contemporary authors, Helena Janeczek, Claudio Magris, and Igiaba Scego, build on this Jewish Italian tradition and encourage reevaluations of *italianità*, past and future.

The Jewishness of Modern Italian Literature

Italo Svevo's Jewishness has been a debated topic both in terms of his biography and whether it is appropriate to include in discussions of his literature.⁴ In works such as H. Stuart Hughes' *Prisoners of Hope* (1996), Giorgio Bassani,

meanwhile, is the model Jewish Italian author, since he has two Jewish parents and writes about Jewish religion, culture, and traditions as well as the Shoah. Many other Jewish Italian authors — Natalia Ginzburg, Marina Jarre, Carlo Levi, Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia, Umberto Saba, Clara Sereni, and Gian Stuparich — are less clearly categorizable, either because of their heritage or literary content. There is a different angle to take with these authors: rather than assess “how Jewish” Italians with Jewish origins are, I want to emphasize how *Jewish* Italy and Italian culture are.⁵ Modern Italian food, literature, and art would not be what they are were it not for Jewish Italians.⁶ Italian literature written by authors with Jewish origins and representations of Jewishness in Italian literature help construct what being Italian means in terms of regional identities, style, and traditions. Building on the scholarship of Alberto Cavaglion, Luca De Angelis, Stefania Lucamante, Christoph Miething, Sergio Parussa, Elizabeth Schächter, and Raniero Speelman, who have analyzed Jewish Italian literature, especially the Jewish authors for whom Jewishness is a central theme, I call attention to the Jewishness of modern Italian literature more broadly, including in works by authors whose backgrounds are debated or who explore Jewishness but are not Jewish.⁷

Svevo was born in Austro-Hungarian Trieste in 1861, was raised Jewish, spoke Triestine, attended school in Germany, and wrote in Italian. He eventually converted to Catholicism for his wife, whose memoir of Svevo does not mention his Jewishness. While his wife Livia Veneziani was religious, Svevo had an ironic relationship with religion, including with his own conversion. Like many parts of his identity, Svevo’s Jewishness is not simple but was significant throughout his life, as evidenced by his own writings, from his first published article “Shylock” (1880) to his lecture on Joyce, Hebrew, and antisemitism (1927).⁸ None of Svevo’s novels describe their characters as Jewish, but in a version of a later preface to *Senilità* (1898), Svevo commented that its protagonist, Emilio Brentani, was Jewish:

Mi sembrerebbe proprio di mutilare il libro privandolo del suo titolo. Io non so neppure l’origine di esso, non so se attribuii un carattere senile al protagonista del romanzo, alla sua razza (a proposito: mi accorgo di non aver mai trovato il modo di dire che era un ebreo), o all’ambiente in cui si muoveva. Ma è certo che il titolo mi guidò e lo vissi (Svevo 2004a, 1347).

Emilio’s *senilità* may relate to his individual character, or his Jewishness, or his bourgeois Triestine environment, but most likely to all three. Svevo’s multiple identities are similarly interlocking and influence each other.

Svevo’s Jewish heritage negatively affected his early literary reception. At the time of his death in 1928, six years into the fascist *ventennio*, Svevo’s fame was on the rise. In 1931, a bust of Svevo was erected in Trieste’s public gardens to honor the author, but it was removed after the proclamation of the antisemitic Racial Laws in 1938. Even before the Italian Racial Laws, the Triestine author was not touted as a strong representative of the relatively new nation. Within

the peninsula, Svevo's work encountered resistance due to his writing style and his so-called effeminate characters. Because literature has played an especially important role in Italy's concept of itself, beautiful writing contributes to the Italian sense of identity, more so than in most other countries. Critics have debated the quality of Svevo's prose, which, understandably, is not described as beautiful.⁹ In addition to his language placing him outside the Italian canon, Svevo's place of birth, schooling, and Jewish background contributed to how he and his works initially were estranged from admired Italian literature. Many twentieth-century critics and anthologies that included Svevo minimized his Jewish heritage.

Like fiction itself, literary history shapes collective memory.¹⁰ Setting off a debate about the novel as form, Morante's *La Storia* (1974) presents figures that Italian historical narratives generally ignored, including Jewish, gay, female, and young characters. Morante's layered paratexts offer different ways to map her extensive work. Suggesting the significance of Jewishness in the novel, five of Morante's seven explanatory notes at the end of the novel have to do with being Jewish and the majority of them deal specifically with the Shoah, including Himmler's definition of the "final solution," Pitchipoi ("questo nome sarebbe stato inventato nel campo di Drancy dai bambini ebrei destinati alla deportazione, per designare il paese misterioso verso il quale partivano i convogli dei deportati," 1990, 1035), and ZYKLON B ("si tratta, per chi non lo sapesse, di un composto chimico usato dai Nazisti per lo sterminio nelle camere a gas," 1990, 1035). Morante's notes highlight the bestselling novel's focus on the persecution of Jewish Italians, since these are certainly not the only moments of this rich, long, and complex work that could use extra clarification. Gabrielle Elissa Popoff analyzes the novel's deep engagement with the Shoah showing how, "the controversy surrounding *La Storia* excluded, as most literary criticism still does today, the book's Holocaust content" (Popoff 2012, 26). The earlier silence around the central role Jewishness plays in Morante's bestseller is emblematic of a critical tendency to overlook the Jewishness of canonical Italian works, both in terms of content and the authors' backgrounds.

This tendency has, in turn, contributed to Italian literature and authors like Morante and Svevo remaining peripheral in many debates about Jewish literature. Jewish Italian modernist literature does not fit into the same narratives that Jewish American or Jewish German modernism does so it has been left out of too many non-Italian literary histories. Current anglophone discussions of modernism often ignore Svevo altogether.¹¹ Identities and literary formations are forged from within a nation's critical tradition (Italy's) and outside (what non-Italians include as Italian or Jewish). They also influence each other. While almost none of the literary works by Kafka, Svevo's last "amore letterario" (Veneziani Svevo 1976, 144), mention Jewishness, Kafka is central in analyses of what Jewish literature encompasses for scholars from Ruth R. Wisse to Dan Miron, in part because of the richness of German-Jewish Studies.¹² In contrast to German, Polish, French, or English, let alone Hebrew and Yiddish, Italian

literature is frequently ignored in investigations of what Jewish literature is, as if the “Italianness” of the language prevented a work from being considered “Jewish.” The relative neglect of Italian literature in studies of Jewish literature is strange, given the long, diverse, and uninterrupted history of Jews in the Italian peninsula and the number of important Italian authors with Jewish heritage. Jewish Italian history and literature prompt reconsiderations of some common frameworks for understanding culture and identities.

Primo Levi is the most likely Italian author to be included in broader examinations of Jewish literature. While the focus is usually on Levi’s writings as a concentration camp survivor, Levi is also part of a tradition of Jewish Italian authors bringing a range of new thought into Italian. With *Se non ora, quando?* (1982), Levi aimed to serve as mediator between the Yiddish world and Italy (Roth 1996, 186). With *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923), Svevo foregrounded psychoanalysis in Italian literature. An interview between Primo Levi and Philip Roth reveals both Svevo’s significance for Levi and the Triestine author’s limited visibility in the United States. When Roth asked Levi about his unusual position as an author who also manages a paint factory, Levi associated his biography with Svevo’s: “However, to your list of writer-paint manufacturers I must add a third name, Italo Svevo, a converted Jew of Trieste” (Roth 1996, 187). Levi highlights Svevo’s Jewish identity and their connections as writers and workers.

Svevo’s multiple identities make him central to Kwame Anthony Appiah’s investigation of national belonging, in a discussion that includes Appiah’s own Asante and English heritage: “And yet, in the canons of our culture, Italo Svevo is still with us. The tolerant, pluralist, self-questioning, and cosmopolitan modernity he embodied is, to be sure, under attack. The confessors of ambivalence will always seem at a disadvantage amid the fervent partisans of nativism” (Appiah 2018, 104). Appiah is not the only author who finds Svevo inspirational for challenging restrictive ideas about national identity. With a nameless narrator whose identities are ambiguous, Jhumpa Lahiri’s Italian work, *Dove mi trovo* (2018), begins with an epigraph from Svevo: “Ad ogni mutamento di posto io provo una grande enorme tristezza. Non maggiore quando lascio un luogo cui si conettono dei ricordi o dei dolori e piacere. È il mutamento stesso che m’agita come il liquido in un vaso che scosso s’intorbida” (Svevo 1968, 845–846). There is sadness in movement, in leaving anywhere, but also an openness to being temporarily rooted in a number of places. The connections between Svevo and Lahiri highlight movement that engages multiple places and languages, both in terms of their upbringings, but also in terms of their choices of temporary homes, Lahiri’s in Rome and Svevo’s in London (Lahiri 2018). Svevo’s sense of change comes partly from the incredible transitions of Trieste and its environs, but also from his experiences in modern London, where he spent a significant amount of time for work between 1901 and 1926. He discussed the difficulties of living in London as a foreigner where it was unclear if his British contemporaries identified him primarily as Jewish, Italian, Austrian, German, or just “foreign” (Svevo 2003, 227). Considering Svevo in terms of

Jewishness offers one method of approaching Italian literary history that leads to a number of contemporary authors, such as Lahiri, that can be hard to place in the Italian tradition as it used to be configured.

Indicating how widely twentieth-century Jewish Italian authors inform contemporary Italian literature, *Dove mi trovo* is not the only recent novel whose epigraph is taken from an Italian author with Jewish origins. Donatella Di Pietrantonio's *L'arminuta* (2019) and Nadia Terranova's *Addio Fantasmi* (2018) begin with quotes by Morante and Ginzburg respectively.¹³ Like Lahiri's, these novels relate to the ideas of childhood, movement, memory, and the instability of belonging suggested in their epigraphs, which can also be analyzed in terms of the twentieth-century authors' backgrounds. Di Pietrantonio's quote from Morante's *Menzogna e sortilegio* highlights the power childhood experiences hold: "Ancora oggi, in certo modo, io sono rimasta ferma a quella fanciullesca estate: intorno a cui la mia anima ha continuato a girare e battere senza tregua, come un insetto intorno a una lampada accecante" (Morante 2001, 18). *L'arminuta* in part explores the difficulty of breaking away from and understanding the realities of one's upbringing.

Terranova's *Addio fantasmi* explores not knowing the exact fate of the protagonist's father and how that has shaped her. It opens with a quote from Ginzburg's "Infanzia" (1948) that emphasizes the strangeness of being in between, neither rich nor poor, ideas reflected throughout Terranova's novel: "Avevo sempre l'impressione che noialtri fossimo una strana famiglia di gente né ricca né povera, molto più ricchi dei poveri e molto più poveri dei ricchi, con un giardino che era una cosa da gente ricca, ma con un cesso buio dove ci crescevano i funghi" (Ginzburg 2016, 146). Ginzburg's essays "Infanzia" (1948) and "Infanzia" (1969) also explore other elements, such as her Jewish heritage, that contributed to this feeling of being "nothing," strange, and mixed: "Noi non andavamo né in chiesa, né come certi parenti di mio padre al tempio: noi eravamo 'niente,' m'avevano spiegato i miei fratelli; eravamo 'misti,' cioè mezzi ebrei e mezzi cattolici, ma in definitiva né l'una né l'altra cosa: niente" (Ginzburg 2016, 201). In part because of her Jewish background, Ginzburg writes powerful works about being uneasy or unsure about one's identity and place. Ginzburg's exploration of not fitting into society's categories inspire authors whose narrators also question their class, ethnic, regional, and religious identifications.

Although Ginzburg, Morante, and Primo Levi did not necessarily want to be labeled "Jewish authors," they describe Jewishness as a key part of their Italian identities. Ginzburg explained: "My Jewish identity became extremely important to me from the moment the Jews began to be persecuted. At that point I became aware of myself as a Jew" (Boyers 1992, 141).¹⁴ Morante similarly commented, "I should be grateful to Mussolini. By introducing the German racist laws he made me realize that I myself was a Jew" (Fontana 1988, 20). Before Hitler, Levi had also considered himself an Italian, who was most significantly also "borghese:" "Mi hanno fatto diventare ebreo" (Bruck and Levi 1997, 269).¹⁵ Levi's "Argon" offers one testament to the author's youthful participation in a

family tradition of Jewish culture, which took on new significance after the Shoah. These authors' observations highlight how their senses of self shifted as new identities were imposed upon them.

Analyzing Jewishness in Italian literature calls attention to Italian antisemitism in history and literature, for instance as represented in Pirandello's "Un goy" (1916). Unlike German antisemitism, Jewish Italian antisemitism, could be, and therefore often was, ignored (Schwarz 2012, 3). After the Second World War, many considered Italian antisemitism to pertain to a distinct period in which Mussolini followed Hitler by propagating anti-Jewish policies that did not reflect real Italian values.¹⁶ Italian education, collective memory, and scholarship largely ignored the role Italians had played in the persecution of Jewish Italians.¹⁷ Numerous scholars have examined the tensions between Jewish Germans' important participation in German culture and their persecution, whereas it has sometimes appeared that to call attention to Italian authors' Jewish background might suggest a modification or limit to their *italianità*, a dangerous nationalist discourse that still sometimes guides critical categorization of authors.¹⁸ *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature* notes neither Morante's Jewish heritage nor Moravia's. Though their Jewish backgrounds are only one element of their multifaceted identities, mentioning it would draw attention to the representation of Jews in their works, such as Moravia's *Il dio Kurt*, Morante's "Il ladro dei lumi," and her *La Storia*. In *Censorship and Literature in Fascist Italy*, Guido Bonsaver shows that it was often possible for Jewish authors to continue being published in Italy after the Racial Laws, provided their Jewishness was not officially noted (2007, 198). At times the minimization of Italian authors' Jewishness can appear like a continuation of these practices of silence.

Bassani's "Una lapide in via Mazzini" (1952) scrutinizes how Italians resisted confronting their role in the persecution of Jewish Italians and asks readers to question their understanding of history. In the story, an Italian concentration camp survivor, Geo Jozs, returns to his hometown of Ferrara and finds his name on a plaque honoring the victims of the Shoah. Unable to get the town to remove his name or to acknowledge fully what he underwent, he eventually leaves. The narrator is one of the resistant townspeople who problematically equate the specific experiences of Jewish Italians with everyone's pain at the end of the war: "dopo tanto tempo, dopo tante sofferenze toccata un po' a tutti, e senza distinzione di fede politica, di censo, di religione, di razza, costui, proprio adesso, che cosa voleva? Che cosa pretendeva?" (Bassani 1980, 67). This "toccata un po' a tutti" erases both Jewishness from the Italian experience and the particularity of being deported to a concentration camp.

The narrator believes that making distinctions between the levels of suffering, from the violence experienced by partisans, to that experienced by fascists, to that experienced by Jews in camps, would hinder Italy's ability to move past the divisions of the 1940s. He exclaims: "il passato era passato, inutile star lì a rivangarlo!" (83). Bassani's Ferraresi could accept Jozs, provided he did not suggest that their fascism had contributed to Jewish Italian deaths in concentration

camps.¹⁹ While the narrative describes the plaque remaining and Josz disappearing, “come un personaggio di un romanzo” (124), the story itself challenges the collective memory it presents. “Una lapide in Via Mazzini” reveals literature’s potential power to contribute to the reevaluation of words written in stone (plaques, memorials, gravestones) that often misrepresent the past. Scholars have contested the “Italiani brava gente” narrative in examinations of Jewish persecution and Italian colonization (Del Boca 2005; Fogu 2006; Levis Sullam 2015; Rodogni 2005), but this myth has been hard to disrupt.²⁰

Concentration camp survivor and author Edith Bruck called attention to the resistance her work has faced because of her focus on the Shoah. She shares that Italo Calvino suggested:

I should have written in English and lived in the United States, because Italy is not the right country for my books. Maybe he was right, I do not know. The Italian readership is part of the global readership. Today nobody wants to face our past, especially people who did not live that past (Bruck and Maceri 2007, 609).

Contemporary Italian fiction’s growing reception shows that at least two things have changed since Bruck’s statements: one is that more readers recognize Italy as part of the global landscape; another is that more readers are prepared to face the variety of Italian history. Bassani, Morante, Svevo, and other Italian authors discussed here, as well as the scholarship on their works, have contributed to this shift. In novels with significant Jewish characters, the works of Janeczek, Magris, and Scego similarly show the power of literature to prompt reconsiderations of the construction of history, as will be discussed in the next section. While Josz disappeared like a character in a novel, these authors’ contemporary novels highlight the presence of Jewish Italians.

The Jewish characters of Janeczek’s *Le rondini di Montecassino*, Magris’s *Non luogo a procedere*, and Scego’s *Adua* can be contextualized by the multiple representations of Jewishness throughout the authors’ works. Partially due to the important role of Jewish authors in Austria-Hungary, generally, and Trieste, specifically, explorations of Jewishness play a notable part in Magris’s works, throughout both his fiction, starting with *Danubio* (winner of the Bagutta Prize, 1986) and *Microcosmi* (winner of the Strega Prize, 1997), and his non-fiction, starting with *Il mito asburgico nella letteratura austriaca moderna* (1963) and *Lontano da dove: Joseph Roth e la tradizione ebraico-orientale* (1971).²¹ From Scego’s short stories to her children’s book *Prestami le ali: Storia di Clara la rinocerante* to her novels, numerous examples throughout the author’s oeuvre highlight connections between Jewish and Afro-Italian experiences. In “Salsicce” (winner of the Eks & Tra Prize, 2003), the narrator considers racism in an international context and shows the connections between a range of oppressed people, including Jews, and reactions to prejudice (Scego 2005, 34). In “La chat,” Scego’s contribution to *1938: Storia, racconto, memoria*, which reflects on the Italian racial laws, a mother learns from her son that parents of his classmates, Eritrean immigrants, have been excluded from a mothers’ shared chat group.

The narrator confronts the other mothers in the chat group, who respond with disparaging comments about Africans and Black people, causing the narrator to consider her Jewish grandmother's experiences of hiding to avoid persecution during the Second World War and personal responsibility (Scego 2018a). Beginning and ending with Émile Zola's famous *J'accuse* letter protesting the prejudice in the decision to condemn Alfred Dreyfus, Scego's introductory note to *Future: Il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*, an anthology of Afro-Italian women writers, highlights the connections between antisemitism, racial violence, and anti-migrant feelings (Scego 2019).²² Scego includes Janeczek in her discussion of migrant authors; Janeczek was born in Munich to Jewish Polish parents.²³ Her *Lezioni di tenebra* (1997) investigates her mother's experiences during the war and Janeczek's relationship to her mother's past.

In 2018, Janeczek won the Strega Prize for her work, *La ragazza con la Leica*. Scego highlights the significance of this prize: it is notable not only because a woman had not won it in fifteen years, but also because it was the first time an author not born and raised Italy had received the prize. This official recognition shifts how some view Italian literature: "Ed è questa migrazione linguistica che fa della sua vittoria allo Strega una vittoria storica non solo per lei, ma per il paese. È la prima volta che la letteratura italiana è così dichiaratamente multiculturale. Lo è sempre stata, ma non si è mai raccontata in questo modo. Pensiamo solo al padre dell'italiano, Alessandro Manzoni. Anche lui in fondo ha scritto il suo capolavoro, *I promessi sposi*, in una lingua non sua" (Scego 2018b). As the inclusion of Manzoni suggests, Italy and its literature have always been in a dynamic process of development. Who are the "real Italians" or what is "real Italy" has been up for debate since well before and also after Italy's unification. Literature can be a form of cultural participation for authors who come from places or background that are frequently excluded from a national image (like Trieste) and their work then shapes what being Italian is.²⁴

Scego's work has been foundational for critical reevaluations of Italian history, literature, and culture. Her writing plays a vital role in postcolonial and decolonial studies of Italy. As the author herself states, "Ho sempre visto lo spazio della letteratura italiana come uno spazio da decolonizzare" (Ferracuti 2020, 49). She has characterized her last three novels, *Oltre Babilonia* (2008), *Adua* (2015), and *La linea del colore* (2020), as a "trilogia di violenza coloniale" (Scego 2020, 360). Emma Bond (2014), Simone Brioni (2015), Marie Orton (2012), and Simona Wright (2004) have analyzed Scego in order to open Italian studies to new perspectives that center on borders, belonging, migration, and postcolonialism.²⁵ Scego's multiple representations of Jewishness shows the crucial role of Jewishness for these debates as well.

Scego's inclusion of Jewish characters is unrelated to her identities as a Roman, Italian, Somali, Muslim, and Black woman. When critics focus on gender, generation, or background, Triestine Magris (born in 1939) and Roman Scego (born in 1974) are ascribed to different categories, but neither is Jewish. The role of Jewishness in their works underscores not only the significant role of

Jews in Italian literature, history, and culture, but also the limitations of conflating authors with their fictional content. The tendency to identify authors' experiences with their literature has grown: while *Writing Across Worlds: Literature and Migration* (White 1995) analyzed Cesare Pavese's *La luna e i falò* (1950), today, authors like Pavese, who never saw the America described in his novel, are frequently excluded when scholars discuss "migration literature." Reading texts solely through the lens of authors' identities assumes imagination is constrained by an author's background.

Janeczek's, Magris's, and Scego's novels are inspired partially by their backgrounds, but their literature is not bound by it. The narrator of Janeczek's *Le rondini di Montecassino* reflects on how authors create stories that lead them far beyond their own experiences: "Nulla di ciò che è umano ti è alieno, ripeti con Terenzio, e una storia vale l'altra, ma solo in questo senso: basta che tu riesca a trattarla come la tua o che la tua valga quella di un altro, qualcosa che devi scoprire, interrogare, imparare a conoscere" (Janeczek 2010, 138). The narrator emphasizes the potential power of literature to serve as a bridge, for writer and reader, to other worlds and perspectives. The multiple narrative voices in the novels of Janeczek, Magris, and Scego challenge modes of reading that collapse author and character.

Jewish, Black, and Italian: The Archival Fictions of Helena Janeczek, Claudio Magris, and Igiaba Scego

Janeczek's *Le rondini di Montecassino* (2010), Magris's *Non luogo a procedere* (2015), and Scego's *Adua* (2015) interrogate Italy's role in the persecution of Jews, racial violence, and colonialism. Exploring still uncanonical parts of history, their literature draws on historical documents to show the gaps that exist in dominant discourses, asking readers to reflect on how historical narratives have been constructed and what pasts have been silenced.²⁶ By comparing novels by Janeczek, Magris, and Scego, I aim to enact on a scholarly level what these three authors have done in their fictions that bring together disparate histories. *Le rondini di Montecassino*, *Non luogo a procedere*, and *Adua* contribute to the process of reshaping national self-awareness and a future Italy that engages its complex past. Their English translations — *The Swallows of Monte Cassino* by Frederika Randall (2013), *Blameless* by Anne Milano Appel (2017), and *Adua* by Jamie Richards (2017) — make available for a larger audience these novels that reflect on the interconnections between places and the intersections of racism, antisemitism, and colonialism that are of great significance beyond Italy itself.

The Italy of Magris, Janeczek, and Scego includes Jewish and Black characters as vital narrators of the country's stories. In Magris's *Non luogo a procedere*, Luisa, the protagonist, is Jewish and Black: Luisa's father was an African American soldier stationed in Trieste and her mother was a Triestine Jew who went into hiding in order to survive the Second World War (Magris 2015).

Luisa's work to put together a museum of peace prompts her to reflect on personal and national memory and, in part through her attempts to understand her parents, the issues of contemporary racism and antisemitism are interwoven and made personal. In one concise comment Luisa links slavery, the Shoah, lynchings, pogroms, and her family: "Schiavitù d'Egitto e cattività in Babilonia, distruzione del tempio e fuga in tutte le direzioni, pogrom di Galizia e linciaggi d'Alabama, Tratta e Shoah. Mio padre è arrivato fin qui per impedire che uccidessero mia madre" (Magris 2015, 236). The descriptions of what Luisa's father experienced in the United States and Italy connect to not only American and Italian racism but also the hostilities facing Black and Jewish Italians.

The interactions between Luisa's parents could suggest the idea of a hierarchy of suffering or "competitive" memory (Rothberg 2009, 9). The mother's past persecution frames the father's reticence to talk about his experiences: "Doveva aver avuto imbarazzo a parlare di oltraggi razziali a chi era passato attraverso la Shoah" (Magris 2015, 235). Luisa, meanwhile, holds these experiences together in her memories and existence, at times against her will: "Come invidiava quel dono che sembrava dato agli altri, a tanti altri, a quasi tutti; quella capacità di dimenticare, almeno di vivere come se si avesse dimenticato" (Magris 2015, 121). As the granddaughter of a woman killed in Risiera San Sabba, the death camp in Trieste, Luisa is deeply aware of the horrors of history and that her individual memory contrasts with the collective memory of a society that prefers to forget.

In Janeczek's *Le rondini di Montecassino*, war also prompts reconsiderations of nationality, race, and oppression. In the first section, before arriving in Italy, a Texan soldier writes letters to his family that reflect on the enormity of the United States: "Ho visto l'oceano, ho visto palme e pini, ho condiviso le giornate con ragazzi che parlano in un modo per me così strano e difficile da capire quanto a loro dev'essere sembrato il mio, mi sono abituato all'idea che molti di loro sono negri" (Janeczek 2010, 20–21). The novel establishes how leaving home requires reevaluating understandings of race and nation. In the following section of the novel a Maori character, Rapata, travels from New Zealand to Italy for a ceremony honoring soldiers who fought at Monte Cassino, a group that includes his recently deceased grandfather. When Rapata eventually arrived in Italy, the Italians were unsure of how to place him: "Gli chiese anche lei se era 'american' e a Rapata balenò che americano non volesse mai dire veramente americano, ma nero, simile al nero, non uguale ai bianchi, in ogni caso" (Janeczek 2010, 71). In this scene, an Italian woman tries to understand the background and skin tone of Rapata, who is Maori and from New Zealand, through America's binary racial categories, revealing its prominence in many conceptions of Blackness, as it often is in discussions of Jewish identity. While the beginning of *Le rondini di Montecassino* describes an American's changing comprehension of race in the United States, other characters receive greater narrative space and the Texan soldier dies an unheroic, unnecessary death. The majority of the novel in fact highlights the limits of perspectives on race,

migration, and identity from any one nation, perhaps especially from the United States, given its global dominance.

Rapata's grandfather, as a young soldier, had encountered people in South Africa (on the way from New Zealand to Italy) who caused him to reconsider racial constructions. He reflects on this in a comment to Rapata (Rapi): "Sai, Rapi, io un negro non l'avevo mai visto prima. I bianchi che erano tutto sommato identici ai nostri, parlavano giusto un inglese un po' curioso, ma quelli erano gente fatta in tutt'altro modo" (67–68). Related to Rapata's wonderment at how the Maori could be confused with people who were so different from them, his grandfather shows how one racial category, "Black," covering such as a vast range of people can be nonsensical. Rapata's grandfather concludes that racism is about international power dynamics: "Forse a te sembrerà strano, ma in Guerra ho capito che il razzismo non c'entra con il colore della pelle. Il razzismo è poter decidere chi sei. I tedeschi trattavano da schiavi gente spesso più bianca e bionda di loro, come i polacchi" (Janeczek 2010, 69). His statement echoes bell hooks's formulation that, "Being oppressed means *the absence of choices*. It is the primary point of contact between the oppressed and the oppressor" (hooks 2015, 5). *Le rondini di Montecassino* describes how Black soldiers were excluded from the celebrations of victories they had helped achieve (Janeczek 2010, 337). Racism shaped the Second World War, but many of those who fought against Nazi Germany then contributed to racist constructions after the war. As the novel's multiple characters reflect on colonialism, race, and Jewish identity, their varying viewpoints reveal how much of the prejudice that led to the Second World War remains ingrained in society.

Scego's *Adua* narrates the experiences of a father and daughter, both of whom come from Somalia to Italy. The father Zoppe is repeatedly assaulted in 1930s Rome because he is Black. Highlighting the connections between racial violence during and after fascism, his daughter, Adua, also faces racist violence when she moves to Rome in the 1970s. Zoppe's only positive personal interaction in Rome is with a Jewish family, the Limentani. When Davide Limentani and his daughter, Emanuela, first invited Zoppe over to their house, Zoppe assumed they were Catholic and reflects that he had never seen white Jews. Emanuela's attempt to describe her background shows how Italian antisemitism intersects with the country's Catholicism:

"Noi siamo diversi" sussurrò il padre. "A scuola i compagni mi chiamano 'assassina.' Dicono che ho ammazzato Dio e che la mia famiglia va in giro a rubare i bambini. Ieri Graziella, quella grassa che non sa ancora l'alfabeto, mi ha tirato i capelli e mi ha chiamata 'mangiaocche.' Mi sono messa a piangere, perché mi ha tirato molto forte." Zoppe non capiva, confuso da parole troppo veloci. "Emanuela," intervenne il padre, "sta tentando di dirti che noi siamo ebrei. Per lei è un problema questo?" (Scego 2015, 26).

Though Zoppe felt a connection to the Limentani before knowing they were Jewish, the narrative suggests that the persecution Zoppe and the Limentani

both face draws them closer together. The Jewish and Black characters of *Adua* can look at each other “con occhi umani” (Scego 2015, 16). While in his cell in the prison Regina Coeli, Zoppe has visions that suggest the future struggles the Limentani will face, connecting them to the Italian’s deadly use of poisonous gas in the colonies.

Adua was in part inspired by a photograph, as Scego remarks in her novel’s acknowledgements: “La scrittrice romana Giacometta Limentani un giorno mi ha fatto vedere una sua foto di infanzia: lei bambina e tra ascari probabilmente somali nel quartiere Prati” (Scego 2015, 181). The photograph prompts Scego to reflect on how Jews like Giacometta Limentani and colonized Black people like the askari were tragically bound together by the racial laws. In Italy, fascist policies and propaganda overtly connected antisemitic policies and colonizing racism. The fascist magazine *La difesa della razza* offers numerous examples of the horrifying links between the antisemitism, racism, and colonialism by including arguments about the danger of having Jews in Italian society juxtaposed with pages that emphasize why racial differences should encourage Italian colonialism. *Le rondini di Montecassino*, *Non luogo a procedere*, and *Adua* show links between racial and antisemitic violence, whose historical connections were more obvious in fascist Italy than in many places, to shed light on Italian violence that used to be overlooked. Throughout the last century, conversations about antisemitism, racism, and colonialism often excluded Italy. Italian authors and scholars, such as Ruth Ben-Ghiat, Angelo Del Boca, Derek Duncan, Teresa Fiore, Claudio Fogu, Mia Fuller, Camilla Hawthorne, Stefanie Malia Hom, Simon Levis Sullam, Cristina Lombardi-Diop, and Sandra Ponzanesi, redress these gaps, offering critiques not only of what had been ignored in Italy, but also of the problem of omitting Italy from these larger debates. In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg argues for the significant interrelationship between Shoah and decolonial memory: “There is no shortage of cross-referencing between the legacies of the Holocaust and colonialism, but many of those moments of contact occur in marginalized texts or in marginal moments of well-known texts” (2009, 18). Although Rothberg does not discuss Italy, he shows how apparent marginality — like Italy’s — can facilitate experimentation.²⁷

Recent scholarly and literary investigations build on past debates to consider a greater confluence of elements than many earlier discourses (Mezzadra 2010). Those discussions frequently juxtapose Italy’s histories of prejudice and violence with other countries’ that have tended to dominate the critical discourses, such as Germany’s antisemitism, the United States’ racism, and France’s colonialism. Because the discourses about postcolonialism, the legacy of the Shoah, racism, migration, and sexism have sharply increased in Italian studies, they are often more interconnected than in places like the United States, where the fields are more established, and therefore the barriers between them have at times become reified. American reviews of Scego’s *Adua* have tended to emphasize how the novel connects Italy’s colonial history with current migration to Italy, but ignore

the significance of its Jewish characters.²⁸ In the section of *The European Tribe* set in Venice's ghetto, Caryl Phillips describes Black-Jewish divisions as more notable in the United States than in Europe.²⁹ Jewish-Black alliances in the United States are frequently framed as problematic.³⁰ Due to its cultural and political dominance, the United States is often a reference point in works on contemporary Jewish and Black identities, but the differences between it and Italy reveal how much the Global-English (often American) perspective needs to consider other outlooks, histories, and cultures.³¹ Camilla Hawthorne points out how often Afro-European identity is problematically navigated, and therefore at times formulated, via American ideas of race, history, and culture (Hawthorne 2019, 30). Considering Jewish Italian literature reveals how the "lines of fracture" described by Adam Kirsch (2019, 179), also necessarily go beyond binary divisions once the United States is not considered the center. Black-Jewish boundaries are pushed by authors and scholars of Italy (Duncan 2016, Bassi 2011).

Differing from historical novels that describe one time period, Janeczek's, Magris's, and Scego's transhistorical novels contrast contemporary Italy with Italy under fascism. Scholars have revealed Italy's particular position as a country of emigrants and immigrants,³² invaded and invading,³³ to underscore the dynamic relationship between present-day Italy and its colonial past.³⁴ Linking Italy's histories of antisemitism, colonial racism, and present-day racism, Janeczek, Magris, and Scego connect Italy of the present to Italy's fascist past, not directly equating them, but showing the dangers of considering Italian racism and antisemitism under fascism as a period of exceptionalism, rather than elements of society that need to be constantly confronted. Suggesting it is a beginning of a reconsideration process for the reader, *Adua* includes a historical note, with bibliographic references for readers who wish to understand better the novel's broader contexts.³⁵

All three novels interrogate losses of historical knowledge, which relate both to archives, or what accessible materials exist, and also how formulations of identity shape these archives. When writing their novels, Janeczek, Magris, and Scego drew on historical documents and events about which there are still questions.³⁶ Scego links fictional Emanuela Limentani to the author Giacometta Limentani with their shared family name. Scego further clarifies in this note: "La bambina non è Giacometta, ma rappresenta il destino commune di chi ha sofferto sotto il Fascismo" (Scego 2015, 182). Emanuela, like the Texan soldier of *Le rondini di Montecassino*, who is introduced as "Il sergente John 'Jacko' Wilkins – e qualcuno come lui è esistito" (Janeczek 2010, 19), suggests that the novel explores aspects of characters who "did exist" in some way and embeds these histories within its pages. Much of *Non luogo a procedere* revolves around real events. The novel covers a vast swath of history and numerous characters, but primarily organizes the plot around two figures, a Triestine proponent of a museum dedicated to showcasing objects of war (henceforth referred to as "the man") and Luisa, who must finish the project after his mysterious death. While

the man who has died remains unnamed, in the note following the work, Magris notes the name of the actual figure who inspired this part of the story, Diego de Henriquez. By not explicitly naming him, the novel both represents the historical figure and reflects on its fictionality. The “Museo di guerra per la pace ‘Diego de Henriquez’” now exists in Trieste.

Non luogo a procedere alternates between chapters taken from the man’s remaining notes, Luisa’s thoughts about the museum, reflections on Luisa’s own story, and other stories related to materials that will potentially be displayed in the museum. While Magris’s *Non luogo a procedere* is grounded in Trieste’s specific history, the novel also includes discussions of the Chamacoco (indigenous people who dwelled primarily in what is now Paraguay), the slave trade, Otto Schimek (an Austrian buried in Poland who may or may not have refused to participate in a firing squad), and Sun Tzu (the fifth century BCE Chinese military strategist), among other figures and events. At times the reader does not know who narrates a section until part way through the passage. *Non luogo a procedere*, *Le rondini di Montecassino*, and *Adua* generate considerable narrative power from what is not said, where the reader grapples with the tensions and connections created by having multiple voices in the novels. In “Paternale,” the parts of *Adua* in which Zoppe addresses Adua (as opposed to the chapters focused on Zoppe’s experiences or those narrated by Adua), the father refuses to share information about his past, about which he has given everyone a modified version (Scego 2015, 125). Zoppe is oppressive and forces his daughter to be infibulated in Adua’s sections, but is sympathetic and a victim in the sections that instead focus on Zoppe’s earlier life. He is understanding of his sister and Emanuela, children he associates together, in a way he is not with his own child. Like *Non luogo a procedere* and *Le rondini di Montecassino*, *Adua* is partially constructed around the gaps between characters who do not fully understand each other.

Janecek organizes *Le rondini di Montecassino* around the processes of discovery, for the characters, narrator, and reader. The novel slowly reveals the links between very different characters in terms of their investigations of their relationships to Monte Cassino and the legacies of the Second World War violence. The narrator eventually shares that the story may also be deeply personal, since she connects the battle to her Jewish parents having survived the Second World War: “Io non sapevo nulla dei maori, nepalesi, indiani, maghrebini, che erano venuti a combattere e a morire nel continente che stava annientando la mia gente. Non ho idea nemmeno adesso se e quanto, [...] il loro sacrificio avesse contribuito affinché almeno mia madre e mio padre potessero salvarsi e io nascere grazie alla loro sopravvivenza” (Janecek 2010, 145). Since the international soldiers helped end the war and Nazi persecution of Jews like her parents, the narrator intimates that, were it not for the battle of Monte Cassino, she may not exist.

Janecek’s *Le rondini di Montecassino* shows the need to revisit the past in order to challenge incomplete or mistaken dominant historical narratives.

Rapata reflects on how the layout of the Cassino War Cemetery conflicts with his sense of the battle, obtained from both his grandfather's tales and his reading: "E questo rivelava qualcos'altro, mostrava che l'allestimento del sacrario militare non era soltanto classista e razzista, ma soprattutto falso. Il cimitero trasmetteva il messaggio che gli uomini caduti in quelle battaglie fossero per la maggior parte nativi della Gran Bretagna" (92). Although located in Italy, the layout of the cemetery emphasizes Great Britain's historical and political dominance and thus shapes Monte Cassino's memorial narratives. Through their engagement with history, Janeczek, Magris, and Scego ask readers to reflect on the past and how its story has been constructed through cemeteries, monuments, museums, films, and literature.

Magris's novel explores the role of the museum as a tool for constructing history and identity. In *Non luogo a procedere*, the man thinks that perhaps exhibiting all weapons will put an end to war, but he worries that nothing would then remain outside of the museum, since even a scarf can be a weapon. No one wanted the museum or to listen to the man when he was alive. Luisa's preparation of the papers and museum objects suggest that Trieste, and the world more broadly, may be ready to consider the museum's existence and its implications. The novel however questions the timeline of historical recovery that it itself represents: "siano catalogati e classificati e prima di aver soppesato l'eventuale opportunità di desecretare alcuni brani di argomento delicato, che forse sarebbe stato ancora troppo presto... ' Troppo presto per chi? Semmai troppo tardi" (Magris 2015, 21). Magris's novel, unlike the man's ideas for a museum that it describes, does not attempt to offer resolutions to the tangle of violence and hate humans have created, but makes clear how personal and disturbing the unacknowledged legacies of violence, racism, and antisemitism can be.

Non luogo a procedere argues that books and literature are not separate from war or life, but that writing makes a difference and can hurt: "Stilo che incide sulle tavole di cera, lascia cicatrici nell'animo e nel cuore. Scrivere incidendo a sangue il corpo, vedi *Nella colonia penale* di Kafka" (Magris 2015, 168). Writing can reveal what has been forgotten or buried: "La penna è una vanga, scopre fosse, scava e stana scheletri e segreti oppure li copre con palate di parole più pesanti della terra. Affonda nel letame e, a seconda, sistema le spoglie a buio o in piena luce, fra gli applausi generali" (Magris 2015, 200). Current writing has the power to bury or expose the secrets of the past, suggesting the burden and urgency of both authorship and reading.

Adua explores the significance of cinema and literature, alongside historical facts, for constructing one's own narrative. In the novel, the eponymous protagonist chooses at one point to purchase, with her limited funds, a book rather than food:

"Racconti le storie che hai come meglio puoi." Non l'ho detta io questa frase, ma uno scrittore famoso. Io non lo conoscevo. Ma ieri ho sfogliato un suo romanzo al supermercato. L'ho aperto a caso ed è uscita fuori questa frase. L'ho letta un paio di

volte. All'inizio non l'ho nemmeno capita tanto. Ma poi qualcosa dentro il pancreas mi ha suggerito che forse quella frase casual mi riguardava più di quanto potessi immaginare (Scego 2015, 56).

Adua here meditates on a quote from Nathan Englander's short story "Everything I Know About My Family on My Mother's Side," a text that reflects on Jewish American identity. In Englander's short story, the narrator's ability to "narrate" or connect to the past also correlates with his ability (or inability) to uncover the truth or have a romantic relationship. A conversation between the narrator and his Bosnian girlfriend prompts him to search for stories and the search itself ultimately becomes his story (Englander 2012). Adua relates to this narrative and similarly desires to develop her own narrative. When acting, Adua was abused and forced into racist roles. With her possession of a camera at the end of the novel, there is hope, as her husband tells her, that Adua will be able to tell her own story: "Ora potrai filmare quello che vuoi, ora potrai narrarti come ti pare and piace" (Scego 2015, 174). *Adua* itself has of course already brought Adua's story into Italian literature.

Non luogo a procedere, *Le rondini di Montecassino*, and *Adua* weave together questions about racism, the legacies of colonialism, and the Shoah, with interrogations of the role of culture, art, and narrative dealing with these histories. In this way, the three novels highlight the many narratives that never become part of collective memory because of destruction, shame, or guilt. All three novels reflect on how much archival evidence is missing and how literature can reflect on these gaps. The novels of Magris, Janeczek, and Scego are not repositories of historical truth, but dynamic parts of collective memory and the cultural imaginary. Literature can prompt readers to reexamine assumptions about history and identity.³⁷ Jewish Italians have been vital to the development of Italy as a nation and its cultures. While being more cognizant of Jewish Italians, their backgrounds, and their representations in literature adds to the growing analyses of Italy's current and historical diversity, obscuring the background of Jewish Italian authors paints a less nuanced picture of what being Italian is, especially in relation to the important role literature plays in forming cultural identities.

Notes

1 Landy has analyzed the problematic representation of gender and sexual dynamics in the film, especially given Fascist and Nazi ideas on gender roles and sexuality (2004, 98–99). This relates to other parts of Italian identity that are minimized in the film.

2 See recent works on Jewish Italian history (Klein 2018; Schächter 2011; Schwarz 2012) and several collections on Jewishness in Italy that contain a range of significant approaches to what Jewish Italian means (see Carlà and De Angelis 1995; Hassine et al. 1998; DiNapoli 2000; Pugliese 2002; Myers et al. 2008; Garvin and Cooperman 2008).

3 Gordon explores the "uneven spread of knowledge of the Holocaust in Italy" (2012, 109) and notes the comparable historiography of colonialism, with their growth starting in the 1990s (2012, 190). Speelman suggests focusing on Jewishness in Italian literature leads to a broader picture of its diversity and globality (2002, 187).

4 See Moloney (1973) and Schächter (2000).

5 For an outline of *italianità* see Choate (2012).

6 For example, especially because of their movement between different regions, Jewish Italians were an integral part of the development of Italian food culture, bringing

- eggplants, artichokes, and spinach to the north. See Roden (2008).
- 7 For important overviews of Jewish Italian literature see De Angelis (2006), Serkowska (2008), Speelman (2002).
- 8 For an extended discussion of “Shylock” (Svevo 2004b, 969–971) see Moloney (2015).
- 9 One early Italian critic claimed that the reason the French praised Svevo was because they read him in translation, which the critic considered an actual language, in contrast to what Svevo wrote (Caprin 1984, 28). This focus on language is a consistent reaction of Italian criticism when faced with an author who does not seem appropriately Italian, for a variety of potential reasons. Ferrante has been similarly critiqued (Merelli 2015).
- 10 See Gordon on how literature and scholarship build on each other and shift historical perspective in terms of the Shoah (2012, 25–38).
- 11 Svevo has never appeared in the title of an article in major journals such as *Modern Language Quarterly*, *Modernism/Modernity*, and *PMLA*. Minghelli significantly argues that for Giacomo Debenedetti, Svevo’s Jewishness, “substitutes for a confrontation with Svevo’s modernist aesthetic” (2002, 57). Debenedetti claimed that Svevo would have been a better writer had he openly represented his Jewishness (1990, 68).
- 12 Wisse (2003) primarily discusses Hebrew, Yiddish, German, American, Polish, and Israeli fiction, granting Italian literature only a minor mention. Miron revolutionized how to approach the study Jewish literature with a focus on continuities and contiguities. His text does not include Italian examples.
- 13 Many works by twentieth-century Italian authors have been re-translated: for instance, Elsa Morante’s *Arturo’s Island* by Ann Goldstein, Natalia Ginzburg’s *Family Lexikon* by Jenny McPhee, and Italo Svevo’s *A Very Old Man* by Frederika Randall.
- 14 See Parussa (2008) and Scarpa (2017) on Ginzburg’s Jewishness.
- 15 For analyses of Levi’s Jewishness see for instance Cavaglion (2006) and Harrowitz (2018).
- 16 For more on the construction of memory and identity in Italy after the Second World War see Foot (2009).
- 17 Italians were characterized as exceptionally good in exceptionally bad times, see Wolff (1999) or Bettina (2009). Scholars have called attention to the ambiguities of antisemitism in Italy, see Stille (2003).
- 18 Elon’s *The Pity of it All* provides one guiding narrative that interrogates this disjunction (2002).
- 19 In contrast to Nazi Germany, many Jews were members of Italy’s Fascist party, from 1922 to 1938. As in Bassani’s story, Jewish Italians themselves often wanted to ignore the role Italians had played in contributing to the deportation of Jews. Klein (2018) has shed light on the Jewish Italian investment in “Italiani brava gente.”
- 20 Coming almost twenty years after Goldhagen’s (1996) much debated *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, Levis Sullam’s *I carnefici italiani* (2015) analyzes how Italy skipped from the era of testimony to the saviors, neglecting the Italian persecutors. Part of the reason for the return to the Fascist period has to do with current events, such as the threats the concentration camp survivor and senator Liliana Segre has faced or the digging up of *pietre d’inciampo* in Rome.
- 21 For readings of Magris’s fiction and its relationship to history see Harrison (2015) and Pireddu (2015).
- 22 Scego’s citation of Zola suggests the connections between racism and antisemitism. Balibar has argued for a close relationship between differential (as opposed to biological) racism and antisemitism (1991, 24).
- 23 Lucamante calls attention to the importance of Janeczek’s novel as global literature (2014, 235).
- 24 Literature as a form of cultural participation has been given as a reason both for the large number of Austrian writers at the fin de siècle and the large percentage of Jewish writers among these Austrian writers (Spector 2002).
- 25 For a thorough examination of this shift see Duncan (2019).
- 26 For an extensive discussion of this concept see Trouillot (2015).
- 27 Cheyette (2014) also discusses the ways in which remembering colonialism and the Shoah intersect. He contrasts Primo Levi and Jean Améry, but Italian colonialism is not discussed. Duncan has called attention to the way Italian intellectuals in particular have connected Shoah-specific vocabulary with migrant experiences (2015).
- 28 See for instance Larsen (2017), Lazzari (2017), Monster (2018). Duncan (2016), meanwhile, analyzes *Adua* within a discourse of how terms from the Shoah are connected to contemporary refugee experiences in Italian.
- 29 Phillips (2000), 52–53. Cheyette has analyzed “the anxiety of appropriation, with the fear being that one history of racism expunges other histories,” (2014, 37).
- 30 See Kaufman (1995), Friedman (1995).
- 31 Italians and Jews in America have been linked in terms of their immigration patterns

- (Marinari 2019) and have played a key role in discussions of the construction of race in the United States (Jacobson 1999). For analysis of the construction of race in Italy see Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop (2013).
- 32 Fiore brings together emigration and immigration, whereas previously “studies in Italian and English on the subjects of emigration and immigration [...] looked at these two phenomena as separate” (2017, 11). See the work of, for instance, Ben-Ghiat, Bond, Brioni, Del Boca, Duncan, Fiore, Fuller, Hom, Lombardi-Diop, Parati, Ponzanesi, and Wright, who bring together fascist history with more recent culture, architecture, literature, and film.
- 33 Ponzanesi has argued: “despite its aggressive past, Italy still perceives itself more as a colonized country than as a colonizer” (2004, 105). Parati has stated: “Past and present narratives on internal and external otherness propose Italy as a crossroads where difference and the recognition of sameness meet and invade cultural and linguistic territories” (2005, 37).
- 34 Del Boca’s extensive work (see for instance the three volumes of *Gli italiani in Africa orientale* 1976, 1979, 1982) is considered the beginning of the study of Italian colonialism. See Andall and Duncan 2005, Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 2005, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012, for examples of important work in English on Italian colonialism. Calling attention to what was missing in Italian discourses, Hom complicates Agamben’s theories of concentration camps by calling attention to Italy’s colonial history (2019, 65).
- 35 Providing more evidence of how the study of colonialism has quickly developed in the last two decades, the list of resources are all from the twenty-first century, with the exception of Del Boca’s foundational *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale*. See also Fuller (2006).
- 36 For a thorough analysis of *Non luogo a procedere* in terms of history and memory see Parmegiani (2018).
- 37 Duncan examines how Italian has gone and goes well beyond the limiting frame of the nation-state (2019, 11).

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