CHAPTER ONE

Colonial (Re)productivity

Colonialism was not a secure hegemonic bourgeois project. It was only partly an effort to import cultured sensibilities to the colonies but as much about the making of them.

Ann Laura Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire (99)

One of liberal Italy’s first and most influential proponents of demographic colonialism in the Horn of Africa, Leopoldo Franchetti (1847–1917), spent the earlier part of his career traveling Italy’s southern regions on horseback, armed with rifles and intent upon, to modify Christopher Miller’s phrase, “reaching out to the most unknown part of the [nation-state] and bringing it back as language.”6 Before beginning his career in parliament in 1882, Franchetti published two proto-sociological inquiries on Italy’s southern regions that, along with Pasquale Villari’s Lettere meridionali (Southern Letters, 1875), are generally considered to have inaugurated modern Italy’s questione meridionale (southern question): Condizioni economiche e amministrative delle provincie napoletane (Economic and Administrative Conditions of the Neapolitan Provinces, 1873–1874), and La Sicilia nel 1876 (Sicily in 1876) (which Franchetti co-wrote with Sidney Sonnino, who would later become Prime Minister).7 The southern question was arguably the leading

6 Miller describes Africanist discourse as emerging from a European “gesture of reaching out to the most unknown part of the world and bringing it back as language” (5).
7 La Sicilia nel 1876 included Franchetti’s Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia and Sonnino’s I contadini in Sicilia. It was later republished as Inchiesta in Sicilia in 1974. In addition to these well-known texts, I refer to “Sulle condizioni dei lavoratori agricoli,” “Relazione alla Commissione realepei demani comunali nelle province del Mezzogiorno,” and “Mezzo secolo di Unità nell’Italia meridionale,” which, along with Condizioni economiche e amministrative delle provincie napoletane and Appunti di viaggio
question for policymakers after Unification. Villari and Franchetti were two pioneers of what became known as meridionalista (southernist) literature—a proto-sociological genre which depicted southerners as either hapless victims of history plagued by poverty, illiteracy, superstition, and other forms of “backwardness,” or as criminally, culturally, and/or racially resistant to the rationalist progress of liberal-capitalist development. Franchetti’s post in the Italian parliament and his engagement with Italy’s southern question brought him to Italy’s first colony, Eritrea, in 1889 (before it was officially designated as such) to conduct agricultural experiments and to advocate for the relocation of several dozen primarily southern Italian peasant families to expropriated land in the Eritrean highlands. He envisioned that the Italian state might correct the economic and political injustices to which it had been subjecting its own southern peasantry by redirecting the increasing flow of its emigrating masses from oltreoceano (across the ocean) to the promised lands of its oltremare (across the sea). Named by Prime Minister Francesco Crispi as Deputy of the Special Mission to Colonize Eritrea in 1890, the statesman’s “almost maniacal” support for Eritrean colonization prompted him to roam far and wide conducting surveys and experiments with what Paolo Pezzino alleges was “the same passion that he had brought to his earlier travels in the Mezzogiorno” (68). Between 1890 and 1914, Franchetti delivered a series of reports to parliamentary committees and state ministries on the status of both his Eritrean plan and, after the Italian defeat at Adwa, meditations on Italy’s colonial venture in Libya.

To be sure, Franchetti’s design for a resolution to the southern question through east African colonization was not necessarily unique; his interventions were part of a larger debate about the benefits (“bloodletting”) or detriment (“hemorrhage”) of emigration and, beginning in the 1880s, the potential presented by east African colonization. In the wake of an...
agrarian crisis to which Franchetti’s *Condizioni economiche e amministrative delle provincie napoletane* and *La Sicilia nel 1876* were a direct response, there was a dramatic shift in patterns of Italian emigration (Romano and Vivanti 1750).\(^{10}\) If the contours of previous emigration had been shaped by a combination of small business owners, artisans, and agricultural laborers from disparate Italian regions (including Sardinia, Sicily, the Italian Alps, and the Ligurian Riviera) who sought seasonal employment in Europe or North Africa, emigration began to take on a different character after 1880: significantly larger numbers of peasants, primarily from the continental South, began to leave Italy—often definitively—for the Americas.\(^{11}\) A concomitant demographic explosion meant that the Italian state was also concerned with balancing an increasingly prolific population with economic development that would curb what it identified as the consequent threats of brigandage and the fomentation of socialist resistance to the practices of the liberal state.\(^{12}\)

In 1874 alone, two years before the Italian state began collecting emigration statistics, at least four substantial volumes on the emigration and unofficial colonies of Italians abroad (in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and the Levant) were published and reviewed in the popular journal *Nuova*

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10 See also: Choate, *Emigrant Nation*; Gabaccia.

11 Historian Frank Snowden has called for a revaluation of the role that public health played in liberal Italian emigration, by illustrating that malaria was one of its primary causes. Snowden writes, “Here, claimed the antimalarial crusaders, was a major cause of the massive hemorrhage of the most able-bodied and hardworking southern male youths who migrated abroad by the millions between 1880 and the First World War. There they hoped to build the economies of Italy’s competitors instead of developing productivity at home” (Snowden, *The Conquest of Malaria* 21).

12 Tekeste Negash writes of a “violent population explosion” (15) and claims that between 1861 and 1911, the Italian population increased from 25 million to 35 million and that emigration consequently increased from 1887 onwards. In his *Lettere meridionali*, Pasquale Villari, to whom Franchetti pays homage in his *Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia* for having been the first to articulate the *questione meridionale*, employs, significantly, a metaphor of sickness to describe the socialist threat that the landless southern peasantry presented: “The most dangerous sickness of modern societies […] is socialism. […] We must think about it before the multitudes do” (cited in Romano and Vivanti 1714). Franchetti is haunted by the spectre of socialism when he writes of the rural masses: “Now, the rural southern plebes are having a hard time organizing themselves. Once they do, they will become a dangerous explosive that blows up in the hand of whomever attempts to manage them” (*Mezzogiorno e colonie* 223). See also the chapter “A World at War: The Italian Army and Brigandage” on *brigantaggio* as a textual construction in post-unification Italy in Dickie, *Darkest Italy* 25–53.
Colonial (Re)productivity

antologia (Girolamo; Choate, Emigrant Nation 25). Contributors decried the distinguishing feature of Italian emigration in the 1870s as the “nearly absolute deficiency of capital.” (Girolamo 627) Emigrants were considered “braccia” (arms) leaving the nation, and observers noted that, in the case of the thousands of Italians bound for Buenos Aires in 1870, a third were bound for asilo pei poveri (homeless shelters); numerous others endured “cruel suffering” from New York to Boston (627). During the first parliamentary debates of emigration in 1888, Franchetti and his fellow policymakers Giustino Fortunato, Andrea Costa, and others discussed the potential benefits of restricting emigration: was emigration a necessity, an “inevitable evil”? Would limiting it increase Italy’s population and suppress wages? Could internal emigration be encouraged as a solution to emigration abroad (Choate, Emigrant Nation 28–29)? Was it was possible to turn emigration from a phenomenon of poverty and backwardness into a colonial politics of vigor and productivity?

In the midst of increasing economic and political instability in the South and the consequent exodus of hundreds of thousands of landless peasants, the Italian colonial defeat at Dogali in 1887—another of the fetishistic ‘losses’ recurring throughout liberal-era Italian colonial discourse—marked a significant moment in both administrative and popular imaginaries.13 In January 1887, an army led by Ethiopian Ras Alula defeated a contingent of roughly five hundred Italian soldiers led by lieutenant colonel Tommaso De Cristoforis. The defeat was immediately commemorated in Italy. A monument to the fallen soldiers was promptly erected at the entrance to Rome’s new train station and the piazza in which it was situated was renamed Piazzale dei Cinquecento.14 In 1889, the prolific nationalist and imperialist commentator and novelist Alfredo Oriani published a commercially successful collection of essays entitled Fino A Dogali in which he exalted the dead soldiers as heroes and calls for Italy’s perseverance in the conquest of Africa. Eighteen eighty-seven also marked Francesco Crispi’s first election to the office of Prime Minister.15 Crispi worked closely with

13 For more on the Battle of Dogali and its significance, see Del Boca, “Realtà e leggenda di Dogali.”
14 See von Henneberg for a description of the monument, as well as the implications of its strategic positioning and repositioning in the 1920s.
15 The first year of Crispi’s term as Prime Minister was marked by military defeat at Dogali, and the collapse of Crispi’s last government was triggered by another, more significant colonial defeat at Adwa in 1896.
Franchetti and was initially an enthusiastic proponent of Franchetti’s plan to resolve the southern question and curb the depopulation of Italy’s southern countryside through demographic colonialism in the Horn of Africa. In 1890, Crispi joined Asmara and the ports of Assab and Massawa to form the first Italian colony of Eritrea. As historian Mark Choate describes Crispi’s project (paraphrasing Franchetti himself), “Territorial settlements would strengthen Italy’s African colony and allow masses of emigrants to thrive amid transplanted Italian customs, traditions, and society in the shadow of the Italian flag” (*Emigrant Nation* 32).

In the post-Unification years, the national politics of the southern question and mass transatlantic emigration brought neglected Italian populations into the realm of visibility for policymakers. Franchetti’s work illustrates how this project culminated in a distinctively Italian brand of colonialism. Italy’s demographic colonialism in the Horn of Africa, which was largely directed at Italians themselves rather than local populations, was thus linked to a wider array of biopolitical concerns and practices aimed at the guiding, or “making” of Italians as *vital subjects* in Italy and abroad. Indeed, as Franchetti was continuing to advocate for Italian colonialism in Africa, he and his wife Alice Hallgarten (1874–1911) founded and directed a school for agricultural workers and their children on his private Villa Montesca in the Umbrian Città di Castello (Perugia). This chapter therefore brings together Franchetti’s writings on the southern question, early colonialism, and his pedagogical project at the Villa Montesca in order to explore the breadth of what I call his *colonial biopolitics*. What follows is a close reading of the discursive and ideological links among a range of colonial forms and practices—from southern Italy to Eritrea and eventually the Umbrian countryside—employed by this influential thinker. His writings have been of interest almost exclusively to historians whose goals range from reconstructing the cultural, political, and ideological bases for debates around Italy’s southern question and early colonial projects to tracing the breadth or recurrence of his stereotypical representations of the Italian South.16 Recent scholarship on the Villa at Montesca has recast “Baron Franchetti” as a beneficent patron of secular pedagogy, given his and his wife’s hosting there of Maria Montessori as she penned her treatise that would revolutionize early childhood education. The splitting of Franchetti’s oeuvre by scholars has produced some ambivalent results, as Franchetti emerges as either a dealer

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16 See: Moe, *The View From Vesuvius*; Dickie, *Darkest Italy*; Wong; and Choate, *Emigrant Nation*. 
in quasi-racist stereotypes, a clear-minded liberal pragmatist, or a generous philanthropist and experimental pedagogue.

Franchetti figures so-called “demographic” colonialism in the Horn of Africa as an answer to what he suggests is an improper circulation of bodies and labor—namely, Italian emigrants laboring under the shadow of another nation-state’s flag. This chapter reads the three fields of Franchetti’s social intervention alongside one another in order to suggest that his answer to the problem of the improper circulation of laboring Italians as a result of emigration was formulated as an agricultural project the rhetoric of which overlapped with a biological imperative. Rather than continuing to set out for foreign lands, according to Franchetti’s vision, prolific Italian bodies were to cultivate prolific Italian colonies, both at home and abroad. Biopolitical discourse in post-Unification Italy was acutely aware of its constitutive fractures—of both the body politic (poor, landless emigrants; illiterate peasants; lawless southern “brigands,” “mafiosi,” and so on) and the lands it either inhabited (“America”) or sought to (longed-for colonies in Mediterranean and East Africa). An ideological fantasy, the “making of Italians” as a unified corporeal body was nourished by rhetorical figures of loss, fragmentation, and dismemberment. By insisting on loss (from emigration, colonial defeat, etc.), rather than absence, turn-of-the-century Italian biopolitical discourse was able to disavow the constitutively fractured nature of that body. In calling forth this cultural preoccupation with corporeal and territorial fragmentation, Franchetti’s brand of demographic colonialism aimed at least as much to make Italians themselves ‘whole’ as it did to colonize African others. His texts therefore also illustrate what some scholars of Italian colonialism have called the “peculiarity of the Italian ‘civilizing mission,’ which was directed as much toward Italian colonizers as it was to the colonized” (Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 3). As Franchetti would recall to his colleague at the Associazione per gli Interessi del Mezzogiorno (Association for the Interests of the South) and future biographer Umberto Zanotti-Bianco, the years after Unification were characterized by the fear that “with every little uprising in Italy, with every international situation, it seemed we were seeing the miraculous work of our unification wrecked” (Pezzino 16). Tantamount to a “miracle,” Unification was thus fraught with anxiety about the fragility of the national project.
Love thy Nation: Affect and Rule in Franchetti’s South

It is our sacred duty [...] to commemorate him, [one] of the most noble intellects that new Italy possessed, [and] to offer him a profound goodbye, a salute which [I] am honored to offer in the name of the provinces of southern Italy, which Leopoldo Franchetti knew and loved like none of us knew and loved.

Giustino Fortunato, *Leopoldo Franchetti. Ricordi* (x)

The goal of Franchetti’s travels through mainland southern Italy and Sicily was to produce a uniquely Italian savoir, or knowledge, about the Italian South through objective fieldwork:

In Italia, chi voglia imparare a conoscere le condizioni del paese, pur troppo così poco conosciute, e ricercare i suoi bisogni e i rimedi dei suoi mali, non deve contentarsi di studiar nei libri, quasi tutti forestieri, l’economia politica, l’amministrazione o il diritto costituzionale ma terminati gli studi teorici, si alzi, cinga i lombi e vada a vedere coi propri occhi, a sentire colle proprie orecchie, vada a constatare i fatti, e a verificare se giustifichino le teorie degli scrittori. (Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* 53)

[In Italy, whomever wants to learn to get to know the conditions of his country (which are unfortunately quite unknown), to research its needs and the cures for its ills, should not content himself with studying books (almost all of which are written by outsiders), nor its political economy, government administration, or constitutional law. Instead, once he has completed his theoretical studies, he must stand up, gird his loins, and go see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, to ascertain the facts, to verify whether they justify the theories.]

Within Franchetti’s purportedly objective (and explicitly gendered) disposition toward the representation of the Italian South lies the specter of colonial discourse. Homi Bhabha’s description is particularly apt in describing Franchetti’s approach to southern Italy:

[Colonial discourse] produces the colonized as a social reality which is at once an ‘other,’ and yet entirely knowable and visible. It resembles a form
of narrative whereby [...] subjects and signs are bound in a reformed and recognizable totality. It employs a system of representation, a regime of truth, that is structurally similar to realism. (70–71)

Franchetti’s social realist texts contain just such a tension between southern alterity, on the one hand, and its fully visible representability.

Yet despite Franchetti’s explicit claim to objectivity, among the most striking discursive strategies of his ‘realist’ southern texts is a recurrent vocabulary of love and desire. Franchetti, who positions himself as both an objective social explorer and a foreign traveler, repeatedly justifies his project by claiming that it has sprung forth from a love of both social science and of the abject populations that he takes as his object.17 Concluding an 1883 report “On the Conditions of Agricultural Workers,” Franchetti writes, “I would like to ask your permission to say a few more words about another wrong done to the southern peasantry, something that has weighed on my heart for a number of years, and from which I have learned to know and to love the Italian South” (Mezzogiorno e colonie 165). Franchetti employs this strategy in part in order to manage his status as forestiero (outsider). By deploying a rhetoric of amorous compassion and charity, his texts attempt to stave off (what he perceives as potential) objections to a Tuscan taking up pen (and rifle) against southern populations.18 He opens his Condizioni economiche e amministrative delle provincie napoletane with the following dedication:

(S)arei profondamente addolorato se potessero nelle persone sincere di quella parte d’Italia, eccitare quel patriottismo locale male inteso, che

17 For a reading of Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia that highlights Franchetti’s use of rhetorics of surprise, shock, and conventions of the travel narrative, see Moe, The View from Vesuvius 241–244.

18 Moe also discusses this passage, emphasizing Franchetti’s avowed unifying rhetoric. See Moe, The View from Vesuvius 238. In his oft-quoted opening to Condizioni politiche e amministrative della Sicilia (his portion of La Sicilia nel 1876, later republished as Inchiesta in Sicilia), Franchetti describes how his initial impressions of Sicily’s kind people, abundant citrus groves, and picturesque landscapes with time give way to a much bleaker and more violent picture of the island, as he mentions the “profound tenderness” he begins to feel for his rifle. The “paradise inhabited by devils” topos is ubiquitous in literature on Sicily and the southern regions more generally. In his recent history of the Sicilian mafia, John Dickie confirms that, on their voyage to Sicily, Franchetti and Sonnino were indeed armed with “repeating rifles and large-caliber pistols” (Dickie, Cosa Nostra 54–60). See also Moe, The View from Vesuvius 242.
nega tutto e rifiuta di cercare i rimedi ai mali piuttostoché convenire con un forestiero di cose che tornino a disdoro della sua regione, provincia o comune. Siamo tutti Italiani, le loro vergogne sono nostre, siamo deboli della loro debolezza. (Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* 3)

[I would be deeply hurt if [my writings were to] excite that misunderstood local patriotism [...] that denies everything and refuses to try to find remedies instead of agreeing with an outsider about [...] their region, province, or commune. We are all Italians, their disgraces are our own, and we are weakened by their weakness.]

Franchetti adopts a stance of humble objectivity to justify his study by appealing to a nationalist rhetoric of equality and commonality. Yet, by following “we are all Italians” with “we are weakened by their weaknesses,” Franchetti exposes the tentativeness of this initial gesture with an “us” and “them” equation that evokes the threat of contagion. Indeed, this formulation exposes the immunitary structure of the newborn Italian national community. This opening passage also establishes what will be a recurrent mode of representation within Franchetti’s southern texts, as it ties affect to the production of knowledge, and thus, to technologies of rule: Franchetti-as-narrator will be “profoundly hurt” if his status as “outsider” inhibits his readers from drawing administrative strategies and practices from his texts. Since 1860, Franchetti claims, the Italian state had neglected the peasantry, as lawmakers had “lost sight of” the agricultural class (Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* 158). Accordingly, his texts aim to restore the visibility of peasants to state administrators. As Bhabha argues, this visibility was far from neutral, tied as it was to the practices of disciplining and regulating difference enacted by the newly unified Italian state and its institutions.

Franchetti’s ideal administrator is a figure that his texts repeatedly attempt to sketch. In *La Sicilia nel 1876*, his main objective is to present information about the current systems of rule and to establish and condemn the Sicilians’ mode of self-governance by juxtaposing their adherence to the private rule of violence to the liberal state’s public rule of right and law, in order to inform the state’s appropriation of them. Franchetti’s exemplary southern administrator

19 For an alternative reading of the same passage which emphasizes Franchetti’s attempt to “nationalize the problems of the south, dissolving the force of regional difference in an equation of theirs is ours, they are us,” see: Moe, *The View from Vesuvius* 238.

20 The canonical literary interpretation of the encounter between the Sicilian
Colonial (Re)productivity

is necessarily from northern Italy (a point to which I will return) and his main charge is to effect the political, economic, and moral education of southern political subjects. This educative campaign is represented in Franchetti’s texts as a battle that is to be waged at the level of sentiment. Southern deficiency is defined primarily in terms of a lack of affection for the state: (“they do not feel a social sentiment,” Franchetti and Sonnino 133; “that missing sentiment for the law and for legal security,” 141; “they have maintained the dynastic and superstitious affection for the Bourbons,” Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* 28, etc.) and a good southern administrator is characterized by an excess of affect and desire for the rule of law:

Allora solamente sarà possibile trovare i modi di dare all’intera amministrazione civile e giudiziaria, uniformità nello spirito e nell’indirizzo, e di infondere in tutti un sentimento tale che [...] ogni impiegato [...] intenda il fine comune al quale dovrebbe esser diretta l’opera dei singoli funzionari, e provi per esso quell’amore del quale ogni uomo intelligente si sente preso [...] per uno scopo grande e difficile. (Franchetti and Sonnino 266)

[Only then will it be possible to find ways to give the entire civil and legislative administration a uniformity of spirit and application, and to instill in everyone such a feeling that [...] every clerk understands the common goal toward which his individual work should be aimed and feels for this goal that love that captivates all intelligent men.] (emphasis mine)

And:

(E)ntrando in quelle provincie, s’aspetterebbe a trovare un Eden politico ed amministrativo, una classe dirigente che, acquistati coll’uso dell’autorità il sentimento della responsabilità e della dignità, le tradizioni amministrative e l’amore alle cose pubbliche, governi ed educhi una popolazione docile, più coll’amore e colla fiducia che coll’autorità, e la prepari gradatamente ad entrare a fare parte del governo. (Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* 25)

[Entering those provinces [Abruzzo and Molise], one might expect to find a political and administrative Eden, or a leading class that, having aristocracy and representatives of the newly unified Italian state is in the meeting between Don Fabrizio of Salina and Chevalley di Monterzuolo in Tomasi di Lampedusa’s novel *Il gattopardo* (*The Leopard*).]
assumed with authority a feeling of responsibility and dignity [and] a love for public service, would govern and educate a docile population with love and trust rather than with authority, and would prepare it to enter into government. ] (emphasis mine)

Thus, southern subjects—a “docile population”—and the administrators that are apt to govern them are bound to one another by a rhetoric of affect. As Bhabha has suggested, colonial discourse is marked by both pseudo-objective modes of knowledge production—“learning,” “discovery”—and by subjective desire and pleasure—“dreams,” “fantasies” (71). Franchetti’s southern texts are steeped in such an oscillation: Franchetti emerges as a colonial narrator as he presents himself as compelled by his love for his southern objects and his desire for them to confront the horror of their disorder and to represent it scientifically. Furthermore, the binding of the compassionate administrator to his unfeeling southern subjects in an inverse relationship (lack/abundance of sentiment) illustrates how a rhetoric of sentiment can be actively mobilized to legitimize subjection and rule. For Bhabha, this ambivalent binding of sentiment and subjection, of objective knowledge and subjective affect, marks all colonial discourse as fundamentally fetishistic. As he puts it, “This conflict of pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defence, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence, has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse. For the scene of fetishism is also the scene of the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy—the subject’s desire for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division […]” (75). This oscillation also pervades Franchetti’s immunitary logic of “us” and “them” (“We are all Italians, their disgraces are our own, and we are weakened by their weakness,” cited above), which fetishistically binds and splits the national population in two.

Franchetti’s Clash of Civilizations

Franchetti’s southern texts grapple with the possibilities of naturalized difference within the borders of the newly forged nation-state. His texts are to be both descriptive and prescriptive, as he illustrates structurally by organizing his inquiries under subheadings such as “Conditions” and “Remedies.” Franchetti’s writings may be situated within the context of what
David Horn has identified as a flurry of intellectual activity beginning in the
nineteenth century that forged the social sciences and created “social bodies”
as their object—men and women, “located neither ‘in nature’ nor in the
private sphere, but in that modern domain of knowledge and intervention
carved out by statistics, sociology, social hygiene, and social work” (Social
Bodies 4). This moment of negotiation—in which boundaries between public
and private are being rethought through the analytic of the social—emerges
in Franchetti’s southern texts as a tension between whether his nightmare of
moral and economic degeneration within the boundaries of the nation-state
can be explained through socio-historical forces such as foreign occupation
and oppression, economic systems, the organization of labor-power and
private property, or through biology, that is, naturalized or pathologized
difference figured as a threat to the social body.

Despite Franchetti’s avowed subscription to social determinism, his
southern texts betray an ambivalence about how to represent southern
populations. These populations are unequivocally marked with difference, and
thus as targets of this emergent mode of social intervention, but Franchetti’s
texts betray a murkiness with regard to precisely where socio-historical forces
cease to be sufficient in explaining the economic and moral disparities that
his project so desperately seeks to expose and ultimately level. At these
points in the texts, causality is fragile and ambiguous. For instance, Bourbon
occupation is invoked as explanatory, but Franchetti’s furious repetition of
the entrenchment of its power effects within the psyches of the southern
populations over thousands of years seems to point more to an evolutionist
model of innate psychology (Mezzogiorno e colonie 219).

Franchetti’s southern texts painstakingly construct several criminal
elements of the population—mafiosi, malfattori, briganti—that threaten the
body politic. In isolating these groups and prescribing their elimination, he
adopts a rhetoric of sickness. This was a recurring discursive strategy in meridi-
onalist literature after Unification, as the South and its inhabitants were referred
to variously as “gangrene,” a “bloody plague,” or a “wound.” In Franchetti’s texts, examples abound of dangerous populations that are diseased, that infest the landscape and the population and are potentially contagious. In one instance, the *mafia* is positioned in opposition to the state as an infectious agent: “[I]f the Government does not want to itself undergo contagion by the conditions of the Island instead of curing it, if it does not want to become yet another Sicilian mafia, it may only govern it by the force of the modern State” (Wong 20). In *La Sicilia nel 1876*, such a rhetoric enables Franchetti’s final prescription for the relocation of “the Sicilian element” to the mainland. In his section aptly entitled, “Remedies,” the sickness to be cured is grafted explicitly onto Sicilian bodies, rather than onto their amoral practices or onto the geopolitical space of Sicily (as in the remainder of the text). Sicilians are thus to be excluded from self-governance, as they are wholly incapable of enunciating their political and economic needs within the framework of the liberal state. In a rare moment of carefully elaborated narrative, Franchetti writes:

> Spesso il sentir l’ammalato lamentarsi della sete, è pel medico una ragione per non dargli da bere. Spesso le sensazioni di cui l’ammalato si lamenta più aspramente, sono segno pel medico che i suoi rimedi sono efficaci e portano la guarigione. Spesso un sollievo momentaneo ed un miglioramento apparente è segno che il morbo peggiora, e la morte è vicina. (Franchetti and Sonnino 221)

>[Often, hearing the patient complain about thirst is, for the doctor, a reason not to give him something to drink. Often, the sensations about which the patient complains most bitterly are signs for the doctor that his remedies are effective and healing. Often, a momentary relief and an evident improvement is a sign that the disease is worsening and that death is near.]

Thus, the Italian state emerges as the doctor that can and must diagnose, treat, and cure a dying patient who can no longer articulate his own interests. It is within Franchetti’s deployment of sickness in representing southern populations that the ambiguity between social and biological

21 The expression recurs several times. See also: Franchetti, *Mezzogiorno e colonie* 156; 167; 203.

22 See also: Moe, *The View from Vesuvius* 246–247.
causality that I mentioned above emerges. According to Franchetti’s logic, healthy bodies are those deemed capable of economic, moral, and political redemption through social intervention. Yet, the moment these bodies are deemed diseased, they are figured as contagious and necessitate containment or expulsion. Socio-historical forces are figured as almost physiologically corrosive. He writes, for instance, “The [peasants’] mentality [is] that of the historical period in which the town [is] arrested” (Mezzogiorno e colonie 219).

Years of foreign occupation and/or self rule have arrested the development of southern minds and bodies and rendered them, like strains of an infectious disease, resistant to intervention and change. Socio-historical causality slides into an almost naturalized, and unequivocally colonialist, distinction between modern and savage and rational and irrational:

Alla vista di quella desolazione, il forestiero è tentato di credere che in quel paese, ogni anno dopo il raccolto, avvenga qualche grande sciagura, qualche invasione, qualche conquista che tolga i frutti di tutto il lavoro dell’anno […] oppure che da secoli e secoli i raccolti cattivi si siano seguiti senza tregua ed abbiano appena lasciato ai proprietari ed ai lavoranti tanto da poter mangiare e seminare, oppure che in quel paese viva una qualità di uomini speciale, che, in mezzo a terre coltivate, abbia conservato l’imprevidenza dei selvaggi delle praterie d’America […] che […] non senta quel desiderio comune a tutti gli uomini di migliorare la propria sorte. (60)

[Seeing such desolation, the foreigner is tempted to believe that in that village, each year after the harvest, there must be a great disaster, some invasion or conquest that steals the fruits of the entire year’s work […] or else that for centuries and centuries there had been one bad harvest after another, with no respite, and that it had left proprietors and workers just enough to eat and sow, or else that in that village there must live a special type of man who, in the middle of cultivated lands, had maintained the

23 In her chapter, “Fascism as Discursive Regime,” Barbara Spackman proposes that, “Fascism’s principal fantasy was a reproductive one.” Through a careful analysis of Mussolini’s “Discorso dell’ascensione,” Spackman traces a collapsing of biological and social reproduction within Mussolini’s call for “igiene sociale, profilassi nazionale” and locates fascist racism within this conflation. She writes, “[T]he regime’s policing of gender and sexuality, its codification of that policing in pronatalist policies and reproductive incentives and controls, was no afterthought but a part of the very formation of fascist ideology” (Spackman, Fascist Virilities 144).
improvidence of American savages, and who does not feel that desire
common to all men to improve his own lot.]

Franchetti skates the line between naturalized and social differentiation:
atavistic remnants of a pre-modern past prohibit the entrance of these
elements of the population into humanity by inhibiting the evolution of
“that desire common to all men to improve his own lot.” What distinguishes
this “special type of man”—the southern agricultural laborer—from other,
ostensibly less troubling types is his inability to act in his own self-interest.
Quite critically, this difference is articulated through an assertion of the
common: what is “common to all men” (a “desire [...] to improve his own
lot”) is also what divides them into types.

In the final instance, Franchetti’s analysis falls back upon a distinction
between two opposing civiltà. Franchetti’s use of the term civiltà further
underscores a nebulousness between naturalized and socio-historical
difference: connoting either “culture” or “civilization,” civiltà is an ambiguous
signifier. For instance, civiltà and its correlate civilizzazione emerge in
the writings of Giustiniano Nicolucci (1819–1904), founder of Italian
ethnography and the man Maria Sophia Quine has called “the father of
Italian racism,” or the “Italian Gobineau,” referring to genetically transmitted
beliefs, customs, and values (127–152). In Franchetti’s formulation, given
that the term is shaped by a duality, civiltà implies a confrontation—more
or less “civilized”—between the two groups or elements that it represents.
Furthermore, Franchetti later employs the term in his colonial texts in order
to distinguish between “past dominators” and Italian colonials: “We will
demonstrate our civilization [civiltà] and our humanity far more than past
dominators by imposing more mild and more stable tributes.” (Mezzogiorno
e colonie 271) The confrontation between Italian state and its southern
subjects and territories is figured as a clash between civilizations in the
following passage:

La coesistenza della civiltà siciliana e di quella dell’Italia media e
superiore in una medesima nazione, è incompatibile colla prosperità di
questa nazione e, a lungo andare, anche colla sua esistenza, poiché produce
debolezza tale da esporla a andare in fascio al minimo urto datole di fuori.
Una di queste due civiltà deve dunque sparire in quelle sue parti che sono incompatibili coll’altra. (Franchetti and Sonnino 237)

The coexistence of the Sicilian civilization and that of middle and upper Italy in one single nation is incompatible with the prosperity of this nation and, in the long run, also with its existence, insofar as it produces such a weakness that it exposes it to ruin with the slightest push from the outside. One of these civilizations must therefore disappear with regard to the parts that are incompatible with the other civilization. (emphasis mine)

Franchetti bifurcates the nation-state into two antagonistic, almost naturalized populations and stages an external threat to divided, and therefore weakened, internal populations. Furthermore, in this final passage, an analytic of war is explicitly evoked. Viewing such remarks through a biopolitical lens demonstrates how a discourse that isolates criminal “elements” for expulsion is informed by a discourse of race war (here figured as an inevitable clash between two ambiguous civiltà). Moreover, an immunological model is already in place. The life (“prosperity” or “existence”) of the nation is at stake, and vying for survival within it are two civilizations, one of which threatens to contaminate and weaken the other. In order to protect one, pathological elements of the other must “disappear.” Nurturing, maintaining, and protecting life thus requires a certain kind of death. Writing about medical immunization, which requires the introduction of a small portion of the disease into the patient, Roberto Esposito suggests how it has become a generalizable social model, which he has named an “immunitary paradigm.” “It’s almost as if in order to save someone’s life,” he writes, “it is necessary to make them taste death” (Terms of the Political 61).

24 For an alternative reading of the same passage focusing again on the logic of absolute difference, see Moe, The View from Vesuvius 245.
25 Foucault writes, “The discourse of race struggle—which—when it first appeared and began to function in the seventeenth century, was essentially an instrument used in the struggles waged by decentered camps—will be recentered and will become the discourse of power itself. It will become the discourse of a centered, centralized, and centralizing power. It will become the discourse of a battle that has to be waged not between races, but by a race that is portrayed as the one true race, the race that holds power and is entitled to define the norm, and against those who deviate from that norm, against those who pose a threat to the biological heritage” (Foucault, Society Must Be Defended 61).
Salvaging the Productive Peasantry

What remains of that segment of the population—the landless peasantry—that Franchetti had deemed capable—indeed desperately in need—of moral, economic, and political regeneration? Franchetti’s texts propose three possible outcomes for the landless peasantry if left within the borders of the nation-state: contagion by the criminal components of the population and descent into lawlessness (“The lifestyle of peasants is such that becoming a brigand is an improvement of their conditions rather than a worsening of them,” Mezzogiorno e colonie 137); mass uprisings and peasant resistance to the liberal state (“The dissatisfaction of the peasants has manifested itself in various ways: brigandage, uprisings for the division of municipal property in the southern provinces, strikes, etc.,” 155); and transoceanic emigration (“In 1872, 5,545 people emigrated from Basilicata, 5,150 of whom for America,” 100). It is within this segment of the southern population that Franchetti most explicitly lays out a plan for social and biological engineering in the domains of sexuality, labor-power, and, ultimately, race through an ambiguous rhetoric of productivity. Franchetti eventually concludes that such a project should be rehearsed not at home, but within Italy’s colonial territories in East Africa.

Franchetti singles out peasants as the most hard-working segment of the Italian population. Yet the failure of the Italian state to effectively harness this labor-power, claims Franchetti, has meant that the risks of criminal degeneracy, epidemics such as malaria, and sexual deviancy are explosive. In a striking passage, Franchetti conveys the horror of the behavior of southern peasants when not contained within the normalizing structure of the workweek:

Questi contadini, forse i più laboriosi d’Italia, passano la domenica a giocare ed a ubriacarsi, e, al bisogno, si anneriscono la faccia, e vanno ad arrestare la gente per le strade maestre. Religiosi e superstiziosi al punto di spendere migliaia di lire nei più poveri comuni per la festa del santo e per la fabbricazione della chiesa, non è raro sentirli parlar male dei preti.
Con tutto il loro rispetto pei signori, nelle sommosse reazionarie del 1860, sobillati da signori reazionari e da preti, assalirono le case dei signori liberali, e fecero morire uomini e donne in mezzo ai tormenti. I parricidi, i fratricidi sono relativamente numerosi. (Mezzogiorno e colonie 21)

[These peasants, perhaps the most hard-working people of Italy, spend Sundays playing and getting drunk, and, when necessary, they blacken their faces, and they go around harassing people on the main streets. Religious and superstitious to the point of spending thousands of lire in the poorest communes for the feast of their saint and for the construction of their church, it isn't rare to hear them talking badly about their priests. [...] With all of their respect for the gentry, in the reactionary uprising of 1860, roused by reactionary gentlemen and by priests, they assailed the houses of the liberal gentleman and killed men and women in the midst of the torments. Parricides, fratricides are relatively numerous.] (emphasis mine)

Here, Franchetti suggests that the absence of disciplined labor results in a kind of racial and moral degeneracy: drunk southern peasants, having blackened their faces, are consumed by homicidal rage, which, in the worst instance, violently destroys even the family structure.

In another instance, concern with sexual promiscuity emerges from Franchetti’s description of the extant agricultural labor structure in Italy’s rural south:

Il genere di vita dei braccianti d’amo i sessi impiegati nelle masserie, è caratteristico, e più d’ogni altro, atto a dare un’idea dell’esistenza cui sono ridotti i contadini di quelle provincie [...] In alcune parti, dormono tutti e tutte nel medesimo stanzone; ogni famiglia vi si fa la sua lettiera di paglia a parte. Altrove vi sono due stanze, uno per le donne, l’altro per gli uomini, e il sorvegliante è incaricato del mantenimento dei buoni costumi; ciò non impedisce che, intorno a Matera, per esempio, il maggiore insulto che si possa fare ad una donna è il dirle: “sei stata alle masserie.” (Mezzogiorno e colonie 84)

[The lifestyle of the laborers of both sexes who are employed on the farms is characteristic more than any other, and apt to give an idea of the level of existence to which the peasants of those provinces are reduced. In some parts, they [male and female] all sleep in the same large room; every family makes its own separate straw bedding. Other places, there
are two large rooms, one for the women, the other for the men, and the night watchman is charged with the maintenance of moral behavior; this does not impede the fact that, around Matera, for example, the worst insult that you can make to a woman is saying to her: “You’ve been in the masserie.”

Peasant labor conditions pose not only a moral threat, but a sexual threat as well. The site of moral, legitimate female labor (the masseria) is invoked as a euphemism for the amoral, illegitimate prostitute. Within Franchetti’s southern texts, sexual relations are to be absorbed within the purview of the state. State management of labor-power is thus tied to a concern with productivity, in both senses.

Franchetti also marks the reshuffling of sexual relations that results from emigration as a target for intervention. Franchetti laments that one of the detrimental effects of permanent emigration is indeed the dissolution of the family (and class) structure, as large numbers of husbands abandon their wives in order to seek work abroad:

Veramente, c’è molto di brutto nel modo in cui si opera l’emigrazione. [...] I costumi delle donne, nei paesi dove sono migliori, peggiorano. Le mogli degli emigrati finiscono spesso per cadere sotto a qualche signore del paese, fanno figli in assenza del marito, e sono costrette spesso ad abbandonarli od a consegnarli, per essere portati all’ospizio dei trovatelli in Napoli [...] (Mezzogiorno e colonie 103)

[There is truly a lot wrong with how emigration works. [...] The behavior of women, in the towns where it is optimal, gets worse. The wives of emigrants often end up falling under some townsman, they produce children in the absence of their husband, and they are often forced to abandon them or to turn them over, only to have them brought to the foundling home in Naples.] (emphasis mine)

The sexual threat alluded to here is hardly veiled by an economic one, as Franchetti fantasizes the abandoned peasant wife “falling under some townsman,” thus conjuring up an image of both sexual and economic submission. Franchetti’s texts betray a preoccupation with the biological proliferation of certain elements of the population. Children born to abandoned peasant wives clearly constitute another segment of the population that Franchetti’s texts attempt to manage. These children would not only represent
the refusal of sexual boundaries between economic classes, thus threatening their normative, hierarchical ordering, but, if abandoned, Franchetti warns, they would present a burden for emergent state technologies of social welfare. In his study of infant abandonment in nineteenth-century Bologna, David Kertzer notes that during this time Italy also witnessed an explosion in numbers of infants abandoned at foundling homes. According to Kertzer, adolescent male foundlings were often released for either military service or agricultural work. Females had a different fate: marriage or domestic servitude were the sole acceptable conditions for release, as home administrators were concerned with the potential for more reproduction out of wedlock, thereby ensuring a cyclical pattern wherein illegitimate babies would beget illegitimate babies.26 In the above passage, Franchetti’s nervous evocation of the foundling home is itself a site of reproduction: the biological reproduction of the abandoned peasant woman is thus tied to the social reproduction of the very conditions at which Franchetti’s work is aimed, wherein such women give birth to either versions of themselves (abandoned girls), or to young men who would choose between spade and rifle. By the start of the twentieth century, Franchetti and his wife Alice Hallgarten would open their school at Villa la Montesca in order to provide job training and moral instruction to precisely these populations—orphans, delinquents, the underemployed, children of impoverished farmworkers, and the like.

From Peasants to Soldiers: Franchetti’s Hyper-productive Colony

By 1891, Franchetti had plotted a new course for the (re)productivity of southern agricultural workers. If their sexual relations were to be supervised and reproduction curbed within the confines of the nation-state, this was certainly not the case for Franchetti’s Eritrean colonies. For Franchetti, Italy’s Eritrean colony is “an absolutely new country” that is to be settled peacefully by hard-working Italian families. Franchetti occupies much of his colonial texts with topographical surveys and other “figural regimes,” identifying territories that he believes are well suited for Italian settlement and cultivation (Mezzogiorno e colonie 313).27 This requires the use of a

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26 For a fascinating discussion of the social regulation of prostitutes, midwives, wet nurses, and unwed mothers in late nineteenth-century Italy, see Stewart-Steinberg 223–228.

27 For a discussion of the “literariness” of “figural regimes,” see: Hunt and Rudolf, and
common discursive strategy in colonial texts: a disavowal of the violent
expropriation of lands from local populations that such settlement requires.
Indeed, in the years Franchetti was writing, between 1893 and 1895, the
Italian state conducted mass land expropriations, slating numerous tracts
of locally owned land for habitation by future Italian settler-colonists. This
resulted in frequent skirmishes between Eritrean peasants and Italian colonial
authorities (Sòrgoni, Parole e corpi 21, 25). Franchetti makes no mention of
this resistance, choosing instead to manage the obstacle that local inhabitants
pose through a claim that vast amounts of uncultivated land already lay empty
for the Italian taking. Furthermore, in actively producing the myth of Italians as good colonizers, Franchetti outlines the ways in
which Italian occupation will be kinder and gentler than past, non-European
occupations and insists that local populations will be grateful to the Italian
state for improving their living conditions.28 He resolves the question of
autochthonous populations with broad brushstrokes: “It is in the interest of
the Government that the indigenous populations resume cultivation of the
territories reserved for them, and that they return to the level of prosperity of
which they are capable” (Mezzogiorno e colonie 296). Franchetti then moves
on to delineate his project of Italian peasant settlement in great detail, making
it clear that his concern lies more in colonizing Italians than local populations.
In so doing, he illustrates the ways in which the management of the Italian
population will be facilitated by relocating landless peasants and containing
them within the colonies.

Franchetti stages the Italian colonial occupation of Eritrea as an
opportunity for the Italian state to right historical wrongs inflicted upon its
southern peasantry. If in his southern texts Franchetti painstakingly details
the quantity and quality of uncultivated land within the boundaries of the
Italian nation-state that is ripe for redistribution, in his 1891 report “Italy’s
African Colony,” this opportunity is no longer figured as viable:

[L']Italia ha un debito da pagare verso le classi diseredate della fortuna,
le quali col sangue e con le imposte hanno contribuito a far l’Italia,

the Introduction to this book.

28 For more on the myth of Italians as good colonizers, see Bidussa. Reflecting during World
War I on Italian successes in recruiting Eritrean soldiers (askari) to fight alongside
Italians against Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II, Franchetti comments that their fidelity
“demonstrates that Italy […] knows how to conquer the affections and trust of its
indigenous subjects” (Franchetti, “Prefazione” vii).
hanno contribuito alla occupazione africana; che è obbligo dello Stato italiano di far quanto sta in lui perché anch’esse possano guadagnarsi col lavoro, all’ombra della nostra bandiera, quella indipendenza economica inaccessibile ad esse sul suolo italiano. (Mezzogiorno e colonie 290)

[Italy has a debt to pay to the classes who have been dispossessed of fortune, those who with their blood and their taxes contributed to making Italy and to African occupation; it is the Italian State’s obligation to do all that it can so that even these [classes] can earn with work, under the shadow of our flag, that economic independence that is inaccessible to them on Italian soil.]

For Franchetti, Italian land is inaccessible to the hard-working peasants who populate it. Peasants are figured as worthy precisely insofar as they are soldiers, and as such have been drained both physiologically and economically (blood and taxes), both literally and figuratively, by the imbricated projects of “making” Italy and the colonial occupation of Africa. In addition, anxiety about transoceanic emigration is present from the outset, as Franchetti fantasizes accommodating these laboring settlers, “under the shadow of [the Italian] flag,” rather than someone else’s.29

Franchetti’s writings illustrate the ease with which peasant populations might be contained and managed once relocated to colonial territories: his studies include countless figures and calculations of the nutritional intake, housing plans, labor conditions, and health of Italian laborers. In his “Report on Agrarian Experiments Executed in the Colony,” Franchetti fetishistically records daily alimentary consumption of individual Italian workers:

Ecco l’elenco, delle derrate che compongono il vitto giornaliero di ciascun

29 A testament to the appeal of Franchetti’s metaphor can be found in preeminent historian Christopher Seton-Watson’s 1980 essay, where it is absorbed and presented as description: “The ‘demographic imperialism’ of southern politicians, publicists and peasants took the form of a search for land where Italy’s surplus population could be settled in prosperity under the Italian flag” (170). While Seton-Watson lifts Franchetti’s metaphor to describe his project, he is not cited explicitly in the article. The metaphor crops up again in Franchetti’s plea for colonial expansion in Asia Minor during World War I, “It’s not necessary to recall here how important the phenomenon of emigration—in particular proletarian emigration—is in Italy. Until now, the hundreds of thousands of Italians who are emigrating today have no corner of earth where they may live under the shadow of the Italian flag” (Franchetti, “Prefazione” v).
operaio: Carne, Cg. 0,400 a lire 1, 34 il Cg. Pasta o riso, grammi 150 a lire 0,85 il Cg. Pane Cg. 1 oppure 1 Cg. di farina a lire 0,65 il Cg. Olio, cl. 15 a lire 2,50 il litro. Formaggio, grammi 10 a lire 4 il Cg. Conserva, grammi 10 a lire 1,40 il Cg. Cipolle, grammi 25 a lire 0,60 il Cg. Aglio, grammi 25 a lire 0,80 il Cg. Pepe, grammi 1 a lire 3 il Cg. Caffè, grammi 15 a lire 3,50 il Cg. Zucchero, grammi 22 a lire 1,20 il Cg. Rhum, cl. 4 a lire 3 il litro. Erbaggi in conserva, grammi 25 a lire 1 il Cg. (Mezzogiorno e colonie 342)

[Here is the list of the foodstuffs that compose the daily provisions of each worker: Meat, .40 kgs. at 1.34 lire per kg. Pasta or rice, 150 grams at 0.85 lire per kg. Bread 1 kg. or 1 kg. of flour at 0.65 lire per kg. Oil, 15 cls. at 2.50 lire per liter. Cheese, 10 grams at 4 lire per kg. Preserves, 10 grams at 1.40 lire per kg. Onions, 25 grams at 0.60 per kg. Garlic, 25 grams at 0.80 per kg. Pepper, 1 gram at 3 lire per kg. Coffee, 15 grams at 3.50 lire per kg. Sugar, 22 grams at 1,20 lire per kg. Rum, 4 cl. at 3 lire per liter. Dried spices, 25 grams at 1 lire per kg.]

Such calculations illustrate the degree to which Italian colonials themselves were to be guided and managed by state technologies. The health of individual Italian bodies, conceived of as elements of the national population, thus becomes a primary site of deliberate state intervention. Contained within the colonies, the collective behaviors and habits of Franchetti’s vital subjects become as predictable as average rates of rainfall in Asmara (347). Furthermore, like literary topoi, these “figurative regimes” reflecting the meticulously regulated biological lives of Italian colonists constitute “the substitution of language for life.” As Hunt and Rudolf remark, “life […] becomes accessible to biopolitical intervention, not as such, but through its entry into language and representation.” (20).

Whereas in Franchetti’s southern writings, the ordering of sexual relations is aimed at a suppression of reproduction, within his colonial texts, Italian peasants are almost obsessively celebrated as vigorous, robust, and productive. Franchetti projects a “dense and immensely productive population” and a concomitant “intense production of wealth” upon Eritrean soil, forged by “that physical and moral vigor” that characterizes his ideal colonial laborer. He imagines that the Italian state will, “assure in few years to thousands of Italian peasant families economic well-being conquered with work, economic independence, and moral regeneration that they cannot obtain in Italy if not through laws that are unlikely to be approved, much less effective”
Colonial (Re)productivity

Colonial conquest is an opportunity to enable the “healthy exuberance of [Italy’s] energies and population” and to permit its “organic development” (“Prefazione,” v).

Franchetti’s colonial fantasy is formulated in part by the deployment of the topos of gendered African soil that lays itself open for penetration by Italian colonials: a revitalized Italian peasantry will become “economically, physically, and morally robust” because “the plain is offering its unoccupied lands to them” (Mezzogiorno e colonie 402). Each colonial family will be given, “virgin and fertile lands” to “sow” (321). If the Eritrean highlands are figured as a female eagerly awaiting Italian penetration, Italian colonial families themselves are to be “planted” in the soil (312–313).

What is most striking about Franchetti’s feverish insistence on peasant productivity is precisely the paradox of biopolitics: in celebrating “the vital forces of a nation” Franchetti’s texts are able to advocate unproblematically not only the state-subsidized redirection of Italy’s landless, working poor, but, ultimately, the violence against and dispossession of Eritrean populations that his colonial project presupposes (411). In his seminal lectures on biopolitics, Foucault asks, “How will the power to kill and the function of murder operate in this technology of power, which takes life as both its object and its objective?” (Society Must Be Defended 254). His answer is racism. Foucault writes, “In the nineteenth century [...] war will be seen not only as a way of improving one’s own race by eliminating the enemy race (in accordance with the themes of natural selection and the struggle for existence), but also a way of regenerating one’s own race” (257). As Hunt and Rudolf describe Foucault’s lectures, racism serves two functions: “first, the means to create biological ‘caesuras within the [population]’ that allow a line to be drawn ‘between what must live and what must die’ and, secondly, it creates a ‘positive relationship’ in which ‘the death of the bad race ... is something that will make life in general healthier and purer’” (8). Indeed, anxieties about the regeneration of a population of Italians outside the juridical domain of the Italian nation-state emerge most explicitly within Franchetti’s articulation of a colonial project:

Ogni anno, abbandonano l’Italia, senza pensiero di ritorno, circa centomila emigranti, in massima parte contadini. Vanno con diversa
fortuna a rinsanguare nazionalità straniere e, nelle presenti condizioni, non possono andare a fecondare col loro lavoro le terre fertili di clima mite che rimangono abbandonate sull’altipiano della nostra colonia. (Mezzogiorno e colonie 380)

[Each year, without any thought of return, roughly one hundred thousand emigrants—primarily peasants—abandon Italy. They go with varied fortune to revitalize foreign nationalities. And yet, given the present situation, they are not allowed to fecundate with their work the fertile and temperate lands that lay abandoned on the highlands of our colony.]

(emphasis mine)

Hundreds of thousands of Italian peasants embark on a one-way trip to foreign lands, infusing other national populations with new blood and labor-power (which, like the verb rinsanguare exists at the threshold of physiology and [political] economy), yet the fertile lands of the new colony are kept from being inseminated with Italian agricultural labor. This passage marks one of the few deployments of an economy of blood within Franchetti’s texts. “Rinsanguare” means literally “to supply or transfuse with new blood,” and only figuratively to “revitalize,” “boost,” or “supply” economically. Significantly, this ambiguous term emerges when the southern question, emigration, and African colonization collide. Read symptomatically, this passage suggests that what is at stake in Franchetti’s texts is indeed harnessing the productivity (in both senses) of an Italian race, lest this race begin to (re)produce in foreign lands as a result of emigration. Here, Franchetti espouses what Mark Choate characterizes as a widespread, popular “view of population control dating to the Middle Ages, [which understood] spontaneous emigration as a ‘hemorrhage’ of Italy’s best blood, assuming that the most industrious of the poor would emigrate to better themselves.” Choate continues, “In the Darwinian struggle between national peoples, the Italian race would falter unless the government retained its population, the basis for national survival” (Emigrant Nation 33).

30 Franchetti returns to this formulation after the Italian invasion of Libya and before the conclusion of World War I, as he laments the fate of Italian emigrants inhabiting other colonial lands (particularly Tunisia): “In the remaining regions around [the Mediterranean Sea], occupied by other civilized nations, Italian activity is taking place, but our compatriots are destined to be absorbed sooner or later by the dominating nationality” (“Prefazione” iv).
For Franchetti, the triumphant regeneration of an Italian race can only happen “under the shadow of [the Italian] flag.” As the Italian state has inhibited its landless peasantry from regenerating on its own soil, and since the Eritrean highlands seem to be “offering themselves” to laboring Italians, goes the logic, a state-sponsored redirection of these populations to colonial lands is the only solution. Yet, in order to execute a project centered upon the health, life, nutrition, and productivity of Italian bodies in colonial lands inhabited by local populations, the discourse must construct populations that potentially threaten the proliferation of this life. And it is at this point in the logic of the discourse that an explicit deployment of race becomes necessary:

È fortuna che ci sia dato creare un tipo di società di razza italiana al di là dei mari, la quale abbia quel vigore che nasce, non tanto dalla lotta cogli elementi e con la natura vergine, quanto da uno stato di indipendenza economica […] È questo il primo, il grande beneficio della nostra impresa africana. (Mezzogiorno e colonie 309)

[It is fortunate that we have been given [an opportunity] to create a society of the Italian race overseas, the kind that possesses that vigor that is born, not so much from a battle with the elements or with virgin nature, as from a state of economic independence. […] This is the first, the largest benefit of our African mission.]

The greatest outcome for the Italian colonization of Africa will thus be the production of explicitly racialized *vital subjects*. And what will be the main function of this “vigorous” Italian race—once a space for concentrated productivity has been established? Its own protection in a state of war: “We must send a part of the population that provides soldiers to the army and provides for their nutrition. Then we can truly say that the Italian Nation is in the colony” (392). The agricultural hyper-productivity that Franchetti has celebrated throughout his meditations on demographic colonialism and that is to enable settler families a viable economic income is thus recast as necessary to the reproduction and nutrition of healthy soldiers for the Italian colonial army. Furthermore, Franchetti’s call for the proliferation of soldier-subjects underscores the degree to which the nation itself is produced by and through colonial expansion: the Italian nation finds its true expression in an African colony, and it exists only insofar as it is racially and agriculturally (re) productive. Indeed, just a few years earlier, Franchetti had extolled “military religion” as the highest “feeling for the patria,” and had decried pacifism as
a force that “weakened national energies” (Pezzino 66). Some years later, as the focus of Italy’s colonial ambitions had shifted from Eritrea to Libya, Franchetti praised a 1912 law granting universal male suffrage as a way of allowing peasants, as the most essential “elements” of Italy’s economic and military strength, to “feast at the banquet of the nation’s growing prosperity”
The *sentimento militare* (military feeling) was the highest form of patriotism, one that “[made] a people feel that they must be ready to give everything for the great ideal of the *patria*—even their own lives and those of their children” (Pezzino 65). The Italian state needed to complete “the work of unification, of fusion among all the forces that constitute the nation, and to these forces the union and the participation to the collective action of the country will give new life and new vigor for the increased grandeur of Italy.”

Through sacrifice and death, the Italian national community was to find “new life and new vigor.”

To be sure, Franchetti does not linger on reproductive policy or politics in crafting his rhetoric of colonial (re)productivity. Still, it seems safe to say that the “part of the population” that he claims must be “sent” to colonial Eritrea in order to reproduce and nourish healthy colonial soldiers are white Italian women. In the earliest days of colonial conquest, as Franchetti was busy recording the daily alimentary intake of Italian colonial laborers and conducting agricultural experiments in the Eritrean highlands, there were very few European women in the colony. Local Eritrean populations were of little to no interest to Franchetti in his fantasy of the colony as a vast, fertile land awaiting Italian labor and biological (re)productivity. That Franchetti’s project is one ultimately aimed at colonizing Italians themselves is thus made all the more clear by those reproductive bodies that his colonial reports omit but who were nevertheless a constant presence from the beginning of the Italian occupation of Eritrea—local women. And yet, in the early period of Italian occupation, sexual relationships in the form of concubinage or madamismo and prostitution between Italian soldiers and African women were quite widespread and encouraged as a means of maintaining the vitality or “wellbeing” of soldiers. As early as 1885, one of the first orders of business in coordinating the Italian occupation of Massawa was regulating prostitution and opening a sifilicomio. Medical doctors and the Carabinieri were enlisted to identify a restricted pool of licensed prostitutes or “sanitized women” to be

32 Though Franchetti does not, I specify “white” here in order to begin to undo the normative fiction of Italian whiteness, and also to call attention to whiteness as a socio-political position. Quoting Ien Ang’s 2003 article, “I’m a Feminist, but... ‘Other’ Women and Postnational Feminism,” Derek Duncan uses the category “white” in his analysis of the colonial legacies of representations of Albanians in contemporary Italian film to refer not to biology or skin tone, but to a political position in a “structural, hierarchical inter-relationship” (“Italy’s Postcolonial Cinema” 200). Furthermore, at this point in Italian colonial history, indigenous populations and colonial subjects were “by definition deprived of the rights of citizenship” (Barrera, “Sex, Citizenship, and the State” 158).

33 Sòrgoni reports that in 1904, there were roughly 1,800 Italian men living in Eritrea, alongside 480 Italian women. By 1938, as a result of Mussolini’s imperial project, there were roughly 67,000 “whites” (men and women) in the colony, as compared to roughly 596,000 locals, of whom roughly half were women. See Sòrgoni, Parole e corpi 29.

34 This might explain why, in her cogent discussion of liberal-era colonial anthropology and its interest in the sexual politics of colonial rule in Eritrea, Barbara Sòrgoni makes no mention of Franchetti.

35 On madamismo in East Africa, see: Ponzanesi; Iyob.
offered to Italian troops. While the sexual politics of colonialism would change with the arrival of Governor Ferdinando Martini in the wake of the defeat at Adwa in 1896, tending increasingly toward racial segregation, which would become more widespread after Mussolini’s invasion of Ethiopia (1935–1936), in the so-called conquest years in which Franchetti was writing, official policy sought to encourage and regulate unions between Italian men and African women. Indeed, until the Ethiopian campaign, children born of these unions were granted citizenship if their Italian paternity was officially acknowledged. Clearly, these sexual politics of colonial rule, which would eventually be tethered to all kinds of notions about maintaining white “prestige” (and this well before fascism officially embraced biological racism in 1935), were of less interest to Franchetti than the imagined (re)productivity of Italians on which his Eritrean fantasy relied.36

Bringing the Colonies Home

Biopolitics, as a form of governmentality, entails an exercise of power as a kind of guiding of behaviors, or “the conduct of conduct.” It draws its model for a political economy of forces from the private sphere of the home, or the oikos (as the etymological connection between oeconomia, household management, and modern political economy suggests). Modern institutions—schools, prisons, colonies, and the like—are often places where these two spheres intersect. As Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg has noted in her seminal discussion of Maria Montessori’s social-maternal pedagogical method, the school, and debates around the nationalization of public instruction as a means of “making Italians,” were particularly dense sites for the exercise of such power, particularly in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. Montessori saw education as a social cure. “Montessori would later take a further step,” writes Stewart-Steinberg, insofar as she would “bring the school into the home” (307) in her founding of Rome’s famed Casa dei bambini beginning in 1907. The Casa grew out of a project of urban renewal in the San Lorenzo district, spearheaded by Edoardo Talamo and the Roman Association of Good Building, which turned slum buildings and shantytowns into “hygienic” proto-borgate or “new towns” just outside the Aurelian walls. According to Montessori, the project would “acquire city tenements, remodel

36 I have drawn my discussion of sexual policy in colonial Eritrea from Barrera, “Sex, Citizenship, and the State” and Sòrgoni, Parole e corpi.
them, put them into productive use, and administer them as a good father of a family would” (Montessori, cited in Stewart-Steinberg 320). At stake, Stewart-Steinberg argues, was a “national project of civilization, known as incivilmento,” and Montessori’s ideal teacher, as a “social mother,” took on the role of socializing the family through “civiliz[ing] its members and open[ing] its walls to make its scientific management possible” (323). It should thus come as no surprise that, after his early inquiries into the southern question and his subsequent studies in the Horn of Africa, Leopoldo Franchetti dedicated the remainder of his life to the education of the peasantry as a means of making them into modern national subjects.

Alongside his wife, Alice Hallgarten, a wealthy American-born philanthropist, Franchetti founded the Scuola della Montesca in 1901 at his private villa in the Umbrian Città di Castello. The school swiftly became an internationally renowned center for scientific and experimental pedagogy. Franchetti saw the Montesca as an opportunity to continue the work he had been doing for nearly three decades toward the formation of a “populous and hard-working class of small landowning farmers” (Bonomi 10). The goal was, in Franchetti’s patronizing words, to educate the “agricultural plebes” toward spiritual and social awareness, introducing them to a “new humanity.” In 1902, the couple opened a second school roughly ten kilometers from the first site, at Rovigliano. In August 1909, they hosted and financed the first international course on Montessori’s scientific pedagogical method. Montessori had already been a recipient of Franchettian patronage as she wrote and published her groundbreaking treatise Il metodo della pedagogia scientifica applicato all’educazione infantile nelle Case dei bambini (The Montessori Method:...
Colonial (Re)productivity

Scientific Pedagogy as Applied to Child Education in the “Children’s Houses”) at their villa (and at their expense) earlier that year.  

Hallgarten, Franchetti, and Montessori had met in Rome, where Alice, a “practical feminist” of the early twentieth century, alongside other like-minded social interventionists such as Montessori, Linda Malnati, Aurelia Josz, and Felicitas Buchner, was an active member of the Unione per il bene (Union for Good), also in Rome’s impoverished San Lorenzo neighborhood. Hallgarten Franchetti was an organizer interested in hands-on philanthropy, and took a special interest in hygienic instruction and care for women and children. Born to a bourgeois family of bankers, life at the Montesca introduced her to the joys of manual labor: “I would have never believed that an industry […] could be so pleasant,” she wrote. “Manual labor is good for the soul and forges a bond of understanding among all” (Fossati 291). Hallgarten Franchetti was a “social mother” par excellence, as she and the Baron Franchetti never had children of their own, and on her deathbed she penned letters asking after “i (suoi) bambini amati” (“(her) beloved children”) (Waldbaum 132–133).

If, as Stewart-Steinberg notes, the Virgin Mary was the model for a secular, social Maria in what quickly became the cult of Montessori, Hallgarten Franchetti was the “fiammella francescana” (“little Franciscan flame”), as her friend, colleague, and early biographer Aurelia Josz affectionately named her. Montessori herself referred to Alice as a “saint” (Bucci 202). Alice shared with her husband a common interest in botany, agricultural experimentation, and moral and social regeneration through a return to rural life, which was inspired by her studies of John Ruskin, Leo Tolstoy, and St. Francis of Assisi. Hallgarten Franchetti herself penned a daily prayer to open each elementary school day modeled on St Francis’s thirteenth-century Canticle of the Sun (Waldbaum 130). For her primary contemporary biographer, Roberta Fossati, Hallgarten Franchetti’s social utopia, which linked her to many other women philanthropists and social advocates of her day, included “the loving cultivation of the earth, divided up into small plots to be tended personally, the moderate use of brick for the construction of houses” (194), and weaving and spinning with techniques allegedly inherited from Giotto and Homer.

Montessori dedicated the original Italian volume Il metodo della pedagogia scientifica applicato all’educazione infantile nelle Case dei bambini (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1909) to the Baron and Baroness Franchetti and later the 1912 English edition of her magnum opus, which Franchetti also financed, to the memory of her then recently deceased friend and colleague Alice Hallgarten (Waldbaum 129). Hallgarten died of tuberculosis at the age of thirty-seven.
The Montesca was home to an elementary school that served the local peasantry around Città di Castello, most of whom labored on the Franchetti’s land (Waldbaum 130). Erica Moretti has highlighted the ambivalence of the Franchetti’s pedagogical experiment, arguing that in spite of their avowed focus on the education of peasant children as a means of social emancipation, course assignments and lesson plans reveal an ideological project aimed at tethering sharecroppers’ children indefinitely to the land (Moretti 144–145). See Fig. 1.1.

The Franchetti’s fostered pride and passion for the agricultural work of the students’ forebears through dictation exercises that emphasized manual labor as the “inevitable law of all.” Student notebooks from the school’s first decade contain multiple dictates on the theme of “Work” that extoll the virtues of hard work across the animal kingdom, or refer to labor as “a duty and a right” while condemning “loafer who live on the money of others” as “unworthy of being called men.” Workers, the Franchetti’s students diligently transcribed, must take care not to “squander their physical and intellectual energies [forze] too early in life,” lest they become a burden to the society, “in which and for which they live.” In addition to labor, in-class writing assignments focused upon public hygiene and domesticity (Fig. 1.2), with essays such as “How I Would Make a Home,” which describe a three-story house flooded with natural light, on arable land, with room for a cellar and stables for oxen.41

Although the school at Villa la Montesca began as an elementary school, it soon expanded to include training for male laborers in agricultural techniques, and courses for women in weaving, “domestic economy,” and hygiene. In an era of increasing industrialization, the Franchetti’s pedagogical project to some degree pushed back, romanticizing rural labor, as well as its correlate, artisanal manufacturing. Beginning in 1908, unemployed or otherwise impoverished women would come to train in Hallgarten Franchetti’s Laboratorio Tela Umbra weaving facility, and would bring their nursing infants and children to the adjacent nursery and elementary schools.42 During winter breaks, peasants would receive instruction in woodworking in order to help them furnish their

41 The Archivio unico di deposito della Regione Umbria contains primary sources such as textbooks, student notebooks, and other pedagogical materials used at the Schools of Villa Montesca and Rovigliano. I am incredibly grateful to Erica Moretti for sharing these resources with me.
42 The Tela Umbra operates to this day as an artisanal weaving studio. The palazzo also hosts the Museo Franchetti, dedicated to its founders. See: http://www.telaumbra.it/ (accessed July 9, 2014).
homes. Women were to learn “sapere pratico” (practical knowledge), which would improve the management of the household in daily life or provide professional development in the event women were to seek work as gouvernanti (governesses) (Fossati, “Il lavoro culturale” 292–294). This method of social intervention, much like Montessori’s and that of Paolo Mantegazza (the subject of Chapter Two), brought the government of the household in line with that of the new national community through the deliberate production of certain kinds of knowledge, or savoir. Franchetti’s writings on the southern question and early colonization in Eritrea are also laden with such a biopolitics of knowledge. Indeed, what prompted his wife to attend to the training (read: governing) of peasant and impoverished women was the failure of another of Franchetti’s attempts at colonization: a short-lived Colonia Agricola on Rome’s via Flaminia (also known as the Dormitorio Sonzogno), which provided agricultural training to orphans and delinquent youths and opened in 1899. When the Roman colony was closed two years later, Franchetti transferred the urban youths to another of his properties, the Buon Ricovero estate, and unsuccessfully tried to instill in them a love for rural labor.

Franchetti would have been familiar with the pioneering work of the Catholic priest Leonardo Murialdo (1828–1900) on agricultural colonies as transitional but ultimately carceral programs for young offenders. Founder of the vocational school Pia Società Torinese di San Giuseppe, Murialdo had spent time in England, Belgium, and France visiting agricultural orphanages, or orphelinats agricoles. The first Italian agricultural colony opened at Moncucco Torinese in 1853 (Bucci 214). By 1872, there were also agricultural colonies operating in Assisi, Bosco Maregno (Piedmont), Perugia, and Scansano (Tuscany). Critically, while young male offenders were confined in agricultural colonies, young women were relegated to the domestic sphere; theirs were rehabilitative homes, or case: the Pia Casa di Nazaret in Milan; the Casa di Patronato in Turin; the Casa di Riabilitazione in Venice, for example (Ministero dell’Interno 430). Leone Carpi’s 1874 Delle colonie e dell’emigrazione d’italiani all’estero (On the Colonies and Emigration of Italians Abroad), one of Franchetti’s source texts for emigration figures in La Sicilia nel 1876, calls for the establishment of a system of penal agricultural

43 Franchetti was the president of the Colonia Agricola. Don Brizio Casciola, a protestant literary figure and social interventionist who had greatly influenced the Franchetti’s (both of whom were secular Jews by birth) was the colony’s director.
44 Italy’s last agricultural penal colony still operates on the island of Gorgona, off the coast of Tuscany (Alessandrini).
colonies in Italy, with the goal of moral and political rehabilitation and education, which he argues would be consistent with “modern civilization [civiltà].” He outlines the targets of such correctional institutions: 1) at-risk orphans and foundlings; 2) corrupt or convicted minors and adults convicted of minor offenses; 3) “gli accattoni […], gli sfacendati, i girovaghi ed i viziosi” (scroungers, loafers, vagrants, and perverts) (Carpi 140). Franchetti’s turn to agricultural penal and pedagogical colonies did not so much signal an abandonment of his colonial project in the Horn of Africa, as much as the coexistence of these various modes of agricultural colonization. Indeed, as the Franchetti’s school at Montesca was continuing to expand its reach among the Umbrian peasantry, his African colonial fantasy endured.

Caffé, Cafoni, Cacao e Cotone: Turning Desperation into Design

In July 1907, Doctor Gino Bartolommei Gioli, along with Franchetti, inaugurated the publication of a new monthly periodical entitled L’Agricoltura coloniale by outlining its mission. As the official organ of the Institute for

45 The editorial history of L’Agricoltura coloniale in many ways reflects the ideological and rhetorical trajectory of colonialism in Italy (as elsewhere). From its inception through to the end of World War II, L’Agricoltura coloniale enjoyed an explicitly colonial gaze, published by the Istituto Agricolo Coloniale Italiano. In January 1945, its title was changed to Rivista di agricoltura tropicale e subtropicale, reflecting the imposition of a more nebulous ideological frame upon the symbolic geography of Africa: colonial space, characterized by inherently hierarchical power relations, becomes climatic space, where atmospheric conditions, rather than armed men, reign. In 1953, the publishing Institute changed names, to the Istituto Agronomico per l’Oltremare (a name which remains today). In January 1998, the publication underwent another transition, as it became an English-language journal entitled Journal of Agriculture and Environment for International Development. The symbolic trajectory of Africa, from a space of colonial desire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to one of economic aid and capitalist development in the late twentieth and twenty-first, is legible not only within this reductive history of an institution and its monthly periodical, but within a variety of representational practices, from the naming and renaming of formerly colonial institutions and offices to the appropriation of the colonial topos of mal d’Africa by contemporary Italian human aid groups working in Africa and the ad campaigns of Benetton. These expressions of the afterlife of colonialism are not proof that desire has been purged, but instead illustrate the degree to which it has been reworked to accommodate, rather than fantasies of domination through violation, something closer to a no-less colonialist hegemony, as nations and peoples are figured as either capable of offering aid or desperate to receive it.
Italian Colonial Agriculture and the Office for Experimental Agriculture in Eritrea, the primary goal of the journal was to ensure the “technical instruction of future agrarian colonizers” (Gioli 2). The introductory address by Gioli and subsequent articles by the bourgeois professional class—senators, professors, scientists, and doctors—which fill the pages of L’Agricoltura coloniale illustrate the breadth in the liberal period of the concept of “colony,” which signified, variously: 1) the “spontaneous” colonies of farmworker emigrants in the Americas; 2) colonies of “direct dominion” in East Africa; 3) agricultural, educational, and/or penal colonies within Italy. What drew these fields together was agricultural labor. For Gioli, Franchetti, and their colleagues, the outpouring of Italian labor-power to

Fig. 1.3 Mussolini during the fascist occupation of Ethiopia (1935) on the cover of the journal L’agricoltura coloniale, founded by Franchetti and Gioli in 1907 (Photo by author.)
the Americas needed to be harnessed and managed through instruction. As such, the journal also publicized a new degree program, which would train professionals in colonial agriculture, botany, economics, geography and history, the hygiene of humans and of livestock, emergency medical care, and foreign languages.

At stake was Italy’s position with respect to the established colonial powers Britain, Holland, France, and Germany. Up to this point, emigration and the “spontaneous” colonization of the Americas had been the work of poor, landless, and uncultured Italians, whose exploited status in the Americas risked resembling that of the “negro slaves of old” (75). Italy had to prove that it was capable of producing not only cafoni (poor, landless peasants) but also a class of managers competent enough to direct their labor. Hygiene was a constitutive part of this program, as colonists were conceived of as physiological beings who faced a variety of specific and organic challenges due to the changes in climate and soil inherent to relocation. As Doctor Enrico Persano put it in his article, “Colonial Hygiene”:

The colonial problem, reduced to its most simple expression, may be posed in these terms: white men, born and raised in temperate regions, and used therefore to living within the climatic and telluric conditions of such regions must, as quickly as possible, get used to living, prospering, and producing in tropical or even equatorial regions, under completely different climatic and telluric conditions, which [...] have often proved to be fatal for them. (123)

Yet, if the hygienic discourse presented in L’Agricoltura coloniale affirms a certain degree of physiological unity (Italian colonials are unequivocally “white men”), this wholeness is proclaimed through a rhetorical dismemberment: able-bodied worker-colonists are figured overwhelmingly as little more than “arms.” The movement of laboring bodies is referred to as “the emigration of arms” (Gioli 4).47 As in Prime Minister Crispi’s language in the Introduction (“colonies must be like arms”), the emigrant peasant body exists only through its relationship to labor productivity. Furthermore, the emigrant population is fetishistically made whole through its rhetorical truncation. The rhetoric of loss functions fetishistically to ‘mend’ the

47 Lauding Italy’s Libyan campaign in 1911, poet Giovanni Pascoli would refer to Italy somewhat melancholically as “the great provider of cut-rate arms,” referring to the mass emigration of laboring Italians. See: Chapters Three and Four of this study.
constitutive absence at the heart of the racialized Italian national subject. Truncated limbs will recur again in D'Annunzio’s occupation of Fiume, though they will be recast as belonging to wounded soldier-patriots whose dismemberment, like that of Italy’s after World War I, is “healed” by aerial conquest.

By 1890, when Prime Minister Crispi led efforts to secure the colony, there had been a shift in the rhetorical and ideological registers of Italian colonialism in the Horn of Africa: while earlier discussions had centered around colonization for diplomatic and/or military gain, the Eritrean venture marked the advent of a new official disposition (Rainero, I primi tentativi 11). Within parliamentary discussions of “demographic colonialism,” agriculture came into focus as both the target and the apparatus of Italian rule. As the inaugural issue of L’Agricoltura coloniale illustrates, agriculture as a dispositif enabled the cohesion of a set of terms under a new sign: that of biopolitics. Peasant bodies were conceived of not only as potentially productive agricultural laborers (Marx’s labor-power), but also as elements of a biological Italian population, whose reproductive capacities and alimentary intake were sites of discussion, projection, and textual production among policymakers. “Demographic” colonialism, a uniquely Italian contribution to European colonial thought and practice, therefore refers not simply to the Italian settlement of colonies in East Africa, but to a reproductive project aimed at Italian settlers as vital subjects. To refer to Franchetti’s colonial project is thus to draw together the three overlapping biopolitical fields of social intervention to which he dedicated his life-work: the southern question, “demographic” colonialism in the Horn of Africa, and a pedagogical model of guiding, or instruction, that culminated in the “corrective” (disciplinary) agricultural colony.

1 Rainero also offers an account of the failure of Franchetti’s project. For a similar appraisal of the outcome of Franchetti’s plan, as well as a detailed description of it (in English, based on Rainero’s account), see Larebo 12–19.
2 I draw here from Foucault’s dispositif (typically translated as “apparatus”). The dispositif consists of the relations between “a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions” (Foucault, Power/Knowledge 194–195). See also: Agamben, What is an Apparatus?
Franchetti’s writing and social intervention illustrate how state practices centered around what David Horn identifies as “the emergence [in the 1920s and 1930s] of new social technologies – including censuses, social insurance, practices of urban planning, housing projects, and social work” (Social Bodies 4) were rehearsed in southern Italy and the colonies (both abroad and domestic) well before the fascist state practiced them at home. What is particularly striking is that, contrary to Horn’s claim that the rise of such technologies resulted from the fascist state’s concern with declining fertility, the emergence of the problematic of the population was instead already in progress during a time of fervent biological productivity and that this problematic was informed by a logic of race war long before the fascist regime’s official implementation of the racial laws in the metropole. Indeed, in 1937, Italy’s first racial laws declared sexual relations between Italian
citizens and colonial subjects illegal and punishable by five years of imprison-
ment (Barrera, “Sex, Citizenship, and the State” 157). Franchetti’s texts thus illustrate one of the many routes of what Foucault called the effet de retour of European colonialism on models of power in the metropole. In one of the few moments in his seminal 1976 lectures on biopolitics in which he mentions colonialism, Foucault states:

> It should never be forgotten that while colonization, with its techniques and its political and juridical weapons, obviously transported European models to other continents, it also had a considerable boomerang effect [effet de retour] on the mechanisms of power in the West, and on the apparatuses, institutions, and techniques of power. A whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West, and the result was that the West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself. (Society Must Be Defended 103)³

If it is reasonable to assume that Foucault did not have Italian colonialism in mind here, Franchetti’s writings nevertheless constitute an example of this dynamic “internal colonialism,” given how he writes about Italy’s southern regions and how he approaches the ultimately self-referential demographic colonialism in Eritrea, and later the agricultural penal colony in Rome and Buon Ricovero, as well as the training facility at the Montesca. Franchetti’s writings illustrate not only a “boomerang effect,” but a constant shuttling back and forth between colonizing Italians both within and outside the ever-shifting borders of the nation-state (in terms of both knowledge production about Italy’s southern regions and pedagogy). At its most basic, his colonial model points to the profound imbrication between colonial discourse and the project of “making Italians” through the biopolitical rhetorics of race and (re)productivity. Italian colonialism—understood not simply as African conquest, but as a wider project of colonizing Italians themselves, through training or Foucauldian “guiding” in domestic hygiene, alimentation, and agricultural labor—was viewed by Franchetti and others as a means of healing national fragmentation through a harnessing of Italian (re)productivity.

³ The French effet de retour does not appear in the original English translation that I have been citing. I borrowed it from Stoler, who cites this passage in an English translation of the Italian. In her version, the “boomerang effect” is translated as “return effect” and the French effet de retour is given in parenthesis (Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire 75).
At least since Alfredo Niceforo’s 1898 declaration that the “barbarous” Italian South was “a great colony to civilize” (6), and certainly since Antonio Gramsci’s 1927 polemic against what he described as the colonial subjugation of the South and the islands to the Italian mainland, scholars of Italy’s southern question have acknowledged the role that colonial modes of representation have played in its historical trajectory (La questione meridionale 132). In spite of this fact, recent studies by Nelson Moe and John Dickie have focused exclusively upon Franchetti’s southern texts, without taking into account his concomitant interests in “demographic” colonization in Africa and domestic pedagogy (Moe, The View from Vesuvius; Dickie, Darkest Italy). Furthermore, when historians such as Romain Rainero, Angelo Del Boca, and Nicola Labanca have addressed Franchetti’s colonial plans, they tend to be depicted as beneficently liberal, nationalist, and/or “demographic,” and thus as not-yet racist, not-yet imperialist, and, therefore, not-yet fascist. As Dickie puts it with regard to Franchetti’s southern writings, “[Pasquale] Villari and Franchetti are often viewed, from both left and right, as the origin of a long and honourable tradition of social analysis anchored in objectivity” (Darkest Italy 55). Similarly, scholars of Italy’s southern question (e.g. Salvadori 184) tend to split the corpus in two, cordon off what are figured as the liberal-humanitarian works of Pasquale Villari, Leopoldo Franchetti and Sidney Sonnino, and Giustino Fortunato from the explicitly racialist writings of Alfredo Niceforo, Giuseppe Sergi, and Cesare Lombroso. The more or less blatant racism of both colonialist and meridionalist thinkers thus becomes the primary index of how they are remembered by historiography and, consequently, by their modern readers. And yet, the reading of Franchetti conducted in this chapter problematizes some of these dearly held assumptions about Franchetti’s place in the genealogy of Italian race thinking. As the coming chapter illustrates, the anti-fascism that propelled Italian anti-racism, while politically and even ethically necessary, has produced its own warped

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4 For an analysis of Gramsci’s contribution to the southern question in its historical and political context(s), see Davis, “The South, the Risorgimento, and the Origins of the ‘Southern Problem’”. See also Verdicchio, “Introduction.”

5 See, for example, Massimo Salvadori, who writes: “Despite his time in Parliament, Franchetti always remained a humanitarian. And we might say that [...] Franchetti experienced the political moment by following humanitarianism, the only truly deep feeling he had.” For Salvadori, Franchetti’s colonial project was the logical outcome of this humanitarianism: “It isn’t too difficult to understand how [...] he and Sonnino boarded the train of imperialism. [...] Franchetti brought his humanitarian spirit to the question and saw in the colonies above all a way out of Italian poverty” (109).
lens. If readers “know” in advance that Franchetti was neither a proto-fascist nor a racist—or at least not as much of one as Niceforo, Sergi, or Lombroso—they are inclined to perform a selective reading, overlooking some details of his text, while emphasizing others. One of the goals of this chapter has been to explore the degree to which Franchetti’s plan (supported as it was, at least initially, by Prime Minister Francesco Crispi and others) provided the rhetorical and ideological conditions of possibility for Mussolini’s warning to prefects on August 10, 1927 (Fig. 1.3):

Per ogni emigrante che esce per sempre dall’Italia, in compenso di poco oro che giunge dall’estero, il paese perde economicamente tutto ciò che ha speso per nutrirlo, per educarlo, per metterlo in grado di produrre. Militariamente un soldato, demograficamente un elemento giovane e forte, che feconderà terre straniere e darà figli a paesi stranieri. (350)

[For every emigrant that leaves Italy permanently, in exchange for the bit of gold that arrives from abroad, the country loses economically everything that it spent to feed him, to educate him, to make him capable of producing. Militarily a soldier, demographically a young and strong element, that will fecundate foreign lands and give children to foreign countries.]6

Read symptomatically, and therefore in spite of their dry rationalism and apparent lack of rhetoric, Franchetti’s liberal-humanistic texts figure the relationship between the potential (re)productivity of individual bodies (conceived of as elements of the Italian population) and emigration in precisely the same way as a justification for his early colonial project in Eritrea. How is it that the very same biopolitical rhetoric can be used to confirm the implicit racism of Mussolini’s demographic policy, on the one hand, and the rationalism of Franchetti’s liberal-democratic humanitarianism

6 As David Horn points out, “[I]n a variety of ways, Fascism took up the language of the medical and social sciences in a self-conscious effort to constitute itself as a modern form of government. However, it would be unwarranted to characterize as fascist the new discourses and practices that took the Italian population as their object. They were part of a modern rethinking of society and the social in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that tended to cut across both national and political boundaries” (Social Bodies 8).
on the other? This is just one of the analytical pitfalls of Italian anti-racism that I propose we begin to undo.