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**Political Power and Religious Otherness in the Fascist Era
The Polemic about the Connections between Judaism and Modernist Art and the
Instrumental Use of the Nazi Iconography against “Degenerate Art”**

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The aim of this research is to examine anti-Semitic themes during the fascist era in relation to the condemnation of Modernism intended as the result of the negative Jewish influence on cultural life. The paper discusses the reconstruction of the instrumental use of the Nazi iconography against degenerate art in journals sponsored by the fascist regime: *Il Tevere*, *Quadrivio*, *La Difesa della razza*. In 1936 the equivalence between modernism in art and “judaization” became explicit and definitive: rationalism, surrealism, abstractionism, metaphysics and magical realism are Jewish creations. One can immediately see the perspective and imitation of what was happening in Nazi Germany at the origin of the anti-Semitic campaign in Interlandi’s periodicals: fascist intransigence seized the opportunity to import the German model, which thus became its touchstone. In the pages of the journals are to be found illustrations taken from Wolfgang Willrich’s tome (*Säuberung des Kunsttempels*), from Paul Schulze Naumburg’s *Kunst und Rasse* and from the catalogue for the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition. These books not only made a theoretical contribution, but they also defined an iconography of the monstrous and degenerate in modern art. The most hardened contributors to Telesio Interlandi’s periodicals drew on this repertoire of images, publishing them exactly as they were found in the books. It is interesting to note how the same monstrosity that the regime had adopted to represent the deformed inferiority of the impure races is found in the expressions of anti-fascist dissidence. In particular, it is found in the representation of the nude as an object of violence, chosen to testify in an iconographic sense to the abuses of despotic power during the tragic years of the war.

Keywords: Fascism, Degenerate art, anti-Semitism, modernism, race

This article explores the fascist condemnation of modernism in the visual arts, interpreted by the regime as the fruit of negative Jewish influence, with special attention to illustrations of German “degenerate art” in the Italian periodicals edited by the journalist Telesio Interlandi: *Il Tevere* (1924–1943), *Quadrivio* (1933–1943) and *La Difesa della razza* (1938–1943). The anti-Semitic campaign found its strongest and most hard-line expression in these three magazines, especially in the culture section. A group of experienced writers formed in the first two journals – *Il Tevere* and *Quadrivio* – went on to contribute to *La Difesa della Razza* when it was founded in 1938 (fig.1).¹ A decidedly anti-Europeanist and anti-modernist attitude was already developing at the end of 1933 in certain cultural circles that were closely tied to the fascist party; an aversion that merged with the anti-Jewish struggle after the promulgation of the Italian racial laws in 1938.

In Italy anti-Semitism became the official doctrine of the fascist regime with the implementation of the discriminatory laws. The adoption of this set of rules was experienced by Jews as a grievous historical rift.² Before fascism, the history of Italian Judaism had been marked by increasing integration, in part demonstrated by the particularly high number of mixed marriages. Liberal Italy had not known public expressions of anti-Semitic intolerance of the kind that had been happening in France and Germany during the same period, and Jews in Italy

did not struggle with preserving their traditions, culture and rituals. Although there were episodes of intolerance towards Jews, they lacked the force needed to become a political movement. The historian Renzo De Felice, who wrote the first fundamental book on Jews during the fascist dictatorship, wrote of the sensational failure of Mussolini's attempts to give the Italians a "racial consciousness", due to the high degree of integration achieved by Italian Jews starting in the first decades of the century and the low incidence of anti-Semitism, even before it was rejected in connection with the Holocaust.³ The path of Italian Judaism towards full equality was therefore abruptly interrupted by fascism. Anti-Semitic polemics, which remained weak during the first ten years of the regime, began to heat up in 1933, concurrent with Hitler's rise to power in Germany. The decision to introduce anti-Jewish legislation developed between the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936 and the process for formulating the new persecutory rules was lengthy and complex.⁴ In 1936, the anti-Semitic current within the fascist party, led by Roberto Farinacci, was already strong enough to spark a press campaign, mixing political elements (the anti-Jewish conspiracy) and references that touched upon the anti-Jewish religious sensibility.⁵ Fascist anti-Semitic ideology was in some ways indebted to Catholic anti-Semitism, which was tied to old models of traditional theological anti-Semitism, from the anti-Christian Jew to the Masonic Jew and the anti-national, Bolshevik Jew.⁶ Prejudice against Jews in the Italian political and cultural tradition was in fact essentially Catholic in origin. However, the fascist-era change of major importance in both the history of Italian anti-Semitism and the institutional, legal and social history of Italy itself was the fact that the persecutory rules defined its victims not as persons with determinant religious or cultural features or a particular identity, but rather as belonging to the Jewish race, which is to say carriers of immutable, material hereditary features.⁷ Fascism thus struck a blow to the element that was perhaps the most characteristic of liberal modernity: the equality of all individuals regardless of religious persuasion.



1 Cover of the first issue of *La Difesa della razza*, 5 August 1938

The definition of a Jew, or better of an individual belonging to the Jewish race, introduced by the regime was rooted in a racist biological framework: the Jew was a carrier of innate hereditary features *because* he was of the Jewish race. The historian Emilio Gentile's work helped to insert the analysis of fascist racism within the far broader totalitarian project of constructing the "new man".⁸ Gentile identified the stages of the anthropological fascist revolution as the campaigns for the reform of customs and ways, the anti-bourgeois polemics and, most importantly, the adoption of racism and anti-Semitism as State ideology. The exclusion of Jews from the national community in 1938 is explained not so much in terms of racist and anti-Semitic roots in the genetic code of fascism as in terms of the logic of the ideology that aimed to shape the "new fascist man", and the Jew was the designated enemy of this project.⁹

The activity of the journalist Telesio Interlandi was critical for the campaign against the Jews and the spread of racist ideas as expressed through the periodicals he edited: *Il Tevere*, *Quadrivio* and *La Difesa della razza*. The first attacks were published in early 1934 in the daily *Il Tevere*, a newspaper focused on culture and tradition that became a polemical mouthpiece for a form of aggressive fascism.¹⁰ Interlandi's anti-Semitism had Catholic roots and soon joined with an extremist racist vision. *Il Tevere*, which was among other things a prominent source of colonial and anti-Semitic racist imagery, became an organ for a racist vision at least starting with the Italo-Ethiopian War. Since Italians were repulsed by the theme of racism, *Il Tevere* fell back on anti-Zionism, which was easier for Italians to condemn and embrace, thus laying the foundations for anti-Semitism.¹¹ The choir of voices debating the Jewish question necessarily included, besides the mixing of the anti-Jewish tradition of Italian Catholicism with the new fascist racism, authentically Catholic contributions. A range of anti-Judaic Catholic positions emerged: in addition to those deriving predominantly from Church tradition, which stressed the priority of the privileges acquired with the Lateran Pacts of 1929, there were others steeped in racist influence, represented in their most complete expression by the "clerico-fascists". The issue of the Church's position towards anti-Semitic racism during the fascist period is extremely complicated. The most recent research has shown that the Italian Church and the Holy See itself were soft in their reaction to fascism's racist provisions for pressing tactical reasons.¹²

Gino Sottocchia, the architect of clerico-fascism, was a frequent contributor to *Il Tevere* and *Quadrivio*, and, later, *La Difesa della razza*. Radically anti-Jewish, he waged a harsh attack maintaining that Judaism was principally anti-Christian and anti-Catholic and arguing against the positions of the Church regarding the possibility of conversion changing the nature of the Jews, asserting instead that since founded on race, it was destined to remain such.¹³ The Catholic racism advanced by Sottocchia defended both the features and the spiritual faculties of the Italian race. He stressed his adherence to a "typically Italian, fascist, our" racism, understood as a tool for protecting and valorising the "traditional spirit of the Italian race."¹⁴

The concept of Italian character appeared extremely complex, deeply nuanced and flexible, and contributed to the construction of a highly effective, wide-ranging cultural system. The theme of the "Italian character" of fascist culture is in fact linked to Telesio Interlandi's campaign against modern and Europeanist art, which began to coincide with the anti-Jewish struggle starting in the mid-1930s. In the context of art, Italian character had acquired a purely stylistic meaning and claimed the need for continuity with the Italian painting tradition, even while accepting total openness to foreign art. The most open positions predominated, particularly those of the Italian minister of education Giuseppe Bottai and Cipriano Efisio Oppo, a central figure in the organisation of Italian artistic life.¹⁵ Both valorised all new trends against the iron traditionalism of some of the fascist party leaders, embracing the utopian, avant-garde and modernist nature of fascism, which aimed to identify itself with different but non-conflicting artistic movements. Stimulus towards a modernist ideology and the granting of expressive freedom constituted, at least in terms of style, opportunities for national and international artistic development, thus stirring up broad support among artists. Activist modernity in fact met Mussolini's need to give Italy a new image, one of a dynamic, progressive country. At first, the attacks against the xenophilic relationships of Italian artists were limited to the most reactionary and conservative fringes of fascism, but then they gained strength in the context of cultural production, first with the autarchic turn of the regime in connection with the birth of the empire and later with the promulgation of the racial laws.

Once the Jew was equated with the intellectual and with the internationalist and Europeanist par excellence, the anti-Jewish struggle merged with the celebration of the regime's identity and the battle for the construction of a "new man": the Jew became the negative stereotype of the myth of Italian character. The periodicals edited by Interlandi, *Il Tevere* and *Quadrivio*, supported anti-modernist aversion, but this position did not become dominant until after 1933. However, in an article published in *Il Tevere* in 1926, Interlandi was already speaking of a return to classicism and the need to move in the direction of an Italian language free from foreignisms.¹⁶ In 1933, Giuseppe Pensabene, one of the most energetic voices of fascist anti-Semitism, wrote in *Quadrivio* that he was "against all surrealisms, suprematisms, rationalisms, twentieth-centuryisms, against all of this stuff that peels off the

conscience like bark; by now we are feeling irremediably desiccated” and he spoke of “indigestion from elements foreign to our nature” (in reference to the visual arts) and a “slow intoxication that is already starting to make us feel uncomfortable” and the “negative influence of European currents”.¹⁷ The equivalence between artistic Europeanism and Hebraization became increasingly explicit and then final starting in 1935. In December of that year, Pensabene wrote in *Quadrivio* of his disappointment with painters “lacking in skill and humanity who seem to have no other guide for their work than Parisian Jewish dealers”.¹⁸ And it became fully explicit a few months later in an article entitled “L’Europeismo e i giovani” (“Europeanism and young people”), in which Pensabene declared that “rationalism, surrealism, metaphysical art and magical realism are Jewish creations”.¹⁹ What had been defined up until then as Europeanist art could now be openly called Jewish, since it was developed by Jews and in Jewish circles, in the capitals of the countries where the influence of that population was strongest. The accusation of internationalism was central to Pensabene’s anti-Semitic discourse. He held that the Jews wanted to impose their way of feeling, starting with art, being considered “the easiest and most sure-fire tool”. He accused the Jews of having created a form of art that was described as Europeanist but that should have been called Jewish, “having been developed by Jews and in Jewish circles in the capitals of countries where the influence of that population was strongest and where the new plan could more easily take root due to the waning of traditional creative energies”. In the cited article, he attempted to explain the origins of the germ of intellectualism in art that was capable of “destroying the naturalness of the roots”, a germ that spawned “a monstrous inversion of the beautiful into the ugly and the sane into the insane”. Pensabene added that “Hitler had made a political issue of the elimination of the Jewish art that had for some time given the impression of blending with Germanic art”.²⁰ In fact, one can immediately see the perspective and imitation of what was happening in Nazi Germany at the origin of the anti-Semitic campaign in Interlandi’s periodicals: fascist intransigence seized the opportunity to import the German model, which thus became its touchstone.

The concrete danger of the Hebraization of Italian culture and the analogy between internationalism and Jewish pollution were definitively decreed by Interlandi in an editorial published in *Il Tevere* in July 1938. Here, he wrote that the extraneousness of the Jews to the Italian race, ruled in the Manifesto of 14 July that same year, needed to be explicitly interpreted not only in biological terms but also from the cultural perspective: “the scandalous affirmations of an art lacking in national features – music, painting, architecture – are the poisonous fruit of the Jewish influence on Italian intellectual life”.²¹

The attack on modernism in the periodicals discussed here was closely linked to the concept of “degeneration”, as developed in the heart of the Nazi regime. Degeneration was understood to be an inverse process of evolution, and so regression to the state of primitive man and his pre-human ancestors. According to Hitler, the plan for restoration needed to include centralisation of control over all aspects of cultural and intellectual life. National Socialist policy was intent on destroying everything that had developed on the German modern art scene before 1933: all avant-garde art was accused of being degenerate. The term degeneration was drawn from psychiatry, understood in the middle of the nineteenth century as a pathogenetic element of mental illness and criminality.²² The first critical study of contemporary art and its immediate predecessors to use the tools of psychopathology was Max Nordau’s *Entartung (Degeneration)*, published in 1892.²³ For Nordau, cases of degeneration coincided with forms of mysticism and egotism, and he hence included the Pre-Raphaelites and Symbolists among the degenerate artists. In 1928, following in Nordau’s footsteps, the German architect Paul Schulze Naumburg wrote *Kunst und Rasse*, concentrating his attention on identifying degenerate elements in contemporary art.²⁴ With a disparaging tone, he harshly attacked the artists of the historical avant-gardes, and in particular the German Expressionists. His study was rooted in a need to find real-world correspondents for the subjects represented by the artists, which, the author emphasised, could not be found among “healthy people” but rather in psychiatric clinics, hospitals for cripples, leprosy wards and the most depraved hiding places. Contemporary art was considered anti-educational because it did not follow the traditional canon of classical beauty. The choice to illustrate the text pairing modern art with images of patients with clear physical marks and signs of psychopathology is of interest, among other things, from the perspective of effective communication. Drawings made by the mentally ill were also published with scandalous

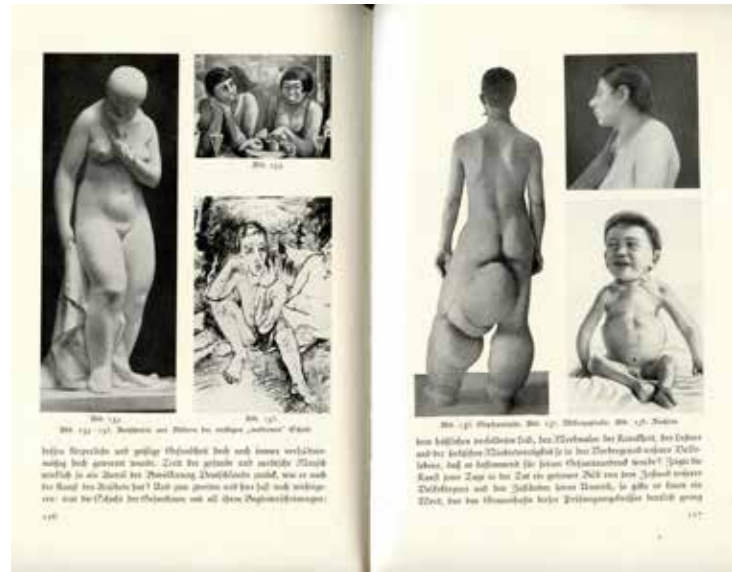
and denigrating captions alongside works by German expressionists, condemning the art of the insane, which the artists of the avant-gardes had been drawn to out of fresh interest in the sensitivity to formal regression.²⁵ This is a rich visual repertory that we shall return to below in relation to the slavish re-use of these images in the fascist press.

In 1937, the exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) opened at the Archaeology Institute of Munich, an important event that put the spectacle of degeneration in the spotlight: "All around us, you can see the monstrous progeny of sickness, impudence, ineptitude and pure degeneration."²⁶ This exhibition inspires horror and disgust in all of us", Adolf Ziegler, head of the Department of Visual Arts remarked at the opening.²⁷ All of the most innovative artists of the time – but also those from previous generations, many of whom had been dead for years – were banned by the regime, and soon 16,000 works of art were removed from Germany's museums. In his inaugural speech, Hitler spoke of prehistoric barbarians, "art-stutterers" and "primitive international scratching".²⁸ One of the members of the committee of experts formed to organise the exhibition was Wolfgang Willrich, one of the most important ideologues of the totalitarian defence and author of the volume *Säuberung des Kunsttempels* (Cleansing the Temple of Art), published in 1937.²⁹ Willrich considered artistic creation to be an effective tool for defining the pure German race, since art, as he wrote, "is better than words for circulating and imprinting the idea of race that aims to establish the nobility of the German population, acting as a guide for the population itself".³⁰ Only classical art was considered of value, and it was deemed necessary to remove all works held to be degenerate from German museums. German Expressionists were singled out in particular because they were powerfully drawn to the myth of the primitive and the savage. The ideal of formal perfection promoted by Nazi ideology, the fullest expression of which being Aryan heroes sculpted in stone or bronze, was opposed to the anti-model, the body with negative qualities and disproportionate, inharmonious features, an ugliness that corresponded to both physical and mental discomfort. Modernity, seen as disorganized and lacking in self-control, was equated with evil, and in many cases equated with Jewish Bolshevism.

These publications, from Wolfgang Willrich's tome to Paul Schulze Naumburg's *Kunst und Rasse* and the catalogue for the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, therefore not only made a theoretical contribution: they also defined an iconography of the monstrous and degenerate in modern art. The most hardened contributors to Telesio Interlandi's periodicals drew on this repertoire of images, publishing them exactly as they were found in the books. The reference to the monstrous and the degenerate is constant and found its most complete expression in *La Difesa della Razza*. We shall now take a close look at a selection of articles that develop the concept of degeneration in art within the fascist context, emphasising the equation of modernism and anti-Semitism.

In 1937, Giuseppe Pensabene published an article in *Quadrivio* with the title "La tradizione moderna nella pittura e nella scultura" (the modern tradition in painting and sculpture). Here, he argued that modernism in art was politically based, since "deformation", powerfully opposed to "the spirit of the nations", aimed to eliminate the meaning of race. He wrote that this was carefully calculated propaganda with "the goal of bastardising and definitively destroying Europe. Squint-eyed people, cripples, people with rickets and handicapped people of every kind are the themes of modernism".³¹ The text is accompanied by a reproduction of a lithograph from Oscar Kokoschka's series illustrating Bach's cantatas (1914) paired with an image of a person with rickets (fig. 2). On the following page, there is a reproduction of Amedeo Modigliani's *Portrait of a Young Woman* (1918) paired with a photograph of a paralytic (fig. 3). The images were drawn from *Kunst und Rasse* and presented in exactly the same order, the aim being to make the resemblance between the work of art and images of sick people immediately clear (fig. 4). In Paul Schulze Naumburg's volume, Modigliani's painting is shown with works by Heckel, Nolde and Kirchner. It is significant that Pensabene chose to use the work by the Italian artist, seen to have suffered modernist influence, sacrificing himself for internationalisation and betraying the Italian tradition.

References to the degenerate imagery published in the German catalogues are found most of all in *La Difesa della Razza*, where interest was concentrated in particular on the anti-Semitic attack and Jewish artists. Continuing in chronological order, the next article that we shall examine is Francesco Scardoni's "L'ombra giudaica sulla Francia", published in September 1938.³² In this piece, the writer emphasised the difficulties plaguing



4 From SCHULZE-NAMBURG, 1928, pp. 116-117

2 *Quadrivio*, n. 38, 18 July 1937, p. 1



3 *Quadrivio*, n. 38, 18 July 1937, p. 7



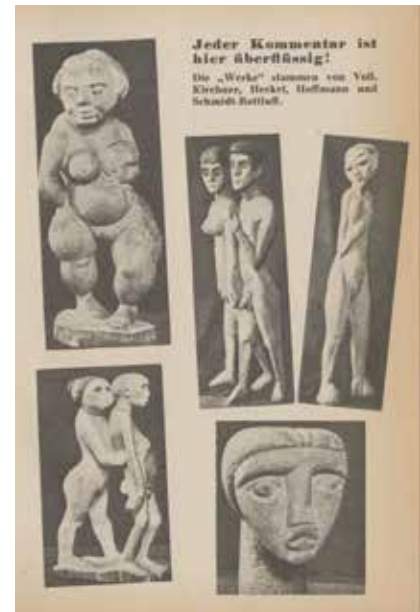
5 From KAISER, 1937, p. 25



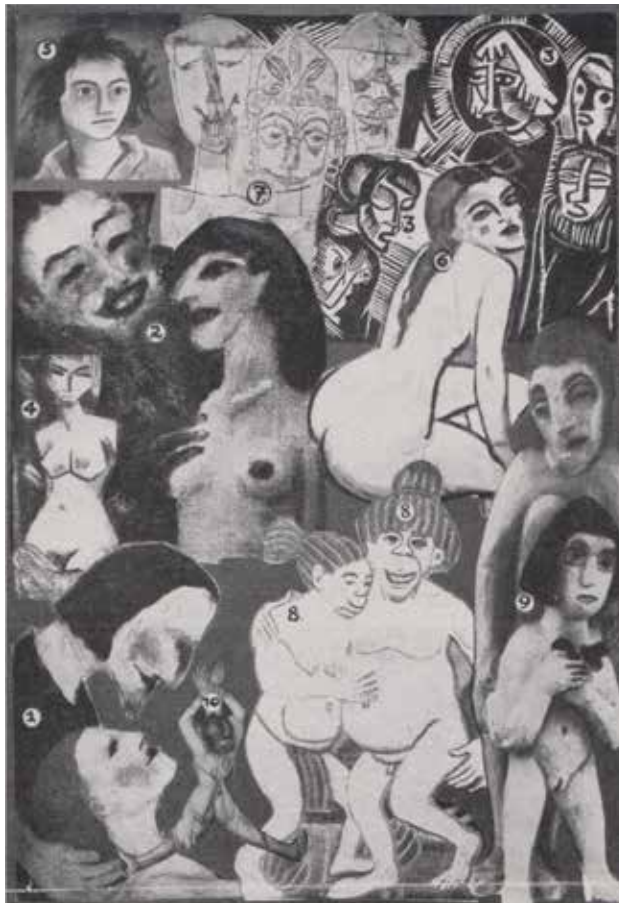
6 *La Difesa della razza*, n. 3, 5 September 1938, p. 34



8 *La Difesa della Razza*, 24, 1939



9 From KAISER, 1937, p. 19.



7 Collage of works by German expressionists, from: WILLRICH, 1937



10 Mario Mafai, *Fantasia*, 1943 (public domain)

Parisian life, given that the French capital was the centre of international Hebraism. Scardoni's condemnation primarily targeted the unscrupulous business dealings of the Jews and, with reference to the art world, emphasised Jewish meddling in all the galleries and the sale of paintings. The same followed for film, theatre and publishing. "Judaism [...] insinuates itself more deeply into the blood of the French population with every passing day", Scardoni wrote, "like a slow, incurable syphilis. All the country's most vital cities [...] are in the hands of the Jews. The French breath is Jewish breath"³³. In addition to a few caricatures, the article is illustrated with four images drawn from the catalogue for the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition (fig. 5), maintaining the same pairings, designed to highlight the presumed resemblance: Paul Klee's *The Saint of the Inner Light* (1921), paired with a portrait made by a schizophrenic in a mental hospital, and a sculpture by the "Jewish Hoffman", as described in the caption, with a head sculpted by an "incurable madman" in a clinic in Heidelberg (fig. 6). The idea of the Jewish threat infiltrating France was therefore conjured by the work of Jewish artists, considered responsible for the spread of modernism throughout Europe. The direct reference was to the German catalogue, in which the captions describe the work by Paul Klee and the sculpture by Hoffman as "terrible monsters".

Giuseppe Pensabene published "Arte nostra e deformazione ebraica" (Our Art and Jewish Deformation) one month later, in October 1938.³⁴ At the centre of his attack was the opposition of subjective art and realist art, the latter considered more usable and accessible to the general public. The forms condemned as subjective painting included Post-Impressionism and Expressionism, the latter style described by Pensabene as one in which "sentiment transforms into deformation". The drive towards deformation was intensified by the participation of Jews in artistic life, Jews who had contributed to degeneration, as demonstrated by the work of Chagall, Matisse and Picasso. As for Italy, Carlo Carrà (a detail of his *Dioscuri* was published in *Kunst und Rasse*) was identified as the greatest exponent of "deformed" painting, followed by the artists who revolved around the Galleria della Cometa and "Carlo Levi's group". The examples of "deformed" art chosen to illustrate the article were two works by German-Jewish artists drawn from the *Entartete Kunst* catalogue and *Sauberung des Kunsttempels*, respectively. The first was Otto Dix's *War Cripples* (1920), which was described in the caption as "a Jewish interpretation of heroism: a group of cripples portrayed by the Jew Otto Dix". The second, a collage of works by German Expressionist artists, was described by Wirlich as "Bolshevik works that destroy feeling" and labelled in *La Difesa della Razza* as "works by German-Jewish and Hebraized painters" (fig. 7). Pensabene's interest in both cases was to emphasise and highlight the Jewish origin of the artists. Just as Nazi slogans were used in the German catalogue to describe the works and dictate the meaning of the images towards interpreting the texts, the anti-Semitic attack was emphasised above all in the captions in *La Difesa della Razza*.

A rich selection of images from *Entartete Kunst* was used to illustrate an article published by Domenico Paolella in January 1939 with the title "Espressioni rappresentative. Di selvaggi. Di dementi. Di ebrei" (Representative expressions. Of savages. Of madmen. Of Jews) (fig. 8). They were reprinted as a block, following the same pairings of sculptures by Kirchner, Heckel, Hoffmann and Schmidt-Rottluf, all considered important examples of "internationalist Jewish art, with works by "madmen", also from the catalogue, and statuettes sculpted by Black artists (fig. 9). In the text, Paolella attempted to explain the reasons for the deformed nature of the works by savages, "flattened figures, as if they were born and raised in an oppressive atmosphere". He traced it to a monstrosity that derived from the need to atone for and free oneself from tormenting original sin, implicating Freudian psychoanalysis and the parricide linked to the Oedipus complex.³⁵ He also emphasised the correspondence with the deformed nature of the works by the insane, which demonstrated their mental imbalance. Similarly, a "deforming nature" dominates the Jewish works categorised as pseudo-artistic, since, the author claimed, the Jew felt a need to free himself from his inner torment, leading to the formulation of expressions so pessimistic that they were toxic and highly dangerous for the other races. He concluded with a call for rebellion against the Jewish race, which was trying to corrupt all of humanity by imposing inclinations that were not their own.

The terms "monstrosity" and "bestial" were heavily used in Interlandi's periodicals, with explicit reference to the German concept of degenerate art even in the absence of illustrations. One example is an article pub-

lished by Pensabene in the January 1937 issue of *Quadrivio*, which is of particular significance for repeating the concepts found in Paul Schulze Naumburg's text. The author argued that the danger presented by monstrosity in modernist paintings would sooner or later become reality and that the "monstrous, sinister figures with deformed arms" would step out of the pictures and walk through the streets. "Eight years ago, the art at the Barcelona exposition sent an audience of imbeciles into raptures", he wrote, "Today, having come out of the paintings and become flesh-and-blood brutes, they are shooting those same imbeciles by the thousands". Pensabene was harshly critical of fascist intellectuals, considered guilty of having created in Rome a centre for nationalising and internationalist propaganda in the art world. He accused them of misleading the young, who would grow accustomed to tolerating the *foetus Judaicus* to the point of destroying their love of beauty.³⁶

The management of the Venice Biennale also came under attack. In an article published by Pensabene in the December 1937 issue of *Quadrivio*, he protested the decision to commission the Jewish artist Cagli to create the large fresco for the Hall of Honour at the 1938 Biennale,³⁷ due to the risk that the Italian pavilion would appear to have been conquered by international Hebraism. His target was what he called the "system of trends": "With the criteria of trends, there is no craftsmanship [...] Everyone invents their own every day." He complained that the phenomenon could concern the Biennale, which, being an expression of the fascist state, should be by definition immune to "trends" and serve as the defence of national values pride of place, as an inviolable fact. The following year, he published an article with the title "Alla XXI Biennale di Venezia. Inghilterra, Danimarca e Olanda" (At the 21st Venice Biennale. England, Denmark and the Netherlands) in *Il Tevere*.³⁸ The article was illustrated with an image of the Jewish artist Jacob Epstein in front of his sculpture *Genesis*, which was described, ironically, as a "beautiful monster" to mock the painter and art critic Cipriano Efisio Oppo, who had described the English sculptor's space at the Biennale as a "beautiful exhibition". *Genesis* and the sculpture *Adam* were also used to illustrate an article in *La Difesa della Razza* in 1939, which also spoke of internationalisation as a Jewish term for modern art, an example of deformation and "monstrosity".³⁹

What was described as the worst example of modernised and Hebraised "deformation", condemned in anti-Semitic attacks in *La Difesa della Razza*, soon became the dominant style for expressing condemnation of the violence of the regime. The violence perpetrated following the Nazi invasion after 8 September 1943 became the subject of denunciation and explicit revolt against the horrors of the dictatorship. Profound anti-fascism is found in painting and sculpture in the distorted representation of the self, deriving not from being abject but from the atrocity of the subjection and violence. The iconography of the consumed tormented body reverberated, a carnality expressed with anti-hedonistic objectivity that in some cases approached the monstrous and grotesque. From the iconographic perspective, we find special attention to the representation of the nude body, chosen to document the abuses of despotic power during the tragic years of the war. An important example is Renato Guttuso's series *Gott mit Uns* (published in 1945),⁴⁰ dramatic but accurate depictions of Nazi-fascist war crimes, some works of which were on view the year before in the exhibition *Arte contro la barbarie. Artisti romani contro l'oppressione nazifascista* (Art against barbarism. Roman artists against Nazi-fascist oppression).⁴¹ For these images, Guttuso's reference was the series of inhuman nude bathers by Fausto Pirandello that depicted, without recourse to rhetoric, a distressing human condition using imagery entirely detached from the classical tradition revived by Cézanne and Renoir.⁴² The unnatural agitation of the deformed bodies became a symbol of profound anti-fascism. Mario Mafai's *Le Fantasie* (1939-1944) are also filled with nude bodies contorted like figures in Dante's *Inferno* and were an explicit manifesto against what was by this point a sadistic regime (fig. 10).⁴³ The artist displayed these works in 1944 at the above-cited *Arte contro la barbarie* exhibition alongside works like Mirko Basaldella's sculpture *Prigione* (1940), the deformation of the distorted, flattened body amplified through contrast with the model of classical statuary deliberately referenced by the title. The need to represent a carnal, physical reality, often with an openly anti-fascist political intention, had already been felt in the Roman School and Milan circles after the regime's autarchic and anti-Semitic turn and expressed in the new realism championed by the magazine *Corrente*: from Ferruccio Ferrazzi's apocalyptic scenes to Albert Ziveri's nudes and Guttuso's tortured bodies in *La Fuga dell'Etna* (Escape from Etna, 1939).

The modernism condemned by the regime as a form of art created from nothing, anti-evolutionary and an enemy of tradition became the most effective tool for condemning fascism through the “deformation” of bodies: Deformation not in the sense of degeneration and regression to a “primitive” stage, as theorised by Nazi culture, but rather as condemnation of violence as the very worst form of human regression.

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- 1 For a detailed history of the periodical, see: F. CASSATA, *“La Difesa della Razza”. Politica, ideologia e immagine del razzismo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2018; M. LORÉ, *Antisemitismo e razzismo ne “La difesa della razza” (1938-1943)*, Catanzaro, Rubettino, 2008; A. LEONETTI, *Oltre la “La difesa della razza”. L’editoria razzista e antisemita in Italia (1938-1945)*, Milan, EDITIO – Nuove ricerche sull’editoria contemporanea, 2019.
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 - 11 COLLOTTI, *op. cit.*, 2003 p. 52.
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**Politička moć i "religijska Drugost" u vrijeme fašizma
Rasprava o vezi između judaizma, moderne umjetnosti i nacističke ikonografije
protiv tzv. Degenerativne umjetnosti**

Cilj ovoga rada je ispitati antisemitske teme u doba fašizma u odnosu na osudu modernizma viđenog kao rezultat negativnog židovskog utjecaja na kulturni život. U radu se govori o rekonstrukciji nacističke ikonografije protiv degenerirane umjetnosti u časopisima koje je sponzorirao fašistički režim: *Il Tevere*, *Quadrivio* i *La Difesa della razza*. Godine 1936. jednakost između modernizma u umjetnosti i "judaizacije" postaje eksplicitna i definitivna: racionalizam, nadrealizam, apstrakcija, metafizika i magični realizam su židovske kreacije. U Interlandijevoj periodici lako se može prepoznati perspektiva i imitacija onoga što se događalo u nacističkoj Njemačkoj u počecima antisemitske kampanje: fašistička nepopustljivost iskoristila je priliku da uveze njemački model, koji je tako postao njegov kamen temeljac. Na stranicama časopisa nalaze se ilustracije preuzete iz djela Wolfganga Willricha (*Säuberung des Kunsttempels*) i Paula Schulzea Naumburga (*Kunst und Rasse*) te iz kataloga izložbe Entartete Kunst. Ovi radovi nisu dali samo teorijski doprinos, već su definirali ikonografiju monstruoznog i degeneriranog u modernoj umjetnosti. Najrevniji suradnici u časopisima Telesia Interlandija oslanjali su se na ovaj repertoar slika, objavljujući ih točno onakvima kakve su bile u knjigama. Zanimljivo je primijetiti kako se ista nakaznost koju je režim usvojio da predstavlja deformiranu inferiornost nečistih rasa nalazi u izrazima antifašističkog neslaganja. Osobito u prikazu akta kao predmeta nasilja, odabranog da u ikonografskom smislu svjedoči o zlouporabama despotske vlasti tijekom tragičnih ratnih godina.

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