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L'ITALIA METICCIA
BEING AND BELONGING IN THE BLACK MEDITERRANEAN

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS
with an emphasis in
FEMINIST STUDIES and LITERATURE

by

Samantha Ayana Smythe

September 2017

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Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

L'ITALIA METICCIA

BEING AND BELONGING IN THE BLACK MEDITERRANEAN

SA SMYTHE

In *L'Italia Meticcia: Being and Belonging in the Black Mediterranean*, I examine the oft marginalized corpus that includes migration, postcolonial East African and Black Italian writings to affirm ontologies of blackness in the wake of widespread dispossession of Black and migrant livelihood in Italy. I examine literary, historical, and geographical sites to generate multiple approaches useful to the broad mandate of Black Studies including grappling with the dialectical conceits of citizenship and nonbelonging. I respond critically to proliferating scholarship on postcolonial and Black Europe as well as concerns with the variegated movements of peoples, cultures, and ethnoracial categories. This dissertation is informed by the turn to creolization in Caribbean Studies, the turn towards mixed identities and hybridity in Queer and Postcolonial Studies, the incisive attention to history in Black Studies, and the postcolonial turn in Italian Studies. Throughout the dissertation, I offer close readings of texts within the categories of migration and postcolonial literature written in Italian by writers of African descent or origin. These readings focus on representations of blackness, femininity, and mobility in 20th and 21st century Italophone literature.

“Where Blackness Meets the Sea” introduces the terms and stakes of my intervention, which are further discussed in the following chapter, “Black Italianità.” Together, these chapters examine the legal, literary, and historiographical aporias in the common narration of Italy’s history in relation to its Mediterranean identity and its African colonies. In Chapter Two, I analyze a story by Igiaba Scego, an Italian writer of East African descent, with an analysis of how regimes of race and gender from the periods of Italian unification and colonialism are reflected in the present. I offer an analysis of the lived experience of belonging to or “feeling Italian” versus “feeling Somali” or Black. I contextualize this reading a discussion of current citizenship laws and the differing implications within Italian imperialism of discourses of “outsiderness” as they intersect with the phenomena of Italian migration.

In “Scenes of *Meticciato*,” I proffer a theory of *meticciato*, a term roughly translated as “mixed,” and one whose nuance and complexity I explore in relation to particular fascist and colonial configurations in the Italian legal and historical contexts. I analyze *meticciato* as a narrative framework, as a legally-codified historico-biological category, and as a contemporary cultural experience. Reading the works of Italian women writers of East African descent, I attend to discourses on mixed racial and religious identities and argue that the syncretic sphere of the Mediterranean undermines the construction of whiteness as the assumed requirement to citizenship and cultural belonging in Italy, and thus, in Europe.

“New Representation Regimes” discusses the potential for radical futurity in postcolonial and Black Italian literature. I discuss the collectively and often anonymously written literature known as “New Italian Epic” to consider the regulation of queerness, Blackness, and collective identity as constitutive components of the polyvalent *meticciato* that comprises and reconfigures the Mediterranean. By complicating an analysis of the literary production of marginalized writers in Italy with keen attention to the intersections of gender, race, sexuality, class, history, and geography, this dissertation contributes to a thriving and urgent conversation around postcolonial Italian literary criticism and concerns about Italian sociopolitics and citizenship taking places in different fields, ranging from Italian studies, comparative literature, migration studies, Mediterranean studies, queer and gender studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies.

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I arrived in the History of Consciousness Department when it was in one of its many transitional phases. That was one of the most beautiful things about such a unique department, and it was also be one of the most disorienting. I managed to pull together a group of kin across intellectual generations, methods, and political investments, to whom I'll always be grateful. I'd like to thank Cindy Rose Bello, Martha Kenney, Nick Mitchell, and Eric Stanley, some of the HistCon "old guard" who helped me early on with navigating an otherwise alienating and demoralizing experience. Susy

Zepeda and the Women of Color in Collaboration and Conflict cluster contributed to so much of my healing and helped me tap into my tree hugging brujería that still grounds me today, if I let it. Nick Mitchell showed up for me at the beginning and very end stages of this process and I owe a great deal to them for helping me keep my wits and humor about me. I had a fierce maternal and sisterly protector in Anne Spalliero. The department did not deserve her and I wouldn't be getting a degree with the department's name affixed to it if not for her unwavering faith and support. I thank her for the unbridled enthusiasm, friendship, and tenderness around the koi fish pond. I thank Christopher Chitty for surviving until he couldn't any longer. He's not be here to see this work to come to fruition, but his ferocity of spirit, infectious laughter, and deep intellect have touched these pages.

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This work is about the connected experience of dispossession and Black resistance and memory. As such I must acknowledge the life and presence of Khadija Saye and her art, through which she survives. To all the ones we've lost too soon at Grenfell and the numerous other

catastrophes instigated by white supremacy and disregard for certain human lives: we will never forget and we will continue to demand justice by any means necessary. My father has never had the opportunity to read my work. My mother may yet get the chance, if she chooses. Regardless, they shared an unyielding support of my intellect throughout my childhood. I am so grateful for the countless hours they worked serving others to provide me with an education and the transnational community they propelled me into that helped raise me between Jamaica, Costa Rica, Britain, and the US. Thanks to my godmother, siblings, countless aunts, "aunts," and uncles. It took more than a village, and it is still taking one that they gave me the tools to expand. Thank you to my sweet Collins boys: Malachi, Brandon, Mathias, and Liam. The future is yours and I hope it remains bright and capable of holding how free you are. Lastly, thanks to Dom Holdaway for the support, especially through these past 525,600 minutes. I appreciate your attention to my writing, your friendship, and the constant one-directional optimism (as much as I tried to resist it) and to Winslow, the best of felines and best of companions, with me from the first words to the last ones, whenever they may come.

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DEDICATION

What would this endeavor be without shoulders to set it on,

ears to whisper inside, interlaced fingers in which to place it?

To the ones who guided and pushed me for answers.

To the radicals, the dancers, doting darlings, inferiority complex

rejecters—strutting, trash-talking, glorious.

To victims & survivors of racialized, antiblack, & gender-based violence.

To capacious Black Italians, who continue to struggle for freedom, self-expression, and beauty.

To the ancestors, the indigenous, the refugees, the criminal mess-makers,

the healers, cooks, and queers, all of us making and unmaking ourselves,

hurrying forwards, towards who we'll become:

free in time but not from it,

typing time constraints—to locked rooms and long nights—

here in the diaspora the living make and unmake together.

Look alive, and look quickly:

No borders will ever hold back the tide,

No dedication will ever be as adequate,

No word will ever be as full of life as this world.

— ONE —

WHERE BLACKNESS MEETS THE SEA

The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hints of earlier and other creation
— TS Eliot, "Dry Salvages"

È davvero giunto il tempo in cui, ad un livello più generale
e non solo storiografico, gli italiani conoscano e ammettano
questa storia passata non trincerandosi dietro amnesie, rimozioni,
esotismi o addirittura tardive e fuori luogo rivendicazioni.[1]
—Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare*

Let us set the scene with the sea. On 26 January 2017, footage surfaced of 22-year-old Gambian national, Pateh Sabally, thrashing forcefully in the middle of the renowned Grand Canal in the most serene city of Venice.[2] Hundreds of onlookers were caught on film, jeering, gawking, waiting for the spectacle's dénouement. Some of them laughed. At least one shouted, "*Africa! Africa, oh!*" as Sabally's torso slowly disappeared under the canal's surface, the water up to his neck and his arms shot straight up, nothing visible below the elbows. "*Butta il salvaggente!*" demanded another, as a boat full of people, mainly tourists, bobbed gently—almost purposefully by—mere meters from Sabally's body, which dipped and resurfaced with increasing infrequency. The onlookers looked on. "*Butta il*

[1] Indeed, the time has come in which, at a level more general than that of historiography, Italians must learn and avow the history of their [colonial] past without entrenching themselves within amnesias, repressions, exoticisms or, what is worse, behind the belated and inapt reclamations. Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare*, 474. NB: Translations from Italian and French into English are mine throughout this dissertation, unless otherwise indicated.

[2] "La Serenissima" is the present-day nickname for Venice, which was named the "Most Serene Republic of Venice" when it was a sovereign state for a millennium before Italian Unification.

salvaggente…butta il salvaggente!" the disembodied voice, possibly the cameraman's, demanded again, with more urgency. The people on the boat remained still for a few moments more. Eventually a few stirred and threw two or three lifebuoys overboard. Sabally did not grasp them, did not appear to fully lunge forward over the echo of more laughter and gasps from the crowd. One particularly flustered and indifferent spectator scoffed that Sabally just "wanted to die." "Just let him die then," said another. In the very asymmetrical reporting on Sabally's drowning, a few headlines reported on the shocking complicity of the tourists and lack of "heroism" amidst the crowd of onlooker. But the media also picked up the narrative that Sabally wanted to die without any confirmation, with reports like "African Refugee, Pateh Sabally, Drowns Self in Venice as Tourists Look On" and "Venice to Pay for Funeral of Migrant Whose Suicide Was Filmed by Tourists."[3] The latter article has several quotes from the mayor of Venice, Luigi Brugnaro, attesting to the "benevolence" and good will of the city: "The money [for Sabally's funeral] will come from Venice mayor Luigi Brugnaro's personal cost of living allowance in 'a gesture of respect from Venice towards Pateh Sabally and his shattered dreams," he said, adding that "[t]he death of this young man has saddened all of us, and we feel pity towards those who, faced with the adversities of life, no longer find the strength to react to desperation. . .We can't continue to nurture the hopes

[3] Kathryn Snowdon, "African Refugee, Pateh Sabally, Drowns in Venice Canal As Tourists Film and Laugh." *Huffington Post*, 26 January 2017, http://tinyurl.com/yd6qe9j8. Accessed 27 January 2017; and "Venice to pay for funeral of migrant whose suicide was filmed by tourists." *The Local*, 27 January 2017, http://tinyurl.com/y932j8e8. Accessed 27 January 2017.

of half the world of coming to Italy. Everyone needs to realize it is impossible for our country to continue managing such a large-scale phenomenon in the way it has done so far."

There is so much bound up in this politician's expressions of measured pity, metastasizing Sabally's story—which, again, was unconfirmed in his cause of death or hypothetical motivations—and rendering him a metonym for all migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Italy. Brugnaro unconsciously reveals the state as a regime of necropower in which, as Achille Mbembe writes in his 2003 essay "Necropolitics," "the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred" (40).[4] The resignifications of Sabally's final actions and inactions were an ultimate violence to someone whose death was rendered a spectacle, his final gasps for breath a repository of negative affect and dehumanizing racial hatred. Reports that came in soon after identifying Sabally as the drowned figure said that he had initially obtained the proper residency papers for Italy, on humanitarian grounds no less, having sailed from Africa, probably making the trek from his native Gambia on the West Coast to a port in North Africa before setting sail across the Mediterranean and arriving in Sicily two years before, where his claims for asylum were ultimately rejected. "*Scemo! Vai via!*" spat cries from the crowd. Sabally's hands

[4] Mbembe clearly defines necropower in relationship to the Foucauldian conceit "biopower." Necropower is the politics of death, or rather the technologies of control through which life is strategically subjugated to the power of death. For Mbembe, biopower cannot properly account for the state's contemporary warmongering practices make murder the primary objective of sovereign power and authority.

remained up in the air, perfectly vertical. Each time he bobbed his body went lower. Soon, only the crown of his head showed, along with his fingertips. Then nothing. The rings of water that arrived when the lifebuoys made contact with the water and pushed it into outward puddles also reverberated into nothing. The sea was still again. The video abruptly ends. Pateh Sabally arrived in Italy by sea. He also departed that way.

Narratives of the arrival of Black people across the globe have often appeared to be bound to waterways. When Black Canadian poet Dionne Brand tells us that "water is another country," there is much power, trauma, and possibility there.[5] This is the case even when there is no "there" there. This is the case even as that which is liquid at times appears "ubiquitous and mute" and the voice of the oppressors seem to be the only one left to reverberate, like miscast lifebuoys on the surface of the sea.[6] This ubiquity of the water is what ties us, binds us in time and spirit to the ontological depths of Black presences, and has been thought in historical and material relation to such bodies of water as the Caribbean Sea (Brathwaite, Glissant, Toumson), to the Atlantic Ocean (Gilroy, McKittrick, Nassy Brown, Morgan), and increasingly to the Mediterranean Sea (Giuliani, Mezzadra, Labanca, di Maio).[7] The histories are also bounded and

[5] Dionne Brand. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*, 141–142.

[6] Dionne Brand writes that "there are ways of constructing the world—that is, of putting it together each morning, what it should look like piece by piece…Before that everything is liquid, ubiquitous and mute. We accumulate information over our lives which bring various things into solidity, into view." Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return*, 141–142.

[7] For paradigmatic works from these authors in relationship to Black thought, historical consciousness, and waterscapes, see Kamau Brathwaite, *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy: Rights of Passage, Islands, Masks*; Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*; Roger

dynamic, and the call for liberation from that liquid space is more than just a call to perform difference or the constitutive outside. For what even is history to those drowning from along its margins or at the center of the spectacle?

As Derek Walcott famously wrote, "the sea is History."[8] And so another scene from the sea. In October 2014, the then allegedly centrist Italian government terminated the program known as *Operazione Mare Nostrum* (OMN). The name was itself an imperial recall of the Roman name for the Mediterranean Sea.[9] The Latin term *mare nostrum* ("our sea") has experienced several revivals. During the height of Italian nationalism after the Risorgimento, it was a rallying cry used by poets and political agitators who saw Italy as a successor to the Roman Empire and wished to expand during the "Partition of Africa." It was revived again during Fascism, spreading throughout fascist propaganda once more for the sake of aggressive territorial expansion and "reclamation" of former lands. North and East Africa became known as "the Fourth Shore," which I discuss in relation to racialized and geopolitical dispossession. This is the genealogy under which the OMN national security system under the guise of

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T oumson, *Mythologie du métissage*; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*; Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, eds, *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*; Jaqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool*; Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Gender and Reproduction in New World Slavery*; Gaia Giuliani, "The Colour(s) of Lampedusa;" Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method, or the Multiplication of Labor*; Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare*; and Alessandra di Maio, *"Black Italia: Contemporary Migrant Writers from Africa."*

[8] Derek Walcott, "The Sea is History," *Derek Walcott: Collected Poems 1948–1984*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1987, 364–367.

[9] See: David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean*.

international rescue operation was authorized by Italy. It was promptly defunded when it appeared that their nation had to spend most of the money towards maintenance costs. For much of the state apparatus, there has been a sense of crisis in the Mediterranean rather than concern or awareness about the historical processes leading to the increase of global migration in the first place. OMN was a naval and air-based "coast guard" operation of sorts charged with arresting traffickers and rescuing tens of thousands of migrants from shipwrecks and other maritime tragedies; it was itself established on 18 October 2013 by the Italian government a respective ten and two days after the 3 October shipwreck with over 360 confirmed deaths and 155 survivors, and the 11 October shipwreck where 34 have been confirmed dead.[10] Since then, thousands have died crossing from the Northern Coast of Africa to Europe—specifically to Italy—via the Mediterranean, leading it to be characterized by many as the deadliest sea and the deadliest migrant crossing in the world.[11] This

[10] It should also be noted that this operation began to be phased out not long after the one year anniversary of those two tragedies, in October 2014. For mainstream coverage and more information about the shipwrecks, see Operazione Mare Nostrum's website, which is no longer updated regularly: "Operazione Mare Nostrum." *Operazione Mare Nostrum*. http://www.marina.difesa.it/Pagine/Default.aspx. Accessed 4 September 2016; European Council of Refugees and Exiles (ECRE). http://tinyurl.com/q7dcym5. Accessed 28 August 2016; Lizzy Davies and Arthur Neslen. "Italy: end of ongoing sea rescue mission 'puts thousands at risk.'" *The Guardian*. 31 October 2014. http://tinyurl.com/qbl84c8. Accessed 29 August 2016; and "Migranti, il governo ha deciso: "Mare Nostrum finirà questo mese." *La Repubblica*. 16 October 2014. http://tinyurl.com/knuamwd. Accessed 28 August 2016.

[11] Pizzi, Michael. "Mediterranean Sea the World's Deadliest Migrant Crossing, Report Says." *Al-jazeera America*. 29 September 2014. http://tinyurl.com/nsv2u53. Accessed 11 January 2015; Data Team. "Europe's Boat People: Graphics Explain Europe's the Migration across the Mediterranean." *The Economist*. 29 May 2015. http://tinyurl.com/ybhgazz5. Accessed 29 May 2015. Travis, Alan. "UK axes support for Mediterranean migrant rescue operation." *The Guardian*. 27 October 2014. http://tinyurl.com/jfst26k. Accessed 29 May 2015.

is something in which all of Europe is complicit in some way or another, be it for their withdrawal of funding, their past colonial exploitation and underdevelopment, or current militaristic and neoliberal practices in Africa, which have exacerbated and even forced migration across the increasingly treacherous Mediterranean route. The current patrols are being "overseen" by Frontex, the border agency for the European Union—a term that I've placed in inverted commas because it has wilfully turned a blind eye to thousands of requests for aid and has directly told state agencies like Italy's beleaguered Corps of the Port Captaincies (Coast Guard) that it would not respond immediately to distress calls as it pulled its patrol area further north towards Europe and away from known sites of frequent shipwrecks.[12]

This dissertation, *L'Italia Meticcia: Being and Belonging in the Black Mediterranean*, demonstrates that Italy remains a rich archive from which to think about proximity, borders, and belonging. It is the result of my desire to affirm the production of writings and the collective politics of community-making and resistance by people of Italian and African descent. It is also borne from the need to scrutinize the racialized and gendered regimes undergirding Italy's cultural and political landscape, the nexus of which are laid bare in literary works addressing related themes of citizenship, migration, and belonging, often referred to as literature of migration or

[12] Campbell, Zach. "Abandoned at Sea: Europe Keeps Its Rescue Ships Far from the Coast of Libya – Where Thousands of Refugees Have Drowned." *The Intercept*. 1 April 2017. http://tinyurl.com/k8gk7cs. Accessed 15 April 2017.

Italian postcolonial literature. However, there remains an abiding critique in this affirmation, and there is a productive tension between affirmation and scrutiny that allows for deeper understanding of the stakes of these writings and the context in which they were produced. There is a politics of imagination that is central to any freedom-making project. Thus, I argue that literature is a useful way to think critically about how race, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and cultural practices converge in Italy (or anywhere) because of its ability to transcend into an imaginative otherwise, to show us where we've come from and transcend that to envision where we can go without, one hopes, binding the reader or the author to their own identitarian categories but rather to future liberation. The Italian postcolonial and collective literature studied in this dissertation show us precisely why history is important. It offers us poetry, the kind Audre Lorde speaks about in "Poetry is Not a Luxury," which indicates a "revelation or distillation of experience," rather than "the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean—in order to cover their desperate wish for imagination without insight."[13] The heart of the matter is that the Black Radical Tradition and Black imaginative practices give us insight into how to use the broken pieces—fragments of our past, (mis)remembered histories—to make new paths and to make ourselves anew. We might remember what they once were, but above all, it is our imperative to create new things from those memories. That is

[13] Audre Lorde, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," *Sister Outsider*, 36–40.

ultimately what the works of the writers analyzed in this dissertation teach us, with writers like Igiaba Scego, Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, Carla Macoggi, and Wu Ming, all of whom are concerned in some way with geographies and memories of/in/from seascapes. Their concerns are figurative, political, artistic, and transhistorical. While "Black Italian literature" is a phrase that doesn't have consistent usage in Italy or in scholarship surrounding these literatures, Annalisa Mirizio remarked on the refusal by many creative individuals to continue being categorized as minority literature or art. They pushed "for the literary appreciation of contemporary black artistic and literary productions" and Mirizio focuses on Black Italian literature to demonstrate this refusal and think about the notion of aesthetic value.[14]

Throughout this project, the term "Black" is first and foremost used as a social category for people of African descent who have been recently or historically racialized as Black and who experience antiblack racism. While various forms of blackness exist globally as cultural, social, and political identities alongside various identifications, my scholarship aligns with the use of "Black" here defined as an always already intersectionally bound condition tied to various experiences of antiblack racism, and as such one that can never be rendered monolithic.[15] While I use this term to

[14] Mirizio notes that the BASILI database for immigrant writers in Italian had registered almost one-third of its writers being Black or of African descent, and reads the Italian case in conjunction with other Black artistic and literary production throughout the diaspora. See: "Autobiography as Political Essay: Narrative Strategies in Black Postmodern Literature," *Afrope@n Configurations,* 157–167.

[15] Kathy Davis, "Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology of Science Perspective on What Makes a Feminist Theory Successful," *Feminist Theory*, 67–85.

speak of people who are held within this definition (including myself), the use of this term is highly contested and dynamic, often by people who are racialized as Black.[16] The term travels and leads to ideological conflicts, such as the question of political Blackness that has re-emerged in 21st century Britain and, as Kehinde Andrews argues, "is based on an inaccurate understanding of the relationship between multiculturalism and anti-racism."[17] This leads directly into an important part of the problem engaged with in this dissertation. At issue is the right to self-identify, to either belong or resist non-consensual incorporation. To insist that those who are racialized as Black, through the various processes of racialization enacted because of antiblack racism, must necessarily identify as Black in social, cultural, or political terms is to harm the right to self-identify, no matter how heterogeneously conceived that Blackness is. Some of the authors studied in this dissertation refer to their Blackness in various ways, including strong emphasis on their "Black" identity or a complete disavowal or detachment from it. This includes the different ways of navigating race and ethnicity, whether detaching completely from racialized markers to using ethnonational terms like "Somali" or "Ethiopian," to the usage of

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[16] See: Allan Charles Dawson, *In Light of Africa: Globalizing Blackness in Northeast Brazil*; H. Samy Alim, John R. Rickford, and Arnetha F. Ball, eds., *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*; and Manoucheka Celeste, *Race, Gender, and Citizenship in the African Diaspora: Travelling Blackness*.

[17] Andrews, Kehinde. "The Problem of Political Blackness: Lessons from the Black Supplementary School Movement," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, February 2016, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2015.1131314. Accessed 8 May 2017 and Clarke, Amy. "People of African Descent in Europe," *UK Race and Europe Network*, June 2012, http://tinyurl.com/ya5wzknj. Accessed 11 March 2017.

"Afro-Italian," "Italian," "of African origin," "descendant of Africans or African migrants," "Italian citizens (with or without citizenship/papers)," and "of color" or "Black" as an intentional political identity as well as a reference to one's skin color. I therefore follow the important distinction between Black as being a racialized condition (i.e., being perceived as Black) and Black as a form self-identification, one with various and multiple self-declared and self-identified iterations, including ethnonational terms like those previously mentioned. Further, I will also refer to people of African descent (recent or historical) as well as Afro-Italian and Black Italian in this thesis for contextual distinction, as my corpus of these various and internally heterogeneous groups are racialized as Black. For example, in the contemporary racial landscape, some North Africans are likely to be cast as "Middle Eastern" and thus often experience that Orientalized designation instead of Black racialization or being subsumed into Africanist discourse. And Southern Italians have also been interpreted within this racial ecology, occasionally being referred to as *marocchini*.[18] However, to follow that distinction and engage with terms like "Sub-Saharan" African or "Africans from the Horn" would be rather problematic with regards to the colonial and neocolonial divisions of the African continent. Thus, I will stick to "of African descent" (as distinguished from "origin") to imply people of African descent who are racialized and self-identify as Black in this work.

[18] In "Immigration and Social Identities," Vanessa Maher observes the racialization of Southern Italians by those in the North: "[A] Calabrian worker from the FIAT works [in Turin] remembered how the southern Italian immigrants were called *marocchini* in the 1950s, twenty years before the first Moroccan immigrants were seen in Italy." Vanessa Maher, "Immigration and Social Identities," *Italian Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, 160–177.

The study of the Black Mediterranean and Black Italian literary production belongs squarely within an expansive reading of my understanding of the Black Radical Tradition. In 1983, Cedric Robinson wrote a meticulous work titled *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. In the third section of this text, "Black Radicalism and Marxist Theory," Robinson focuses on three members of the twentieth century Black left intelligentsia: Richard Wright, CLR James, and WEB DuBois. He shows that Western Marxism was central to their intellectual and political development, but as they were faced with global crises and uncertainty with anticolonial and labor movements, they struggled to negotiate their relationships to historical consciousness, racial capitalism, and eventually to Western Marxism itself. Some of those thinkers left the framework of Marxism for a Black radicalism that could better suit their positionalities and deepen their anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and pro-Black liberationist interventions. Robinson never intended for the Black Radical Tradition to be trademarked as a fixed US-American product, nor could it be with the genealogy he outlines. For Robinson, the tradition began with the enslavement and coerced transportation of Africans to the "New World" and thus the advent of racial capitalism. These events necessarily involved European thought through which the "invention of the Negro" was developed:

> Resistances were formed through the meanings that Africans brought to the New World as their cultural possession; meanings sufficiently distinct from the foundations of Western ideas as to be remarked upon over and over by the European witnesses of their manifestations; meanings

> enduring and powerful enough to survive slavery to become the basis of an opposition to it. With Western society as a condition, that tradition almost naturally assumed a theoretical aspect as well.[19]

Subsequently, the Black Radical Tradition was forged over centuries of collective Black resistance to globalized racial capitalism, enslavement, cultural and economic imperialism, and with the emergence and development of a leftist Black critique.

There are several key things that are useful in the way Robinson outlined the Black Radical Tradition. The Black Radical Tradition can help bolster analyses of contemporary sociopolitical conditions in Italy and the genres of postcolonial and Black Italian literature, but that the literature studied here could be considered as contributing to an expanded notion of this tradition. First, the Black Radical Tradition is, as the name states, a tradition. This implies that it is something that could be passed on, that has a history or a will to historicization. Indeed, the Black Radical Tradition is wedded to a rigorous historical consciousness. As we will see, much of the writings described as postcolonial or Black Italian or even literature of migration speak directly to the historical, cultural, and political exigencies that have led us to discuss and negotiate the variegated crises and oppressive regimes linked to racialized capitalism. And as I discuss further in the next chapter, the writings under study here have gone through several phases, which have been recorded and analyzed by many

[19] Cedric Robinson, "Introduction," *Black Marxism*, 5 and "The Invention of the Negro," *Forgeries of Memory*, 1–81.

scholars.[20] The literary tradition at this stage is more dynamic than ever, and as a genre, the aim has both been a dedication to an aesthetic form as well as to an uncovering and bringing forth of hidden histories of colonialism, trauma, and abjection while passing on traditions of resistance and joy. Secondly, due to the historical events leading up to its advent—namely the entities that funded the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the trade itself as a transimperial enterprise, and Black Reconstruction—the Black Radical Tradition is intimately involved with state-based rights such as citizenship and the building of Black political power. Current debates and demonstrations raging in Italy include: the demand for expanding the purview of citizenship and immigration, the material conditions of asylum-seekers and migrants like Pateh Sabally, and the racialized and heteronormative regulation of fertility policies. Thus, the events configuring the contemporary Black Mediterranean are an extension of the regime of racial capitalism motivating the aforementioned ones. Most importantly, no matter the diversity of tactics or methods that the tradition's many followers employ, the project and processes of the Black Radical Tradition are about liberation and emancipation.

I believe that the writers under study in this dissertation, all of whom hold several other professions or positions tasked with invention—they are also activists, journalists, musicians, *griot*, performers, thinkers, mothers, etc.—are deeply invested in the freedom of all people, specifically Black

[20] See Chapter Two, "Black Italianità," for a longer discussion and more examples of scholarship and criticism surrounding these writings.

and migrant people who experience multiple concerted oppressions, dispossession, and disavowal in Italy, Europe, and across the globe. This is the very "invention into existence" that Frantz Fanon describes, and will be discussed again later.[21] I argue that this kind of invention is the purview of literary production. I analyze how my corpus of short stories, novels, and transmedia production might rise to meet that challenge in the occasion of combatting systemic racism and xenophobic-Islamophobic immigration laws and cultural practices. There are many more things that can be said about the Black Radical Tradition, but it is also helpful and applicable to consider it as expansive and ever-mutable because that tendency is linked to the dynamic and culturally syncretic space of the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean has long been considered a site of harmonious cultural syncretism, though that concept has always been fraught and contentious.[22] Italian anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi was one of the foremost Mediterraneanists of the 19th and 20th centuries. He posited that there was no white or black race to which Italians belonged, but rather a "Mediterranean race" that was superior—in fact, "the greatest in the world"—dating as it did back to classical empires from antiquity.[23] In *The*

[21] Frantz Fanon, "By Way of Conclusion," *Black Skin, White Masks*, 179.

[22] Ilaria Giglio's article, "Producing Sicily as Europe: Migration, Colonialism and the Making of the Mediterranean Border between Italy and Tunisia" is particularly interesting as it argues that while portrayal of the Mediterranean is one of multicultural utopia, it has been contentious as long as there have been borders in the region and with that, the constant revision of civilization and the incorporation and expulsion of difference.

[23] Giuseppe Sergi, *The Mediterranean Race: A Study of the Origin of European Peoples* and Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century Volume 1: The Structures of Everyday Life*.

Mediterranean Race: A Study of the Origin of European Peoples, first published at the turn of the twentieth century, Sergi identifies and traces the ethnic origins of the Mediterranean race. He argues that it originated in Africa and included dark-skinned African peoples from the Horn like the Ethiopians. Sergi asserted physical anthropology was indispensable to proving his claims that the Mediterraneans, the Africans, and the Nordics all originated a Eurafrican race:

> Until recent years the Greeks and the Romans were regarded as Aryan, and then as Aryanised, peoples; the great discoveries in the Mediterranean have overturned all these views. Today, although a few belated supporters of Aryanism still remain, it is becoming clear that the most ancient civilisation of the Mediterranean is not of Aryan origin but the product of a stock composed of many consanguineous peoples, which occupied the Mediterranean from a common centre of diffusion, through bearing different racial names. This stock, which I term Mediterranean, has formed the subject of my studies for many years, in the hope that I may be able to contribute to the solution of the problems I have stated. (29–30)

The problem of delineating purity in a history of miscegenation was central to the question of the "Mediterranean race." Even within the idea of individuated nation states in the Mediterranean, such as Italy, internal divisions complicated matters. In *Race and Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861–1911: Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora*, Aliza Wong describes the internal divisions between Northern Italy's alignment with Nordic Europeans and the Italic South of Italy's dual position, which has perpetuated difference:

> This neo-Orientalist discourse within Italy itself operates on two parameters. Northerners, in their attempt to have Italy included within the larger imperialist, industrial, progress-driven Europe, found Italy's weakness in the distant south, a place less civilized and thus further from the European core, and displaced the failures of the country onto its most sensitive and volatile region. At the same time, some southerners began to articulate the northerners' meridionalist discourse, criticizing their native society and culture, and lent credence to the political and cultural debates. (6)

The development and projection of national Italian identity have thus been deeply influenced by transnational and migratory movements over the last few centuries. Thus, Italian diasporic movements can be examined as a continuum, rather than as separate phenomena. Therefore, Antonio Gramsci's *la questione meridionale* ("the Southern Question") will be discussed in Chapter Three in relation to one that I am calling *la questione meticcia* "the 'mixed' question." This latter "question" is mobilized here in terms of a multivalent "South," taken to include Southern Italy, historically contested irredentist lands (e.g., Trieste), former Eastern European territories, and Italian African colonies in relation to the Italian metropole. Thinking about simultaneous belonging to the Mediterranean, to Italy, and to African countries like Eritrea, Ethiopia, or Somalia is to reconsider the trope of the Southern Question narrative.[24] Coupled with specific attention

[24] In referring to the Southern Question as a narrative, I follow Maurizio Albahari's work, especially "Between Mediterranean Centrality and European Periphery: Migration and Heritage in Southern Italy." In that article, he notes that said question is a series of discursive practices that have been articulated and rearticulated depending on the needs of those who deploy them. Maurizio Albahari, "Between Mediterranean Centrality and European Periphery: Migration and Heritage in Southern Italy," *International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies*, 141–162.

to racialization and literary production also means to contribute to the understanding of the Black Mediterranean.

The notion of the "Black Mediterranean" is one that has been increasing in circulation since its popularization in the Italian context by Alessandra di Maio. At the 2014 "Black Italia" dialogue series hosted by NYU's Villa La Pietra in Florence, she argued that "[t]he term focuses on the proximity that exists, and has always existed, between Italy and Africa, separated. . .but also united by the Mediterranean. . .and documented in legends, myths, histories, even in culinary traditions, in visual arts, and religion." In my view, the term and its attendant regionalism also foments cultural syncretism, intimacy, and expansiveness while still leaving room for geo-specificity for those who seek that within a transnational frame, as di Maio does by focusing her attention on Italy, as do many scholars who have followed her in the usage of the term.[25] This does not fully explain my use of the phrase "Black Mediterranean" yet. As Fanon notes in *Wretched of the Earth*, there has been a common perception of the Mediterranean as a threshold for whiteness and a disarticulation of Arabness from Blackness in Africa:

[25] See: Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*; Alessandra di Maio, "Black Italia: Contemporary Migrant Writers from Africa;" Gaia Giuliani, "Mediterraneità e bianchezza. Il razzismo italiano tra fascismo e articolazioni contemporanee (1861–2015)," *Iperstoria*, 167–182 and "L'italiano negro. La bianchezza degli italiani dall'Unità al Fascismo," *Bianco e nero*, 21–66; and Raeymaekers, Timothy. "Working the Black Mediterranean." *Timothy Raeymaekers*. 21 January 2015. http://tinyurl.com/y8ca4t5b. Accessed 14 May 2015. Raeymaekers is a good resource to start with when employing di Maio's analytic as he includes a range of sources including literature, criticism, film, music, and art.

> Africa is divided into Black and White, and the names that are substituted—Africa South of the Sahara, Africa North of the Sahara—do not manage to hide this latent racism. Here, it is affirmed that White Africa has a thousand-year-old tradition of culture; that she is Mediterranean, that she is a continuation of Europe, and that she shares in Greco-Latin civilization. Black Africa is looked on as a region that is inert, brutal, uncivilized, in a word, savage. (160)

It is the mass scale of internal migrations that render this same site part of the Black Mediterranean. From specific concerns with *italianità*, I engage with a sort of *mediterraneità*, a term that can be reclaimed from the Fascist context—indeed, one which would present a distinctly oppositional relationship to it or any totalizing political position. This use would be what Gloria Anzaldúa refers to as "sustained contradiction," a space for fraught creativity and tension that leads to new consciousness, which I return to in subsequent chapters.[26] My engagement with the Black Mediterranean does not entirely follow the same trajectory as di Maio and her reading of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, for example. Instead, I'm tracing the term back to Robinson's *Black Marxism*, a text in which he continued the earlier legacy of diaspora studies regarding a discussion of transatlantic slavery, but also posited the notion of the Black Mediterranean as a precondition to the Black Atlantic and the making of Europe itself. Robin Kelley remarks on this in the foreword to the 2000 reprint of *Black Marxism*:

> …the exorcising of the Black Mediterranean is about the fabrication of Europe as a discrete, racially pure entity solely responsible for modernity,

[26] See: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

> on the one hand, and the fabrication of the Negro, on the other. In this respect, Robinson's intervention parallels that of Edward Said's Orientalism, which argues that the European study of and romance with the "East" was primarily about constructing the Occident. (xiv)

Robinson himself notes that migrations of multiple ethnicities of and around the Mediterranean occurred voluntarily on a massive scale, groups that were "entirely assimilated by the indigenous peoples as a primarily slave labor force" (11). He reiterates that "with respect to the emerging European civilization whose beginnings coincide with the arrivals of these same barbarians [the Ostrogoth, Visigoth, Vandal, Suevi, Burgundi, Alamanni, and Frank peoples], slave labor as a critical basis of production would continue without any significant interruption into the twentieth century" (11). This completely eradicates the idea that slavery was either a historic problem common throughout antiquity or else one that was restricted to the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In fact, Robinson shows that "[t]he tendency of European civilization through capitalism was thus not to homogenize but to differentiate-to exaggerate regional, subcultural, and dialectical differences into 'racial' ones" as we see medieval citizenship give way to race and racialization in the 17th and 18th centuries, eventually leading to the "domination, exploitation, and extermination" of non-"Europeans" (26). Eventually, Robinson leads us to understand that the previous "racial ordering of European society. . .[the] domination of Mediterranean civilization and the consequent [hampering] of European social and cultural life" leading to the Dark Ages ought to precede the Middle Passage as the more originary moments for the analysis of global

racism and racial capitalism (67). Citing the scholarship of Frank Snowden, he recounts that from Greco-Roman antiquity, the interactions with those whom we today assess as Black African people (e.g., Egyptians and Ethiopians) did not give rise to any prejudice due to skin color:

> The presence of large numbers of Negroes in a white society, according to some modern views, gives rise to anti-Negro feeling. [But] Ethiopians were far from rare sights in the Greco-Roman, particularly the Roman, world. . .the intense color prejudice of the modern world was lacking. Although it is impossible to estimate the Negro element in the classical world in terms of precise statistics, it is obvious that the Black population in Greece and Italy was larger than has been generally realized.[27]

Throughout several chapters, Robinson manages to provide a radically different temporal and political economy for the rise and logics of European racialism and Black cultural and labor production. Racialization is important to consider when tracing the ways that European participation in an African enterprise inextricably linked race to cultural and financial capital. He also abolishes the myth that Arabness, Blackness, and/or Muslimness are contemporary and external identitarian phenomena to Europe or any of its Southern European nation states that were part of the Roman Empire. For Gilroy, the Black Atlantic was a repository bound to the Middle Passage and the pervasive genocidal politics therein were what most formidably shaped Black modernity and consciousness. But rather than existing solely as a metaphor, a fixed geography, or a paradigmatic

[27] Frank Snowden, *Blacks in Antiquity*, 183. Cited in Cedric Robinson, "Processes and Consequences of Africa's Transmutation," *Black Marxism*, 85.

and hypervisible site of loss often referred to as a "wet cemetery," I consider the Black Mediterranean to be a plangent site of Black knowledge production, Black resistances, functional cultural syncretism, Black historical consciousness, and collective promise that extends between and beyond the space-time of the Mediterranean. If we are hard-pressed to acquiesce to this being considered a crisis (of migration and its reception), then this analysis of the Black Mediterranean declares "so be it." It argues that this situation in the Mediterranean is a *contemporary* crisis—one we need to refuse to accept and continue to historicize since its origins have long been obfuscated. In the preface to another work, *The Terms of Order* (1980), Cedric Robinson writes:

> Currently, at the centers of this civilization, what are now frequently referred to as the core-states: America, Britain, France, Germany and Italy, social crises are extensive and structurally quite deep. Paradoxically, that intelligentsia which has marked as its special province the explication of social organization, has in large measure ignored both the disruptive character of our times and the fundamental nature of social disorder. Its members persist in the delusion that, beneath the chaos, ordered systems reign administered by stable political institutions and fundamentally resilient cultural and economic integrations. As such, the existential experience of the individual is denied by resorting to a heritage as citizen of a politically maintained social order rationalized by the authority of leadership. Greater social cohesion, we are instructed, is dependent upon better leadership. (x)

In Italy, the social crises to which referred were different than those in the present. However, this claim could easily be made in our current political

moment. The self-protecting, fear-borne idea of "crisis" systematically put forward and enforced by Europe at every level is one that encapsulates, distils, and crystalizes complex histories. Thus, we should refuse the moniker of "crisis" as utterly contemporary. As Paul Gilroy notes in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1991), a primary strategy of white supremacy would be to deny the past and to contain Black people and their presences in the here and now (11–13).

So before leaping back into the past, historicizing the present is also warranted. In the context of Italy's demographics and current migration trends, it has become commonplace to note that throughout the last several decades, Italy has experienced rapid transformation of its demographics.[28] Indeed, Italy currently possesses one of the higher growth rates in Europe in terms of its foreign population.[29] Due to these past few years of increasing levels of immigration, the dual issues of what makes one "Italian" and how to ethically integrate immigrants and the Italian-born children of immigrants into Italian society come to the fore in contemporary discourses around Italian citizenship and identity formation. According to the *Istituto nazionale di statistica*, or ISTAT, foreign minors in

[28] See: Jaqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, eds., *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*; Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism*; and Palumbo, Patrizia, ed., *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Colonial Culture from Post- Unification to Present*.

[29] See "Natural increase and migration rates." *Noi Italia*. nd. http://tinyurl.com/ydc5pmvj. Accessed 1 August 2017. For more raw data, see also the website for the *Istituto nazionale di* statistica (ISTAT): www.istat.it. ISTAT is the Italian equivalent of the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics (ONS) and other national census bureaus. The ISTAT is run on the national level, but is partly informed and regulated by Eurostat on behalf of the European Union.

Italy (those under the age of eighteen) account for approximately one-fifth of the total foreign population overall, with those born in Italy roughly 15% of all foreign residents. Foreign residents in Italy totalled 5,047,028 as of 1 January 2017, or +30.1% more than the amount calculated during the most recent census in October 2011. This number is already homogenized as it includes those who are classified as "ex-pats"—a category afforded to majority white, middle-class individuals from a Western or other industrialized nation. During 2016, the number of resident foreigners rose primarily due to immigration from abroad (approx. 301,000 individuals) but also partly due to the births of foreign children. Around 69,000 foreign infants were born in 2016, amounting to 12.8% of the total number of those born to all residents in Italy. The percentage of foreign citizens in the total resident population (including Italian citizens and foreign nationals) continues to rise, though much more slowly than during the period between 2009 and 2015. As of 1 January 2017, the rate was 8.3%, up from 8% the previous year. It is important to note that the distribution of resident foreigners in Italy continues to be uneven. 86.5% of foreigners live in the Northern and Central regions of Italy, with the remaining 13.5% in the South. However, 2015–2016 held the largest increases of Italy's foreign population in the Southern regions (+11.5%), particularly in the islands nearest to Northern Africa (e.g., Sardinia and Sicily) (+11.9%).[30] Statistics

[30] See: "Italy's resident foreign population." *ISTAT*. 29 September 2011. http://www.istat.it/en/archive/40658. Accessed 25 November 14 and the 2016 annual report "National demographic balance." *ISTAT*. 13 June 2017. http://www.istat.it/en/archive/201143. Accessed 1 August 2017.

cannot tell us the whole story, as these numbers do not count undocumented individuals living in Italy, nor can it tell the subjective story of belonging, though they may try. An ISTAT report named "Educational and social integration of second generation foreign children: Year 2015" attempted to record the comparative relationship of integration and belonging between Italian secondary students and "foreign students," wherein the study already reveals an ideological bias as among the latter group are "foreign students born in Italy."[31] The report notes that:

> Nearly 38% of the foreign students declared feeling "Italian;" 33% felt foreign and more than 29% preferred not to answer. Almost 53% of the students arrived at the age of 10 or older [reported] feeling "foreign." The situation for foreign students born in Italy was very different: only 23.7% of respondents felt foreign, while 47.5% felt Italian.

There are glaring gaps in the snapshot of information, which merely reports quantitative data and does not follow up on, say, the ambivalent category of those who preferred not to respond to the question or the fact that those with a geographic attachment to Italy from birth were themselves more likely to claim belonging to Italy, even as the state does not afford that same viewpoint as it regulates their lives and the lives of their family members. At the time of this writing, Italian citizenship is still primarily based on *ius sanguinis*, or "right of blood," a policy that disregards place of birth and privileges an unbroken line of citizenship from one's ancestors. This policy grants Italian citizenship to children at birth if one or both

[31] "Educational and social integration of second generation foreign children: Year 2015." *ISTAT*. 15 March 2016. http://tinyurl.com/ydaopmt4. Accessed 1 August 2017.

parents are Italian citizens, and offers a clause of naturalized and dual citizenship for those who can trace their lineage to Italy as the progeny of an Italian citizen, including persons of the Italian diaspora (e.g., Italian Americans), as far back as 7 March 1861.[32]

The term "Italian diaspora" merits unpacking, given the complexities and multiple implications of the term "diaspora" itself. Etymologically speaking, "diaspora" is a direct transliteration of the Greek word διασπορά, meaning "sowing, a scattering, or a dispersion," usually of a group of people. Historically, it has referred specifically to the *Galut*, the forced mass exodus of Jewish peoples from their historic homeland of Judea, and implies the resulting suffering and marginalization that took place thereafter. The term has since expanded to refer to various other communities affected by forced migrations as a result of slavery, warfare, socioeconomic reasons/poverty, or exile, such as the African diaspora, borne out of the Trans- Atlantic slave trade; the South Asian diaspora resulting from the enslavement (also known as the "coolie trade") and indentured labor of people from Southern China and the Indian subcontinent; the Somali diaspora; the Italian and Irish diasporas; and the Palestinian diaspora, just to name a few. In colloquial speech and even in certain academic contexts, the migration of Mexicans, specifically

[32] This is the precise date articulated in Italian national law, coinciding with the ratification of the Kingdom of Italy. By definition, no Italians existed before this date. See the website for Italy's Ministry of the Interior for the complete transcript of Act No. 91: www.cittadinanza.dici.interno.it. Accessed 11 May 2016.

throughout North America, has been referred to as "the Mexican diaspora."[33]

As evidenced by the brief list above, on the one hand, the term's expansion can be highly problematic, imprecise, and uneven. With its contemporary quotidian usage, the notion of a "diasporic community" becomes epistemologically flattened and ill-defined without much consideration for the vast array of geopolitical or ethnoreligious particularities, the social and class-based motivations, or even the realities and historical developments internal to the community being discussed. On the other hand, the definition's expansion can be radical—that is, literally, rooted—in deep historical affinities stemming from a real or imagined set of shared experiences. For example, Ahmed El-Basheer, the acting head of the Diaspora Division, a unit within the Directorate of the Department of Citizens and Diaspora Organizations (CIDO)—which is itself a subdivision within the African Union, a continental union of almost all African states—defines the African diaspora thus:

> [It] refers to the communities throughout the world that are descended from the historic movement of peoples from Africa—predominantly from the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, among other areas around the globe. With regard to all historic migrations (forced and voluntary), the African Union defines the African Diaspora as "[Consisting] of people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to

[33] See Susana Rinderle's analysis of the various etymological and epistemological signifiers inherent in the "Mexican diaspora" and its multiple subgroups in her article, "The Mexican Diaspora: A Critical Examination of Signifiers."

> contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union." Its constitutive act declares that it shall "invite and encourage the full participation of the African Diaspora as an important part of our continent, in the building of the African Union."[34]

Here, the qualification of "belonging to the African diaspora" is supranational, pan-African, and affective in nature. This definitional expansion mirrors a trend in African diaspora studies and includes people of African descent whose histories of migration may be more recent, or under vastly different socioeconomic conditions and racial regimes than those produced by the Atlantic slave trade. Thinking with eminent scholars in fields such as African diaspora studies, Black cultural studies, transnational feminist and queer studies, I recognize the complexity of diaspora's many definitions and permutations.[35] While remaining open to the solidarities of the usage of the African diaspora and attentive to more localized struggles and shifts in human geography (such as the Palestinian or Somali diasporas), for the sake of clarity and coherence, I will use "diaspora" to refer to a group of people that was dispersed, at one point, to "foreign" regions; underwent this dispersal under some form of social, political, economic, religious, racial, or ethnocultural necessity; retain cultural aspects from their perceived homeland (i.e., music, folklore,

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[34] Diaspora Division, CIDO. pages.au.int/cido/pages/diaspora-division. Accessed 4 March 2015.

[35] See also Elisa Joy White's "Paradox of Diaspora, Global Identity and Human Rights: The Deportation of Nigerians in Ireland;" Michael Gomez's *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora*; and Verene Shepherd's edited volume, *Slavery without Sugar: Diversity in Caribbean Economy and Society since the 17th Century*.

sartorial, and religious practices); maintain a collective appreciation, affinity, or attachment to a homeland as integral to their identity; and have decided to mobilize the term "diaspora" for greater solidarities.

The contemporary usage of the term "Italian diaspora" continues to make sense under this rubric. It describes the mass migration of "Italian" people, from the outset of Italy's existence as a nation to the mid-twentieth century, predominantly to countries in Europe, to the Americas, and to Australia.[36] While it doesn't have as long a history of semantic expansion, "Italian" merits the inverted commas because it is also quite misleading without considering the various political climates during its existence over the last 150 years. "Italy" was technically unified in 1861, a political entity under the rule of King Vittorio Emmanuele, but many of the people within its freshly outlined borders had yet to consider their sociopolitical identity formations in terms of any intrinsic "Italianness" or national Italian feeling. This was particularly the case for a significant subset of so-called Southern Italians, most of whom were formerly ruled under the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.[37] As Pasquale Verdicchio wryly notes, "the South was, in fact, 'liberated' from Bourbon colonization—but was, in substance, an instance of recolonization by a Northern elite."[38]

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[36] Anthony Julian Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate: The Italian/American Writer: An Other American*.

[37] "The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies" (*Regno delle due Sicilie*) refers to the kingdoms of Sicily and Naples that were officially united by Aragon in the 15th century.

[38] Pasquale Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance*, ii

After the subsumption of the kingdom of the two Sicilies and the ratification of political unification, *L'Impero italiano* ("the Italian Empire") quickly attempted to assert itself on the global stage. At this moment in the late-19th century, other empires such as the British, the French, the Portuguese, and the German empires had already begun their concerted campaigns to carve out territories, usurp external resources, and develop colonies on the continent of Africa during what has become known as "the Scramble for Africa." By the time Italy entered the fray in 1890, most of the continent had been drawn up and claimed by the other colonial powers according to European economic and political interests. Italy's drive into Africa was sparked in part by its self-narration as taking up the imperial legacy of the former Roman Empire and its desire to be recognized as a legitimate European power. Italy's colonial endeavors had a much shorter lifespan in comparison with the other European imperial projects. However, that this period coincided with this incipient nation-state's self-fashioning in the image of empire while trying to clarify its own identity in relation to other geopolitical, economic-historical, and affective formations such as Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa contributed to major anxieties around cultural exchange and alterity.[39]

This dissertation examines what exactly is being regulated when we talk about Italian citizenship as linked to Italianness? Moreover, what it

[39] See Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Imperial Moment in Fascist Cinema;" Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*; and Claudia Lazzaro and Roger Crum, "Forging a Visible Fascist Nation: Strategies for Fusing the Past and Present" in *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, 13–31.

considers the relationship of those traces to "crisis" in the Mediterranean and what, in this mutable, centuries-long codification, are the ephemera, the re-emergences, and the purchase of belonging? This study aims to critically attend to Italy's contemporary political context and the historical conditions that underline it, specifically concerning colonialism, occupation, the presence and contributions of people of African descent, and Italy's relationship to the continent. Soon after Italian Unification in 1871, Italy began its colonial pursuit in the following countries: Italian Somaliland (1889), Italian Eritrea (1890), Italian North Africa (1911), the Dodecanese Islands (1923), Italian East Africa (1936), Greater Albania (1939), and also a concession territory from the Chinese government in the city of Tiānjīn from 1901 until it was returned in 1947, when Italy became a republic.[40] We need to double over, folding histories of "the beginning," as it were, of the Italian Republic with an outline of Italian unification as spurred by colonialism and its impact on the Horn of Africa, before discussing how memories of that colonial violence and occupational resistance have been taken up in the contemporary works of Italian writers of African descent. During the overlapping periods comprising the "Conquest of Africa" (roughly

[40] For the sake of clarity, the current names of these territories after decolonization are the following: Somalia, Eritrea, Libya, the Dodecanese Islands, Ethiopia, Albania, and Tiānjīn. Prior to Italian colonization, there existed several different empires which will be reference throughout this dissertation: Italian East Africa (AOI) roughly consisted of the former Ethiopian Empire, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland whereas Italian North African (ASI) covered much of what is present day Libya and a small portion of Tunisia. In 1890, Eritrea was decreed "Italian Eritrea" a name derived from the bordering Erythraean Sea, and was several different empires before this date. Greater Albania was the name of the Italian (and then Nazi Germany) protectorate that is present day Albania and was previously the Kingdom of Albania.

1880–1914) and the duration of the Kingdom of Italy (1861–1946)—particularly during the reign of Benito Mussolini's National Fascist Party (PNF) from 1922 to 1943—Italian irredentists relied on the ancestral link between the Roman Empire and the Northern and Eastern regions of Africa to justify their colonial efforts as a return to the continent.[41] The terms "Partition of Africa" and "Scramble for Africa" are more commonplace names denoting the carving up of continent into new states—regardless of previous tribal or regional affinities—amongst the imperial powers Britain, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, and Italy. The process of Italian *irredentismo* was slightly different, as it was the practice of annexing a territory controlled or administered independently or by another state on the grounds of ethnic affinities or prior ownership (alleged or historical). And yet, contemporary Italy remains reticent in acknowledging the inherited polysemy of cultural exchange and expansion at the heart of its empire. This is even after the decades of work done by literary and cultural critics, anthropologists, and historians who have sought to bring this knowledge to light and demonstrate the overwhelming presences and evidence of Italy's colonial encounters.[42]

[41] A well-known example would be the Republic of Ireland referring to Northern Ireland as an *irredenta* in the heated political efforts to unify the entire island of Ireland. For literature on the propaganda disseminated on behalf of the Kingdom of Italy toward its colonial efforts, see: Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* and *Storia dell'Italia coloniale*; and Jaqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, eds., *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*.

[42] For scholarship specifically dedicated to Italy's willful "colonial amnesia," see: Mia Fuller, "Italy's Colonial Futures: Colonial Inertia and Postcolonial Capital in Asmara," *California Italian Studies*; Luigi Goglia, "Note sul razzismo coloniale fascista," *Storia contemporanea* 1223–1266; Giampaolo Calchi Novati, "L'Italia in Africa: come dimenticare il colonialismo," *L'Impero fascista. Italia ed Etiopia (1935–1941)*, 545–572;

In order to foreground the anxiety-inducing presence of "Africa" in the Italian imaginary, this study engages histories of racialization on and around the Italian peninsula in terms of an epistemology of blackness made most manifest during Italy's imperial forays into the Horn of Africa. In the 1875 conference proceedings for the *Società Geografica Italiana* (SGI) is a speech by Cesare Correnti, who was the organization's president from 1873–1879. The passage ends with Correnti declaring that: *L'Africa è sempre stata per la nostra Società una maniera di vocazione. Tutta la sua poca storia è intessuta d'Africa*.[43] Correnti was a career politician involved in education and theological reforms as well as a revolutionary who took part in several key military actions leading up to the First Italian War of Independence against the Austrian Empire, such as the *Cinque giornate di Milano* ("the Five Days of Milan"). As president of the SGI, he encouraged his members to embrace what was known to be Italy's *fascino irresistibile* ("irresistible fascination") with Africa, since

> a distanza omai [sic] di poche ore, e con si sfolgorata diversità di cielo, di clima e di popoli, la curiosità, non ch'altro, vi ci dovrebbe tirare. Quattro salti e potremmo trovarci in mezzo a una natura nuova e vivere in un'età preistorica. A chi non deve piacere sentirsi allargar l'universo e radoppiare [sic] il tempo e l'anima?[44]

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and Alessandro Triulzi, "Displacing the Colonial Event: Hybrid Memories of Postcolonial Italy," *Interventions*, 430–443.

[43] "Africa has always been like a vocation for our society. All of its modest history is interwoven with Africa's." Cesare Correnti, "L'Africa: Le Ultime Esplorazioni (1873–1875)," *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana: Anno IX – Volume XII*.

[44] "…at a distance of a few hours or so, and with the stark contrast of the sky, climate, and people, the curiosity—and aught else—should draw us back there. Four quick leaps and we could find ourselves in the midst of a new nature and living in a

This scene is but a small one in the history of Italian imperialism and the fetishizing of the African "Other." However, it is paradigmatic of Africa's place in the imaginary of many colonizing powers of that era, which include Africa's representation as idyllic, mystical, prehistoric, and lacking interiority.[45] These tropes lingered into the Fascist period and well beyond, taking on new names, masking themselves, shifting and expanding what I will discuss throughout my work as the gender and racial regimes that allow the Italian nation state to perpetuate structural oppression and dispossession via heteropatriarchal and white supremacist logics, while enabling its fully incorporated citizens to disavow and disidentify with that very enduring genocidal imperative.

I have been deeply curious about the way that the entity called Italy—fourteen years old at the time of Correnti's efforts to galvanize Italians for "geographical expeditions"—strived to assemble and settle into structures of European nationalism via the colonial project and subsequent segregation and regulation of native East Africans and Italian settlers to protect *il prestigio della razza* ("racial prestige").[46] In *Rewriting the Nation*, Caterina Romeo explains that

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prehistoric age. Who wouldn't like to feel the universe expand and redouble one's time and spirit? Correnti, "L'Africa: Le ultime esplorazioni (1873–1875)."

[45] See: Loredana Polezzi, *Translating Travel: Contemporary Italian Travel Writing in English Translation*; Patrizia Palumbo, ed., *A Place in the Sun: Africa in Colonial Culture from Post- Unification to Present*; and Jennifer Burns, *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature*.

[46] The concept of "racial prestige" will be taken up again in subsequent chapters. See: *Barbara Sòrgoni, Parole e corpi. Antropologia e discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali interraziali nella colonia Eritrea (1890–1941)*.

> If the construction of an "other" is often a strategy to strengthen the sense of selfhood and sameness, Italian colonial policy soon became a stratagem to reinforce the newly attained national identity. Italy imagined itself unified around an "Italianness" which did not in fact exist within the national territory, where the disparities between the north and the south were blatant and where people identified each other on the basis of regional origins. But colonial propaganda produced a sense of "Italianness" that was strengthened in its juxtaposition with the colonized subject and was shaped around the desire to conquer the other.[47]

As I will discuss again in the next chapter, regional identification was such that when people migrated from the South of Italy to places like the United States, they brought with them racial hierarchies that were already circulating within the peninsula. To consolidate a sense of national propriety or identity, those ideas were utilized to motivate a sense of superior "self" that could be used to bind a national character. Thus, as Derek Duncan notes—citing Barbara Spackman—"Fascism's autarchic ambition moved ever more clearly into the territory of the 'reproductive fantasy' identified [by Spackman] as the regime's sustaining myth," that is, the hierarchy was implemented under the "scientific pretense" that racial categories were anything more than floating signifiers that could be used to political ends, as Italy sorted through its own racial anxieties.[48] These colonial histories have become increasingly central to my project, a study

[47] Romeo, *Rewriting the Nation*, 41.

[48] Derek Duncan, "Secret Wounds: The Bodies of Fascism in Giorgio Bassani's *Dietro la porta*," *Queer Italia*, 192 in which he cites the following article: Barbara Spackman, "Shopping for Autarchy: Fascism and Reproductive Fantasy in Mario Camerini's Grandi magazzini," *Reviewing Fascism: Italian Cinema 1922–1943*, 276–292.

of how contemporary cultural practitioners write back against Manichean labels and tropes, confront the presumption and desire that Italian identity must align with being white and/or European. In his ground-breaking work, *Orientalism* (1978), Edward Said writes that "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self."[49] This may well be axiomatic at this point in scholarship circulating within European, migration, and postcolonial studies, and even tacitly acknowledged by many nation-states, although many have purported to shed the skin of empire. However, with its long-term ignorance and disavowal of its imperial endeavors or its citizens' persistent construction of "colonial benevolence" retained in the slogan *italiani brava gente* ("Italians are good people"), what might be axiomatic elsewhere has informed the Orientalist-informed "Africanist" discourse that helps me think further about Italy's contemporary moment, precisely because of that ostensible banality.

One of the descriptions that Said gives us for the results and processes effected by the institution of "Orientalism" is that

> [it] can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.[50]

[49] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

[50] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

In his paired texts, *Theories of Africans: Francophone Literature and Anthropology in Africa* and *Blank Darkness: Africanist Discourse in French*, Christopher Miller builds from Said (and also Foucault) to situate Africa in relation to the Orient—and thus, of course, Europe—the latter of which concept he says has a "long-prestigious and well-endowed study" in relation to the study of Africa which is "lexically and institutionally" poor.[51] As Said's Orientalism is based on the set of discourses that manages and produces it, Miller notes that it does not actually exist in any true geographic sense, but is rather relative and directional. He therefore sets about differentiating the contours of Africanist discourse from the Orientalist one:

> The Orient is a negative for Europe, conforming to the profile of what Europe thinks Europe is *not*; the opposition is therefore diametrical, producing a single, symmetrical Other. That Other always has a separate identity of its own, an "interior" culture but a culture nonetheless—namely, Islam. The negativity of Orientalism is that it is a fully constituted non-self
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> . . . (15)

Within this purely rhetorical dualistic economy, Miller says there is no room for a third constructed position "endowed with a positive shape of its own," and that "the third entry [Africa] tends to be associated with one side or the other or to be nullified by the lack of an available slot in our intellectual apparatus. It is Africa that was always labelled the 'third part of the world'" (16). Thus, it was often rendered voiceless, a blank repository that

[51] Christopher Miller, *Blank Darkness*, 14.

coalesced into the prehistoric and unknown “dark continent” (23). Miller’s argument can at times be totalizing in a way that Said himself has urged against, having specifically argued that discourses are often rather inconsistent, insofar as there is a “thing” and a “discourse,” a subject and its representation such as “the Orient” and “Orientalism,” the latter being discourses that are negotiated and proliferated to produce the former. Miller’s argument for attention to Africa’s representation as something “positive”—meaning more than something “null” or “unfulfilled and unfulfillable” (23)—is one that still considers Africa in somewhat Africanist terms, rather than disarticulating the already multiple and conflicting Africanist discourses from the individuated histories and colonial economies of African nation states or regions. Nevertheless, his argument is one that furthers the development of theories of multiple “Orientalisms,” various sites that may have geopolitical referents that Western discourse has sought to distinguish from itself and to continue dominating, restructuring, and having authority over them—in Miller’s case, the continent of Africa and all the ontological and epistemological objects produced therein. Understanding Miller’s work is helpful for delineating the stakes and investment for contemporary writers of Italian postcolonial and migration literature. This includes those who share differentiated histories and seek to write back against the mischaracterizations of European anthropologists, military occupiers, and laypeople who uphold Africanist views and deny the connections between Italy and Africa via the Mediterranean.

This was a link that was never tenuous in antiquity. The Romans used to claim the Mediterranean as their "liquid continent" and the surrounding land was a part of the empire as well.[52] The logic of the Romans was that they considered the sea "our sea" then the land (*mare internum*) also belonged to them, because if the sea were also "at land's edge," then it would also include and even surpass the land.[53] Centuries later, the mere *quattro salti* that it would take members of the SGI to feel the universe expanding (*allargar l'universo*), now represents a repository of negative affect and force like resentment, anxiety, despair, and necropower. The once ready embrace of the *distanza di poche ore* is striking in the face of 21st century news reports that reflect an attempted distancing from responsibility and proximity to Africa, as well as utter disinvestment from the significance of non-white and non-European life. Hence, not only does Black or migrant life not "matter," but it also doesn't *mean* in the same way, as it now instigates disinterest—with the bodies of the drowned reduced to ontological receptacles of negative affect and political talking points for the procuring of increased funding for heightened security. We are no longer dealing with an Africanist discourse of *la curiosità. . .di popoli* that led Italy to enthusiastically contribute to the collapse of African kingdoms, to occupy territories and establish colonies to aid in fully asserting itself as a nation-state. While this consideration of

[52] Nicholas Purcell*, The Liquid Continent: A Study of Mediterranean History*.

[53] "At land's edge" is a line from TS Eliot's poem "Dry Salvages" which is quoted in the epigraph and speaks to the spatiotemporal and ideological vastness of the Mediterranean.

the mattering of Black and migrant life echoes the post-2013 #BlackLivesMatter moment—and indeed this project is invested in the mattering of Black life in as capacious and transnational a way as possible—my provocation was initially informed by a passage from Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* that was also published in 2013, a dialogic text in which Athanasiou replies to Butler that "[t]he very question, 'Whose life (and death) matters?' dismantles the ontological presumptions that work to distribute, limit, or eviscerate the possibilities of life in defining the conceptual, epistemological, and political scope of the human" (135). Foucault, by way of Mbembe's necropolitical analysis, is also informative here regarding the stakes of humanity, biology, and control. Mbembe writes:

> In Foucault's formulation of it, biopower appears to function through dividing people into those who must live and those who must die. . .
>
> Operating on the basis of a split between the living and the dead, such a power defines itself in relation to a biological field—which it takes control of and vests itself in. This control presupposes the distribution of human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others. This is what Foucault labels with the (at first sight familiar) term racism. That race (or for that matter racism) figures so prominently in the calculus of biopower is entirely justifiable.[54]

[54] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 16–17.

So, to disrupt the inadequate epistemological claims of arbitrary literary categories and to prioritize the voice of "authentic" Africans to respond to Africanist discourse—though I balk at Miller's insistence upon the concept of "authenticity"—this dissertation focuses primarily on writing in Italian from Black women of East African descent or origin. As such, this project is one which adheres to an abiding attention to the resistances and narratives that are richly entangled with Black femininity. I center my corpus on the study of Black literature in the syncretic geopolitical site of the Mediterranean. There, I emphasize the history and ideological possibilities of postcolonial Italy. This allows me to examine how the forces that drive national projects and genocidal border regimes are fundamentally antiblack in origin and can be revealed and resisted by centering Black works.[55]

This leads me to move into a consideration of and then beyond postcolonial literature—understanding that "postcolonial" as a category of literature has its own analytic baggage that buckles under the Italian case. For example, in Chapter Two, "Black Italianità," I consider how, on the one hand, writings in Italian from authors of Ethiopian descent often resist the category "postcolonial" on technical and ideological grounds. While Abyssinia was occupied by Italy from 1936–41, the territory now known as Ethiopia was, strictly speaking, never colonized by any European power.[56]

[55] On Italy's border regime see Maurizio Albahari, *Crimes of Peace: Mediterranean Migrations at the World's Deadliest Border*.

[56] Alberto Sbacchi, *Legacies of Bitterness: Ethiopia and Fascist Italy, 1935–1941*.

However, writers like Gabriella Ghermandi, who is of Italian and Ethiopian descent, reckon directly with the memory and effects of Italian colonialism and occupation. Ghermandi touches on the impact of representational regimes of sexuality, gender, and race by marking herself as an active rupture from and resistance to Italy's imperial endeavors that affected her genealogy, saying: *Io dico sempre che il colonialismo nella mia famiglia ha creato danni a quattro generazioni di donne, e io sono quella che chiude* ("I always say that colonialism has harmed four generations of women in my family, but the cycle ends with me").[57] These remarks have motivated several guiding questions for this project: What purchase does the "post" in postcolonial have in sites with histories of occupation? What is being unearthed or erased in the ideological shift from "literature of migration" and "migrant literature" to "postcolonial literature in Italian," or "Italian postcolonial literature"? And how might reference to an explicitly Black Italian literary corpus lead us to consider new and resurgent ways to engage Black collectivities, emancipatory practices, and anticolonial standpoints? Critically reading the writings of Black Italians, Italian Africans, Afro-Italians, and Italophone authors of African origin is to explore the radical aperture needed to answer some of those questions. It also relies on those answers to undermine fixed categorizations through ontological kinship, cultural solidarities, and to foment direct outcomes, such as the abolition of Italy's harmful immigration policies.

[57] Daniele Comberiati, *La quarta sponda. Scrittrici in viaggio dall'Africa coloniale all'Italia di oggi*, 157.

With its focus on Black literary production in Italy, this dissertation aims to provide a contribution to scholarship on Black transnational, European, and postcolonial literature more broadly. Moreover, as this project engages with dispossession, Black presences, and Black experiences in the context of the Mediterranean, it also situates the field of Black Studies as a clearly interdisciplinary field devoted to the social landscapes, politics, creations, experiences, and knowledges of people living in the African diaspora. Ranging from the history of enslavement and the Middle Passage, the violent deportation, exploitation, and dispensing of Black labor and lives; to colonialism, the recruitment of African and Afro-Caribbean soldiers during the two World Wars; and the migration and settlement/re-settlement of Black people throughout the African diaspora, Black Studies conceptualizes Black experiences and presences according to various temporalities and terrains. It thereby demonstrates how Blackness is an inherent part of Western modernity and has not only shaped it, but as Cedric Robinson has said, "is the very critique of Western civilization itself."[58]

While these are not "queer" texts in the generally accepted sense regarding non-normative sexualities or gender identities, my comparative analysis relies on a queer of color methodology described in part by Roderick Ferguson in *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique* (2004) as an

[58] See Chuck Morse, "Capitalism, Marxism, and the Black Radical Tradition: An Interview with Cedric Robinson."

> . . .interrogat[ion] of social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices. Queer of color analysis is a heterogeneous enterprise made up of women of color feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer critique. (149)

Taking up Ferguson's useful analytic, I include critiques of Africanism, Black cultural studies, modern anthropology of the Mediterranean and its contemporary critiques, and narrative theories of Black and feminist epistemology. My adapted "heterogeneous enterprise" establishes a theoretical framework that moves towards a queer of color critical praxis, and views reading as both pleasurable and a modality of survival. In so doing, I aim to further link the contemporary struggles around citizenship and the practices and politics of solidarity and belonging that I have identified as integral components of the Black Mediterranean.

While my sources and objects of inquiry are primarily literary, my work is situated within and informed by the interdisciplinary fields of Gender Studies, Mediterranean Studies, Italian Studies, and the Black Studies, especially what is increasingly referred to Black European Studies. The latter is a relatively new field of research in terms of its institutional recognition, one that is still strongly marginalized within European academia, but gaining rapid purchase in North America, particular from white and US/Americanist scholars who study race in Europe comparatively to the United States. The centuries-long history of Black people in Europe is still largely undertheorized. However, since the

1980s, scholars have started to engage systematically with the history and presence of Black people in Europe, while Black social justice movements have also been growing throughout the continent.[59] Black European Studies focuses on the recent and historic presences of Black people and sometimes other racialized peoples (e.g., Romani) in Europe either permanently or temporarily. My dissertation can be considered a part of this field in that I engage with Black experiences and Black cultural production in Europe with a primary focus on contemporary Black and postcolonial literature in Italy, which I discuss in relation to Black Mediterranean politics.[60] All of the fields with which my work is in conversation or to which it contributes are considered interdisciplinary and as such necessitate shuttling across a grid of intelligibility that contains multiple axes along the lines of race, culture, and language.[61] Austrian-British psychoanalyst

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[59] See: May Ayim and the movement of Afro-German women facilitated by Audre Lorde in *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*; Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*; Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche. Der Diskurs um «Rasse» und nationale Identität 1890–1933*; Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," *Identity, Community, Culture Difference*, 222–237; and "New Ethnicities," *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, 441–449.

[60] The scholars who have best defined this field engage primarily in the humanistic social sciences (e.g., Sociology, Anthropology, and History), however there are several scholars of film, literature, and popular culture who help shape these thriving discussions. The countries given the most primacy have been France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, and Germany. A few seminal texts include: Darlene Clark Hine, Trica Danielle Keaton, and Stephen Small, *Black Europe and the African Diaspora*; Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*; Trica Keaton, Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Tyler Edward Stovall, eds., *Black France/France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness*; Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory*, Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche. Der Diskurs um «Rasse» und nationale Identität, 1890–1933*; and *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*.

[61] Here I rely on the concept of "grid of intelligibility" laid out by Gayatri Spivak reading Foucault's conceptualization of power to develop her own explanation of nominalism and the rhetorical device known as catachresis. The grid of intelligibility is related to Foucault's

Melanie Klein suggested that the work of translation is an incessant *shuttle* that is a "life," and I append to that the claim of translation as a method, a strategy without which a politics and project of affirmation would be impossible. In the translator's note for *Little Mother* (2011), the English translation of *Madre piccola* (2007), Giovanna Bellesia-Contuzzi and Victoria Offredi Poletto discuss similarities between their translation process and that of one of the protagonists:

> Domenica Axad, a character whose very name reflects her dual identity, comments on her experience when, as a child, she had to act as translator between her Italian mother and the extended family of her Somali father. She felt a strong responsibility to "ferry across voices that were entrusted to her without the speaker making any effort to adapt them to the receiver." (*xii*; quoted from page 202 in the English translation)

Throughout this dissertation, but especially in the third and fourth chapters, "Scenes of *Meticciato*" and "New Representation Regimes," I examine works that specifically offer instances of new shuttling techniques. However, they do not merely "ferry across voices" in a manner that seeks full recognition or achieves total legibility from those hegemonic forces that deem them "Other." These writers employ multiple narrative forms, multiple voices, and multiple grammars—in the linguistic, ontological, and

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dispositif and refers to a series of discursive and non-discursive practices that are assembled into a field of comprehensibility, an analytic grid of sorts by which we can communicate, understand, perceive and derive knowledge-power. See her article "More on Power/Knowledge" in *The Spivak Reader* on pages 143–151 as well as *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* and her 2000 essay "Translation as Culture."

epistemological sense—and thus actively try to break through the cage of minoritarian literary categorization.[62] They refuse to let their readers forget the hauntingly political position of the historico-cultural, sometimes earnest, and sometimes accusatory question that anxiously races through the arteries of literary criticism: What is literature? The stakes of this question are meant to be high, and have often been used as an "aesthetic" or "canonical" marker rather than a political litmus test, as though those categories are ever mutually exclusive and do not together yield an inextricably linked desire for purity of genre and ethno-racial forms, often white supremacist in nature, ideology, and enforcement. The writers in this study make it possible to take this question seriously by being attentive to Black imaginative works and creative practices. In fact, this is an attempt to re-read Blackness and re-imagine literature in always already geopolitically and transhistorically expansive relation.

I would like to emphasize that Blackness is usually at stake in a way that is individually and collectively a matter of history, affect, and sociopolitics. This is pertinent to a nation like Italy, which has preferred not to refer explicitly to *razza* or "race" in recent years because of its strong association with 20th century fascist ideology. During the latter half of the Fascist period (1938–43), *leggi razziali* or "Italian Racial Laws" were enacted throughout Italy that enforced racial hierarchies that stripped Italian Jews of citizenship, property, and position of state or civil service.

[62] Spillers, "Whatcha Gonna Do?" *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 301.

These laws and the campaign promoting them, including the 1938 manifesto *La difesa della razza* ("The Defense of the Italian Race"), relied on pseudo-scientific and historical documents to insist upon a distinction between Aryan, non-European, and African people, with the Italians falling into the most superior category of Aryan.[63] This was not a unilateral view at the time. Mediterraneanists such as Italian anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi and French historian Fernand Braudel argued in favor of a "Mediterranean race" to which Italians proudly belonged, along with the Berber people in Algeria and others more readily categorized in the contemporary moment as African or Arab.[64] However, Aryanism was the predominant doctrine of the Fascist government about the "Italian race." This still resonates strongly for some Italians who balk at the self-referencing of Black people as *nera/o/** and instead are using the term *di colore* with increasing popularity.[65] The *Accademia della Crusca*, Italy's

[63] See Valentina Pisanty *La difesa della razza. Antologia 1938–1943*; Francesco Cassata, *La difesa della razza*; Giovanni Sale, *Le leggi razziali in Italia e il Vaticano*, 68–73; and Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Aryans and Others: The Fascist War Against the Jews," *Fascist Modernities*, 148–156.

[64] See earlier discussion of Sergi's *The Mediterranean Race* and Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century Volume 1: The Structures of Everyday Life*. Though relative contemporaries, these two men had divergent views on racialization in the Mediterranean. Braudel's articulation of Mediterraneanism allowed him to advocate for the further colonization of North Africa. He argued that it was something that would enable them (specifically, Algerians under French rule) to continue the legacy of the Holy Roman Empire. For more on Braudel's colonial Mediterraneanism see: Paul Silverstein, "Colonization and the Production of Ethnicity." *Algeria in France Transpolitics, Race, and Nation*, 35–75.

[65] The * (asterisk) is used to represent a gender-neutral referent in Italian, which is a grammatically gendered language. When spoken, the *u* (e.g., *neru*) has become adopted as an acceptable ending. It is common to several (mostly Southern) Italian dialects, and is a recent effort to articulate the neuter form or a non-binary/non-gendered subject while also remaining within the broad parameters of the "standard" Italian language and maintaining an oppositional/minoritarian relationship to it.

linguistic academy responsible for tracing, historicizing, and codifying the use of the Italian language on multiple registers, notes:

> Sull'uso di negro, nero e di colore per descrivere e caratterizzare una persona, o un gruppo di persone, in base al colore della sua (o della loro) pelle si è discusso non poco, negli ultimi decenni. E tuttora si continua a discutere, a voler scorrere, in Internet, i forum dedicati al tema. Non è un caso. Perché non vi è dubbio che l'argomento e le connesse scelte linguistiche presentino alcune incertezze e insidie sia sul piano squisitamente lessicale, sia su quello dell'accettabilità o dell'interdizione sociale.[66]

However, on the idea of explicitly naming "race," Anna Curcio and Miguel Mellino, in the introduction to the special issue of *Darkmatter* called "Challenging Italian Racism" (2010), speak to the disavowal and foreclosure of open discussions about race in the public arena in Italy, even within the antiracist movement, especially when it comes to building antiracist practices towards Southerners. They argue that it goes hand in hand with the increase of racial conflict and racist episodes in the country, advocating for more usage of explicit language around/of race to challenge contemporary Italian racism and articulate a nuanced understanding of racialization that is accountable to contemporary Italian history:

[66] Regarding the use of "Negro," "black," and "of color" to describe and characterize a person or a group of people based on the color of his/her (or their) skin has been discussed quite a bit in the last decades. And the discussions are still carrying on, online and in forums dedicated to the topic. This is not by chance. The subject and related language choices undoubtedly present some uncertainties and pitfalls, both on an extremely lexical level and on the level of acceptability or social inhibition. "'Nero' o 'di colore'? Ecco cosa dice la Crusca" Accademia della Crusca, 27 April 2013, http://tinyurl.com/y8s9hr24. Accessed 14 July 2017.

> What we want to stress here is that given the particular historical configurations of the modern nation building process, …the more evident the racial material constitution of Italian society becomes the more violent will be its discursive *foreclosure*, both within and outside the institutional domain. On the Italian scene, then, race could emerge as a *fundamental signifier*, that is as an "operator" of social meaning, practice and subjectivity, only through: (a) the "implosive violence" generated by episodes of "ethnic punitive anxiety". . . driven by what can be defined (following the Lacanian concept of *foreclusion*) as "racial collective deliriums and hallucinations"; or, alternatively, (b) by the political pressure or *enunciations* of *outsider* subjects. We think this is a key feature of contemporary Italian racism.[67]

This recent discussion over which term to use and how to discuss race is happening in conjunction with the rise of various social, activist, and creative collectives of self-identified *nere/i/* italiane/i/** ("Black Italians") as well as writers who explicitly center their work around Black Italian identity.[68] Also circulating are vitriolic claims that "there are no Black Italians," which continue to ring out at sports matches and in piazzas throughout the Republic.[69] In response, some have not only begun using

[67] Anna Curcio and Miguel Mellino, eds., "Introduction to Challenging Italian Racism," *Darkmatter: In the Ruins of Imperial Culture*, http://tinyurl.com/yc7vgdhv. Accessed 22 May 2017.

[68] See: Pap Khouma, *Noi italiani neri. Storie di ordinario razzismo*, and Igiaba Scego, dir. *Black Italians*. RAI – Radio 3, 16–30 November 2010.

[69] Tesfamichael, Yonas. "Negro, nero o di colore" *YouTube,* commentary by Yonas Tesfamichael, 22 May 2015, http://tinyurl.com/y9evm577; The Facebook social group "Neri Italiani - Black Italians (NIBI)" https://www.facebook.com/neritaliani/. For a discussion of the reception of Black Italians in national sports, see: Mauro Valeri, *Black Italians: Atleti neri in maglia azzurra* and Karon, Tony. "Scoring the Goals That Sank Germany, Balotelli Says It Loud: He's Black, Italian and Proud," *Keeping Score: Time Magazine Sports Blog*, 29 June 2012, http://tinyurl.com/y7av9dts. Accessed 18 February 2013.

the term “Black” as a self-descriptor in Italian, but have done so with intention, mindful of the distinction they are making in that choice. Take, for example, former Minister of Integration with the Democratic Party (PD) Cécile Kashetu Kyenge during her first speech on diversity and her new cabinet position:

> Sono nera e italo-congolese e ci tengo a sottolinearlo. Dentro di me ci sono due paesi. Non sono di colore, sono nera, lo dico con fierezza” dichiara nella sua prima conferenza stampa, sottolineando la necessità di “cominciare ad usare le parole giuste.[70]

Kyenge, like many other Black Italians, rejects the language of “person of color,” a decision that is itself another testament to the heterogeneity of Blackness. The term in the United States was explicitly mobilized by Black women to empower multiracial coalitions and foster solidarity between those who were not racialized as white and experienced racisms and racialized forms of oppression. It was not intended to be used in lieu of Black, though it is increasing rendered politically sterile and ahistorically resignified as the “politically correct” terminology for non-white racialized groups.[71] That is the version that has unfortunately travelled the most, and the version that Kyenge and other Black Italians have sought to reject. This

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[70] “‘I am Black and Italo-Congolese, and it’s important to underline that. There are two countries within me. I'm not “of color,” I'm black, and I say it with pride,’ she states in her first press conference, stressing the need to ‘start using the right words.’” “Kyenge, la fierezza del ministro: “Sono nera e l’Italia non è un paese razzista.” *Il fatto quotidiano*, 3 May 2013, http://tinyurl.com/c8ozppf. Accessed 9 May 2013.

[71] See: Trudy, “Black or Person of Colour? Both. But Still Black,” *Gradient Lair*, 27 July 2013, http://tinyurl.com/y7mpp5pz. Accessed 30 September 2016. Western States Center. “The Origin of the Phrase ‘Woman of Color.’” Excerpt from a Conversation with Loretta Ross, 15 Feb 2011. http://tinyurl.com/kr8jdvc. Accessed 30 September 2016.

sense is equated more to the offensive or colonial “colored person” used in recent history to refer to mixed race people in South Africa and to Black people in North America.

This study aims to sustain the complexity of Blackness in Italy while also being consistent about the critical distinctions regarding who or what is Italian and who or what is Black/Blackness. These questions are first taken up in Chapter Two, “Black Italianità,” which summarizes the “canon” of Italian migrant literature and some of the scholarship surrounding it; reflects on the notion of citizenship in the Italian Republic; and describes the national reality of contemporary Italy as being bound to a simultaneously colonial and fascist imaginary that has managed to rearticulate its past as “merely” fascist rather than also colonial. This subsequently absolves Italy and erases its need to account for its colonial history. This historical entanglement matters and becomes revealed and repurposed by authors like the Somali Italian writer Igiaba Scego, whose protagonist in the story *Salsicce* (2005) resists the dispossession of her identities and clings instead to cultural memory and an avowed claim to the autonomy of her own identification. Throughout Chapter Two, I attest to the origins of *letteratura migrante*, position my project in relation to the field of Italian postcolonial studies, but more firmly as Black Italian Studies, where both “Black” and “Italian” are epistemologically key, simultaneously called into question, and not taken for granted.

The questions about the possibilities of/for Italian(ness) reach a fever pitch in the case of authors and protagonists navigating “mixed” racial

and interreligious identities, as are those under study in the third chapter, "Scenes of *Meticciato*." In her 2010 memoir, *La mia casa è dove sono*, Igiaba Scego writes: *Essere italiani a ben vedere significa far parte di una frittura mista. Una frittura fatta di mescolanze e contaminazioni. In questa frittura io mi sento un calamaro molto condito* ("Being Italian means being a part of a fish fry. A dish made up of mixtures and contaminations. In this fry, I feel like well seasoned calamari") (159). "Scenes of *Meticciato*" offers close readings of Ubah Cristina Ali Farah's *Madre piccola* (2007) and Igiaba Scego's short story *Identità* (2008). The chapter surveys the fundamental issue of "mixedness" in postcolonial Italy by discussing *meticciato* as a narrative framework, as an historico-biological category, and as a contemporary cultural experience that shines a light on the false promise of national citizenship. I read several texts by three Italian-identified authors of East African descent from which a theory of *meticciato* as a multimodal analytic can be derived, in a way that destabilizes the twinned regimes of colonial logics of incorporation and translation. Within those logics is the question of religion. Thus, in this chapter, I briefly explore how religion and religiosity operate in the lives of these writers and the characters in their stories. In Italy, Catholicism has such a profound relationship with every aspect of Italian life, even for those who do not practice it. Furthermore, Christianity has historically affected any conversation about citizenship.[72] In the novels presented in most of the

[72] Paolo Ballero Pes, "Meticciato e legislazione."

texts, interreligious couples are also mixed race, and the question of religious appears repeatedly throughout much of this corpus. For example, in *Madre piccola*, Domenica Axad's white Italian mother marries her black Somali father and moves with him to Somalia to raise her. Domenica says of her estranged mother's choice that

> Oggi io credo che, così come lo era stato il non apprendere pienamente la lingua somala, la religione fosse un tentativo di custodire la propria identità, di preservarla dalla confusione. Io invece continuavo a oscillare nell'attribuire la mia devozione: studiavo il Corano, facevo il Ramadan per qualche ora insieme ai miei cugini e, contemporaneamente, accompagnavo a messa la mamma. (237)[73]

On the other hand, the Muslim Somali parents also sought to preserve their children's identities from contamination by the Catholic faith, from becoming like the *ciyaal missioni*, mixed-race and often orphaned children who were sent to be raised by nuns in Catholic boarding schools:

> Tra suor Ernestina e i nostri genitori vigeva un tacito accordo che era quello di non mescolare, durante le ore di lezione, le sillabe ai discorsi religiosi; poiché i nostri padi erano musulmani e ciò che più temevano era che crescessimo disadattate come i *ciyaal missioni*. (227, Ital.)[74]

[73] "Today I am convinced that her reason for not learning Somali, and her religious belief, were both attempts to protect her identity, to somehow preserve it in the middle of that confusion. I, instead, continued to switch from one to the other: I studied the Koran, I observed Ramadan for a few hours with my cousins, and, at the same time, I accompanied my mother to mass." (205)

[74] "Sister Ernestina and our parents had a tacit agreement that during our classes she was not to mix syllables and religion since our fathers were Muslims and what they feared most was that we might grow up estranged like the *ciyaal missioni* [mission children]." (196, Eng)

This project considers the relevance of religious contestations in Italy, the impact of religion on linguistic particularity, the politics of who or what can and cannot be mixed (in terms of gender, race, sexuality, and religious customary practices), and how both religion and the secular are mobilized in conversations around citizenship.

Thus, while my primary interest is in the Italian and Italophone writings of contemporary authors of African descent, I also wish to acknowledge that the ability to resist the bind of the Saidian paradox, and even the one posed by Miller in his desire for "authenticity"—wherein, even if one wishes to "write back" from the a space discursively construed by the West, it is automatically ineffective as that space began as a subjugated construct by an amalgamation of Western ideologies that created it—is a galvanizing one at the core of this dissertation. As another claim on that "real unrealness" ascribed to Said's explanation that Orientalism is not pointing to a real place, authors Macoggi and Ghermandi manage to reject the legacy of colonialism even as they speak to the material effects of both colonization and occupation in reality.[75] Their writings are beholden to an understanding of identity politics, but also claim a futurity of mixed/Black identity that is not mired in post-/colonial politics, while remaining attentive to their histories. These authors resist "politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively" the multiplicities of their existence, struggles, and contradictions.[76] Without

[75] Said, *Orientalism,* 13.

[76] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 3.

presuming to transfer wholesale the idea of Orientalism from one set of cultural, political, and ontological specificities to another, it has been helpful to contextualize the concept of Africanism and see parallels between the axes of "East" and "West." "Europe" and "Africa," or "Italy" and "East Africa" in particular. While there are many national and cultural contexts from which to tease out those resonances and upend toxic paradigms cultivated by biopolitical and discursive processes such like Orientalism and Africanism, Italy's fraught history of internal political unification, its position in the European cultural imaginary, its complex geopolitics with/in the Mediterranean, and its fraught "occupation" with Africa—in multiple senses—make it one of the more powerful examples.[77]

Chapter Four, "New Representation Regimes," concludes this dissertation. The *meticciato* described in the third chapter is mobilized here as radical, anarchic, and collective. I analyze Carla Macoggi's *Kkeywa. Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011) and discuss the Wu Ming collective politics, beginning with the Luther Blissett Project under this rubric. They fundamentally challenge the boundaries of narrative, state recognition, consumerist individualism, and the limits of proprietary or singular literary production. Italian citizenship and the literary canon are queered by the Black Radical Tradition, which fosters full use of Black imaginative practices, including an abolitionist vision that sees a world without border regimes that acknowledges the Mediterranean as a site of cultural

[77] See: Rhiannon Welch, *Vital Subjects: Race and Biopolitics in Italy*.

syncretism and radical possibility rather than also a watery grave and site of dispossession, abjection, and a receptacle of memory.

At the end of *Black Skins, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon asks: "In this world, do I have to pose the problem of black truth?" (178). In my view, the writings under study here draw upon several grids of intelligibility to actively renounce the thinly veiled myth-as-fact of a homogenous (that is, monoracial or monocultural) Italian identity and usher in a more just world. I have been suggesting throughout this introduction that this project is above all a work of affirmation, and I mean to take that claim quite seriously. Affirmation does not assume the agency of another. Rather, it seeks to confirm and corroborate one's shared truth. In liturgy, it is a moment in which what we believe is held in direct tension with the beliefs of those we believe lack our truth. I take that under advisement along with the idea of "black truth" that Fanon laments.

"To affirm," then, is quite a strong proclamation and a deeply ethical project. To do it justice requires lifelong commitment and critical attention. The study of Black Italy is the primary aspect of my project, one that continues to forge these links between the historic and the literary imagination in the hopes of agitating cultural and political change. Africa's sociopolitical and formations also contribute a great deal to these writers' works. However, due to current inadequacies in terms of historical and linguistic competency from my Westernized standpoint, Italy colonizes a much larger part of this project even as I aim to resist reducing Africa to a foil or point of departure. *L'Italia Meticcia: Being and Belonging in the Black*

Mediterranean aims to contribute to the flourishing literary criticism on postcolonial and Black literary production in Italy while taking issue with the striking gap in the literature when it comes to anticolonial and fundamentally Black radical critique in relation to the social and legal conditions the authors are emphasized as important reasons for the emergence of Blackness in the Italian public arena. The fact is, there are Black Italians, and this work is completed in total solidarity and in their honor, in aspiration for our collective radical future(s).

— TWO —

BLACK ITALIANITÀ

Continuano a definirci immigrati di seconda generazione.
Lo vedo scritto ovunque in questi giorni. Immigrati da dove?
Dal ventre di nostra madre?
— Igiaba Scego, "Siamo ancora pecore nere"[78]

This chapter thinks about citizenship and cultural belonging with a reading of the short story *Salsicce* ("Sausages") by Black Italian writer Igiaba Scego. Scego's writing is the paradigm of a proliferating body of writing that challenges the universalist claims of Italy's complicity with Western cultural ideology, affirming the necessity to reclaim, for the marginalized "Other," the power of self-definition, self-representation, and historical agency. This literature helps me to argue the affirmational ambitions of this dissertation and to demonstrate how this body of writing helps us make sense of Italian sociopolitics. This story, written over a decade ago, still resonates strongly with the frenzied contemporary discourse around immigration, religion, biometrics, and belonging. *Salsicce* and some of the other writings analyzed throughout this dissertation project remain tethered to a genre labeled alternately as *letteratura migrante*, *letteratura della migrazione*, or *letterature della seconda generazione*. The genre used to be known more consistently as Italophone literature before the term was problematized by Graziella Parati in *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (2005), for not attending to the

[78] Igiaba Scego, "Siamo ancora pecore nere." *Internazionale*, 21 January 2015. http://tinyurl.com/yafzab87. Accessed 26 August 2017.

multilingualism and linguistic mediation of Italian migration literature. Some of these terms are a bit reductive by design—like most terms that try to qualify difference—but some also have been particularly useful in pointing out the challenge that these works present to the Italian canon. Parati has stated that the terms "homogenize categories that are fragmented and filled with contradictions" where migrants are strictly relegated outside of the tradition of Italian literary production (202). In her forthcoming survey, "Italian Postcolonial Literature," Caterina Romeo assesses the pros and cons of labelling these writings as "migration literature" and how they relate to deeper questions of assimilation and circulation:

> On the one hand, keeping this literature in a separate sphere for over twenty-five years from its inception, rather than allowing it to "simply" join with Italian literature, may be deemed problematic: this could be viewed as a neocolonial practice through which subjects coming from different histories, geographies, languages, and cultures are homogenized on the basis of their difference from mainstream culture, with this difference thus becoming the least common denominator of what is actually a profoundly heterogeneous literature. On the other hand, the label of "migration literature" initially endowed writers with a certain strength in the publishing market, combining their desire to tell their stories with the curiosity their destination country had for their past and present lives and allowing their writings to emerge as a new cultural movement. Being grouped under one label and sacrificing internal differences has placed migrant and second-generation writers in the position to perform cultural and political resistance by showing Italian readers the condition of

> marginalization in which they used to and still live, and by advocating their rights to legally migrate to Italy.[79]

This kind of resistance today is more necessary than ever when considering the Mediterranean's reputation as one of the world's deadliest seas and border crossings, each year being more murderous than the last. For context, what follows is a brief discussion about the changing legal climate around Italian citizenship and then continue onto the state of postcolonial literary production in Italy.

In the last few years, there has been concerted effort to push for an update in Italian legislation on immigration issues. That effort has really intensified in mid-2017, as we are seeing policies begin to progressively address the problem of citizenship for immigrants and their progeny. Italy is moving beyond the two binary possibilities of *ius sanguinis*—the "law of blood," which is based on kinship and accords the citizenship only to those who are of Italian descent—and *ius soli*—the "law of the earth," which accords the citizenship to those who were born in Italy irrespective of their parents' citizenship—as legal consensus is instead slowly shifting towards a broader, more refined and realistic understanding of the right to citizenship, a sort of *ius culturae*, or "law of culture." In an op-ed piece in *La Stampa* from 2012, the Italian Minister of International Cooperation and Integration, Professor Andrea Riccardi, suggested the *ius culturae* compromise because of his belief that Italians are considered Italian because of shared culture, lifestyle, and values that people can possess

[79] Caterina Romeo, "Italian Postcolonial Literature," *California Italian Studies* (forthcoming).

and identify in relation to Italy. Therefore, it followed for him that immigrants should be accorded citizenship under the same logic: they should become Italian—or rather, be afforded citizenship and considered legally Italian—if they were able to share in the Italian lifestyle, its values, and its culture.

Even in 2012, the dichotomy between *ius sanguinis* and *ius soli* was more nuanced than how it is usually depicted: immigrants could already become Italian, though after a sustained period of legal residency in Italy (at least 10 years). And now, after much political debate, legal compromise has proven partially effective: on 13 October 2015, the Italian lower parliamentary chamber voted "yes" on a new law recognizing Italian citizens on the grounds of "tempered" *ius soli* or *ius culturae*, rather than *ius sanguinis* outright. This means that if they were born in Italy the children of non-EU nationals, where at least one of the parents has a regular residency permit, can be registered as Italian citizens—either by their parents from birth or on their own when they reach the age of consent (18, in Italy). Included in this proposition are children who have attended Italian schools for at least five years. The new law has since gone to the Senate where it has faced vociferous debate and resistance over the last two years. However, hope remains that it might soon pass in another compromised form, perhaps with further restrictions.

While its passage would undoubtedly be a boon for many immigrants in Italy, offering more rights to systemically marginalized individuals—particularly children who were politically more palatable for an Italian public and would benefit most directly—these new policies bring

forth new questions and, in some cases, exacerbate old ones. While a "special citizenship test" has been proposed, it is not so clear, for example, how *ius culturae* criteria could be uniformly applied: how could one measure the level of an immigrant's cultural integration? What are "Italian values" and who are the ultimate arbiters of this moralistic cultural litmus test? As *Salsicce* will show, the question of religion and religious difference are important to this question. As Islamophobia is on the rise globally, the relationship between Catholic values and the State can make Muslim religious identity feel incommensurate with Italian identity. How does this seemingly inclusive policy, this codification and banalization of Italian cultural values that merit citizenship facilitate the continued dispossession and displacement of those who remain outside of the its framework of possibility, and thus that of the project known as "Europe" writ large? And lastly, how does this mask the overtly universalist colonial framework through which rights are bestowed based on cultural, political, and racial attachments? *Ius soli temperato* explicitly excludes pathways to citizenship for asylum seekers, those on temporary visas, or those with otherwise precarious status. October 2015, the month that *ius soli temperato* passed through the Italian Chamber of Deputies, marked the one-year anniversary of the coast guard operation known as *Operazione Mare Nostrum*, and the two-year anniversary of some of the deadliest shipwrecks off the coast off Italy in recent years. The people drowned—and drowning—in the Mediterranean will not soon have access to the modest improvements to Italian citizenship, even if they do come to pass. Perhaps another

orientation is required, one that does not look to state recognition, but considers an otherwise—a new coalitional practice that can be thought via the Mediterranean's shores rather than national borders and economics-driven valuation of human life from within and without.

These problematic aspects notwithstanding, this has been a major step forward in terms of immigration, integration, and citizenship, issues that have several counterparts in other European states and that have prompted great epistemic and ideological questions about the European supranational project, particularly in the wake of Brexit and the rise (or re-emergence) of right-wing populist governments throughout the European Union. Writings codified under the literature of migration, postcolonial literature, and Black women's writing in Italian engage meaningfully with these questions. Through them, I can analyze the broader theoretical implications of citizenship, interculturality, and mixed racial and ethnocultural attachments as that which can expand the contours of what we know, in the contemporary context, as Italy and Italianness. I aim to connect multiple themes and theories of citizenship, multiculturalism, interculturality, mixed collectivity, and Black critique. Postcolonial Italian writings, as well as their attendant critiques from Black and postcolonial studies, offers the most useful theoretical framework to reflect the heterogeneity of subjectivity and articulates difference as central to, rather than a subsidiary of, citizenship, identity, and the larger colonial enterprise. Thus, throughout this dissertation, and animating its very existence, is the amplification of questions that have high stakes in contemporary Italian

sociopolitics, questions that arose with Riccardi's statements on cultural integration such as: "who is Italian?" or "what is Italian" and even "where or when is Italian(ness) possible?" There are nuances to how and which people in Italy—including writers—are categorized as migrant, and how their literary and other cultural production have been assessed within the complex realities evoked by these questions. It also situates the regional and migrant Italian culture in relation to the emergence of "antiblackness" as an ideology about the global South and the perceived threat posed to national unity by mobile/migrant populations. This is pivotal to understanding the relationship between Italy and *alterità* ("otherness"). Italy lives a condition said to have been experienced long ago by other empires, but this "repetition" is of course particular.[80] In a dilemma continued from Massimo D'Azeglio's concerns about "making Italy," the nation is perceived to inhabit the dialectical space that is both part and not part of the First World, simultaneously advanced and belated in terms of European modernity, due to the existence of this Southern Question, which can be taken to interpellate elements of gender and racialized nonbelonging.[81]

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[80] Sandra Ponzanesi deftly makes the case for the differentiation of Italian imperialism and the subsequent postcolonial response from other European empires like the British or the French in her essay, "The Postcolonial Turn in Italian Studies," *Postcolonial Italy*, 51–69.

[81] This thread stems in part from Stephanie Malia Hom's essay, "On the Origins of Making Italy: Massimo D'Azeglio and '*Fatta l'Italia, bisogna fare gli Italiani*.'" In that essay, she discussed the famous lament often misattributed to Massimo D'Azeglio: *Pur troppo s'è fatta l'Italia, ma non si fanno gl'Italiani* "Unfortunately, Italy has been made, but they have yet to make Italians." Malia Hom notes that the historical significance of this quote and its reappropriations are counter to the reality and intentions of D'Azeglio, who rather spoke of an Italian *national character* which reveal other possibilities for national identification and the forging of a citizenry. Writes Malia Hom: "In this case, it is only after Italians are

While still often seen as a relatively recent phenomenon, a hierarchized understanding of race and racialization in Italy began to develop centuries ago, as demonstrated by Cedric Robinson's scholarship in *Black Marxism*, discussed in the previous chapter. The influence of intra-Mediterranean, North African, and East African migration heavily impacted that understanding before and during the colonial period. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller contend in the introduction to their edited volume, *Italian Colonialism* (2005), "although Italian colonialism was more restricted in geographical scope and duration than the French and British empires, it had no less an impact on the development of metropolitan conceptions of race, national identity, and geopolitical imaginaries" (2). Colonial policies and the postcolonial aftermath in Italy attempted to create a national identity reinforced by imperialism and racism to combat the country's fragmentation, seen most clearly through geopolitical/regional divides. Italy's current multiculturalism has often been explained in terms of the impact of recent unprecedented immigration into Italy as an engine of tremendous social change.[82] This narrative goes that immigration has

made that Italy will make itself" (4). This is currently reinforced with the notion of migrants to Italy having the "permanent characteristic" of immigrant. Stephanie Malia Hom, "On the Origins of Making Italy: Massimo D'Azeglio and 'Fatta l'Italia, bisogna fare gli Italiani,'" *Italian Culture* 31(1), 1–16.

[82] See: Graziella Parati, "Introduction," *Mediterranean Crossroads: Migration Literature in Italy*, 13–32; Lucia Quaquarelli, *Narrazione e migrazione*; Alessandro Dal Lago, *Non persone: L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*; Grace Russo Bullaro, *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema*; Beverly Allen and Mary Russo, eds. *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*; Norma Bouchard, "Reading the Discourse of Multicultural Italy: Promises and Challenges of Transnational Italy in an Era of Global Migration;" and Alessandro Triulzi, "Displacing the Colonial Event: Hybrid Memories of Postcolonial Italy."

so changed the face of Italy that the assumption is that it is no longer possible to assume a monoracial or monocultural Italian national character. Quite the opposite in fact; Italy can now only be viewed as an emerging multicultural nation—despite vehement right-wing insistence to the contrary and generalized assumptions that persist concerning racial and ethnohomogeneity.

While race and racism have fundamentally shaped the founding, ideologies, and practices of the Italian Republic, race is not explicitly considered a category of social, political, and economic inequality and subordination in this ideological and constitutional context for reasons discussed in the first chapter.[83] Nevertheless, significant debates on the issues of race and racism have taken place in the Italian public sphere since the late 1990s, with increased more attention being paid to racial discrimination in Italy. Most scholars agree on the emergence of migration literature as the response to both the killing of South African refugee Jerry Masslo in Villa Literno (a bit north of Naples) in August of 1989 and to the first law that regulated immigration, Act 39, also known as the Martelli Law, which was enacted in 1990). Several autobiographical accounts from migrants were published in the wake of these sociopolitical upheavals, many of which were written *a quattro mani* or "with four hands." This refers to the use of a ghostwriter or a work written in collaboration between the author and a native Italian journalist, editor, or translator to whom the story

[83] See discussion on pp. 38–44.

was dictated and eventually published—usually with significant editing and aesthetic changes to the "autobiographical" texts and explicit co-writer credit.[84] Works written *a quattro mani* were often co-produced via French, the shared mutual language between Italian journalists working throughout Mediterranean nations and migrant writers from countries in West Africa like Senegal or Togo. Some of these initial authors and texts, which were all published in 1990, include: Pap Khouma's *Io, venditore di elefanti: Una vita per forza fra Dakar, Parigi e Milano*; Mario Fortunato and Salah Methnani's *Immigrato*; and Mohamed Bouchane's *Chiamatemi Alì*.

The Martelli Law dealt with immigration as an issue that needed to be curtailed based on the economic needs of the country, ascribing a quota of possible legal immigrants that could be issued depending on the fluctuating job market. The law held provisions of amnesty for business and trade organizations that employed non-Italian workers but did not stipulate or provide legal means of entry for those workers or any other category of migrant. This set the tone for future immigration laws that sought to regulate the economy rather than provide pathways for permanent legal residency. The pressure to regulate the economy came from within Italy as well as eventually from other supranational governing bodies, such as the Schengen Area (which currently promotes limited border and customs restrictions for about 25 European nation states). The

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[84] Jennifer Burns notably discussed the relationship to authorship and the status of these works as literature/literary in "Borders within the Text: Authorship, Collaboration and Mediation in Writing in Italian by Immigrants," *Borderlines: Migrant Writing and Italian Identities (1870–2000)*, 387–94.

governing board of the Schengen Area demanded stricter immigration laws from Italy before the nation could enter into the Schengen Agreement. This resulted in the Turco-Napolitano Law, Law No. 40, enacted in March 1998.[85]

The last two decades of the twentieth century witnessed the arrival in Europe of an unprecedented wave of migrants from economically disadvantaged countries—due to war, colonial interference and underdevelopment, or civil unrest, from Africa, Asia, South America, and Eastern Europe. This large-scale phenomenon touched many of the northern industrial nations, such as Italy, which experienced a significant wave of emigration roughly between 1870 and 1925.[86] The unexpected exuberance of the migratory wave produced a corollary of repercussions in different areas of Italian society. A significant contingent of these immigrants moved through, and eventually settled in, the Italian peninsula, producing a series of economic and social transformations and, simultaneously, a fierce political debate about the merit of value of these immigrants akin to *la questione meridionale* or "the Southern Question" commonly described as being about the perceived backwardness and unindustrialized state of Southern Italian regions, a perception which took hold around the time of Italian unification and was theorized by Southern

[85] Al-Azar, Rima. "Italian Immigration Policies: The Metaphor of Water." *The SAIS Europe Journal*. 1 April 2006. http://tinyurl.com/ybwrd33m. Accessed 16 August 2017.

[86] See: Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*; Caterina Romeo and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Postcolonial Italy*; and Beverly Allen and Mary Russo, eds. *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*.

intellectual and Marxian scholar Antonio Gramsci. The consideration of *la questione meridionale* is dialectically relevant to the question and presence of diasporic subjects from the Global South (known as *migranti*, *immigrati*, *post-migrant*, *rifugiati*, asylum seekers, *seconde generazioni*).

Pasquale Verdicchio writes in the "Preclusion of Postcolonial Discourse in Southern Italy," that said preclusion has been due to a "characterization of postcoloniality almost purely in terms of problematic designations of white versus non-white, or First versus Third World" (191). But the category of "race," as Veridicchio demonstrates using the case of the Italian migrants in the United States, is much more ambiguous and contingent upon various elements than a strict black-white color binary would afford, since processes of racialization are not always dependent uniquely on apparently self-evident phenotypical difference. Verdicchio readily defines Southern Italians as "unrecognized postcolonials" (ivi), and constructs a very useful framework for the consideration of Southern Italy through a diasporic and postcolonial lens.[87]

On the one hand, while the government was attempting to contain the phenomenon and to regulate the presence of the immigrants within the geopolitical boundaries of Italy, the new arrivals were perceived with apprehension in both the public and in the private spheres, if not with open hostility (e.g., verbal antagonism, physical violence, and even murder).[88]

[87] Pasquale Verdicchio, "The Preclusion of Postcolonial Discourse in Southern Italy," *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, 191–212.

[88] The following is an abridged list of victims of racist killings in Italy since 1985 Pateh Sabally, Victory Uwangue, Emmanuel Chidi Nnamdi, Loveth Edward, Favor Nike Adekunle, Samb Modou, Diop Mor, Kwadwo Owusu Wiafe, Eric Affun Yeboa, Justice

On the other hand, the widespread scandals involving the mainstream political parties had produced general discontent and had favored the re-emergence of strong regional identities that were co-opted by political movements such as the Lega Nord (Northern League) and the Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Star Movement) to signal exclusive economic, social, and cultural boundaries. The promotion of such ethno-democracies has been further fueled by the general anxieties felt in some sectors of Italian society regarding the accessibility of economic and welfare resources and by the widespread distrust of a social state often accused of chronic mismanagement and corruption. Thus, as Mark Betz observes, while distinctions were made on a quotidian level, concerning mass immigration, the perception of migrants to Italy was left deliberately undifferentiated by some Northern Italians, "filtered through a small number of symbolic categories that have been used variously to refer to both non-Europeans and Southern Italians," such as Albanians, Romani, Chinese, or Polish, and of course "Africans," which reaffirmed existing stereotypes and degenerated into moral discrimination and cultural marginalization.[89] Reports of racism and xenophobia have been on the rise as well, testifying to the climate of growing exasperation and antagonism facing the generally unprepared population, while it was gradually becoming clear

Sonny Abu, Julius Francis Kwame Antwi, Karim Yabuku, Ibrahim Muslim, Abdul "Abba" Salam Guibre, Jerry Masslo, Giacomo Valent, Ahmed Ali Giama. This does not include the many other names of those found dead under suspicious or unconfirmed circumstances, or the thousands that may remain nameless, lost to the Mediterranean Sea. *Pronunciamo i loro nomi*. We say their names.

[89] Mark Betz, *Beyond the Subtitle: Remapping European Art Cinema*, 175–176.

that the nation was experiencing an unanticipated and unwelcome alteration of its social fabric. I shift my terminology from immigrant to migrant, because my overall project aims to productively point out epistemological affinities between those who travel from outside of the geopolitical boundaries of Italy and those who do not. Many scholars continue to note the similarities between poor Southern Italians and migrants to Italy, but at this point it more than likely does a disservice in confining both groups to the margins of Italian/European society, relegating those two categories equal and synonymous as white, which we've been seeing has not always been the case.

Italy's *letteratura migrante* has been forged in this tumultuous moment. The category of migrant literature in Italy is still a fairly nascent one—just over a quarter of a century old. However, there is a growing body of writing in this genre, which again has gone through several phases and matured aesthetically.[90] While it has contended with various forms, undergone much expansion, and grown in depth and complexity, this literature has always been, at least on the part of its writers of African descent, an exploration of themes like arrival, belonging, intercultural difference, historical consciousness, and cultural memory, and for many

[90] For scholars who give detailed accounts of *letterature migrante* and its development from 1990 to the present, see: Daniele Comberiati, ed. *La quarta sponda. Scrittrici in viaggio dall'Africa coloniale all'Italia di oggi*; Roberto Derobertis, ed., *Fuori centro. Percorsi postcoloniali nella lettereatura italiana*; Graziella Parati, ed., *Mediterranean Crossroads, Migration Literature in Italy*; Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture*; Caterina Romeo, "Italian Postcolonial Literature;" Fulvio Pezzarossa and Ilaria Rossini, eds., *Leggere il testo e il mondo. Vent'anni di scritture della migrazione in Italia*; among many others.

from North Africa and the Horn, sociopolitics of the postcolonial political moment between Italy and its formerly occupied or colonized states. This has included contemporary political struggles for Italian immigrants and their families and often recalls the periods comprising that of Italian Unification (*Risorgimento*) and Italian colonialism. The narratives, often set in scenes of transit—be it from the protagonist's arrival in Italy or, in some cases, their return to Africa—reveal the difficulties of social integration, describe the multiple dimensions of economic exploitation, and problematize the psychological crises produced by an oftentimes degrading encounter with Europe. These narratives reveal and add "thickness," to use Sara Ahmed's term, to the intersecting strands of race, gender, and ethnicity that help constitute a national Italian discourse. However, to read any of the works in the corpus of Italian postcolonial literature or is subset of Black Italian literary production as "Italian" or "African" novels alone is to misread them as one-dimensional narratives of assimilation and progress that do not resist hegemonic nationalisms. Igiaba Scego, like the other Italian of African descent writers under consideration here, contributes to contemporary and postcolonial literature by engaging in literary discourses that complicate the very idea of national categorization, of literature and of individuals.

Many instances of the Italian literature of migration are written from a first person point of view, with so-called "semi-autobiographical" content, a description critics have claimed does a disservice to the genre being advocated for as literature or even literary. In these narratives, cultural

realities complicate the understanding of the autobiographical experience, engendering a critical discourse on the complex interrelation of dominant and subaltern culture, language, power and agency, "deterritorialization," and resistance.[91] Writing the immigrant existence and the experience of *meticciato* or mixed-identity has problematized the exchange of diverse cultural and political identity forms, while the anamnesis of the past becomes an attempt to transcend the self-effacement produced by years of colonialist violence.

I am interested in attempting to decipher the different instances of identity formation that help establish national affinities. The postcolonial women writers—some of whom were born in Italy but still bear the moniker "migrant writer"—redefine the prescriptive forms of citizenship, belonging, and difference based on national origin and heritage. Movements between and across borders are not just geographical or territorial, since population movements always imply migrations of identities and ideologies. Thus, the spaces narrated by migrants and "post-migrants"—spaces of departure, crossing, and arrival—do not present the nation as a bounded

[91] For Gilles Deleuze, deterritorialization is a process that "leads to an undermining of nation states and democracies in a drive toward turning the globe into one large consumerist collective." Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Œdipus*. This is a concept developed in psychoanalytic theory that has been taken up and widely disseminated in the fields of sociology, literature, and anthropology to refer to shifting cultures and delinking the relationship between culture or cultural objects and the place where it was developed. This was most notably explained in John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* and Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 27–47. Speaking of the South Asian context (e.g., Sikhs, Hindus, Pakistanis), Appadurai says that deterritorialization is also at the core of most fundamentalisms, and should be used to think about displacement and the globalization of culture, rather than its homogenization (38).

geographical unit but instead as an ideological force. The ideological force that is "Italian identity" as represented in the Italian literary and political landscape has been subjected to rapid change as a result of global movement, through which bodies, nations, and subjectivities are linked in cultural, economic, and political ways. This literature demands a reconsideration of how Italian history has been written and historical memory handed down, while at the same time it offers new perspectives on contemporary Italian society and culture, and suggests the need for a comparative and transnational analysis of postcolonial literatures in Europe and around the world. Emerging parallel to this in Italy is the literature of "second-generation Italians," written by Italian citizens of foreign origin who construct their own sense of identity at the intersection of their community of origin, Italian society, and phenomena linked to the globalization of production and culture. Since they are familiar with the Italian language and culture, these authors promote linguistic experiments—including street language, languages of origin, Italian dialects, and multimedia languages in their texts—and "hybridize" literary genres—mixing together "high" and popular culture, literary forms of their countries of origin and destination—in search of forms of expression that give voice to changing social and cultural conditions.[92]

[92] See: Graziella Parati and Marie Orton, eds., *Multicultural Literature in Contemporary Italy*; Simone Brioni, *The Somali Within: Language, Race and Belonging in 'Minor' Italian Literature*; Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver, and Federico Faloppa, eds. *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*; and Loredana Polezzi, "Questioni di lingua: fra traduzione e autotraduzione." *Leggere il testo e il mondo*, 15–31.

Most nation states (in Europe and beyond) cling in some sense to a set of myths and assumptions about its origin story or national character, and Italy in this way is no different than other nation states, in terms of geo-cultural self-positioning. However, those with a history of colonization tend to reckon with and absolve that bleak history by differing means. As a state, Italy's attempts have often been to render that history utterly contemporary, and that belief is still widely maintained by laypeople.[93] Its current sociopolitical dynamics are often solely explained in terms of the impact of recent unprecedented immigration into Italy portending tremendous cultural change, which is not the only aspect of the story worth exploring, and should not be left undifferentiated. That narrative goes that this immigration has so overwhelmed and altered the face of the nation that the liberal or progressivist proclamation is that it's no longer possible to assume a monoracial or monocultural Italian national character—as though it ever was. Quite the opposite in fact; Italy can now only be viewed as an emerging multicultural nation—despite vehement right-wing insistence to the contrary and generalized international assumptions of racial and ethnohomogeneity. Literature produced in the last few decades has reflected these changes and even historicized what was previously held to be a purely contemporary shift.

[93] Recall Gilroy's declaration that "racism rests on the ability to contain blacks in the present, to repress and to deny the past" in *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, 12, mentioned in the first chapter.

It is also not my intent to dispute the nuanced social changes linked to immigration.[94] The various phases of migrants coming into Italy has coincided with and incited many sociopolitical directions and effects reflected in popular Italian society and culture. It is inadequate though to understand the legal response, media attention, and public sentiment against immigration as only due to the changes wrought by recent immigrant groups. This leads to the equation of the changing race and nation-face of Italy with the complex social and economic climatic unrest of new globalism and of the new European Union. It is necessary instead to unravel how these discourses delineate groups and provide the connection between them and socioeconomic changes, obscuring their historical relation to the construction of Italian national identity. Black Italian literary and cultural discourse understands not only the historical dimensions of Black or African immigration but also the way in which the alienation in the process of immigration for many racialized groups or the experiences of Otherness always alternately sediments or threatens European-ness.[95]

Defining this literature as "postcolonial," then, and extending the term to the condition of contemporary Italy, has historico-cultural and

[94] See the following for a discussion on immigration's variegated impact in Italy, on migrant subjects, Italians, and the State: Alessandro Dal Lago, *Non persone: L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*; Daniela Merolla and Sandra Ponzanesi, eds., *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*; Gisella Brinker-Gabler and Sidonie Smith, eds. *Writing New Identities: Gender, Nationalism and Immigration the New European Subjects*, 118–142.

[95] Rhiannon Welch, "Race and Colonial (Re)productivity," *From Otium & Occupatio to Work & Labor in Italian Culture*, 197–213.

socio-political merit. Since the process of suppressing Italian colonial history has been pervasive since its initiation and still very recently, writers originating in once-colonized countries are making that history surface again and rewriting it, thus contributing to creating new imaginaries and configuring new social and cultural sceneries to be projected into the future. So, too, are authors who do not originate from those countries but still speak to that history and link it to the broader history of racialized immigration. Using the term "postcolonial"—rather than "migrant," "of migration," "intercultural," "translingual," etc.—does not only mean rereading and rewriting Italian history and culture in light of the voices of new subjects who produce new epistemologies (new theories and means of knowing), but also questioning social and cultural privileges, reshaping power relations, and acknowledging the need to expand the literary canon in ways that reflect the deep social changes Italy has undergone and continues to undergo.

To apply a postcolonial perspective to the analysis of Italian culture creates a sense of both temporal and spatial continuity. That continuity undermines the discontinuity and erasure fomented by the European racial regime—the racial monologics that the Italian state has tried to maintain since its Unification. These monologics hold that those who are "indigenous" to Europe are ahistorically situated as white, and thus non-white people belong outside of a European frame. This belief obscures the consolidation and internal migrations of various groups and ethnicities that are included in that whiteness as much as it omits the centuries-long

history of Black and racialized peoples, such as the Roma, in Europe. In *Forgeries of Memory*, Black radical philosopher Cedric Robinson explains the following:

> racial regimes are constructed social systems in which race is proposed as a justification for the relations of power. While necessarily articulated with accruals of power, the covering conceit of a racial regime is a makeshift patchwork masquerading as memory and the immutable. Nevertheless, racial regimes do possess history, that is, discernible origins and mechanisms of assembly. But racial regimes are unrelentingly hostile to their exhibition. This antipathy exists because a discoverable history is incompatible with a racial regime and from the realization that, paradoxically, so are its social relations (xii).

Therefore, it's not just the truism "that race is a construct," but that it lies embedded within a panoply of constructs that actively prevent its revelation. This is arguably the very idea of Europe.[96] Robinson's remarks helpfully underscore the connection between the present and the past—including the history of colonialism, emigration, and intranational migration—indicating that Italians have occupied both positions of hegemony and subalternity in different historical times and geographical locations, and also analyzing how migrations cause these positions to shift. This is central to understanding how a sense of Italian national identity was constructed as the result of these events and why there is

[96] This provocation takes its cue from VY Mudimbe's *The Idea of Africa* (1994). This book continues work began in *The Invention of Africa* and considers the contours and limits of the contested notion "African history." Mudimbe talks about the ideology behind Africa and what it is made to represent, what it invokes in the European and African imagination, and how it has come to be interpreted on spatial and discursive levels. The project is great in scope and has similar aims to Christopher Miller who, as discussed in chapter one, discusses the parameters of Africanist discourse in his work *Blank Darkness*.

such a strong resistance in Italy to extending the privilege of *italianità* to migrants and subsequent generations. But also, this perspective creates a spatial transnational continuity with other European countries—which also had a colonial history and/or participated in the dissemination of colonial cultures—since it reinforces the idea of diasporic communities that share a colonial legacy. Through their cultural production, Italian postcolonial writers are unearthing and opening colonial archives, denouncing contemporary racism as a legacy of colonialism, identifying processes of racialization at the base of national identity formation, revealing the existing power relations between Italian, migrant, and second-generation women, and underlining the resistance of Italians to considering the intersection of so-called Italianness with Blackness as viable in a society that has historically and erroneously constructed itself as white and Catholic while giving primacy to men.

We should also think about discourses of gender, heteronormativity, and the nation in contemporary Italian representations of Africanness, "hyphen" Italian identities, and *meticciato*—or mixed acculturation—as we think about the stakes of claiming *Italianità* and pursuing projects of integration. By recognizing the essentializing power of language and its control over socioeconomic and cultural practices as well as the rights of legal citizenship, Igiaba Scego reveals, in her comedic short story *Salsicce* ("Sausages"), the dehumanizing ideology of cultural hegemony. In so doing, she complicates the assumption of a Black Italian's drive to sociocultural integration by recognizing the uselessness of mimicry

and the impossibility of self-representation as dictated within the confines of Western thought. Her work is postcolonial in literal terms, but she as much as her novels focus specifically on colonialism, Scego reads processes of racialization and contemporary racism in continuity with fascist and colonial racism, thus delineating how colonial systems of power have been reincarnated in contemporary Italy.

Scego undertakes a narrative where self-searching and self-definition are achieved through a cultural appropriation that, as we shall see, implies both linguistic and cultural subversions. A Black Italian of Somali descent born in Rome in 1974 to upper-middle class parents fleeing the regime of Somali dictator Siad Barre, Igiaba Scego is a journalist, activist, radio programmer, and novelist. She has published several novels and attained a relative mainstream audience in Italy. In *Salsicce*, Scego uses an ironic and humorous narrative style to depict a protagonist during different stages of identity formation, from self-uncertainty, to recognition of racial and cultural differences, to attempts at assimilation, to resistance, to defiance and a celebration of cultural difference and her own identity.

In the vacuity of Rome on the eve of *Ferragosto* and the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the protagonist of the story's decision to buy sausages while at a shop may seem utterly banal, a spontaneous culinary decision that might be standard in the stereotype of

prosciutto-loving Italians.[97] However, the protagonist is a Sunni Muslim buying them from a woman named Rosetta. Our protagonist cannot comprehend what impulse caused her, on an otherwise normal day, to advance this most unusual and disquieting desire. Later, when faced with the task of preparing the alien and "unclean" hunk of meat, she realizes her total ignorance of its suitable cooking methods. Should she fry it? Boil it? Bake it? The self-interrogation deepens as she wonders about the implications of her choice, whichever she decides:

> Guardo l'impudico pacco e mi chiedo se ne vale veramente la pena, se mi ingoio queste salsicce una per una, la gente lo capirà che sono italiana come loro? Identica a loro, o sarà stata una bravata inutile? (25)[98]

The reason behind such out of character behavior, against the backdrop of an ordinary Roman cityscape and on the eve of such a canonical Italian festivity, is revealed to be that she has taken the civil service exam open only to Italian citizens, but still has deep insecurities about her status and ability to be considered a "true" Italian. This insecurity increased with the passing of Italy's Bossi-Fini law, which she defines: *A tutti gli extracomunitari che vorranno rinnovare il soggiorno saranno prese preventivamente le impronte digitali* (13) ("All non-EEC immigrants who wish to renew their permits must be fingerprinted as a preventive

[97] *Ferragosto* is a mid-August holiday when Italians leave the cities in droves for the seaside that dates from Roman Emperor Augustus in 18BC and was incidentally popularized in the twentieth century during the Fascist Era.

[98] I look at the shameful parcel and I ask myself: Is it worth it? If I swallow these sausages one by one, will people understand that I am Italian just like them? Exactly the same as them? Or will it all have been a useless act of bravado?

measure"). It is a law tightening the restrictions on immigrant workers and asylum seekers, and the European Union's new law mandating the fingerprinting of all *extracomunitari* (foreigners) requesting or renewing a *permesso di soggiorno* ("residency permit" or "visa"). Initially promoted by the right-wing government as a preventive measure against crime, the law's subtle implications about cultural difference occasioned the protagonist's sudden anxiety. Commenting on her perceived anomaly as a Muslim woman in a city that proclaimed itself to be modern and global, as she says, *aperta, anzi che dico, SPALANCATA!* ("open, indeed I say, WIDE OPEN!") (15), she makes a tongue-in-cheek nod to the declaration of Rome as an "open city."[99]

Ironically, a little over ten years after Scego initially published this story, Italy's post-Berlusconi immigration policy was rather the opposite: it is estimated that at most about two-thirds of the migrants who arrive on Italy's shores were fingerprinted, though in the last year policy has shifted that requires fingerprinting as a part of rescue operations before asylum seekers even reach the land.[100] Though many would be glad to remain under the radar, as this might enable an easier path to a European nation with better employment rates, easier asylum policies, and a better chance

[99] This declaration occurred on 14 August 1943, when the defending Italian forces unilaterally declared to Rome be an "open city" following the cessation of bombing from the Allied nations. The event was also referenced in Roberto Rossellini's 1945 film, *Roma, Città Aperta*.

[100] Kroet, Cynthia. "Italy should 'use force' to fingerprint migrants." *Politico*. 16 December 2015. http://tinyurl.com/ydxzumaz. Accessed 12 February 2016 and "AP analysis: Italy fails to fingerprint thousands of migrants, despite EU law." *Associated Press*. 4 July 2014. http://tinyurl.com/y9cfesmb. Accessed 12 February 2016.

of reuniting with family members in other European cities, this is not a benevolent practice on the part of the Italian state. If migrants arrive in one EU nation and move on to apply for asylum in another country, they can be sent back to their port of entry if their application is rejected. By actively refusing to report fingerprints, Italy lets thousands of migrants remain undocumented. And with no record of their time in Italy, the nation does not run the risk of being economically or physically liable for the social welfare of asylum seekers. The law impels the resurfacing of long-repressed questions of cultural and social identity formation. At the time the story was written, the *Carabinieri*'s (Italy's national paramilitary police force) requests for fingerprints were akin to racist "show me your papers" laws in states like Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas in the US and increasingly during immigration raids in Britain—even more so post-Brexit—where the government has chosen to visually identify and indict "the racialized Other" without due process. In Italy, the law's enforcement wound up defining the particularities of this "Other" in society, along with the semantic heaviness of negatively charged words such as *extracomunitari* or *immigranti*, which were always assumed to imply those from the Global South rather than, say, a tourist or "expat" from a Western nation.

The problems that elicited analyses of the Southern question still surface in Italy today, though with multiple intersections and collisions with supranational governmentality, antiblack racism, and more. Perhaps *la questione meticcia* can further new analyses that expand on Gramsci's

insistence on solidarity between Northern workers and Southern peasants to include postcolonial subjects from former Italian territories in Africa and Eastern Europe. One current point of contention in the relationship between citizenship and cultural identity is the notion of the "second generation." The term is already ambiguous in various national contexts because "first generation" may refer either to those who have physically migrated from one country to the next or to their children. The ambiguity continues in the subsequent second and third generations, as those terms refer to the children of the prior generation of immigrants. This term exists nowhere in the Italian constitution but is held by the Italian government to mean strictly the children born in Italy to foreign parents, according to ISTAT, the Italian National Institute for Statistics and other European statistical departments (e.g., Eurostat, which provides comprehensive statistical data for the entire European Union). Scholars, activists, and human rights organizations, and social justice movements such as *La Rete G2*, "the Second Generation Network," have expanded this definition to include young children who arrived in Italy in order to reunite with their parents or guardians.[101]

[101] In "Italiani o stranieri? La seconda generazione in Italia," Jaqueline Andall clarifies her use of the term: *Nella mia ricerca, io includo nella seconda generazione tutti coloro che sono nati in Italia, ma anche coloro che sono emigrati in Italia prima dell'età di 6 anni (prima di cominciare la scuola)* (284) "In my research, I include in the second generation all those who were born in Italy, but also those who have emigrated to Italy before the age of 6 (before starting school)." Paolo Morozzo della Rocca also traces the contradictions in terminology in his article "Condannati a essere stranieri in Patria," *Il Secolo XIX*, 24 November 2010. http://tinyurl.com/ycnueed5. Accessed 13 Sep 2014.

In “Immigrazione, cittadinanza e identità nell’Italia dei primi anni duemila,” Caroline Savi catalogues a few more terms that have been used to categorize these individuals:

> Ho trovato diverse espressioni in varie fonti che illustrano bene la situazione creata da questa legge molto criticata, ritenuta inadeguata e la cui riforma appare sempre più necessaria: “italiani col permesso di soggiorno”; “cittadini di serie B” (rispetto ai loro coetanei con cittadinanza italiana); “condannati a essere stranieri in Patria”; “straniero nella propria nazione”; “essere cittadini italiani nella sostanza ma non nella forma”; “vivere da immigrati nei paesi dove sono nati”; “italiani per socializzazione, stranieri per passaporto.”[102]

Categorizations such as “cittadini di serie B” or “italiani col permesso di soggiorno” explicitly highlight the “second-class citizen” status of the children of immigrants and also underscore the differences between legal and cultural citizenship. According to Act No. 91, Italy’s current nationality law passed in 1992, only a child born to Italian parents (one or both), a child whose parents are both either *ignoti* (“unknown”) or *apolidi* (“stateless”), or a child born in Italy can apply for citizenship at age eighteen. Even then, citizenship is not a guarantee; proof must be provided asserting that s/he has resided in Italy legally and without interruption until

[102] “I have found different expressions in various sources that illustrate well the situation created by this much-criticized law that is considered inadequate, the reform of which appears increasingly necessary: “Italian with a residence permit;” “Second-class citizens” (compared to their peers with Italian citizenship); “condemned to be foreigners in the fatherland;” “Foreigners in their own country;” “Italian citizens in substance but not formally;” “living as immigrants in the country where they were born;” and “Italian by socialization, foreign by passport.” Caroline Savi, “Immigrazione, cittadinanza e identità nell’Italia dei primi anni duemila*,” Identità italiana e civiltà globale all’Inizio del ventunesimo secolo*, 60.

the time of their request for naturalization.[103] This is a restrictive law that prohibits the extended mobility of those who wish to seek legitimate employment requiring Italian citizenship, to temporarily leave Italy to visit family, or to reside outside of Italy with the protections afforded to full Italian citizens. This law tacitly enables the State to supersede any sentiments of cultural belonging for those who have never left Italy, conferring upon certain individuals who self-identify as Italian an *identità meticcia*—that is, "*italiani a metà*" or "*italiani col trattino*"—a peripheral status dispossessed of legally codified Italianness. Activists and even some legislatures are advocating for a "third way" beyond either *ius soli* or *ius sanguinis*. A compromised *ius soli* and *ius culturæ* are being discussed in Parliament at the time of publication. The modified *ius soli* would enable the children of immigrants born in Italy from 1999 to the present to acquire Italian citizenship if at least one of their parents are in possession of the EU residency permit for long-term residents who are extra-EU citizens or leave to remain for EU citizens. This schema would open the opportunity to apply for citizenship to approximately 634,592 people primarily from Albania, Senegal, Nigeria, and Eritrea according to reporting from *La Repubblica*. *Ius culturae* would provide a pathway to citizenship for minors who are born in or move to Italy before turning 12 and successfully complete at least five years in the Italian education system.[104] These stop-gap

[103] See fn. 18.

[104] "Ius soli, la legge è ferma al Senato da un anno. La mobilitazione dei "cittadini invisibili": "E' ora di agire," *Il fatto quotidiano*, 12 October 2016, http://tinyurl.com/hckvptl. Accessed 17 June 2017. Also note that "According to a recent ISTAT survey, about 65% of foreign mothers have resided in [Italy] for more than five years. Reporting this percentage and

measures can positively affect the lives of thousands of families in Italy and beyond can be enacted before long.

This means of dispossession brought forth by current enforcement of *ius soli* and its related policies points to a larger and even more variegated global network of removal and repression of subjects deemed "other" in constantly shifting and rearticulated landscapes. Comprised within this concept most broadly is the notion that the subjects who experience it had some initial claim to something, be it land, language, identity, or other properties, that were forcibly removed from them to serve the agenda or reinforce the supremacy of a hegemonic regime. As I later aim to describe the use—and in some sense, recuperate the potential—of *meticciato* from historical, legal, and biological origins and the contemporary valence of miscegenation and in-betweenness, one must first wrest the notion from those historical modalities of power linked to colonialism and Western ideals of belonging and ethnonational, -racial, and -cultural purity.

Before walking home from the shop where the sausages were purchased, the protagonist encounters the woman overseeing her civil service exam, and after an arduous exchange, she asks the oft-encountered question described by many Italians of color: *Piu somala, più italiana? Forse è per tre quarti somala e un quarto italiana? O forse è vero*

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assuming that none of them have left Italy, it is estimated that foreign born children of parents residing for at least 5 years are 634,592" (excerpt from "I 'nuovi italiani' nella riforma della cittadinanza: l'impatto dello ius soli in Italia," *La Repubblica*, 15 June 2017, http://tinyurl.com/y7y287fn. Accessed 17 June 2017.

tutto il contrario? (“Are you more Somali or more Italian? Maybe three-quarters Somali and a quarter Italian? Or maybe the opposite is true?”) (20). The exchange leads to self-questioning that produces an inventory of the Italian and Somali dimensions of identitarian attributes, in which the protagonist inscribes in sensorial, aesthetic, and habitual terms. She starts by saying *Credo di essere una donna senza identità. O meglio con più identità* “I think I’m a woman without identity. Or better yet, one with several identities” (29). The coexistence and interplay of what are often described as “multiple” identities—as though there is indeed a quantifiable percentage of one set of cultural practices that meets another to form an individual—ironically challenges any reductive, essentializing attempt as she hesitates to “fraction” herself but then wonders about a list of cultural identifying qualities:

> Vediamo un po’, mi sento somala quando (1) bevo il te con il cardamomo, i chiodi di garofano e la cannella; (2) recito le cinque preghiere quotidiane verso la Mecca; (3) mi metto il *dirah* (abito somalo); (4) profumo la casa con l'incenso è l’unsi; (5) vado ai matrimoni in cui gli uomini si siedono da una parte ad annoiarsi e le donne dall'altra a ballare, divertirsi, mangiare, insomma a godersi la vita; (6) mangio la banana insieme al riso, nello stesso piatto, intendo; (7) cuciniamo tutta quella carne con il riso o *l’angeelo* (una specie di focaccia); (8) ci vengono a trovare parenti dal Canada, dagli Stati Uniti, dalla Gran Bretagna, dall’Olanda, dalla Svezia, dalla Germania. . .tutti sradicati come noi dalla madrepatria; (9) parlo in somalo e mi inserisco con toni acutissimi in una conversazione concitata; (10) guardo il mio naso allo specchio e lo trovo perfetto; (11)

soffro per amore; (12) piango per la mia terra straziata dalla guerra civile; più altre 100 cose, e chi se le ricorda tutte! (29)[105]

Mi sento italiana quando: (1) faccio una colazione dolce; (2) vado a visitare mostre, musei e monumenti; (3) parlo di sesso, uomini e depressione con le mie amiche; (4) vedo i film di Alberto Sordi, Vittorio Gassman, Marcello Mastroianni, Totò, Roberto Benigni; (5) mangio un gelato con stracciatella, pistacchio e cocco; (6) mi ricordo a memoria le parole del "Cinque maggio" di Alessandro Manzoni; (7) sento per radio e Tv le canzoni di Gianni Morandi; (8) mi commuovo quando guardo il mio ragazzo negli occhi; (9) critico come una iena il governo, il sindaco, l'assessore …; (10) gesticolo; (11) piango per i partigiani troppo spesso dimenticati; (12) canticchio sotto la doccia; più altre cento cose, e chi se le ricorda tutte! […] Io mi sento tutto, ma a volte non mi sento niente. Per esempio, sono niente quando sento la frase: "Questi stranieri sono la rovina dell'Italia" e mi sento gli occhi della gente appiccicati addosso tipo Big Bubble. (29–30)[106]

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[105] Let's see. I feel Somali when: 1) I drink tea with cardamom, cloves, and cinnamon; 2) I pray five times a day facing Mecca; 3) I wear my *dirah* (a Somali garment); 4) I burn incense and *unsi* in my house; 5) I go to weddings where men sit over on one side, bored, while on the opposite side women dance, have fun, eat. . .in short, enjoy life; 6) I eat bananas with rice (in the same dish, that is); 7) we cook up all that meat with rice or *angeelo* (a kind of focaccia bread); 8) relatives come to visit from Canada, the United States, Britain, Holland, Sweden, Germany, the Arab Emirates, and from a long list of places that for reasons of space I cannot list here—all uprooted, like us, from our country of origin; 9) I speak Somali and add my two cents in loud, shrill tones whenever there's an animated conversation; 10) I look at my nose in the mirror and I think it's perfect; 11) I suffer from love pangs; 12) I cry for my country that's been ravaged by civil war; Plus a hundred other things I just can't remember right now!

[106] I feel Italian when: (1) I prepare a sugary breakfast; (2) I visit exhibitions, museums, and monuments; (3) I talk about sex, men, and depression with my friends; (4) I watch films with Alberto Sordi, Vittorio Gassman, Marcello Mastroianni, Totò, and Roberto Benigni; (5) I eat gelato with stracciatella, pistachio and coconut; (6) I remember by heart the words to Alessandro Manzoni's "The 5th of May;" (7) I hear Gianni Morandi's songs on TV and on the radio; (8) I feel moved when I look at my boyfriend in the eyes; (9) I'm hypercritical of the government, the mayor, and the councilmembers; (10) I gesticulate; (11) I cry for the partisans, who are forgotten too often; (12) I hum in the shower… Plus more than a hundred other things, and who remembers them all! I feel like everything,

This ethnonational economy becomes complicated when considering other aspects of the Italian diaspora experience, such as the case of Italian Americans, many of whom were initially racialized in relation to proximity to blackness. This has been discussed by scholars such as David Richards, Fraser Ottanelli, Paolo Giordano, Anthony Tamburri, Jennifer Guglielmo, Joseph Sciorra, and Laura Ruberto.[107] In 2005, Thomas Ferraro wrote *Feeling Italian*, a work dedicated to what it means to have a cultural or national attachment to Italy, to feel Italian and be a third-, fourth- or fifth-generation American. Ferraro's work is situated in the decades-long scholarship around Italian American Studies, including some scholars who have considered Italian diaspora and migration into and out of Italy, such as Donna Gabaccia, Caterina Romeo, and Anthony Tamburri, to name just a few scholars in what is a flourishing field.[108] Ferraro considers ten cases of Italian American popular culture to ask the following:

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but sometimes I feel like nothing. For example, I feel like nothing when I hear the phrase, "These foreigners are ruining Italy" and I feel people's eyes stuck on me, like a Big Bubble.

[107] See: David Richards, *Italian American: The Racializing of an Ethnic Identity*; Fraser Ottanelli, "Nord America: emigrazione e politica transnazionale nel processo di definizione dell'identitá italoamericana," *Una grande Italia oltre l'Italia*, 103–124; Paolo Giordano, *The Hyphenate Writer and the Legacy of Exile*; Anthony Tamburri, *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate*; and Laura Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, *New Italian Migrations to the United States: Vol. 1: Politics and History since 1945*.

[108] Donna Gabaccia, "Two Great Migrations: American and Italian Southerners in Comparative Perspective," *The American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno*, 215–32; Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas*; Dirk Hoerder, Donna Gabaccia, and James Horton, eds., *People on the Move: Migration, Acculturation, and Ethnic Interaction in Europe and North America*. Caterina Romeo, "Nella letteratura italoamericana," *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, 632–640; Antonio C. Vitti and Anthony Julian Tamburri, eds. *The Mediterranean as Seen by Insiders and Outsiders*. New York: Bordighera Press, 2016. Tamburri and other leaders in the field of Italian American Studies have also developed a summer school in recent years, which as of this writing takes place annually for about three weeks at the University of Calabria (Arcavacata di Rende). There is also an Italian American Studies Association, which meets annually and has maintained a robust membership since 1966.

> Who are Italian Americans today, in the age of political correctness and virtual reality, after the so-called twilight of ethnicity? […] What patterns or structures of feeling are demonstrably Italian? Which ones become recognized as such, and which do not? Where does the idea of "feeling Italian," as itself a structure of feeling, come from? How has Italian-derived culture impacted, even permeated, the U.S. mainstream? What remains recognizably different about Italian forms of Americanness, different in truth as well as in perception? And what about the Italian American difference that makes it so appealing to non-Italians? Why, in short, does American Italianness *matter* in a post-ethnic, gender-liberated, transnational, racially utopian United States? (2)

There are several leaps in Ferraro's initial argument that I would contest or hope to be wildly tongue-in-cheek rather than conservative ideology—namely the assertion that we are in a post-ethnic, gender-liberated, or utopian *anything*, anywhere in the world, or that we have ever been in a politically correct age, particularly in the United States in this contemporary moment. Nevertheless, Ferraro builds a solid case for the multivalent structure of feeling Italian. Ferraro does not cite this directly in his text, but the term "structure of feeling" can be traced back to Raymond Williams' theorization of the term. Williams defines a structure of feeling as

> characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically, affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. Yet we are also defining a social experience which is still in process, often indeed

> not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies.[109]

Williams coins this term to indicate a social experience which is still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis (though rarely otherwise) has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies (132). It is precisely these hierarchies that Ferraro tries to assess in the case of Italian Americans. He historicizes the arrival of "Italians"—most whom identified with regional rather than national affiliation—to the United States and thinks about their cohesive "Feeling Italian" for Ferraro is an ambiguous, multivalent aesthetic sense that indicates that one might "feel the way Italians feel, to have Italian or Italianate types of feelings, whether recognized or not; and, second, to feel that one's identity is Italian or Italian-like, no matter the ancestry" (3). This definition works to de-essentialize Italianness while simultaneously pointing to the inchoate development of a broad socius that is always already transnational, transhistorical, and transient. When Ferraro writes that "feeling Italian is not by birthright so much as it is by choice, a map for educating desire and (re)conceiving relatedness," he also affords agency to the subject of feeling rather than to arbitrary state-articulated borders (7). This is the spirit in which this chapter tries to consider not only solidarity

[109] Raymond Williams, "Structure of Feeling," *Marxism and Literature*, 132.

practices between those who feel African, feel Italian, or feel themselves precluded or dispossessed from psychogeographical or cultural modes of belonging in the Mediterranean. This aim is to promote a critical awareness of the histories and cultures that have intersected with the invariably syncretic nature of what has been considered Italian culture, furthering a comparative discussion about those who has experienced processes of racialization within empire during both industrialization and migration.

In a bout of frustration, the protagonist of *Salsicce* exclaims*, un bel problema l'identità, e se l'abolissimo? E le impronte? Da abolire anche quelle!* (30) ("It's a big problem, identity is. And what if we just got rid of it? And the fingerprints, those too!") This idea echoes a 1996 essay by Stuart Hall titled "Who Needs Identity?" Where he goes on from this tongue-in-cheek title to begin laying out the problem of identity politics and the way that identity can confine us and proliferate difference:

> Within the anti-essentialist critique of ethnic, racial and national conceptions of cultural identity and the "politics of location" some adventurous theoretical conceptions have been sketched in their most grounded forms. What, then, is the need for a further debate about "identity"? Who needs it? There are two ways of responding to the question. The first is to observe something distinctive about the deconstructive critique to which many of these essentialist concepts have been subjected…A second kind of answer requires us to note where, in relation to what set of problems, does the *irreducibility* of the concept, identity, emerge? I think the answer here lies in its centrality to the question of agency and politics. By politics, I mean both the

> significance in modern forms of political movement of the signifier "identity," its pivotal relationship to a politics of location—but also the manifest difficulties and instabilities which have characteristically affected all contemporary forms of "identity politics." (1–2)

Salsicce is a story that is well positioned to answer its protagonist's and Stuart Hall's opening question, especially because it addresses the "critique of the self-sustaining subject at the center of post-Cartesian western metaphysics" that Hall describes (1). The protagonist lays out the question in agential terms. The methodical litany of Somali identifiers mirror the Italian perfectly from sartorial choices to social mores to eating habits, romance, and popular culture. For the protagonist, "feeling" a cultural identity is inextricably linked to actions more than other things that produce affect. She makes, watches, and sings herself between Somaliness and Italianness. Notably, she mourns Somalia's civil war plight as much as she does the partisans of the second world war, marking her as a patriot of both countries. However, as much as the list is to soothe the character's spirit, it is evident that the author, Scego, is writing at least in part for a monolingual Italian audience, or at least one without much exposure to Somali culture, since she translates and defines in Italian terms like *dirah* and *angeelo*, which are part of everyday life for Somali people.

Letteratura migrante most broadly set out to narrate for an Italian audience the experiences and identities of migrants and foreigners arriving to Italy. When characters in the literature referred to as *letteratura migrante* use words in their native language, the texts often come with a glossary of

terms or are somehow defined by that narrator as an aside to the reader, which belies their presumed monolingual character. This was effectively a translation of African identity to an Italian readership, which occasionally seems like a sociopolitical enterprise where the so-called migrant writers are cultural ambassadors rather than authors of literary works. Several scholars have problematized the fact that *letteratura migrante* primarily addresses a white Italian readership. However, it has also problematized and decentered the assumption of who can be a dominant or central literary subject in Italy. That subject is often perceived as dominant across the board of social registers: white, heterosexual, cisgender, "natural" citizen, able-bodied, middle class, literate, and otherwise stereotypically described as "unmarked" or "normative." Rather than speaking from the position of a newcomer who feels the need to explain her existence and navigation of a new place, the protagonist of Scego's story speaks from a place of belonging, which at times feels conditional, and thus she offers linguistic cues for those outside of her frames of cultural reference. And while she says that there are "a hundred other things" she could name, the implication is that this is an exhaustible list, that identity when quantified in this way could reach a terminus. Indeed, she claims that she sometimes feels like nothing, like neither national identity is something to which she can properly belong. In Italy, her Muslim Somali identity emerges as a contamination, that which defies her authenticity or capacity for sameness, pointing with its syncretism on the one hand at the possibility of mutation and cultural synthesis, and on the other at the decentralization of

knowledge production. One could mimic Italian acts, but never truly know what it means to "be" or "feel" Italian. The concept of "feeling" or being affectively attached to a country despite legal or national realities is not a novel one for the Italian case.

The protagonist's personal debate and the agency to shift between cultural feeling via the acts that she lists is violently neutralized by the totalizing term assigned to denote it in the public sphere and the people that stare at her to interpellate her into otherness. The word *straniero* ("foreigner") amalgamates and crushes all "foreignness," all Otherness in one simple, knowable homogeneity that is as incriminating as it is inescapable. Thus, the protagonist, despite her Italian passport and Italian acts, sees her heterogeneous identity swallowed into nothingness by the epistemic violence and essentializing authority of language. In "Italiani col trattino: figli dell'immigrazione in cerca di identità," Maurizio Ambrosini writes optimistically about the harmonious possibilities of cultural difference:

> l'invenzione di inedite forme di identificazione, nel nostro caso di italiani «col trattino» (marocchino-italiani, cino-italiani, ecc.) individua come risorsa la possibilità di riferirsi contemporaneamente a due mondi percepiti come distinti, di essere membri di un gruppo senza rinunciare ad altre possibili appartenenze. (20) [110]

[110] The invention of unprecedented forms of identification, in our case of "hyphenated Italians" (e.g., Moroccan-Italian, Chinese-Italian, etc.), identifies as a resource the opportunity to refer simultaneously to two worlds perceived as distinct, to be members of a group without giving up other possible memberships.

Scego shows that this harmonious cultural ideal can be undermined by a hostile political landscape that breeds insecurity and leads individuals to perceive distinction along ethnocultural and national lines.

Perhaps the solution is not a list of things that mirror one another complementarily, but rather the addition of something that carries a degree of incommensurability. She tries to be *come loro* ("like them") with an additional act that transgresses that of Somali identity, while recognizing that the desire to be *come loro* is also part of what contributes to marking her as Other and quite literally not "of them." The question that arises here is whether the Other could ever be accepted as the same by denying a core aspect of its Otherness—namely on religious grounds—or whether that would simply amount to a vain act of self-annihilation. The reality of her dilemma is as conspicuous as the stench of the inadequately cooked *salsicce* sitting repulsively on the delicate design of the blue plate with clear Somali designs chosen to commemorate the event. The ignorance of the prescribed cooking methods, the indecisiveness, and the disgust narrated before their intake, are deeply emblematic. As our protagonist describes their foulness, colorlessness, and stench, the *salsicce* become the emblem of an act of self-erasure perpetrated in the name of a fierce desire to belong, of coercive social and cultural assimilation: *Certo, se mi mangio questa pseudosalsiccia coperta di squame di vomito color canarino sarò forse italiana? Ma la Somalia? Che ci faccio con la Somalia, me la fotto?* (32) ("Sure, if I eat this pseudo-sausage covered with canary

yellow vomit scales, I might (possibly) be Italian, but then, what about Somalia? What am I going to do with Somalia–just say screw it?").

The *salsicce* signify a measure of hegemonic sameness, and are subversively turned into a malodorous, offensive, and unwholesome food, an unholy communion, as it were. What is commonly understood to be desirable for a stereotypical Italian populace has revealed itself to be nauseating and even horrifying. Figuratively, what was supposed to bring comforting assimilation, belonging, and identity is now recognized as an aggressive and dehumanizing practice that marks her further as an outsider in her inability to consume, confirming the invisibility that the word *straniero* has already semantically decreed. The protagonist vomits and takes that embodied rejection as a clear sign. Breaking from her interior monologue, the protagonist reads the newspaper, which contains several accounts of violence, poverty, injustice, political scandals, and more assaults on Black people in the city streets. She notes that to be born and hailed as "Black" means to have no *uscita d'emergenza*, no emergency exit: there is no escape from poverty, racist assaults, and violence in the West, from civil war, poverty, famine, AIDS, and natural disaster in the country of origin, or even from being accused of constantly making color an issue in a society with the pretense of colorblindness. The self-interrogation continues:

> Allora che devo fare? Devo mangiarmi la salsiccia con il vomito per dimostrare di non avere la coda di paglia? Per dimostrare che sono

> anch'io una sorella d'Italia con tutti i crismi? Di avere impronte *made in Italy* a denominazione di origine controllata? (24)[111]

To distract herself, she flips through the TV and settles on Ettore Scola's film *Riusciranno i nostri eroi a ritrovare l'amico misteriosamente scomparso in Africa?* (*Will Our Heroes Be Able to Find Their Friend Who Has Mysteriously Disappeared in Africa?*) (1968), a film that mirrors her existential dilemma, and provides for the reader an answer of sorts to the questions she poses for herself about the incommensurability of multiple belonging and the false dichotomy of authenticity and alterity. When found in the Portuguese colony of Angola and put on the ship back to Rome, Titino, the titular "friend" of the film's title, strongly desires to jump overboard and return to "his" Angolan tribe. His brother-in-law Fausto Di Salvio (played by Alberto Sordi), who finds himself unhappily caught up in the mire of bourgeois society, feels, while watching Titino swim back to Angola, *disfatto, con un sentimento strano, condito di amarezza, stupore e invidia* ("undone, with a strange feeling, seasoned with bitterness, envy and amazement" (31). After viewing this film's end, the protagonist of Scego's short story concludes that sameness is a prison and authenticity a fabrication. The sausages are thrown in the bin as a rejection that exposes the treachery of mimicry and mirrors Titino's ultimate rejection from the film. However, her identifying with Titino's character is telling since, as she says the film gives much insight into Italians. The character

[111] So what should I do? Should I eat the sausage and vomit to prove that I am not oversensitive? To prove that I, too, am a fully-anointed Italian citizen? That my fingerprints are "Made in Italy" with documented denomination of origin?

that she identifies decides to “remain native” after “going native,” and that includes fake Rastafarian dreadlocks that the protagonist notes are *molto trendy* and some blackface for the actor. While she is agonizing over her place in Italian society, characters like Titino—real or imagined—appropriate blackness and willingly place themselves outside of acceptable (white) social norms as a costume or affinity that is never divested of the power and privilege that whiteness affords. Meanwhile, again, the juxtaposition of her lack of “emergency exit” is made more palpable as she cannot find herself outside of her blackness.

Who can actually claim the standpoint of “the outside” and who wants to claim it anyway? Black feminist sociologist Patricia Hill Collins’ attempt to make women’s voices the point of departure for a discourse is one of the main tenets of standpoint feminism. Standpoint theory is a method used to analyze inter-subjective discourses, which are experienced (hence subjective), but are experienced by more than one individual. Standpoint theory supports the notion that the perspectives of marginalized and/or oppressed individuals can help to create a counter-balanced worldview. All persons or groups, depending on their hierarchical access to power and representation, experience the dominant culture differently. The views of those who belong to groups with more social power are validated more than those in marginalized groups, and so the latter group is systematically forced to disidentify to maintain some semblance of pertinence within any hegemonic discourse.

The struggle for self-determination and autonomy is as much about memory as it is about futures. It is much about the water as it is about land. But claims to land and positivity claiming oneself as a part of its histories, is a very fraught move. It is not just the shift "from terrone to extracommunitario" to something altogether different, but still painfully on the same constitutive outside. Let us take up the question of the *terrone* and perform an etymology therewith. It was, and remains, a derogatory term for a Southern Italian, linking those denizens to the way the earned a living, namely through agricultural practices, working the land. This was a racialized and classed designation, borne out by ideological forces that Gramsci addresses in his analysis of "the Southern question." Italy's colonial failures of ideological and cultural unification, and its more recent history as a "nation of emigration," are integral to contextualizing the contemporary relationship that the nation has to citizenship and racial identity. Until receiving their *documenti*—the passports and other papers required to facilitate their voyages to other nations—peasants from the newly incorporated Southern region of Italy in the late-19th century had no ideological reason to identify with the national Italian project. Understanding this controversial unification in terms of scholar Antonio Gramsci's writings on *la questione meridionale* are a foundation for negotiating intercultural solidarity in the present. The "question" is commonly described as being about the perceived backwardness and unindustrialized state of Southern Italian regions, a perception that took hold around the time of the Risorgimento. The *terrone* was thus always

linked to the terrain, the very site which is being guarded from any deemed outside of Italy.

Stuart Hall directly engaged with treats the terrain in his work as an ideological matter. Hall takes "terrain" from Gramsci—or, at least, most of his writing on "terrain" is engaging Gramsci. In Hall, "terrain" is mobile, a geographic metaphor for something like "condition" or "atmosphere" or "state," but, I think, more than that. Ideology is the problem, and "That terrain, Gramsci suggested, was above all the terrain of what he called 'common sense': a historical, not a natural or universal or spontaneous form of popular thinking, necessarily 'fragmentary, disjointed and episodic.'"[112] Much like terrain cannot be disarticulated in Hall from his intimate accounting for maroonage, the idea of "terrain" in the Italian context cannot be fully disarticulated from its etymology, even as certain bodies only arrive to the earth as corpses and others with feet firmly on the ground.

In *Salsicce*, the process of emancipation from being mired in essentialist cultural ideology is achieved through self-interrogation, sustained contradiction, and the ultimate rejection of cultural norms. With her protagonist, Scego traces the stages of immigrant resistance and those of racialized citizens, simultaneously challenging the validity of the *mission* (self-)*civilizatrice* that would have gone against her religious beliefs. The protagonist's experience and reflexivity reveal the failing

[112] Stuart Hall, "The Problem of Ideology: Marxism without Guarantees." 42.

authenticity of cultural imperialism; she elects to assert the condition of an identity formation rooted in hybrid cultural synthesis, as a condition that "increasingly reflects the global human condition."[113] With this and other narratives as well as journalistic and activist endeavors, Scego helped lay the foundations for a much-needed debate in the Italian social, cultural, and literary milieus. By focusing on the homogenizing and essentializing power of language, her works challenge the assumptions of a stable, unified Italian identity and shows that identity is "irreducible" in the way that Hall described.

This historically based narrative of colonialism, produced in the contemporary moment of "increased" African presence in Italy, can be viewed as mirroring the manner in which literary and cultural analyses must refuse a linear one-sided scrutiny of the "new" Africanness of Italy and its literature and culture. Scego's critical premise is a useful one, concerning a circular and multifaceted exchange between continent and nation, between nation and race, between citizen and other, across histories, and between genders. Scego ironizes the process of coming into the feeling of integrated citizen. Since the very process of identification is antagonistic and fraught, the self-identification or self-representation of the new citizen-subject becomes a useful starting point for understanding and theorizing the very stakes of citizenship and belonging. *Salsicce* is a proliferating example of a text with a character written by an author who

[113] Jan Nederveen-Pieterse and Bhikhu Parakh, *The Decolonization of Imagination*, 15

embraces the terms of mixed cultural citizenship and literally speaks to these exigencies where representations of interculturality are concerned, demonstrating Hall's closing remark from his essay, that

> beyond the shadow of a doubt the question, and the theorization, of identity is a matter of considerable political significance, and is only likely to be advanced when both the necessity and the "impossibility" of identities, and the suturing of the psychic and the discursive in their constitution, are fully and unambiguously acknowledged.[114]

Scego's story uses humor to articulate what is as stake for thousands of people in the conversation around citizenship and belonging. Even as her protagonist is more privileged with her burgundy passport attesting to her Italian citizenship, she speaks to the way that blackness and Muslim identity makes that seem provisional on a fundamental level. This debate over national identification (as well as a globalized understanding of Blackness in terms of mixed cultural formation and radical political identity) is also reflected in, "Due cittadinanze, un'unica appartenenza" by Ghanaian Italian blogger Theophilus Imani. He writes about navigating his *col trattino* identity and the feeling of being Italian as mediated by Blackness and Black African radical politics:

> Questo graduale processo di rivelazione e disvelamento – epifania, o meglio chiamarla 'afrofania' (manifestazione, *phàinein*, dell'identità afro) – è il risultato di una continua ricerca da parte del soggetto, messa in moto (e qui prendo in prestito alcune parole di Fanon) dalla speranza di

[114] Stuart Hall, "Who Needs Identity?,"16.

> (ri)scoprire quella parte di sé che «ci riabilita, al tempo stesso, di fronte a noi stessi e di fronte agli altri».[115]

Imani recounts a continuing process of self-discovery and self-actualization on the path to viewing his Black Italian identity as complete and commensurate. *Salsicce*'s narrative can be considered an extended "aphrophany" in this vein. It begins with a sudden, drastic desire that went against our protagonist's moral and religious compass—her Black Muslim identity—and she spirals out of control as a result, ultimately with a visceral rejection of that desire for conformity. And at the story's end, she experiences an emotional recollection of her own agency and quells the anxious relationship to her ethnoreligious difference. She came into her commensurability, realizing that she is not doomed like Fausto to return to a life of misery and disappointment in exchange for wealth (a plainly Faustian dilemma). In her case, she is not doomed to betray her principles and consume pork to feel socially or legally acceptable. She chooses be satisfied with *lo stesso mix* (32) ("the same mix") and in turn, the reader is left to consider what it ultimately means to belong. Thinking his way through in his essay "The End of History or the Invention of Existence: Critical Thought and Thinking about the Human," Tony Bogues reads and contextualizes Fanon to think about his/our contemporary moment, seeking

[115] This gradual process of revelation and disclosure—of epiphany, or better yet, "afrophany" (meaning the manifestation—*phainein*—of the "Afro" identity)—is the result of an ongoing investigation by the subject, set in motion (and here I borrow from Fanon) by the hope to (re-)discover that part of himself that "rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others." Theophilus Imani, "Due cittadinanze, un'unica appartenenza," *FuturAfrika*. 2015. http://tinyurl.com/yaata5d2. Accessed 14 February 2015.

out possibilities and resources that are yielding innovative freedom practices.[116]

[116] Anthony Bogues, “The End of History or the Invention of Existence: Critical Thought and Thinking about the Human,” *The Empire of Liberty*, 98–122.

— THREE —

SCENES OF *METICCIATO*

A Roma la gente corre sempre, a Mogadiscio la gente non corre mai.
Io sono una via di mezzo tra Roma e Mogadiscio: cammino a passo sostenuto.
Do l'impressione di correre, ma sempre camminando.[233]
— Igiaba Scego, "Dismatria"

I understand your difference, or in other words, without creating a hierarchy,
I relate it to my norm. I admit you to existence, within my system. I create you afresh.
But perhaps we need to bring an end to the very notion of a scale. Displace all reduction.
— Éduoard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*

This chapter continues to discuss contemporary writings in the corpus of Black Italian and postcolonial literature produced in the wake of discussions about migration and Italian citizenship, namely Ubah Cristina Ali Farah's *Madre piccola* (2007), and Igiaba Scego's short story Identità (2008). It addresses the question of mixed racialization and anxieties about racial and legal belonging in Italy and the rest of Europe. In Italy, multiracialism has been variably denounced or subsumed under the amalgamation of whiteness—what Jared Sexton has termed "amalgamation schemes" in relation to black-white miscegenation in the US—and what, following from the work of Cedric Robinson discussed in chapters one and two, might also be described as mixed racial regimes. These writings complicate an already entangled notion of intercultural identity formation in the postcolonial Italian moment. I argue that these authors promote a literary praxis of *meticciato*—a concept I will discuss in

[233] Igiaba Scego's short story "*Dismatria*" ("Ex-matriates") begins: "In Rome people always run, in Mogadishu no one ever runs. I come halfway between Rome and Mogadishu: I walk at a good pace. You might think I'm running but I'm still walking."

relation to other cultural processes such as hybridity and *métissage*, and then mobilize as an analytic specific to the Italian context. What follows is the beginning of a genealogy of *meticciato* on historical, theoretical, and textual grounds. There are many productive resonances with those cultural and political identity formations without insisting on them as analogous, but first it remains to describe the nuances in terminology of legal identification and classification specific to contemporary Italy and its diasporas. This furthers the discussion of the different modes of classifying a) literature that deals with migration and colonialism, b) Italians of African descent or origin, and c) some of the legal statuses in relation to the Italian nation state.

The capacity of dispossession, as formulated recently in dialogues between Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, is useful to think about as it relates to the concerted and connected forces of legal status, carcerality, the disavowal of migrant bodies and bodies of color in Italy, and the performance of identity. In *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013), Butler and Athanasiou join in conversation to conceptualize dispossession on psychic, affective, economic, and political grounds. Athanasiou describes dispossession as "a condition painfully imposed by the normative and normalizing violence that determines the terms of subjectivity, survival, and livability" (2), noting that

> in all its intractable ways of signaling the contemporary production of social discourses, modes of power, and subjects, [the notion of dispossession] is a theoretical trope that might help us begin to address the fact that dis-possession carries the presumption that someone has

> been deprived of something that rightfully belongs to them. In this sense, dispossession is also akin to the Marxist concept of alienation." (6–7)

Alienation and dispossession are twinned tropes on display in Italy's contemporary political landscape and have been codified through the legal apparatus of citizenship as well as the production of ethnocultural markers and categorical assumptions. Also evident is the State's attempted disarticulation from apparatuses of dispossession despite perpetuating multiple articulations of it in relation to practices of State recognition and homogenization of dispossessed subjects. This can be viewed in the state-sanctioned categorization of difference with figures such as "the migrant," "the asylum seeker," and "the second- or third-generation Italian." With the latter group's chants of "*L'Italia sono anch'io*," "Made in Italy," and "18 *ius soli*," this biopolitical aspect of Act No. 91 is paradigmatic of the State's inability to fully incorporate mixed subjects or elements in its regulation of national identity, despite the remnants of fascist and colonial policies.[234]

Where there is a desire for emancipatory citizenship, there is the mandate for ever more solidarity and for reconciliation and proliferation in the Black Mediterranean, a space that, like Glissant's *antillianitè* for the Caribbean or what gets taken up as "creolization" outside of the Francophone context, represents continuity with the past and discontinuity of the future from oppressive epistemological regimes. This is nothing if not an extension of the Black Radical Tradition, and a resistance against

[234] See: Roberta Ricucci, *Italiani a metà: Giovani stranieri crescono*.

the very alienation that Marx—and from him Butler and Athanasiou—describe. During Fascist rule in Italy, there were explicit efforts to impede (and in some instances, eradicate) the progeny of mixed race unions. The question over what the rights of mixed children were in occupied territories such as Ethiopia was a frequent source of anxiety for their families and their occupiers alike. Citizenship, cultural practices, race, religion, and the law converge in this account of the "*meticcio* question":

> . . .si vede come la legge del 1933 fosse ispirata al principio ed alla tendenza giuridica di dare una definitiva personalità giuridica al meticcio, di creargli uno status giuridico rilevante in guisa da metterlo nella possibilità di ottenere, sotto precise condizioni, la cittadinanza italiana, basando tutto su di un concetto spiccatamente antropologico. Ispirata al pietismo (…) la legge ebbe brevissima vita. Probabilmente però se essa avesse continuato, si sarebbe ottenuto un effetto contrario al desiderato. Specialmente dopo la conquista dell'Impero.[235]

I turn to the idea of *meticciato*, a term with a substantive Italian colonial history, as a concept that goes beyond the description of identity or cultural formation, one which thrives and has taken new shapes in the interstices of multiple Italophone discourses. It is an analytic tool with which the debate around citizenship can be expanded in practical terms, but also, as

[235] "…one sees how the law from 1933 was based on the principle and the juridical tendency to give a definite legal character to the *meticcio*, to create for him a relevant legal status in such a manner as to give him the possibility to obtain, Italian citizenship under certain conditions, basing everything on a distinctly anthropological concept. Inspired by pietism (…) the law was short-lived. But if it had continued, it probably would have resulted in the opposite effect desired, especially after the Empire's conquest." Paolo Ballero Pes, "Meticciato e legislazione," *Etiopia*, 74–79.

I will demonstrate through my close readings of Scego and Ali Farah, demonstrative of the more radical possibility that living multiplicity as a theoretical and narrative model can be a powerful form of resistance and community-making in postcolonial Italy as indicated through Black women's standpoint. Not only is an historical account of *meticciato* important in fostering a more rigorous politics of belonging when engaging in sociopolitical conversations, it is also helpful for inciting more profound readings of the writings borne out of those conversations. Thus, a sustained multidisciplinary genealogy of *meticciato* is helpful to produce a multimodal analytic for the concept in the Italian context.

As previously indicated, the politics of "mixedness" has been addressed within various discourses, though with differing terminologies and intent. It is taken up most robustly in comparative empire studies, ethnic studies, Black feminist and transnational gender studies, queer studies, postcolonial studies, and (critical) mixed race studies, the latter being a more recent field of enquiry that incorporates several of the aforementioned fields. Scholars affiliated with critical mixed race studies are predominantly located in and around North America, and their work emerges from developments in Latin American, Latina/o, and Chicana/o studies and the many theoretical and cultural interventions into the cultural politics of *mestizaje* in that region. For example, the distinction between a politics of *indigenismo* and one of *mestizaje* arose from a context of

Mexican nationalism, but Guatemala, Nicaragua, and the other South and Central American have wildly divergent histories.[236]

When considering transnational and transhistorical narratives of miscegenation, it is interesting to bring the Mediterranean and specifically the Italian context into conversation with these discourses. Butler and Athanasiou's "logic of dispossession" might again be useful here to think about the ideological similarities between the terms because they have specifically addressed the logics of deprivation's attendant incorporation of rights-bound ownership, which can be linked to citizenship, territory, and other geopolitically determined nationalist or ethnoracial signifiers. Butler and Athanasiou wrote their book—a series of dialogues primarily conducted via email—in the wake of a series of global street protests and movements responding adversely to the intensification of austerity politics and debt crises. Throughout their conversations is an effort to "think about dispossession outside the logic of possession," meaning beyond liberal frameworks that consider plights borne from extreme wealth disparity (e.g., homelessness, forced migration, foreclosures) solely in terms of proprietorship such as loss and privation. Their conversations move through movements like Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, the 2011

[236] See: Andrew Fisher and Matthew O'Hara, eds., *Imperial Subjects: Race and Identity in Colonial Latin America*, 2009 and Sue, Christina A. *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013. There is a vast body of primary critical scholarship and their subsequently divergent bodies of thought obscured by categorizing the region "Latin America." Formative works on the question of mestizaje and hybridity include Octavio Paz, Norma Alarcon, and Gloria Anzaldúa, among many others. Each of these texts attends to different imperial, national, and ethnoracial particularities, but in terms of my work on *meticciato*, these scholars have taken up the concept loosely defined as miscegenation and shown how it can perform the intellectual labor of theorizing difference, colonialism, and diaspora.

London Riots, and anti-austerity protests in Greece as well as dispossession in tandem with territorial issues like in Palestine/Israel, the latter of which has been discussed by Edward Said in his 1994 work *The Politics of Dispossession*. The pairing is fruitful to an analysis of *meticciato* because, in my view, the concept can also wield the performative to comprehensively deal with the matter of indigeneity/belonging and settler colonialism—what Mussolini referred to as "demographic colonialism"—and the financialization of the border economy under contemporary neo-liberal regimes. The aim of this conceptualization of *meticciato* is also related to Butler and Athanasiou's twinned logics of dispossession in that it is also invested in weaving its ambiguous double valence with self-determination and sovereignty on the one hand and privation, abjection, and vulnerability on the other.

*Meticcia/o/** in nominative form, or *meticciato* in the adjectival form, indicates a process with which I seek to engage more to draw attention to the particularities of Italy's geopolitical and ethnocultural encounters within its empire, explicitly in its occupied and colonized territories in North and East Africa as well as Southern and Eastern Europe in the 19th and 20th centuries. It signals an interesting set of practices when positioned in conversation with the idea of the Global South and the Mediterranean borderscape, geopolitical spaces that loom large in the Italian imaginary, emerging there precisely in their ambiguity as hybrid spaces of intercultural becoming and unbecoming. It can be an ethical-political response to the ahistorical rejection of cultural and racial difference in the contemporary

moment that does not appropriate or fetishize the concept of miscegenation and does not succumb to a state-sanctioned politics of recognition. Thinking through *meticciato* as an analytic is to be attentive to these ambiguities and to resist the homogenizing of difference across indiscriminate boundaries of culture and location, particularly the universalizing polarization between Italians as "white people" and migrants to Italy as "people of color" in social and political discourses. That line of thinking mirrors a common Euro-American paradigm wherein "whiteness" becomes the de facto description of consolidated Italian culture within Italy that is projected outwards, while "*di colore*" ("of color") permanently inhabits the margins. This produces the onto-epistemological bind wherein people of color are rendered monolithic and defined with pejorative terms such as "*immigrato*," "*ex-communitario*," and "*straniero*," while accompanying racist discursive practices that reify perceptions of racial and cultural relations within uncompromising binary of Self versus Other. To be clear, there is even a semantic distinction between "immigrant" and "foreign national," since an immigrant can obtain Italian citizenship (e.g., via naturalization or marriage). According to ISTAT, "the characteristic of immigrant is a permanent one" despite the acquisition of Italian citizenship. It is also true that a foreigner can be born in Italy and therefore not meet the technical requirement of immigration to be considered an immigrant.[237] The writers under consideration in this study are those who blur such

[237] "La popolazione straniera residente in Italia al 1° gennaio 2010." *ISTAT*. 12 October 2010. http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/1811. Accessed 11 February 2015.

boundaries and more in their works, helping us to think about undifferentiated categories of "other" or "non-white" and destabilizing—or rather, revealing the instability of—the ideas of "whiteness" and "*italianità*."

By proffering the idea of *meticciato* as a multimodal analytic, I do not intend to propose an idealist or multiculturalist narrative that promotes and even fetishizes interracial or interreligious couples and cultures at the expense of others perceived to be homogeneous (itself a bio-essentialized misrecognition). Léopold Senghor, Senegalese poet of the *Négritude* movement, tried to advance something like a universalized civilization of *métis*, remarking that *la civilisation idéale ne saurait être que métisse* ("the ideal civilization must be mixed.")[238] Scholars, such as Jin Haritaworn in *The Biopolitics of Mixing* (2012), have done great work to resist this heteropatriarchal narrative, however persistent it remains in its transnational (and often antiblack) iterations.[239] The idea of contamination and miscegenation can be resisted with attention to the other complex modalities of mixedness specific to the Mediterranean context but also borrowing from other transhistorical and transnational sites. It is also not my intention to undermine or erase the very real power that this concept has had, especially for previous generations who have experienced epistemic and physical violence that the term *meticciato* would once portend. At the time when racial laws were promulgated in Italy, the

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[238] Cited in Roger Toumson, *Mythologie du métissage*, 11.

[239] Jin Haritaworn, *The Biopolitics of Mixing: Thai Multiracialities and Haunted Ascendancies.*

colonies of East Africa enacted the same laws to prevent and punish racial mixing. Thus, the *meticcia/o* was perceived as degenerate, regarded comparatively less than Jewish people in some regards, who as previously mentioned were dispossessed of their citizenship, government jobs, and property. This degenerate status was partly due to heteronormative regulations and family ideals. In *Parole e corpi*, Barbara Sòrgoni cites Nicola Marchitto, who eschews some of this propaganda from the *Gruppo Universitario Fascista*, the student wing of Italy's National Fascist Party:

> Respinto da bianchi e neri [il meticcio] è un ribelle, cova un sordo rancore tanto più in quanto non ha famiglia. Il meticcio, essere afamiliale è anche asociale e astatale, quando non è antisociale e antistatale. Figlio di una colpa, ligio a influenze contrastanti, precocemente sessuale, senza freni morali, minato dall'azione deleteria dello spettacolo della violenza a cui assiste, è preda di tendenze degenerative. Questo bastardo, questo essere negativo è pertanto anche uno spossato e un ribelle. Il meticcio dunque come tale rappresenta per noi in Africa ciò che l'ebreo rappresenta in Europa e in America… l'equazione ebreo-meticcio è molto convincente.[240]

For older generations of people who experienced the social and political ramifications of this aspect of Italian colonialism, the term

[240] "Rejected by whites and blacks alike, [the meticcio] is a rebel who harbors deep resentment, because he has no family. The meticcio, being without family, is also without sociality and without a state, even when he is neither antisocial nor anti-state. The child of an affair, beholden to conflicting influences, prematurely sexual, without moral restraints, weakened by the harmful action of the violent spectacle to which he is a witness, he is prone to degenerative tendencies. This bastard, this negative being, is therefore also wretched and intractable. Therefore, the meticcio as such represents for us in Africa what the Jew is in Europe and America…the Jew-mestizo equation is very convincing." Nicola Marchitto, *La difesa della razza nell'Impero: il problema dei meticci*, 28.

meticcia/*meticcio* may have a violent impact and bear the immediate weight of a slur. Given this fraught context, it is important to trace the theorizations of "mixedness" and amalgamation that inform the contemporary value of *meticciato*.

The word "amalgamation" has been incorporated into theories of North American/US miscegenation by Jared Sexton in his 2008 work *Amalgamation Schemes*. While readings of Mediterranean valences on the histories of miscegenation and conservatism do not wholly align with Sexton's—bound as his argument is to the geopolitical specificity of US American racial and sociopolitics—there are some shared valences with the term, which points to the fungible economy of racialization and racial regimes. However, amalgamation means something altogether different within the heightened and lengthy history of cultural syncretism in the Mediterranean, even as there are multiple myths bound up in that project. These significations offer continued resistance to the configuration that the Black Atlantic takes up as the origin story for thinking Black modernities.

What follows are the beginnings of a genealogy of *meticciato*, including general scientific understandings, postcolonial thought, philology, Black British cultural studies, and certain nominative cognates: *métis*, *mestizo*, and *métèque*/*métoikos*. As a concept in the Anglophone context, "hybridity" is also an integral, though fraught, part of this genealogy. Despite its racist and species-ist legacies, hybridity has been mobilized as a fertile term of analysis within national, postcolonial, decolonial, and other ideologies of collective identification, liberation, and

state formation. Initially a term specific to the mostly sterile product of (non-plant) interspecies unions that resulted in an even genetic mix (50% from each parent), the affective, geopolitical, and racialized particularities of two models of theorizing hybridity, from postcolonial studies and philology, are what most inform my theoretical framework around of *meticciato*. By hybridity, I am referencing certain states of cultural, social, and ethnoracial mixing that have informed the multiple convergences of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, ability, and citizenship performed and experienced through variegated histories of diaspora, immigration, and exile. This definition of what has been taken up in North American and British cultural studies and postcolonial studies as "cultural hybridity(ies)" is not simply to argue for the alternative histories of the marginalized in terms of the aforementioned constitutive categories of identity formation, but to move beyond the preconceived sets of theoretical binaries towards an open space for the production of discourses of culture and identity formation in complex interstitial relationships that also carry within them a sense of ambivalence.

Ambivalence, a key psychoanalytic component and discursive strategy in Bhabha's thought, is also an important aspect of the *meticciato* that Ali Farah employs. Bhabha discusses an aspect of hybridity that may positively yield a "third space," a state of possible "true international transculturation," but he also cites the ambivalence that is a motivating force within colonial discourse, which the intentional ambiguity of the third space seeks to challenge, writing:

> My illustration attempts to display the importance of the hybrid moment of political change. Here the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One (unitary working class) nor the Other (the politics of gender) but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both.[241]

On the other hand, Gayatri Spivak regards this "something else besides" aspect of hybridity quite negatively. She cautions against "hybridist triumphalism" that she views as pernicious and present throughout Bhabha's thinking and suggests that certain forms of postcolonial theory that mobilize hybridity "often dissimulate the implicit collaboration of the postcolonial in the service of neo-colonialism."[242] Spivak also centers the materiality of gender in her discussion of hybridity, since "[t]he possession of a tangible place of production in the womb situates the woman as an agent in any theory of production."[243] Moving further into the postcolonial moment to a period when multiculturalism and composite (or "melting pot") culture are being promoted as a harmless aspect of nation states in the wake of colonialism—precisely the "triumphalism" that Spivak decries—Black British and Caribbean scholars such as Stuart Hall, Kamau Brathwaite, Kobena Mercer, and Paul Gilroy craft a counterhegemonic discourse that unpacks the manifold layers of the intentional, organic, and

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[241] Homi Bhabha, "The Commitment to Theory," *The Location of Culture*, 13. See also Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*; "Of Mimicry and Man," *The Location of Culture*, 121–131; and "Signs Taken for Wonders" 145–174.

[242] Gayatri Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 361.

[243] Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds*, 79.

dialogic elements of hybridity that the "new ethnicities" came to politicize and represent in Britain and across the Atlantic.[244] With their analyses of the hybridities within hybridity, these scholars suggest that identifying as "Black" is a counterhegemonic label pointing to an "organic" process of resistance, and that is a type of political "homogenization," which speaks both between and against a dominant narrative of white supremacy. The subsequent use of terms like "diaspora-ization" and "creolization" by way of aesthetic and linguistic practices are emblematic of a more "intentional" aspect within their models of hybridity.[245] It is this intentionality and the accompanying political and aesthetic significations that must be mobilized in contemporary discourse around the Mediterranean. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said speaks to a similar intentionality, noting that "cultural forms are hybrid, mixed, impure, and the time has come in cultural analysis to reconnect their analysis with their actuality" (14).

> There is a great difference, however, between the optimistic mobility, the intellectual liveliness, and "the logic of daring" described by the various theoreticians on whose work I have drawn, and the massive dislocations, waste, misery, and horrors endured in our century's migrations and mutilated lives. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that liberation as an

[244] See: "Stuart Hall, "New Ethnicities;" Edward Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770–1820*; and Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*.

[245] Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*, 22. Young was eminently helpful for the foundation of this study as it much more deeply traces the nuances of hybridity's genealogies across several disciplines. See also Pnina Werbner's Introduction to the "critique. influence. change." edition of *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multi-Cultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism*, 1–28.

> intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentered, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages. From this perspective then all things are indeed counter, original, spare, strange.[246]

In a summary of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia and the dialogic nature of "hybridity," Robert Young helpfully leads us through a differentiation of the terms, noting that "[hybridization] therefore offers a particularly significant dialectical model for cultural interaction: an organic hybridity which tends towards fusion, in conflict with intentional hybridity, which enables a contestatory activity, a politicized setting of cultural differences against each other dialogically."[247] Bakhtin's philological model of hybridization clarifies the dialogic relation between "organic" and "intentional." He clearly defines it as a process involving:

> […] a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor.

It is this conflict that manifests in a "double-voicedness that demands to be reconciled," and will further enable a productive reading of contemporary Italophone and postcolonial Italian literature, wherein several cultures,

[246] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 14.
[247] Ibid.

languages, ethnicities, and other "social differentiations" remain in tension as we strive towards new ethical relationships to a politics of belonging.[248]

This working genealogy contributes to an understanding of *meticciato* as a complex relationality, rather than that which can be essentialized. *Métissage*, *mestizaje*, and *meticciato* are closely related terms alluding to some form of hybridization or miscegenation in their respective (post)colonial and (trans)national contexts. They have also been used to further hierarchical understandings of racial difference as exhibited through their tiered racial systems in European, African, Asian and various indigenous (e.g., Amerindian) communities. Two European thinkers discussing the mainstream acceptance of a superficial *meticciato* insofar as it reifies cultural norms:

> [Philippe] Moreau-Defarges osserva che "l'ondata della modernità occidentale, terribile acido, dissolvendo tradizioni, miti, identità, li conduce a reinventarsi, a metamorfosarsi. *È l'era dei meticciati*: razze ma anche cucine, costumi, religioni, idee, tutto si mescola per produrre delle sintesi bizzarre e instabili". Insomma, i contatti, gli scambi e gli spostamenti implicano contaminazioni e inducono cambiamenti. In particolare, possiamo affermare, seguendo Rosi Braidotti, che "il fenomeno della migrazione su scala mondiale—dalla periferia verso il centro—costituisce una sfida alla presunta omogeneità culturale degli stati-nazione europei" (*italics* mine).[249]

[248] Ibid.

[249] "[Philippe] Moreau-Defarges notes that 'the wave of Western modernity, a terrible acid, dissolving traditions, myths, and identities, leads them to reinvent and transform themselves. *It is the era of miscegenation*: races but also cuisines, customs, religions, ideas, everything is mixed to produce bizarre and unstable syntheses." In short, the contacts, exchanges, and movements involve contamination and induce changes. In particular, we can say, following Rosi Braidotti, that 'the phenomenon of migration on a

Both scholars point to a common Eurocentric trope in a discussion of mixed cultures or identities and an understanding of migration that continues to assume Europe as ever-present center and its former colonies as peripheral. Moreau-Defarges ironically addresses the myth of a linear chronology of identity and monoculture before disparaging the advent of a so-called "era of miscegenation," and as such underscoring the "presumed homogeneity" to which Braidotti refers. My assessment of *meticciato* holds that it must be charged with recuperating a heavily racialized and imperialist project. It often happens in this normative assessment of hybridity or miscegenation that the dominant/subordinate elements are involved in the mixture or hybridization as distinct "but equal," as mobilized within neoliberal trends like "multiculturalism" or the related "multiracialism." Such a view is uncritical of how the field of power exerts itself and operates throughout all modes of relation. Liberal multiculturalism uncritically caters to neoliberal ideas about contamination and inclusion, and has been harshly critiqued by many of the previously mentioned Black British cultural studies scholars. Moreover, as I will later discuss, since there is a feigned equality, the appearance of a "balanced opposition," multiculturalism misses the very real nature of ambivalence

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global scale—from the periphery toward the center—is a challenge to the alleged cultural homogeneity of European nation-states.'" Philippe Moreau-Defarges, *La Mondialisation*, 26 (translated by Savi from French) and Rosi Braidotti, "Figurazioni del nomadismo: "homelessness" e "rootlessness" nella teoria a sociale e politica contemporanea" 44 in Caroline Savi, "Immigrazione, cittadinanza e identità nell'Italia dei primi anni duemila." *Identità italiana e civiltà globale all'Inizio del ventunesimo secolo: conference proceedings*, 57.

inherent in the theorization and performance of *meticciato* in the Italian context.

Meticciato has linguistic and conceptual parallels with *métissage*, a term that has its own formidable body of scholarship around it, particularly in the context of Francophone literature and French colonialism and under Spanish colonialism in the Latin American and Caribbean context as *mestizaje*.[250] *Métissage* has appeared in numerous discourses to describe interracial and intercultural encounters. This racial and cultural "mixture" is itself ambivalent in meaning but is often used in contemporary Western discourses to address the humanistic ideal of destabilization of homogeneity in favor of intercultural coexistence. However, it can also describe violent encounters, particularly the implementation of racial hierarchies and the erasures of minoritarian peoples and cultures by

[250] The Spanish term *mestizo* was first in use, followed closely by the Portuguese *mestiço*. The Italian term was derived from the French, which enjoys a wider usage outside of the academy and is in the mainstream European sociopolitical consciousness, arguably more than its Spanish or Portuguese variants. So, for more on the historicization and dissemination of *métissage* in the French sociopolitical and colonial context, see: Sarah Bonnemaison, "The Aesthetics and Politics of French Métissage," *Ecumene* 4 (4), 435–457. See also: Françoise Vergès, *Monsters and Revolutionaries: Colonial Family Romance and Métissage*; Elisa Camiscioli, *Reproducing the French Race: Immigration, Intimacy, and Embodiment in the Early Twentieth Century*; and Emmanuelle Saada, *Empire's Children: Race, Filiation, and Citizenship in the French Colonies*. *Métissage* has also been mobilized as a discursive practice. See: Acheraïou, Amar. *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. For the Latin American and Hispanophone contexts, see: Maria Elena Martinez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico*; Néstor Medina, *Mestizaje: (Re)mapping Race, Culture, and Faith in Latina/o Catholicism*; and *Blackness and Mestizaje in Mexico and Central America*, edited by Elisabeth Cunin and Odile Hoffmann. The latter text was particularly helpful for this study because it specifically builds an argument against antiblackness and notes the subsumption of black culture without the recognition of black people as a central part of the embrace of multiculturalism. Many parallels can be made with the Italian case, and indeed the pluralistic visions espoused in this anthology are certainly possible and occurring in the Mediterranean (both in criticism and in praxis).

European colonizers. In particular, *métissage* can indicate the process of sociocultural exchange between indigenous populations and French occupiers, exemplified by colonial practices such as interracial marriage.[251] In Canada from the 16th to the 19th centuries for example, *métissage* was a part of an official policy of acculturation, religious conversion, miscegenation, and overall *francisation*, or Frenchification—the process of making someone or something French—of indigenous Indian tribes by the French towards economic ends.[252] The term also speaks to the consolidation of French national identity during this period. On the one hand, those classified as "Indians" were of course composed of many different nations and tribes. The "French" on the other hand, came as Normans, Bretons, Savoyards, and others. These tribal identities are often neglected when single-mindedly pointing to the "French nation" or "Indian nations." As Belgian politician Joannes Josephus Verroken said in 1846, *le phénomène de francisation est réel* ("The phenomenon of Frenchification is real"). It is also known as Gallicization and is like the processes of Italianization in that there are policies that either force or encourage linguistic assimilation. The *francisation* of the majority Dutch-speaking Brussels "(Francisation de Bruxelles") is the most notable, occurring over centuries and facilitating the use of French as a *lingua*

[251] See: Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, "Métissage culturel et société coloniale," *Métissages*, 80–106.

[252] See: "La frontière linguistique: frontière politique." *Wallonie en mouvement*. n.d. http://tinyurl.com/y9hsvxtt. Accessed 6 February 2015.

franca. Above all, the colonial desire undergirding this violently pragmatic process from the 16th to 19th centuries sought to assimilate the indigenous population in Canada into a civilization that would mirror the French metropole.[253]

Meanwhile, though *mestizaje*—initially the mixing of indigenous peoples with Spanish colonizers—implies a similar paradigm of colonial policy, there are key differences that readily differentiate it from *métissage*. *Mestizaje* was explicitly developed in opposition to *indigenismo*.[254] The idea of "opposition," particularly of "balanced opposition," comes from Gloria Anzaldúa's semiautobiographical work, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), a text that comes up in a reading of *Kkeywa. Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011) in the next chapter. Anzaldúa describes a prehistorical state of being that existed between genders but was diminished over time. The reason she gives for this shift is the militarization of the Aztecs; with the masculinization of religious and social power, the roles of female deities were drastically constrained (32). Instead of balanced opposition, Anzaldúa finds sustained contradiction, a space for fraught creativity and tension that leads to new consciousness. The "borderlands" that Anzaldúa navigates here are psychic, geographical, sexual, spiritual, and political. When narrating a utopic vision

[253] Jennifer Yee, "Métissage in France: A Postmodern Fantasy and its Forgotten Precedents," *Modern & Contemporary France* 11(4), 411–425. Yee's work also shows how contemporary France increasingly describes itself in terms of a *pays métis*, or mixed nation, akin to the United States myth of the "melting pot."

[254] See: Laura Gotkowitz, *Histories of Race and Racism: The Andes and Mesoamerica from Colonial Times to the Present*.

of Chicana identity borne from indigenous and *mestizo* peoples, she writes that "people who inhabit both realities are forced to live in the interface between the two, forced to become adept at switching modes. Such is the case with the *india* and the *mestiza*" (37).

In colonial Latin America, specifically in what was considered Mexico between the 15th and 18th centuries, this miscegenation led to several different categories and developed in to a tiered racial and economic system of classification: *castizos* were considered to be people who had one white and one mestizo parent (75% European; 25% indigenous); *mestizos*/*cholos* were a mix between indigenous groups and Spanish Europeans; *moriscos* were the children of mulattoes and Spaniards; mulattoes were black and European; *zambos* were people who were of mixed Black and Amerindian ancestry; and so on. There also existed terms that determined a mix along cultural or geopolitical lines in Spain and its colonies in Latin and South America in the 18th and 19th centuries: *criollos* were at most 1/8 non-European, but the caste denoted an American-born person of American descent (different from the variegated referents of the French term *créole*).[255] On the racial caste pyramid, the *criollos* were one level below the *peninsulares*, White Spaniards born on the Iberian Peninsula.[256]

[255] Severo Martínez Peláez, *La patria del Criollo: An Interpretation of Colonial Guatemala*.

[256] Magali Carrera, *Imagining Identity in New Spain: Race, Lineage, and the Colonial Body in Portraiture and Casta Paintings*, 10–15.

In addition to ethnoracial and geopolitical valuation, *métissage* had literary and other creative purchase. In *Life Writing and Literary Métissage as an Ethos for Our Times*, Erika Hasebe-Ludt, Cynthia Chambers, and Carl Leggo outline the mythological and etymological origins of *métissage*:

> In Greek mythology, Metis was the first love and wife of Zeus, and the mother of Athena, the goddess of arts and wisdom. Like her daughter, Metis was wise; she was also known as intelligent, a figure of skill and craft, a shapeshifter who took many forms to outwit Zeus and to avoid his advances and the power of his animus, however unsuccessfully (Harper, 2001). The word métissage is derived from the Latin *mixticius*, meaning the weaving of a cloth from different fibres (Mish, 1990, p.761). Thus, métissage, through its genealogy of magical cunning (from Greek) and mixing (from Latin), weaved disparate elements into multi-valenced, metonymic, and multi-textured forms, unravelling the logic of linearity, hierarchy, and uniformity. Métissage affirms, rather than polarizes, difference (Lionnet, 1989) and calls those who practice métissage to create an aesthetic product that combines disparate elements without collapsing or erasing difference. The act of creating new mixed forms, stronger and more resilient than the existing ones, gives métissage its generativity in the face of difference and thus its power to reconfigure the past, to transform the present, and to imagine otherwise (Rushdie, 1991). (35–6)[257]

The goddess Metis is less relevant here than the fact that the Greeks called free men who were not citizens of the city, *métèques*, or Metics. Still,

[257] See also: Rebecca Futo Kennedy, *Immigrant Women in Athens: Gender, Ethnicity, and Citizenship in the Classical City* and David Whitehead, *The Ideology of the Athenian Metic*.

the above etymology of maternity and craftsmanship is important to my close reading of the novels (especially Ali Farah's *Madre piccola*), and the overall genealogy that I am trying to trace. The link between citizenship, mixed identity, and democracy is precisely why I turned to the Métis people in the French case in Canada and throughout French colonial Africa.[258] What is interesting about the etymology of the Greek *métoikos* is the root word "*oikos*," or "dwelling." This is the shared root word for economy as a concept and a management practice, which could help us envision a robust analysis of political economy as one related to Cedric Robinson's conceptualization of the Black Mediterranean as well as one with resonances with to the logic of dispossession. The reading of *métissage* from the excerpt of *Life Writing and Literary Métissage as an Ethos for Our Times* and its discursive potential for sustaining contradiction through non-linear creative practices can thus be brought directly to bear on a theory of *meticciato* in the Italophone context. That this weaving, a rather gendered process of crafting, caring, and creating, happens outside of normative linear paradigms speaks directly to the structure of the postcolonial and Black Italian texts read in this study and, as we will see, to the discussions of disrupted (and disruptive) family lines as a result of colonial legacy such as *madamismo*, war, and colonial violation that those writings explore. Understanding *meticciato*'s critical import in relation to these processes further complicates our understanding of the globalized phenomenon of

[258] See: Rachel Jean-Baptiste, *Conjugal Rights: Marriage, Sexuality, and Urban Life in Colonial Libreville, Gabon*.

interracial, intercultural, and interlingual identity formation. The fraught historico-legal and social concept *meticciato* is contextualized by the particularities of French and Spanish imperial formations, but runs necessarily parallel to those forms. While the term has lost some historical specificity in the last few years, it was most often used in the context of African/Italian social and sexual mixing, and became an explicitly derogatory term for the progeny of those unions during the many attempts to regulate it on the part of the Italian Empire and later through the Fascist government. During the 19th and 20th centuries, *meticciato* specifically indicated those from Italian colonies in Africa that became known as *L'Africa orientale italiana* (AOI, or Italian East Africa, which grew to include what are now Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia) and *L'Africa settentrionale italiana* (ASI, or Italian North Africa, which would include portions of what are now Libya and Tunisia).

These encounters, unlike the French paradigm in places such as Canada, were not an explicit aspect of the Italian Empire's social or economic plans for its African colonies; in fact, miscegenation was strictly prohibited by 1939.[259] However, much like *francisation*, Fascist Italy enacted a series of social and linguistic policies of *italianizzazione*, primarily in the former Eastern European and Austro-Hungarian territories it acquired or annexed between the 1920s and 1940s. This was a process

[259] See Martino Moreno, "Politica di razza e politica coloniale italiana," *Gli annali dell'Africa italiana* vol. 2, 455–467; Giuseppe Lucidi, "Meticciato e sue fatali conseguenze nei confronti della politica coloniale," *Etiopia* vol. 9, 83–86.

of concerted ethnocultural assimilation of indigenous populations to introject the fascist culture being disseminated and produced between the shores of Italy.[260] Certain policies included the mandatory change in spelling conventions from native Slovenian, Croatian, and German surnames to those of Italian; the erasure of national religions in favor of the secularism and atheism that were central to fascism; the prohibition of any language other than Italian in any areas under Italian administration; and the insistence on Italian-only instruction as the cornerstone of education reform laws, a central tenet of *la Riforma Gentile* enacted by Mussolini's first Education Minister, Giovanni Gentile. *Italianizzazione* was coupled with the rhetoric of *irredentismo*, or "irredentism," a term coined during the 19th century to refer to territories such as Istria, Trieste, and Dalmatia for Italy, that were to be recovered and reoccupied by the nation laying "true" or "originary" claim.[261] However, an earlier practice reminiscent of irredentism existed in the colonial rhetoric of Italy's "return to Africa." As depicted in several texts within Italian postcolonial and migration literature and surrounding works of criticism, Italianization in the form of linguistic influence, boarding school colonial education, religious indoctrination, privileging white supremacist European ideals and racial regimes, and

[260] The number of shores was a key part of fascist rhetoric concerning the extent of the Italian empire. Mussolini aimed for the portions of the Mediterranean that met parts of Northern Africa's shores (namely what are now Libya and parts of Tunisia) to become Italy's *quarta sponda*, the "fourth shore" rounding out the Italian peninsula. Mussolini also planned for the Adriatic coastline bordering Dalmatia, Montenegro, and Albania to be subsumed under Italian expansion to a possible fifth shore.

[261] See: Jaqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, eds., *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*.

economic conversion began taking hold in the late 19th century in the Horn of Africa. I use "rhetoric of irredentism" to denote that the process of actively trying to take territory "back" is a different modality of dispossession than the promotion of an ethnonationalist ideology via the production of propaganda that insists said territory has always belonged to the reclaiming nation. The rhetoric preceding the military and/or legal (or indeed extra-legal) action is of interest when trying to think through claims of belonging, ownership, and dispossession in relation to heteronationalist racial regimes and the literatures that speak out against them.

In the previous chapter, I note that Gramsci's Southern question most notably outlines the cultural cleavage between the agrarian, working class South of Italy and the industrialized North in terms of the latter's hegemonic enterprise and the perpetuation of the myth of Southern Italian "backwardness" codified through ideology, cultural practices, and deprivation of resources—legal and otherwise. Here, I argue that the "*meticcio* question" works similarly, through a concerted racial and gendered regime undergirded by a malicious legal enterprise, which includes rights to citizenship and asylum. The colonial encounters which led to "historical" *meticciato* in the 19th and 20th centuries had a decidedly gendered aspect, as many displays of colonial power often do. The popularized coupling for the interracial sexual encounter was between an Italian soldier and an African woman. These domestic and sexual relationships were understood as equivalent to long-term affairs, partial, unsanctioned marriages, or concubinage between early Italian settlers and

East African (specifically Eritrean and Somali) women, a phenomenon known as *madamismo*.[262] According to Karen Pinkus in *Bodily Regimes: Advertising under Italian Fascism* (1995), this practice was more commonplace with Somali women than with Ethiopian women because of the former's not completely abject position:

> Of all the African women encountered by the Italians on their many misadventures 'down there,' it was almost universally agreed that the Somalis were the most desirable, in a sense because their beauty was *believed* to be only an exaggeration of whiteness, and not a 'degenerate' opposite of it. (141–142)

This belief further demonstrates how Italians readily bought into the project of whiteness and continued the promotion of arbitrary racial divisions within Africa that were based on a white European paradigm. In "Dangerous Liaisons," Giulia Barrera, who extensively historicizes the *madamato* in Italian East Africa, notes that with the enactment of Italian Racial Laws in Italy and its colonies after 1937, the fascist regime tried to increase control of Black African women's sexuality and that of while male settlers.[263] With Royal Decree 880 issued in 1937 following the invasion of Ethiopia, *madamismo* became illegal in the colonies:

> Il cittadino italiano che nel territorio del Regno o delle Colonie tiene relazione d'indole coniugale con persona suddita dell'Africa Orientale

[262] Ruth Iyob, "*Madamismo* and Beyond: The Construction of Eritrean Women," *Italian Colonialism*, 233–244; Giulia Barrera, "Dangerous Liaisons: Colonial Concubinage in Eritrea, 1890–1941 and "Patrilinearity, Race, and Identity: The Upbringing of Italo-Eritreans during Italian Colonialism," *Italian Colonialism*, 97–108.

[263] Giulia Barrera, "Dangerous Liaisons."

> Italiana o straniera appartenente a popolazione che abbia tradizioni, costumi, e concetti giuridici e sociali analoghi a quelle dei sudditi dell'Africa Orientale Italiana, è punito con la reclusione da uno a cinque anni.[264]

Despite the widespread awareness of the frequent practice of *madamismo*, due to colonial laws demanding strict racial segregation and the increased rebellions against the Italian occupying forces—not to mention the fact that many of the Italian men had families of their own back home in Italy—the women in these interracial relationships were often left on their own to deal with the cultural, political, and ethnoracial ramifications of the affair, a process that intensified if the union resulted in *bambini meticci*, or "mixed children," who were left bearing the brunt of the legacies of what often amounted to sexual colonial violence. Some of them have gone on to write about experiences of (parental) abandonment, dispossession, and self-determination as well as other elements that reify the humanizing aspects and resistances intrinsic to the "*meticcio* question."[265] Carla Macoggi is one such writer, whose novel *Kkeywa:*

[264] "The Italian citizen who, in the territory of the Kingdom or the colonies, has a relation of a conjugal nature with a colonial subject of the Africa Orientale Italiana, or with a foreigner belonging to a people which has traditions, customs, social and juridical concepts analogous to those of the subjects of the Africa Orientale Italiana, will be punished with imprisonment from one to five years." (r.d.l. 19 April 1937, no. 880, turned into l. 30 December 1937, no. 2590). *Ibid*., 38. Barrera's translation. In "La Razza Ario-Mediterranea: Ideas of Race and Citizenship in Colonial and Fascist Italy, 1885–1941," Fabrizio De Donna writes that these racial laws explicitly sought to stop the creation of more *bambini meticci* by officially banning interracial unions. Fabrizio De Donno, "La Razza Ario-Mediterranea: Ideas of Race and Citizenship in Colonial and Fascist Italy, 1885–1941," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 8(3): 2006, 394–412.

[265] Cf. fn. 120.

Storia di una bimba meticcia forcefully addresses the colonial legacy of miscegenation but also puts forth the kind of creative literary practice of *meticciato* that was previously discussed in texts like *Life Writing and Literary Métissage*.

It is through that text that I begin to view *meticciato* as an analytic that can be used to read many other postcolonial Italian writers—in particular the subset of mixed race and Black women of East African descent under study in the chapter, Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, Igiaba Scego—as "performing" *meticciato* through literary praxis. It is no coincidence that Francophone literary scholar Françoise Lionnet was herself cited in the passage from the *Life Writing* anthology, and indeed throughout that text. Lionnet's work, most of all, *Autobiographical Voices*, was seminal in theorizing *métissage* as a literary practice. She sees its polyvalent quality as that which, "allows us to think *otherwise*, to bypass the ancient symmetries and dichotomies that have governed the ground and the very condition of possibility of thought, of 'clarity,' in all Western philosophy" (6; author's emphasis).

Meticciato can itself be thought or engaged with in similar terms—that is, performative and literary along with its other historical valences that can orient us towards future thinking. I am animating the performative elements of *meticciato* mobilized by Italian dramaturg and director Marco Martinelli who since 1987 has been developing *meticciato artistico* ("artistic métissage") at the "Teatro Stabile di Innovazione" in Ravenna

with the Teatro delle Albe.[266] Martinelli's theatre comprises Senegalese and Romagnolo actors and writers. The amalgamated performances, replete with sonic, dance, and storytelling elements, include role-swapping mid-performance, telling common African folk stories in Italian, or otherwise utilizing African practices to generate a creative new form and project the benefits of interculturality and stands in solidarity with migrants and all who experience racism in Italy.[267] There is also the more recent theatre, Cantieri Meticci, based in Bologna. It was founded by Pietro Floridia in 2004 with a similar multimedia, multipurpose bent towards performative arts, pedagogy, and activism:

> Dalla sua nascita la compagnia mette in scena storie di migranti raccolte da chi arriva a Bologna con il sogno di una vita migliore. Un patrimonio di narrazioni che ha preso la forma di teatrali di spettacoli ma che nel tempo si è arricchita attraverso laboratori e laboratori (di teatro ma anche di musica, danza e video) in biblioteche, nelle scuole, nei centri di quartiere e perfino nelle moschee, intrecciando le esperienze di chi arriva da fuori con i pensieri dei bolognesi. All'oggi sono attivi circa 25 progetti in un'ottantina di luoghi, portati avanti da Cantieri Meticci e da quattro compagnie di quartiere, nate come costole del progetto principale. Voci, immagini, suoni, racconti che al MET sono raccolti in una specie di video biblioteca, un archivio "PoPolifonico."[268]

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[266] "Teatro delle albe." www.teatrodellealbe.com. Accessed 9 July 2016.

[267] See: Gerardo Guccini, "Biographic-theater. Osservazioni sulle rigenerazioni contemporanee dell'attore interprete," *Identità italiana e civiltà globale. Meticciati, relazioni, attraversamenti, rapporti con la modernità*, 97–109 and Marco Martinelli and Ermanna Montanari, "Il teatro è l'invenzione del futuro," *Patalogo*, Vol. 30. Milan: Ubulibri, 2008.

[268] Since its inception, the company has staged stories of migrants gathered by those who come to Bologna with the dream of a better life. It's an endowment of narratives that have

This *meticciato*, itself a hybrid praxis, speaks to the colonial ambivalence inherent in Bhabha's hybridity, the linguistic plurality of Glissant's *créolité* and Bakhtin's heteroglossia, Spivak's skepticism, and the woven interculturality marked by recent literature on *métissage* and feminized labor practices (e.g. storytelling, crafting). It also speaks to the polyvocality of indigenous African *orature* to indicate a radical orientation towards solidarity, belonging, and difference.[269] When thinking Italian identity formation, *meticciato* has the possibility to collapse the perceived-as-impervious membrane between "Italian" and "immigrant," a praxis demonstrated by reading some of the works by the writers who readily shift and subvert either paradigm. Ali Farah and Macoggi are linked to East Africa (Somalia and Ethiopia, respectively) and show an investment in *meticciato* as more than a cultural phenomenon indicative of colonial relations and the creation of life conditions under unjust norms.[270] Their works perform a complicated relationship to multiplicity, to hybridity, and

taken the form of theatrical performances but over time have been enriched through workshops (theater, but also music, dance, and video) in libraries, schools, neighborhood centers, and even in mosques, intertwining the experiences of those who come from outside of the city with the thoughts of the Bolognese. Today, about 25 projects are active in about eighty places, carried out by Cantieri Meticci and four neighboring companies that act as branches of the same project. Naldi, Paola. "Bologna, nasce Met: la nuova casa di Cantieri Meticci." *La Repubblica*. 1 February 2017. http://tinyurl.com/y7mgewkx. Accessed 18 June 2017. The theatre's website is "Cantieri Meticci. Percorsi teatrali con migranti richiedenti asilo e rifugiati." cantierimeticci.it. Accessed 18 June 2017.

[269] Pio Zirimu, "Oracy as a Tool of Development," *Black Aesthetics*.

[270] I use "linked" so as not to stabilize any geopolitical concept of origin or otherwise engage in the epistemic violence of determining fixed national identity of "from-ness," since those are the very stakes at hand in these texts.

to the imprecision of postcolonial genre, as do their cultural attachments. Macoggi composes a *meticciato* narrative in the form of play, poetry, memoir, and colonial historiography. As is common throughout writings held under *letteratura migrante*, *letteratura postcoloniale*, or *letteratura di seconda generazione*, Macoggi and Ali Farah both employ non-Italian words that remain untranslated and sometimes unexplained throughout their writing with drastically different effects, furthering a trend in the genre that engages in play between the familiar and unfamiliar at the linguistic level. In *Madre piccola*, Ali Farah provides a glossary for the Somali words that are used, but in *Kkeywa*, the monolingual Italian reader is subsumed by waves of unknowing, dispossessed of the presumed hegemony of their native language facing another that is not their own. This alienation mirrors the suppression of one's native tongue that the protagonist faces as a by-product of colonial era education policies, thus effectively bringing the reader into *meticciato*. These different forms of *meticciato* resist the "hybridist triumphalism" that Spivak fears, or the epistemic violence that Igiaba Scego refers to in her short story "Identità." These writers advocate for the creation of a *lingua plurima*, a pluralistic and multimodal language that get closer to encompassing the heart of experiencing *meticciato*, however, as that which promotes a relational interculturality rather than one that is hierarchically embedded in supremacist ideologies.

Somali Italian writer Igiaba Scego speaks on the importance of "writing back" and "writing with," that is, practicing productive contamination in literary *meticciato*:

> La lingua. . . può fare male e uccidere se usata in maniera pericolosa. Pensiamo a quante volte nei telegiornali sentiamo scambiare con troppa leggerezza i termini "rifugiato politico" con "clandestino." Ecco, io credo che un maggior dialogo tra scrittori italiani e migranti sia indispensabile per contrastare questa pratica e favorire piuttosto contaminazioni che possono invece generare un linguaggio capace di raccontare la società italiana odierna per quello che realmente è.[271]

This language that is "capable of narrating everyday Italian society as what it really is," including colonial legacies that haunt and bleed into the present moment, as discussed in the previous chapter. Scego's "Identità" ("Identity") is another poignant short story that explores this legacy, in part, by narrating how one contemporary interracial, interreligious, and intercultural couple still must grapple with the impact of those same colonial histories.[272] "Identità" centers a 33-year old DJ named Fatou Ahmed Hirsi. Fatou is an ethnic Somali, who was born and raised in Rome, unlike her ethnically Italian partner Valerio, a white Roman who is a university lecturer in History. Valerio, who is in his early 50s, was born to Italian parents in Mogadishu and later lived in Bamako before moving to Rome. On the day the story takes place, the couple goes to pick up Fatou's estranged half-sister Nura, who lives in Manchester, from the airport. On

[271] Language. . . can do harm and kill if used in a dangerous way. Think of how many times we hear on the news the term "political refugee" interchanged with "illegal immigrant" with ease. So, I think that more dialogue between Italian writers and migrants is indispensable to contest this practice and to instead favor contaminations that can generate a language capable of narrating everyday Italian society as what it really is "Lingua madre o lingua matrigna? Incontro con e tra le autrici Lidia Riviello e Igiaba Scego. *Il Paese Sera*. 23 May 2012. http://tinyurl.com/y9yo7ses. Accessed 11 December 2014.

[272] Igiaba Scego, "Identità," *Amore bicolori. Racconti*, 6–32.

their way there, Fatou hears from her *ufficio sister* ("office sister") that Italian journalist Milena Morri's article based on an interview with Fatou and Valerio has just hit the newsstands.[273] The piece, published in an unnamed women's magazine, is titled "La calata delle barbare…Quando il matrimonio si fa straniero" ("The Invasion of Barbarian Women…When Marriage Goes Foreign"). The former part of the article's title borrows directly from a little known eponymous play written by Elisabetta Schiavo in 1960, produced in 1967 under the direction of Carla Messaglia.[274] A more popular reference is to the West German film *Kampf um Rom I* and *II* (1968 and 1969) or *The Last Roman*, films translated into Italian as *La calata dei barberi*. The film centers on one of the falls of the Roman Empire, wherein Germanic, Gothic, and other "barbarian" invasions leave Italy in ruins and unable to retain its "original" identity. While the couple initially understand the article to be an inside look into the lives of mixed raced relationships in Italy, the title gives immediate pause for concern and the rest of the published piece is a hyperracialized misogynist attack. It relishes in tokenizing Fatou and placing all "foreign" women in a negative light, describing them as sexual competition for the magazine's primary demographic of white Italian women. Ann Stoler has noted—along with several scholars who have written on *madamismo* or *concubinage* in the colonies, specifically in Italy—once racial hierarchies were put in place in

[273] This language of extended and non-biological kinship ("office sister") is a trope that comes up repeatedly in migrant, postcolonial, and queer narratives. I discuss this in further detail in the reading of Ali Farah's *Madre piccola*.

[274] Elisabetta Schiavo, "La calata delle barbare," *Controcorrente* 11: 39–105.

the East African colonies that would segregate the races and uphold Italian supremacy, European women were sent to the colonies with the expressed purpose of preventing miscegenation and "toward family formation and legal marriage."[275] The reference parallels the film's narrative, casting Fatou and all the so-called "barbarian" and foreign women as invaders who pillage Italian culture and take the men for themselves. Morri traffics in colonial and fascist tropes about interracial couples that are heavily based on relationship stereotypes between the figures of the black East African *madama* and the white Italian soldier that are consistently employed to refer to Fatou in primitive and animalistic terms:

> La loro casa è arredata con uno stile sobrio e profondamente tendente a una primitività ancestrale. Fatou ha voluto imporre a Valerio il suo stile, lui allarga le braccia e dice «È lei la padrona della mia dimora e del mio cuore.» … Fatou ha un collo da giraffa e due occhi da cerbiatta indifesa che hanno molta presa sugli uomini *made in Italy*, ma Fatou (e lei lo sa bene!) non è un esserino indifeso, ha unghie e denti che all'occorrenza possono fare molto male…Valerio non lo dice, ma è tutto il corpo di Fatou a confermarlo. Una cagnolina che aspetta solo la mossa del padrone. Ansima Fatou (8–9; italics mine).[276]

[275] Anne Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, 64.

[276] Their house is furnished in a somber style, leaning heavily towards ancestral primitivism. Fatou wanted to impart her style onto Valerio, who shrugs his shoulders and says, "She's the boss of my home and of my heart." … Fatou has a neck like a giraffe and two defenseless doe eyes that have quite an effect on men *made in Italy*, but she knows (and she knows very well!) that she's not some defenseless little creature. She's got claws and teeth that, when duty calls, can do a lot of damage…Valerio doesn't say it, but Fatou's entire body language confirms it. She's a puppy who waits only for her master's beckoning. Fatou pants.

This caricature of Fatou is contradictory in its dehumanizing portrayal, bound as it is by racist logics. Doe-eyed but still dangerous, Fatou is described as the opportunistic African woman with a ravenous sexual appetite. She is also set up to bear the onus of Morri's characterization, because *lei lo sa bene* ("she knows well"), and is fully aware of and thus accountable for those beastly attributes of hers. Even as Valerio indifferently shrugs and declares Fatou "la padrona" of their domicile, Morri manages to "correct" this hierarchy, relying on more racist, sexist, and classist tropes, which have been known to converge in certain iterations of white Western feminism, which, Morris claims, *da quelle parte non è arrivato* ("has not reached those parts") (10). Morri also draws upon this ideology to co-opt the language of *La Rete G2* social justice movement, whose activists use the slogan "Made in Italy" in their campaign to push the Italian government to recognize the children of migrants who were born and raised in Italy and full and immediate Italian citizens, the policies of *ius soli* and *ius culturæ* previously discussed in this dissertation. The irony of the effects of white supremacist, Eurocentric, and colonial logics such as those that Morri advances is that their capacity for harm partly lies in their homogenization and misrecognition. No Somali Muslim or Black woman of any kind could belong to Italy. They are all foreign and ostensibly foreign in precisely the same monolithic and regionalized way. In reappropriating the slogan and ascribing it to white ethnic Italians, Morri claims that those truly "made" in Italy are only those who were born and raised in the country, which also aligns with the imperialist frame of the film she references in

her title. This also links Italy's imperialist ideals to colonial and contemporary racist ones that are nostalgic for an ahistorically "pure" Italy. Morri's attack misses its mark here, however, as Fatou was indeed "made" in Italy. White feminism emerges within this nexus wherein the figure of the Westernized modern white Italian woman is more progressive and is thus losing out to foreign women who revert to colonial or otherwise regressive racialized gender roles that the Italian women refuse to endure. It is a plea for conservative from Morri that again aligns with her colonial and imperialist nostalgia. While Italian women are seen to be *troppo dietro alla carriera* ("too involved in their careers"), Fatou controls the home, as women are meant to, and is responsible for its primitive and Africanized aesthetic (8–9). However, power is a limited one because, beyond the domestic sphere, she is just *una cagnolina*, a meek Muslim woman who lives at the beck and call of her male partner, her *padrone*, like a servant or a puppy.

After reading the piece, Fatou responds viscerally, describing feelings of paralysis, anger, and shame—all common reactions to the experience of dehumanizing racist violence. She also internalizes the monstrous characterization, quite literally:

> Si sentiva un po' come Shrek prima che Fiona si innamorasse di lui. Fiona e Shrek, Fatou si chiese se anche loro fossero una coppia mista. «Ma poi lei è uguale a lui. Non possono essere misti. E io sono uguale a Valerio? Siamo misti come dicono?» (24)[277]

[277] She was feeling a bit like Shrek before Fiona fell in love with him. Fiona and Shrek, Fatou asked herself if they were also a mixed couple. "But then she is the

Fatou identifies with Shrek, the seemingly nonhuman love interest of Princess Fiona and protagonist of an eponymous DreamWorks franchise. For the sake of my reading, it's important to know that Shrek is an ogre and Princess Fiona appears to be human, although it is revealed that she was cursed as an infant and turns into an ogre each night, with no memory of this transpiring when she takes human form. This secret otherness is part of what gives her an unconscious sympathy to the much-reviled ogre. Only one human prince, contradictorily named Charming, can break the spell and return Fiona to permanent human form. In this satire of traditional fairytale, it is the ogre who rescues the princess, and so she chooses to remain in her ogress form so they can live happily ever after. And that this contemporary example from American pop culture appears here, along with various transmedial and transnational references, adds to the mixed feeling of the narrative overall. The rest of the narrative of "Identità" is a response at the level of form and content to Fatou's despondent question: *Siamo misti come dicono?* ("Are we mixed like people say?") (11). Scego's writing of the mixed identity and intercultural relationships between Fatou, Nura, and Valerio—as siblings, as spouses, and as in-laws who are Italians and Somalis both—goes to great lengths to problematize difference in terms that mark "culture" and "race" as distinct. The story resists an ideology in which racist stereotypes are privileged without

same as him. They can't be mixed. And am I the same as Valerio? Are we mixed like people say?"

consideration for the concomitant effects of history, culture, ethnicity, class, gender, race, and sexuality.

It is interesting that Fatou identifies with Shrek, in part because of the reversal of gender roles. More interesting in terms of reversal is that although the journalist Milena Morri conscripts Fatou into the role of the foreigner, the "Shrek" representing an increasing threat to the fate of a monoracial Italy by way of mixed relationships, Valerio also subverts the role of being "made in Italy" since he was born and raised in Mogadishu. If Shrek and Fiona *non possono essere misti* ("cannot be mixed"), then how can Fatou and Valerio be? Later in the story, Morri's assessment of Fatou and Valerio comes under further question for the reader:

> Fatou si fissò sull'arredamento. Quando avevano offerto quel tè alla cannella a Milena Morri l'avevano fatta sedere proprio al centro della casa, nel loro piccolo angolo africano. Non lo chiamavano «salotto», era troppo convenzionale. Angolo africano se l'era inventato Valerio.
>
> «Voglio sentirmi a casa» le disse. (22)[278]

It wasn't Fatou's idea to Africanize their dwelling, but Valerio's, whose cultural attachment to Somalia does not immediately reflect colonial engagement, though his presence was certainly part of Italy's colonial history. His estrangement from Italy mirrors that of Fatou's from Somalia,

[278] Fatou stared at the furnishings. When they offered cinnamon tea to Milena Morri, they had her sit in the very center of their home, in their little African corner. They didn't call it a "living room"—that was too conventional. It was Valerio who decided to call it the African corner. "I want to feel at home," he said.

which she has yet to visit. His mixed cultural formation is something that gives Fatou a sense of comfort and occasional doubt as to her own place, both in their relationship and in society. In a dramatic reversal of colonial tropes, Fatou begs: *Raccontami dell'Africa* ("Tell me about Africa") (23), relying on the metonymic referent of "Africa" that homogenizes the plurality and diversity of almost 60 nations, including the discrete cultural properties of each, similar to what Morri had done, though with clearly divergent positionality and intent. Still, this is the result of a decidedly Western gaze that renders nations like Germany, Finland, and Sweden culturally specific and identifiable with even a generalized sense of familiarity, but collapses places like Mali, Nigeria, and Somalia into one undifferentiated Africa. In this relationship, Valerio aligns more with the role of what Gayatri Spivak describes as "the native informant," a colonizing projection put upon a "native" person by a Western subject who is visiting their land and demands an "authentic" encounter from the informant, who is viewed as radically Other or having access to pure alterity. This native informant, as traced by Spivak throughout *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), is one who is foreclosed in the "unceasing operation" that is the mainstreaming of "the relationship between European discursive production and the axiomatics of imperialism" (4).[279] This view of the "native informant" specifically concerns a more subaltern figure than Valerio could ever represent, but the reversal of roles in this narrative is

[279] Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 4. Spivak's "native informant" belongs in conversation with Said's "Orientalized" subject and Miller's "authentic" African subject discussed in the first chapter.

clear. This doesn't absolve Valerio of his complicity in the colonial project nor does it diminish Fatou's relationship to her ancestral homeland, but certainly complicates the relationship between the two. Fatou is not then relegated to the role of the anthropologist, but the lament in the reversal of expectations is one which resonates with many people in the diaspora, those who feel they have lost their culture, been dispossessed of their language(s), and/or who have yet to experience their ancestral homeland in a first-person context. Fatou goes on to categorize Valerio not in Spivakian terms, but in a West African one.

Fatou is a DJ in Rome, and by nature of her profession, mixes cultures within various musical genres, splices of songs, and elements to create her own unique spin, her own narrative. She has no problem mixing *suoni di Erykah Badu e Angélique «Queen» Kidjo passando senza colpo ferire alle discrepanze latte di una PJ Harvey* ("the sounds of Erykah Badu and Angélique "Queen" Kidjo and then passing on to the milk white sounds of PJ Harvey without even blinking") (17). Valerio, not a DJ, but her *djeli*, weaves a narrative of his Africa, including folk tales, mythology, and his childhood memories. The narrator describes a *djeli* as [*m*]*enestrelli del deserto che i francesi in un attimo avevano ribattezzato griot* ("Minstrels of the desert that the French had readily re-baptized as griot") (23). Griot themselves are the treasured bearers of oral tradition in many West African communities, responsible for weaving together cultural narratives and preserving cultural memory for their communities. The couple first meets at an exhibit for Russian-French artist Marc Chagall. An early modernist

painter (1887–1985), Chagall is another "mixed" element in the narrative that underscores transnational and intercultural solidarities. He lived between Russia and France throughout his life and is renowned for synthesizing and creating interplay between several artistic styles, namely the avant-garde, Fauvism, and Surrealism. Often portrayed in his art were dreams, memories, and other biographical elements of Hasidic and lay-Jewish life in Russia. Chagall is also known for speaking from the specificity of his Jewish experience, which in opposition to the minoritization and oppression of ethnic Jewish peoples, he depicted as universal, something that resonates with Scego as a writer and the story's ultimate resolution. he painted as universal humanity despite the minoritization of Jewish people during his lifetime. The exhibit is in Barcelona, where Fatou and Valerio are both foreigners. She finds him both attractive and intimidating as he approaches her:

> «Sei somala, vero?» disse in italiano.
>
> «Ma come sai che parlo italiano?» (19)[280]

Fatou responds to Valerio's question, not directly, but implicitly. He goes on to explain that he was born at de Martino hospital in Mogadishu, the same hospital where her sister and most of her cousins were born, while she *era stata partorita al Regina Margherita, tra San Lorenzo e la Nomentana* ("was delivered at the Regina Margherita, between San Lorenzo and Nomentana") in Rome (19). Fatou is quick to recognize this

[280] "You're Somali, right?" he asked in Italian. "But how do you know that I speak Italian?"

juxtaposition, one that links Valerio to her kin, but separates her from them all. In turn, Valerio is also good at recognition. He recognizes her as an Italian-speaking Somali (or an Italian of Somali descent, it's not clear whether this is a distinction he makes). The reader is left to wonder what signs were there for him to make that assessment in the face of an expansive Somali diaspora: perhaps her features appear Somali, but her fashion aesthetic Italian? It is a distinction that pushes the reader to consider the difference between the often-elided categories of culture, ethnicity, nationality, and race—the very elisions that Black Italian writers offer up for contestation. Valerio's accurate assessment and exchange of recognition initiated a quick intimacy between the two, with Fatou sharing a "confession" from her past before long: *Fu la sera stessa che Fatou gli confessò che da piccola era stata violentata e che non era come le altre donne* ("It was the same night that Fatou confessed to him that when she was a child, she was raped, and that she wasn't like other women") (19). She does not reveal the perpetrator or the circumstances, but her revelation and Valerio's compassionate understanding shows a fast-formed relationship with quick trust. That Fatou has been multiply marked, including marking herself, as "other" along the axes of race and gender converge with this revelation of sexual violence. This becomes something of an anchor for her character as the narrative progresses.

In the foreground plot, while Fatou and Valerio wait for Nura at the airport, it is he who again does the recognizing, though he has yet to meet Nura in person:

> «Eccola» disse Valerio.
>
> Lei non l'aveva riconosciuta. Era ancora più pachiderma di come se la ricordava. Non la vedeva da otto anni ormai quella sorella lì. Nelle foto inviate era sempre affondata in qualche sofà o stesa sopra qualche stuoia.
>
> «Ma come l'hai riconosciuta?» chiese Fatou.
>
> «Ho i miei segreti» sorrise lui.
>
> Forse non era tanto difficile riconoscerla. Forse era solo lei che si ostinava a non riconoscere che la sua persona e quella grassa cosa che stava caracollando con on trolley al guinzaglio erano molto simili. (20)[281]

Fatou is positioned as the one who refuses recognition or identification. The sisters are certainly estranged. At the end of a litany of ostensible differences in temperament and physical attributes, Fatou muses over what appears to be the most definitive and insurmountable one: *Fatou era italiana, Nura somala* ("Fatou was Italian and Nura, Somali") (15). Nura swiftly makes it clear that she doesn't approve of Valerio, whom she consistently refers to as a *gaal* (a "non- Muslim" or literally an "infidel") even though he demonstrates a ready knowledge of Muslim practices, unlike her sister, who hesitates and expresses uncertainty over the appropriate choice of customary greetings:

[281] "There she is," Valerio said. Fatou hadn't recognized her. She was even more pachydermal than she remembered. She hadn't seen that sister for over eight years. In the photos she sent, she was always sunk into some sofa or laid out on some mat. "How did you even recognize her?" Fatou asked. "I have my secrets," he smiled. Maybe it wasn't so difficult to recognize her. Maybe it was only Fatou who strained to recognize that she and that fat woman waddling over with a trolley in tow were in fact very similar.

> Doveva baciarla? Stringerle la mano? O fare come si usava tradizionalmente tra donne somale, farle un baciamano? Lui fece la cosa giusta. Prese la valigia, facendo attenzione a non sfiorarle il corpo.
>
> «Sono Valerio. *Assalamu Aleikum*. Non so se ti posso dare la mano ora, non so se hai già fatto le abluzioni per la preghiera del pomeriggio».
>
> «Lo hai addestrato bene, vedo» disse in somalo. (20)[282]

The trope of recognition continues to triangulate throughout the relationships between these characters. Nura intentionally tries to hail Fatou in Somali at the expense of Valerio who, in her view, is demonstrably outside of her community and could thus only mimic the customs that he was taught by her sister. This is presumed to be the case, even as their estrangement is bound to Fatou's outsider status, which contradicts any "true" claims to ethnoracial or ethnocultural authenticity. Her offhanded misrecognition of Valerio mirrors Milena Morri's willful mischaracterization of Fatou, linking both women to a close-minded ideology of national and cultural purity. In crafting this narrative, Scego still affords nuance for the contemporary moment while demonstrating that anti-miscegenation may exist between Italians and Somalis even as the historical motivations and fears—and thus power differentials—cannot render these ideologies equal in the oppression they exert. Nura arrives prepared to get Fatou to

[282] Should she kiss Nura? Shake her hand? Or do as one traditionally does between Somali women, kiss her on the hand? He did the right thing. He took her suitcase, being careful not to brush against her body. "I'm Valerio. *Assalam-aleikum*. I don't know if I can give you my hand, I'm not sure if you already did your ablutions for afternoon prayer." "You've trained him well, I see," Nura said in Somali.

abandon Valerio, bringing with her a photo album of eligible Somali bachelors from which she wants Fatou to choose. The internal conflict that is mounting for Fatou, who is still reeling from the article, comes to a head when she is met with a portrait in her living room upon arriving to her flat with Valerio and Nura. According to its caption, it is an old colonial photo of a semi- nude black woman from "Brava, Somalia."[283] Again the type of recognition and identification reappears, with an explicitly colonial valence. Similar to the proliferation of city names in other postcolonial cites, such as returning "Bombay" and "Calcutta" in India to the names "Mumbai" and "Kolkata" respectively after decolonial and anticolonial efforts, the city of Brava is also known in English as "Barawa" when translated from the Somali "Baraawe" instead of the Italianized form. In the preface to "Identità," Scego notes that [*i*]*l suo sogno sarebbe rivedere prima di morire il mare di Brava, la città di suo padre* ("Her dream is to see the sea at Brava, her father's city, again before she dies"), opting for the Italian name (4). This of course does not belie any colonial affinity from the author, but in the story, the vintage photograph with the city's Italian name more readily signifies the colonial gaze that permeates the image and the dispossession of the land or claim to her own tongue for the subject (or indeed object) of the portrait, whose indigenous name for that same city is erased.

[283] Ali Jimale Ahmed, ed., *The Invention of Somalia*, xv.

While Valerio and Nura get better acquainted in the kitchen and Nura is gently disabused of some of her prejudices against the *gaal*, Fatou remains unsettled by the image and falls into a deep sleep. She later wakes from the midst of a nightmare involving Milena Morri and the woman in the photograph, who speaks to Fatou during the dream. She returns to the living room and reacts viscerally to the portrait in an episode that speaks to the sexual violence and psychological ambivalence of *madamismo* from the point of view of those who were made subject to it:

> Quella donna era venuta dal passato. Era una madama del colonialismo italiano, una donna somala che durante il fascismo era stata come tante l'amante ufficiale di un italiano. Una quasi moglie. La madama lavava i vestiti dell'italiano, poi li stirava, preparava il suo cibo, massaggiava i suoi piedi maleodoranti, poi la notte la madama si toglieva tutti i vestiti, si sdraiava accanto a lui e lo faceva entrare nella sua vagina. Ogni notte la vagina aspettava il pene dell'italiano. Non sempre l'italiano si preoccupava di essere carino con la madama. Entrava dentro senza pulirsi le scarpe dal fango, senza lavarsi le ascelle, senza curarsi del suo alito alcolico. La vagina voleva innamorarsi di quel pene, ma le risultava difficile. Allora perché ci stava? Non lo sapeva più la povera vagina. All'inizio le avevano detto altre vagine che era tutto molto bello. Che gli italiani colmavano le loro madame di regali. 'Diventi una signora, sei rispettata, hai tante stoffe.' Ma le vagine non raccontavano tutta la verità alle loro sorelle. La faccenda era tutta diversa. Tutta quanta! Le vagine avevano paura di essere compatite. Volevano essere invidiate loro, non

> compiante. Allora per sopravvivere si inventavano storie dove l'amore aveva la pelle bianca degli invasori. (27–28)[284]

Throughout the passage, Scego employs the rhetorical device of synecdoche, reducing the Somali women down to their anthropomorphized and essentialized sexual organs to address the racial and sexual subjugation that was made manifest in the structural inequalities intrinsic to colonial beliefs and desires. The passage ironizes a fundamental aspect of *madamismo*, which resulted in the effective degradation of African women. The impact was such that even the woman's peers are imagined as *si inventavano storie* ("inventing stories") that normalized their realities as romantic affairs, replete with material, economic, and cultural benefits. Indeed, as the "other vaginas" suggest, she will become a respected lady—*Diventi una signora…rispettata*—by way of this affair and her association with an Italian soldier. This cohabitation is the only path to humanization—from *vagina* to *signora*—and the elevated class status that is desired—they want to be *invidiate* not *compatite*, and becoming a *signora* (that is, a "lady" or a "madam"—as a

[284] The woman in the photo came from the past. She was a *madama* from Italian colonialism, a Somali woman who during Fascism had been, like many women, the official lover of an Italian man. A quasi-wife. The *madama* would wash the Italian man's clothes then iron them, cook his food, and massage his stinky feet. At night, the *madama* would take off all her clothes, lie next to him, and let him enter her vagina. Every night the vagina would wait for the Italian man's penis. The Italian man didn't always worry about being sweet to the *madama*. He entered her without cleaning mud off his shoes, without washing under his arms, without caring about the alcohol on his breath. The vagina wanted to fall in love with that penis, but it proved difficult for her. So why did she stay? The poor vagina didn't know why anymore. At first other vaginas had told her that it was all very nice, that the Italians showered their *madama*s with gifts. "You become a lady, you're respected, and you have tons of clothes." But the vaginas didn't tell their sisters the whole truth. The affair was completely different. And how! The vaginas were afraid of being pitied. They wanted to be envied, not pitied. So, in order to survive, they invented stories where love wore the white skin of the invaders.

form of address rather than either profession or colonial moniker) implies a status above that of *donna* ("woman" or "female"). Scego also addresses the ambivalence that comes with colonial subjugation and dependence. The passage narrates the interiority of the woman in the photograph, observing that she *no lo sapeva più* ("didn't know anymore") why she remains bound in an affair that is not just emotionally and sexually violent, but otherwise unfulfilling of any of her relationship ideals. Being a *madama* to this solider is also an affront to her religious sensibilities: the fact that he [*e*]*ntrava dentro senza pulirsi le scarpe dal fango, senza lavarsi le ascelle, senza curarsi del suo alito alcolico* ("…entered her without cleaning mud off his shoes, without washing under his arms, without caring about his alcohol breath") are all indications of the gross disregard and perhaps willful violation of Muslim practices such as *weeso* (Somali for *wuḍū*, or "ablution") and the prohibition (*harām*) of intoxicants. Still, in a bid for survival and social status in a system that limited women's agency, she acquiesces while not offering a possible consent, and attempts to overlook her ambivalence at the fact that colonized love might be a great contradiction.

The synecdoche persists throughout the passage, and the "vagina" does not ultimately escape dehumanization, but is instead trapped within the colonial fantasy for eternity, as a fixed object rendered frozen in time by the photograph. That this photograph holds such a powerful charge over Fatou's affect is a stark reminder for the reader, as much as for Fatou, that the aftermath of colonialism can still be felt viscerally by the

descendants of colonized subject, that it still permeates materials that penetrate the "Italian postcolonial unconscious."[285] In the end, Fatou takes the photograph off of the wall and tears it up along with Morri's offensive article and the photo album of eligible Somali bachelors. In a story that complicates the colonial binary and attempts to reject colonial legacies' ability to define her and Valerio's relationship, the photos are a reminder of colonial violence's ability to continuously haunt the present. When the other women repress their ambivalence and try to convince themselves that "love wore the white skin of the invaders," it is a powerful statement that evokes the work of Martinican psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*. In that text, Fanon discussed the dehumanization and inferiority that black people internalized under the white gaze. The women in Fatou's dream who were rendered as "vaginas" directly portray a similar dehumanization by nature of their essentialist referents and their negotiation of embodied desire in relation to sexuality, property, and safety. While this could not be deemed a consensual encounter as the Italian soldiers are explicitly referred to as "invaders"—turning Morri's accusation on its head—the women try to insert themselves into the colonial ecumene by way of upwardly mobile social status with its infrastructure. They don the "white masks" and invent a consensual reading of the colonial encounters by casting them as love affairs.

[285] Sandra Ponzanesi provides a sound reading of Neil Lazarus' *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, itself a departure from Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious*. In her 2004 essay "Il postcolonialismo italiano. Figlie dell'Impero e letteratura meticcia," Ponzanesi begins to imagine what mixed literary and sociopolitical forms an Italian postcolonial unconscious could take.

The experience and legacy of *meticciato* is forged in the fraught historical moment imagined in Scego's narrative that often seeps into contemporary interracial and postcolonial relationships. The highly gendered and racialized colonial encounter unevenly impacted women and their children, affecting generations of families and altering social and economic regimes and modes of relation. Confronting this history, writers who identify themselves or their writings with *identità meticcia*, or who privilege telling the stories of mixed identity and cultural formation, especially including Black and/or African perspectives, are speaking truth to power. They are claiming an identity with rights to self-affirmation by rejecting the burden of being the sole carriers of colonial memory. To think contemporary *meticciato* in the Italian context is to be attentive to the sexual, gendered, and racial regimes that undergird Italy's imperial enterprise. It is to resist romanticization of historical legacies of unity and purity by performing certain iterations of mixedness, that is, actively weaving mixed narratives to combat colonial amnesia and the Italian myth of the ideology of homogeneity. So, too, is it to resist the romanticization that can take place with the reduction of every colonial encounter to "pure" violence, recognizing that decolonial love and futurity can exist even within uneven relations of power. Other intimate relations have been written about to think through Italian colonialism that highlight cultural and other forms of *meticciato*, such as the work of Ubah Cristina Ali Farah.

Ali Farah was born in Verona in 1973 to a Veronese mother and a Somali father who lived in Italy for university, an activity encouraged by

both the Somali and Italian governments long after Somalia ceased to be an Italian colony in 1942 and an Italian protectorate in 1960. Her family moved to Mogadishu in 1975 and she remained there until 1991, fleeing violence from the burgeoning Somali Civil War with her newborn son, Harun. While in Somalia, she attended an Italian primary and secondary school run by Italian Catholic nuns.[286] A native speaker of Italian, the experimentation in Ali Farah's works of poetry, her short stories, and her first novel, *Madre piccola* (2007), is a meditation on the personal relationship to language and attest to relationship to *meticciato* that involves a great deal of "play"—indeed, she performs several of her pieces as monologues. Ali Farah now works as a journalist, a writer, and overseer of several anthology and creative projects often categorized as postcolonial or "migrant writing."

In a testament to shifting identities, there is increasing variation in the "correct" spelling of Ali Farah's name, due in part to the irregular spelling conventions of the Somali language. Somali was codified as a written language in the latter part of the 20th century and since then continues to be heavily informed by Somalis in the country and in the Somali diaspora writing and transliterating the language in online forums and in local print publications, as inflected by their other spheres of linguistic influence. Ali Farah's name inconsistencies are also due to translation choices and the Italianization of her name at the beginning of

[286] I return to the signification of religion and education later in my reading of Ali Farah's novel and again in Macoggi's.

her writing career. As a result, her name has appeared variously as Ubax Cristina Ali Farah, Cristina Ubax Ali Farah, Cristina Farah, and Cristina Cali Farax, to name the most popular iterations. Her first novel, *Madre piccola*, was published under the name Cristina Ali Farah. The author herself has expressed strong, but shifting preferences between Cristina and Ubax over the course of her career. As recently as September 2014, one month before the release of her latest novel *Il comandante del fiume* (2014), Ali Farah stated her preference for the spelling of her name as "Ubah" and so that is the spelling I will continue to honor in my writing.

In *Madre piccola*, as in much of her written work, Ali Farah relies on Somali words to delineate kinship relations, such as *aabe* ("father, dad"), *abbayo* ("sister"), *ciyaal* ("children" or specifically "sons and daughters"), *dunaashi* ("sister-in-law"), and *walaal* ("brother"). This intentionally disrupts the reading experience of monolingual Italians. It also points to the importance of generational and familial relationships in the Somali or Italo-Somali communities, as there are more readily accessible and nuanced kinship terms. The title of the novel is itself a calque of the Somali *habaryaar*, an auntie or a mother figure, who may hold that kinship role biologically and/or culturally. Ali Farah employs other Somali words to defamiliarize common Italian ones, resignifying them within their postcolonial context so that they take on the cultural and historical weight of their divergent East African context: *defreddi* (*tè freddo* or "iced tea"), *farmashiiyo* (*farmacia* or "pharmacy"), *kabushiini* ("cappuccino"), *suugo* (*sugo* or "pasta sauce"), and *kiniini* (*chinino* or "quinine"). A native

Italophone reader would recognize these words as quotidian, but also rather uncanny in their resignification, not quite "hers" to possess, as their cultural context has been translocated. Much like Metis herself, Ali Farah weaves Somali words and poetry into her works, and in so doing reveals the intercultural ties between Italy and Somalia.

While this novel is not autobiographical, Ali Farah has acknowledged that stories of the Somali diaspora—including her own—motivate and inspire her writings. The decision not to write strictly in Italian, but instead to rest between both Italian and Somali as circumstances dictated, is at times a logistical necessity and at times an intentional challenge to naïve guarantees of linguistic coherence. This has the effect of naturalizing, for an Italian reader, the multiplicities and differences of Italian that were par for the course during her childhood in postcolonial Somalia and incurring a nod of recognition from other mixed Italian Somalis who have had to live in the interstices, often creating new intercultural and political affinities. From the point of view of Domenica Axad, one of *Madre piccola*'s primary protagonists, Ali Farah reveals some sentiments that explain the motivations behind the novel's interlingual preferences:

> Essere per metà somala divenne un'enorme scocciatura per la quale mi trovavo sempre a dover "giustificare" padronanza linguistica e carnagione, senza godere di nessun vantaggio alternativo. Ero già

> abituata a domande simili in senso inverso, ma a Mogadiscio si trattava più di prendere atto che di isolare una differenza (243 Ital).[287]

It is interesting to note that tendencies to isolate difference are experience by Domenica more in Italy. An aspect of coloniality and white supremacy is to name difference in order to exert dominance, or to demarcate power differentials with the aim of enforcing racial regimes. Instead of lamenting rudimentary identity politics and privileging one relative "difference" over another, Domenica goes on to discuss the pleasures and responsibilities of living a life in translation, of inhabiting *meticciato*: *Vivo la traduzione come un divertimento, a tratti, ma più spesso con un forte senso di responsabilità* (233) ("I live translation sometimes as entertainment, but more often with a strong sense of responsibility") (202). Through language (e.g., word choice, words as historical markers, dialect, etc.), Ali Farah's writing spans generations of mothers, aunts, grandmothers, fathers, and sons through memories of colonialism, yet they also reveal aporias in colonial time and disrupt colonial hierarchies. Her stories reflect polyvocal narratives, and this intertextual intertwining is a prime example of what *meticciato* looks like as a narrative framework.

Divided into nine chapters, with three alternating first-person protagonists, *Madre piccola*'s narrations moves across multiple cities,

[287] "Being half Somali became an enormous headache for which I always had to "justify" my linguistic competence and my skin color, without enjoying anything in return. I was already accustomed to this kind of question, but in reverse. However, in Mogadshu it was more a case of being aware of the difference rather than isolating it" (209–210 Eng.). NB: Since *Madre piccola* has a definitive translation, the pages for this novel correspond to the respective language cited.

countries, and temporalities such as Rome, Nairobi, Amsterdam, London, Utrecht, possibly Toronto, Helsinki, unidentified towns in Germany and North America, and Mogadishu both "present day" and in flash backs, all of which demonstrates the complex patterns of migration by just a few families of the Somali diaspora. The interconnectedness between the narrators and their nuclear families is intentionally hard to follow—they comment more than once on having "lost track" of a family member's whereabouts or their current circumstances. A list of main characters is included as a reference guide, classifying them in terms of their immediate biological relationships: e.g., Sharmaarke is listed as the brother of Taariikh and Foodcadde, the father of Barni, and the husband of Ardo. The chapters each bear the name of their respective narrators: Domenica Axad, Barni, and Taageere. Domenica Axad, whose chapters shift between her names (first as Domenica Axad, then Axad, then Domenica), is the cousin of Barni, Libeen, and Shamsa, the daughter of Taariikh and his unnamed Italian wife, the second wife of Taageere and the mother of his second son.[288] All three are protagonists, and their stories are linked in such a way that a hierarchy or a "true" main character cannot really be claimed. Instead, the characters infuse each other's stories with their own points of view and personal histories. The narrations are multiple, but there is one overarching story, for which "Domenica Axad" is the prelude,

[288] Somalia uses a patronymic system for family names. Thus, Domenica, whose father's name is Taariikh, is named Domenica Taariikh. Barni, whose father's name is Sharmaarke is Barni Sharmaarke.

"Taageere" is the interlude, and "Barni" is the epilogue. The other chapters alternate: chapters two through four are "Barni," "Taageere," and "Axad;" chapters six through eight are, respectively "Barni," "Taageere," and "Domenica." The protagionists are all born and raised in Mogadishu, and while Barni and Taageere are revealed to have met there, briefly, Domenica and Taageere's paths cross in North America.

The plural narration that Ali Farah employs is inspired by several key elements: the polyvocality inherent in the already multicultural traditions of global hip hop culture; contemporary modes of communication like the telephone and older forms such as letter writing and sharing photographs; and the strong oral traditions of Somalia, specifically storytelling and a popular form of women's poetry known as *buraambur*.[289] *Madre piccola* thus forcefully embodies *meticciato*, the narrative articulation of mixed-identity formation and literary praxis, at the levels of both form and content. In *La quarta sponda* (2009), an edited anthology on Italian literature and colonialism by Daniele Combierati, Ali Farah expresses an awareness of, but a refusal to isolate the "Otherness" of some of the figures and tropes that she uses in her writing that have been inspired, defamiliarized, or resignified by the Somali diaspora, such as the telephone:

> I somali hanno un rapporto fortissimo con il telefono, quasi fosse una parte di sé, del proprio corpo: ci passano ore, chiacchierando con parenti e con amici lontani che magari non vedono da anni. Quello

[289] See: Mohamed Diriye Abdullahi, *Culture and Customs of Somalia*, 2001.

> che viene fuori da queste telefonate sono i racconti del quotidiano: sembra paradossale, perché magari da un punto di vista più 'occidentale', se non ci si vede da anni sarebbe più normale parlare di quello che si è, del proprio ruolo nella società, dei passaggi esistenziali importanti, come per esempio un diploma ottenuto, la nascita di un figlio, un matrimonio. Invece no, quello che emerge sono i dettagli legati alla vita di tutti i giorni. Durante queste telefonate, che durano anche ore, si parla di ciò che si sta facendo in quel momento, del cibo che si sta cucinando, le mamme nel frattempo cambiano il pannolino e danno da mangiare al proprio bambino, raccontano per esempio che il piccolo in quel momento sta leccando il manubrio del triciclo e se arriva qualcuno in casa si inserisce nella conversazione. L'insieme di tutti questi dettagli è ciò che dà corpo alla vita e comporli significa dar voce alla diaspora somala, a questa comunità sparsa ma in qualche modo tenuta insieme. (48)[290]

The very grounds on which Ali Farah's actions, conversations, folk stories, songs, and other modalities of sharing language become written text carry *meticciato* as its frame. Ali Farah's *madrelingua*, which translates to "native tongue" in Italian, is quite literally this: that is, it's her Italian mother's

[290] Somalis have a very strong relationship to the telephone; it's almost like a part of their bodies. They spend hours on it, chatting with faraway friends and relatives whom they might not have seen in years. What comes up during these telephone calls are stories of the everyday. It seems paradoxical, because maybe from a more "Western" point of view, it would be more normal for people who haven't seen each other for years to talk about oneself, about one's role in society, about important stages in life—for example, a degree earned, the birth of a son, or a marriage. Instead, this doesn't happen. What comes up are the details tied to everyday life. During these phone calls, which last for hours, people talk about what they're doing at that moment, about the food they are cooking, and in the meantime, mothers change and feed their child. They talk about how the little one is licking the handlebar of a tricycle at that moment, and if someone comes to the house, that person enters the conversation too. These details together are what embody life and composing them together means giving a voice to the Somali diaspora, to this dispersed community that has somehow stayed connected.

tongue, meaning her native fluency is mediated through colonialism and the resulting encounter of her parents. As previously mentioned, the Somali language began to be officially transcribed in the early 1970s, not long before civil war broke out in 1990 and triggered massive migration and instability in the codification of Somali spelling conventions, which is now increasingly influenced by the Somali diaspora and the languages of its host countries. Thus, even when granting equal weight to the cultural traditions she was shaped by, she considers them differently and blends them together to augment their intercultural relevance to her artistic and identity formation. Ali Farah mixes the polytonality, orality, and lyricism of Somali with the lyricism and multimodal registers of written Italian, suffusing her work with an irreducibly mixed narrative that is both the medium and the message.

Spivak's idea of "woman as agent of production" is again relevant here.[291] The multiple modalities of representations of mothering in addition to biological mothers and protagonists of the novel facilitate a politics of address that is also pluralistic. Ali Farah refers to motherhood as a way of tracing the movement and dimensionality of her characters, to delve into a diverse range of relationships, saying, *credo che il tema della maternità sia un terreno molto fertile su cui si possono ben rappresentare dinamiche relazionali d'ogni tipo* ("I think that the theme of motherhood is rich with opportunities for representing a very fertile terrain of dynamic relationships

[291] See Spivak fn. 126.

of every kind") (254). This "fertile terrain" resists the shame of colonial relationships within which it was taboo for an East African woman to give birth to their so-called *bambini meticci*, who I will discuss more explicitly with a subsequent reading of Macoggi's *Kkeywa. Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011). These children were often separated from their mothers and extended families, the former of whom Ali Farah notes are often burdened with the failures or the rupture of their nuclear family units:

> C'è persino chi ha il coraggio di dire che queste creature disseminate nel mondo sono indisciplinate per colpa delle madri, senza considerare il padre che se ne lava le mani. (265)[292]

Ali Farah uses her narrative to valorize many of the kinship dynamics encompassed under motherhood and maternity, confronting colonial and heteropatriarchal efforts to suppress the more conflictual attachments and (re-)presenting alternative relationships of motherhood. Barni's character establishes her unique relationship to motherhood most importantly through her communication abilities. As a "little mother" to Domenica and in her work as a midwife, she valorizes her cousin's utterances during times of linguistic amnesia and as a midwife. In addition to helping bring children into the world, she allows her patients to tell their stories while also making sense of her own. Besides being a literal and metaphorical agent of production, Barni's closing words in the epilogue support a broad

[292] "There are even people who have the audacity to say that it's their mothers' fault if these children who are scattered throughout the world misbehave, without even taking into consideration their fathers who have washed their hands of them" (228).

iteration of queer and postcolonial *meticciato* relationality based on atonement and communal living:

> La nostra casa la portiamo con noi, la nostra casa può viaggiare. Non sono le pareti rigide che fanno del luogo in cui viviamo una casa. Dentro la nostra casa io, Domenica Axad e il piccolo Taariikh troviamo conforto e riparo, piantiamo le nostre fondamenta per avere la forza di combattere quotidianamente. Rimanere isolati non è più possibile, cerchiamo di adattarci e di ricostruire il nostro percorso. Convivendo, gran parte del dolore si compartisce. Una madre sola non basta ai propri figli, chi lo può sapere meglio di me e di Domenica Axad? Le nostre madri erano malate di troppe solitudini. Insieme ne verremo a capo, i figli si crescono in comunione. Solo così le molte assenze saranno irrilevanti, è assistendo alle nascite che ho sconfitto la morte. (263–264)[293]

In *Queer Phenomenology,* Sara Ahmed provides further evidence for the link between queerness, domesticity, and diaspora, saying that:

> To queer homes is also to expose how "homes", as spaces of apparent intimacy and desire are full of rather mixed up oblique objects. It is also to suggests that the intimacy of the home is what connects the home to other, more public spaces. If homes are queer

[293] "We carry our home with us, our home can travel. It's not fixed walls that make a home out of the place where we live. In our home, Domenica Axad, little Taariikh, and I find comfort and protection; we lay down foundations in order to have the strength to fight every day. It's no longer possible to remain isolated; we seek to adapt and to rebuild our path. Through living together, we can share the greater part of our pain. A mother alone is no longer enough for her children, no one knows that better than Domenica Axad and me. Our mothers suffered too much loneliness. Together we will make it, children should be raised together. Only by doing that, many absences will become irrelevant; it's by helping babies be born that I overcame death (265; 226.)"

> then they are also diasporic, shaped by "entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'" (Brah, 1996, 16).[294]

Whether or not Barni or Domenic physically travel, their relationality is such that they are bound to a queered home that can sustain them. It is even Barni who assumes the "typical" maternal duty of naming a child, an act which bears witness to cultural histories and attachments. She gives Domenica the name "Axad," which, like her Italian forename, also means "Sunday" in Somali so that she can feel like less of an outsider in their Somali community in Mogadishu. Domenica recalls that was named such because, *mia madre era e immagino sia tuttora cattolica praticante, mi ha chiamata Domenica e andava a messa tutte le domeniche persino a Mogadiscio, dove certamente non lo era indotta dalle circostanze* (237) ("my mother was, and I imagine still is, a practicing Catholic; after all she named me Domenica and she attended church every Sunday even in Mogadishu, where she was certainly not forced to do so by circumstances") (205). Be it through the bestowing of nicknames or other terms of endearment, the tiered (formal/informal) language structure of written and spoken Italian is emphasized and augmented by Somali terms of address. Even foreigners like Domenica Axad's mother, who is a white Italian, is called *dumaashi* or sister-in-law, *perché suo marito è somalo, allora tutti i somali sono suoi cognati* (…because her husband is Somali and all Somalis are her brothers-in-law") (6). The *tu*/*Lei* form that indicates

[294] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 176.

proximity between speakers is deepened by the addition of a word like *abbaayo*, which means (biological) "sister," but also a term of endearment that reveals a deeper kinship structure propelled by clan relationship networks. Domenica remarks, "my mother is *dumaashi* because everyone in Somalia are brothers and sisters. They call her that because her husband is Somali."

Ali Farah continues to trace these relationships, with evocative language that describes the more turbulent and at times violent linguistic aspect of *meticciato*, what bilingual or multilingual people may recognize as a frequent experience of language acquisition that is augmented here by colonial history. Domenica occasionally discusses mutilation, which is sometimes read by literary critics as physical violence and literal self-harm, although in interviews Ali Farah herself has articulated those moments as metaphorical, emblematic of a heavy tongue and the inability to communicate fluently. At moments of elevated trauma or intensity, Domenica does return to the idea of mutilation in physical terms, but it is more often expressed as a feeling, considered in terms of language and memory:

> Tornando dalle vacanze italiane, ciò che più mi terrorizzava era la condizione di tabula rasa linguistica in cui mi riducevo. Non so se il fenomeno sia noto agli studiosi o se sia qualcosa che riguarda solo la mia natura, ma accadeva che, dopo due mesi di assenza, mi occorresse quasi una settimana per recuperare l'uso del somalo…Vivevo questa incapacità comunicativa come una grave mutilazione, soprattutto perché si trattava di una competenza

> dimezzata che mi impediva di emettere suoni comprensibili, ma non di capire le imprecazioni contro la mia amnesia. (237)[295]

This passage refuses a strictly positive or negative discourse of *meticciato*. It simply "is" here, a difficulty intrinsic to this aspect of Domenica's mixed existence and one that is shared by many who live a life within multiple cultures. She later describes being *salvata*, saved by her *habaryaar* Barni, who often eased her reemergence into her Somali home life. In this powerful moment, Ali Farah reinforces the importance of the "little mother," a force of guidance, protection, and cohesion from cultural synthesis. When she returns to Mogadishu in her twenties, after not being there since childhood, Domenica's older cousin is living in Italy and thus she cannot access the gentle re-emergence into Somali culture that she is used to. The difference is palpable. Domenica tries to articulate a kind of *saudade*, a longing for unmediated belonging that she views as impossible because of her *identità meticcia*. This expression of *saudade* and quasi- migrant feeling that Domenica narrates to her psychiatrist is indicative of belonging to a diaspora and feeling the effects of colonialism: She effectively rewrites a common trope of colonialism known as *mal d'Africa*. In *Fuori centro*, Cristina Lombardi-Diop defines *mal d'Africa* thus:

[295] "What terrified me most, returning from my Italian holidays, was finding myself reduced to the state of a linguistic tabula rasa. I do not know if this is a well-known phenomenon or if it is simply related to my nature, but it so happened that, after a two-month absence, it took me almost a week to regain the use of the Somali language. I experienced this inability to communicate as a serious mutilation, especially because it meant that my linguistic competence was cut in half. It prevented me from emitting comprehensible sounds, but it did not spare me from standing people who were cursing my amnesia" (205).

> Compare nel momento in cui un ufficiale, un amministratore o un soldato coloniale viene rimandato a casa dopo una permanenza nell'Africa coloniale. Il reintegro del soggetto maschile nella sua cultura è spesso problematico, proprio a causa di questa malattia coloniale, vissuta come una conseguenza dell'intimità con l'Africa e gli africani acquista dal protagonista attraverso una totale immersione nella cultura native. (50)[296]

The feeling that Domenica expresses is not merely the inverse of this sort of colonial possessive malaise, but it rather the nostalgia for a familial integrity that never existed, compounded with ambivalence and uncertainty regarding where her home truly is. In *Mythologie du métissage* (1998), Guadeloupean poet and literary theorist Roger Toumson writes that *métissage* is "effectively ambivalent. There are two adjoining issues: that of philosophical legitimation of cultural relativism and that of the sociological rehabilitation of dominated cultures" (77). Toumson, in the context of considering the benefits of *négritude* and *créolité,* sees *métissage* as an ideology, a worldview that presumes specific aims. The ambivalence that Toumson points to can be found in Ali Farah's literary *meticciato* as it indeed plays a part in discourses on *métissage* for Toumson since for him authors are seldom certain which discrete issues they are treating when they are referring to or engage the concept. And It

[296] It emerges the moment an officer, administrator or colonial soldier is sent back home after a long stay in colonial Africa. The reintegration of the masculine subject back into his culture is often problematic, precisely because of this colonial disease, experienced as a result of the intimate contact that the protagonist had with Africa and Africans in a total immersion into the native culture. See also: Loredana Polezzi, "'Mal d'Africa' and Its Memory: Heroes and Antiheroes in Pre- and Postwar Readings of the Italian Presence in Africa," *War-Torn Tales*, 39–64.

is interesting, too, that the *mal d'Africa* described by Lombardi-Diop undergoes a gender transposition and is taken out of the colonial confines. *Mal d'Africa* lends itself to easy engagement with *madamismo* for the soldiers because the longing to return to the colonial paradise often included the desire for sexual fulfillment from the native women. Indeed, the Italian soldiers and settlers who "succumbed" to this affliction were said to have been bewitched by those women and driven to "go native." As a woman and a civilian, Domenica's longing for "feeling native" and returning or finding "home" is imbued with maternal desire for security rather than sexual desire. Another instance that complicates the economy of belonging is when Fatou demanded of her lover in "Identità": *Raccontami dell'Africa*, expressing deep desire for rootedness, tinged in this case with the sexual desire that Lombardi-Diop outlines, linked with the desire for security and comfort. However, neither Fatou nor Domenica experience the full immersion that they seek, yet they both are ultimately content with the idea of "home" being one in transition. The works of Igiaba Scego and Ubah Cristina Ali Farah are a testament to the possibility for a performative and literary *meticciato* to speak to a changing literary landscape and Italian sociopolitics. Tony Bogues ends his book of lectures and essays, *Empire of Liberty* (2010), with a series of statements and a question that continues to loom large in my consciousness:

> We live in a world in which the traces of the colonial modern are not just haunting shadows but are part of the everyday technologies of rule that are deployed. . .We live in a world in which we have yet to face the most

> complex questions posed by the event of the colonial encounter: How shall we live together in difference? (121)

For the Italian context, the mobilization of plural voices, the reliance on expanded kinship structures, the use of multiple media and transcultural elements, and the employment of historic and artistic cultural memory in increasingly radical ways as will continue to be discussed in the next chapter, will hopefully point us to new means of understanding difference and living together peacefully in it by way of forming new solidarities and collectivities as a part of our freedom practice.

— FOUR —

NEW REPRESENTATION REGIMES

In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.
I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it.
— Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

As far as my identity is concerned, I will take care of it myself.
— Éduoard Glissant, "For Opacity"

If we cannot imagine an otherwise, another way of being together, then we certainly cannot articulate it, demand it, and thus cannot bring it into being. This chapter continues to agitate for one such otherwise from the kernels of Black, mixed, and anonymous or collective imaginative practices read throughout this dissertation. The previous chapter proffered *meticciato* as an analytic that can describe an organic narrative form found in the writings of several contemporary authors. This chapter continues along that same vein with the comparative reading of Ubah Cristina Ali Farah's *Madre piccola* previously discussed in Chapter Three, Carla Macoggi's *Kkeywa. Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011), and a discussion of Wu Ming—one of the founding collectives advancing the literary phenomenon known as "the New Italian Epic." I address the production of novels like *Timira. Un romanzo meticcio* (2012), their previous project, "Luther Blissett," and a speech by collective member Wu Ming 1. All of these lead us to think about how literature allows us to envision imaginative liberatory practices.

New Italian Epic was a label coined by Wu Ming 1 from the Wu Ming Foundation in their 2008 "Memorandum." The name "Wu Ming" has a dual

meaning that points to the collective's aims and origin. Depending on the tonal shift in Chinese, *wu ming* can mean "nameless," "anonymous," or indicate a group of "five people." The group indeed remain largely anonymous, though at this point, five members have been identified: Roberto Bui, Wu Ming 1; Giovanni Cattabriga, Wu Ming 2; Luca Di Meo, Wu Ming 3; Federico Guglielmi, Wu Ming 4; and Riccardo Pedrini, Wu Ming 5. As of 2017, only the first two remain. Though they have been identified and attend public readings or other events, they still do not allow themselves to be photographed or recorded. The number of each member was not meant to indicate a hierarchy per se, however Wu Mings 1 and 2 have done the most interviews and speak more often on behalf of the entire collective, even when all five were involved. Wu Ming 1 used the label New Italian Epic to describe a corpus of Italian texts, mainly published in the 21st century, that are an unusual mix of genres, styles, and media, which have a reinvigorated sense of political and ethical commitment. Throughout this chapter, I will discuss how history, memory, the epic, realism, and texts that seem to be archival, but sometimes change or distort reality are all a part of literary *meticciato*. Therefore, I will reflect on the interactions between literature, performance, and memory as a distinct response to this contemporary moment.

As we've seen, the historic "*meticcio* question" can often be assessed in terms of recognition and passing within a neoliberal economy in which dispossession can be solely linked to privation. In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Frantz Fanon describes a practice of self-recognition

that undergirds his critique of recognition politics, which points to a more inventive and emancipatory economy:

> I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. I should constantly remind myself that the leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. (229)

This act of constant self-invention comes more than close to Arendt's notion of "natality" as the human condition of making a beginning, where "the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting."[297] In terms of political struggles, this notion of invention into existence resonates on the individual psychosocial level with Gilroy's reflection on "convivial culture" as a practice in which racism is an object of analysis and even point of departure while simultaneously breaking "with the notion of racial differences as a self-evident, immutable fact of political life."[298] Self-recognition in Fanonian terms thus does not imply the reinforcement of collective identities, but it does allow for the right to self-invention, the right to "refuse what we are," as Foucault would have it, in the sense of how we are classed, racialized, gendered, or otherwise constructed.[299] However, Fanon does not leave the ground of experiences embedded in structural power relations. Fanon's notion of invention into

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[297] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 9.

[298] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*, 151.

[299] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 216.

existence means making a beginning within the process of collective action based upon, but not restricted to, lived experiences and memories, rather than collective identities.

If memory is one of the essential factors for constructing individual and collective identity, then it has an important role in the integration of an individual into a given social or ethnic group.[300] In a glossary of terms that she collaborated on with Somali refugee students from *Asinitas*, an intercultural educational center organized with migrants, Ali Farah writes under *Lingua* ("Language"):

> Nella cultura orale la memoria è considerata una grandissima virtù e per questo incoraggiata e sostenuta con varie strategie, per esempio con la *luuq*, la tonalità del canto, vengono enunciati i versi. *Luuq* diversa da *luuqad* che significa lingua parlata sia in somalo che in arabo. Gli studenti di Asinitas che non hanno ricevuto una vera e propria educazione scolastica, sono quelli che ricordano più canti, detti e poesie e ci ricamano continuamente la propria voce. Questa vena giocosa e incredibilmente creativa per esempio gli uomini istruiti come mio padre, l'hanno persa. (4)[301]

As discussed in the previous chapter, memory is a very important device in Ali Farah's *Madre piccola* and is a central aspect of postcolonial Italian

[300] Ruth Van Dyke and Susan Alcock, *Archaeologies of Memory*, 2003

[301] "In oral culture, memory is considered a great virtue and therefore is encouraged and supported through various strategies. For example, verses are uttered with the *luuq* and the tonality of song. The *luuq* is different from *luuqad*, which means "spoken language" in both Somali and Arabic. The Asinitas students who have not received a real scholastic education are the ones who remember more songs, sayings, and poems, and they continuously weave their own voices into them. Educated people such as my father have lost this playful and incredibly creative source of inspiration." Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, "Day Three: Lingua," *Asinitas*.

literature. It is much more explicitly relevant in the theme of remembering and forgetting in Macoggi's novel *Kkeywa. Storia di una bimba meticcia (*2011) where, as we will see, the twelve-year-old protagonist of the story must endure the practice of forgetting and remembering the "right" parts of herself during her colonial education. *Kkeywa* is a decidedly pessimistic but resilient and ironic text, which does not demonstrate the same recuperative efforts as Scego and Ali Farah analyzed in Chapter Three. This might be because while Ethiopia was never successfully colonized by Italy, it underwent a brief occupation and engaged in two wars—the Italo-Ethiopian war from 1895–1896 and the Italo-Abyssinian war from 1935–1936. There is an array of different relationships to Italy's colonial project resonant throughout these Italo-Somali and Italo-Ethiopian narratives. *Kkeywa* addresses similar problems of ambivalence, isolation, and performing *meticciato*. The novel draws the reader into a vortex of flashbacks that represent Fiorella trying to reconcile her existence as she goes in search of her past and, as she narrates it, her humanity. Her story is one of resistance, narrated from the recent past. As such, it also deals with Italy's lack of legal recognition of and support for immigrants, Italians with mixed legal status, and non-Catholic subjects on the state and religious level.

The similarities between Macoggi and Ali Farah are many. They are both engaged in uplifting the communities affected by Italy's colonial enterprise in the Horn of Africa and draw attention to the manifold

connections between the two regions.[302] They are both also concerned with social justice: their writings and their actions speak to their tireless promotion of human rights within an increasingly hostile context of xenophobia, antiblack and anti-immigrant racisms, economic disparity, and violence in Italy. Within this similar political project, their different relationships to diaspora and the former Italian empire help shed light on more aspects of how racial and gender regimes inform *meticciato* in contemporary Italy.

While Ali Farah was born in Italy and grew up in Somalia, Macoggi grew up in Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, moving to Bologna when she was an adolescent and eventually studying Law at the University of Bologna. Motherhood is central to both of their narratives. While there is a proliferation of mothers represented in *Madre piccola*, it is the absence of motherhood and failed surrogacy that plagues *Kkeywa*. Without being legible as biography, these meta-narratives draw from lived experiences of mixed identity formation and colonial/occupational traumas. The difficulty of reading their texts as "pure fiction" is also apparent in how the authors gloss their own texts. Macoggi writes in the beginning of *Kkeywa*:

> Quando scrissi questo racconto desideravo che il "prologo" fosse fiction allo "stato puro", nonostante avessi utilizzato un documento originale

[302] The concept of "racial uplift" has been a key one in Black and Ethnic Studies, with wide-ranging views resulting in often bitter disputes occurring like that longstanding one between from WEB DuBois and Booker T. Washington. See: Jacqueline Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift*.

> del periodo relativo alla guerra dichiarata dall'Italia all'Etiopia e la conseguente occupazione del Paese del Corno d'Africa. . . .(11)[303]

There is a bit of dissimulation here that readers of the more sociological-autobiographical *letteratura migrante* from the 1990s may get caught up on, since the entire narrative appears heavily autobiographical but remains categorized as fiction. That *nonostante* means "despite" or "even though," and it could be that Macoggi is narrating her desire to produce a purely fictional prologue as though it were almost thwarted because she included *un documento originale del periodo* ("an original document of the period") (11). Or perhaps it is the document that is fictionalized, even as it speaks to real historical occurrences. *Nonostante* may be indicating both that the prologue should be read as fiction despite the document itself, or her decision to include it. It's a fine distinction, but given the multiple legal and historical documents in the prologue and the fact that she scans an image of the one to which she draws our attention, Macoggi's immediate reflection on her desire disorients the reader as to the verisimilitude of the narrative and thus reveals greater fiction—that is, that a distinction between history and narrative exists.[304] Following Hayden White's term, Macoggi's prologue alludes to the construction of a "metahistorical

[303] When I wrote this story, I wanted the prologue to be fiction in the "purest sense," even though I included an original document of the period of the war declared by Italy unto Ethiopia and the country's subsequent occupation in the Horn of Africa…

[304] See: Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*.

narrative," one that employs the historical imagination in the writing of history in a capacious literary form.

Having read law, she is also familiar with such things as precedent and verifiability. This, in conjunction with her narrative's investment in history makes interesting parallels with the nature of anti-colonial Fanon's refusal of posing "the problem of black truth." In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he first explains that one effect of colonization is the placing of historical-dialectical process at a standstill, thus rendering truth in colonies something that he describes as "the end of history."[305] Then he proceeds to lay out how, the dialectic of truth was constructed within a rigged Manichean system of colonial logics wherein an "all-white truth" was absolute and blackness was thus substitutable for falsehood (114). When Fanon laments the problem of "black truth," he does not wish to pose this alternative borne from Négritude as it from the racialized false consciousness that govern both the oppressor and the oppressed under a colonial system. Fanon instead challenges the politics of truth and considers the benefits of dissimulation—that is, the conditional pretense of truth-telling, rather than the nature "truth" itself. This is a tool in the kit

[305] This is in part why VY Mudimbe's discussion in *The Idea of Africa* was so powerful. The question of "African history" is an onto-epistemological one, bound up in the historical production of truth—that is, all-white truth—and discursive modalities of colonialism. One must set about articulating what is meant by "history" before either challenging its European iteration or attempting to posit a Black or African alternative that is not always already borne from the colonial moment. This is, again, a problematic discussed by Mudimbe, Miller, and Said, among many others (see fn. 82 in "Black Italianità.") This is because questions of how one might write from "outside" and who are the arbiters of knowledge production or how to instigate its decolonization are very central to various postcolonial, anticolonial, decolonial, and feminist schools of thought. For Fanon on non-history and black truth, see Frantz Fanon, "The Negro and Psychopathology" and "By Way of Conclusion," *Black Skin, White Masks*, 109–162 and 174–181.

against the structures of colonialism, one similarly assessed by Édouard Glissant, also speaking of and from the French Caribbean colonial context. He writes that "our historical consciousness could not be deposited gradually and continuously like sediment" but that it "came together in the contexts of shock, contraction, painful negation, and explosive forces." His version of the end of history is rather a "non-history," meaning the "dislocation of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all."[306] Glissant implored Caribbean writers to continuously explore and keep focus on that dislocation not merely out of a sense of nostalgia for the past or the time before the end of history, but instead "to show its relevance in a continuous fashion to the immediate present."[307] So not only is Macoggi flouting the maxims of traditional historiography, she is doing the same for legal writing by including both in her memoiristic novel. Both are equally profound, as history and the law are the tethers to which human subjects are currently bound and represent the primary site of contention for the struggle for recognition and belonging—the very heart of citizenship debates today. This has important implications for the narration of her story and does the work of resisting the dislocatory interruptions of the aftermath of colonialism, of occupation, and of continued dispossession of rights, specifically for *meticci* people and those linked to nations with a history of Italian colonization and

[306] Édouard Glissant, "The Quarrel with History," *Caribbean Discourse*, 62.

[307] Ibid., 64.

occupation, but also more broadly for all Black and migrant people throughout Italy.

Thus, it is no coincidence that names, naming, and the politics of recognition are one of the largest stakes in the writing, historicizing, and performance of *meticciato*. On dispossessing language, Butler and Athanasiou describe the failure of language and the desire to possess through naming:

> The act of addressing and responding, mediated as it may be by the unfixable and incalculable performative forces of language, exceeds the formal structures of mere naming, capturing, denominating, or even re-membering and bearing witness. This is perhaps about imagining and putting forth the necessary possibility of shifting or disrupting this limitation, even though there can be no question of fully overcoming it and even though (or because?) language always fails us.[308]

In keeping with the notion of resisting/moving outside of dispossession to a more sovereign position, I suggest that in the performance and narrating of *meticciato*, these writers engage what I'll call oppositional onomastics, a political allegory which mobilizes a shifting self-recognition and politics of (self- or re-)naming that pushes back against hegemonic racial, cultural, or national regimes.[309] As a writer, Macoggi is also familiar with the

[308] Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 136.

[309] In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon wrote: "In every age, among the people, truth is the property of the national cause" (49). Butler and Athanasiou have previously linked language and the politics of naming to possession and propriety, often of the nation state, as did Glissant, in his essay, "Dispossession," *Caribbean Discourse*, 37–50. I am thinking of oppositional onomastics as counter to, say, that of colonial onomastics, the imperative to possess and the politics of naming the already named, such as cities like Mumbai or Baraawe, and of the related imperial and fascist call-backs indicative in *Operazione*

imaginative blurring of fact and fiction. She occasionally writes under a pseudonym, as if to distance herself from the characters she creates and to make a statement about her motivations for writing through the practice of naming. Names continue to carry a lot of mimetic weight for a lot of these writers. In *Madre piccola*, Domenica Axad wears her intercultural and interreligious duality on her sleeve, oscillating between names based on affect and circumstance. In *Kkeywa*, Fiorella bears her Italian name marking her as "Other" in Ethiopia along with being referred to by the slur *kkeywa* as though it were proper name. *Kkeywa* is a pejorative word in Amharic meaning "mixed blood" or "half-breed," a telling name that hints at the divisions Fiorella faces because of her parents' origins. In Italian it gets translated as *la rossa*, which is partly how the novel's second volume, *La nemesi della rossa* (2012) gets its title. A cousin briefly sits her down to comb her hair in a moment mimicking mother-daughter intimacy, which is quickly turned on its head as the encounter is not a comforting one. Fiorella's cousin explains bluntly that the "sins of the father" have led to her experience of permanent outsider status. She is, in effect, *la Kkeywa*:

> Nunəš passava ore e ore a pettinarmi i capelli, proprio come un tempo faceva la mia mamma, e mi spiegò finalmente che erano così dissimili dai suoi perché ero figlia di un *ferenğ*. Certo, sapevo di essere la Kkeywa, ma fu una sorpresa per me apprendere che perciò potevo essere anche diversa dai miei cugini. . .Mio padre fino ad allora era solo mio padre, e basta. Lui era ferenğ, ma solo ora mi era chiaro che da ciò derivavano

Mare Nostrum discussed in Chapter One, or republican call-backs of *terrone/extracommunitario/fuori sede* discussed in Chapter Three (See fn. 102).

> degli effetti che mi riguardavano. Soltanto ora capivo perché i bimbi dei miei vicini mi chiamavano kəlləswa, sangue misto. (47)[310]

Thus, with those names formalized and internalized, she cannot shake the feeling of being foreign, a half-breed, and now mixed blood. In the preface to "Identità," Igiaba Scego writes about her own name, ironically re-signifying it with the inclusion Arabic and British cultural references in her of a transnational linguistic and cultural frame, indicative of her own oppositional onomastics:

> Igiaba Scego cerca risposte. Quasi un destino naturale il suo. È scritto sia nel Dna sia nel nome. Infatti Igiaba in arabo ha la stessa radice della parola risposta. Lei lo ha scoperto a Tunisi un paio di anni fa, in una scuola di arabo. «Ora ho capito tutto!» si è detta. «Elementare Watson» ha aggiunto, nonostante Watson non fosse nei pariggi. (4)[311]

The most common pseudonym that Macoggi uses, Amete G. Netza, encompasses what she ironically refers to as *italopiche* or *etioliane* origins, yet another kind of blurring between the supposedly discrete categories "Ethiopian" and "Italian." This name, like the author's and her protagonists contains an embedded micro-narrative of the shared history between Italy and Ethiopia. The first and middle names are Amete Ghebriel, which in

[310] Nunəš spent hours and hours in combing my hair, just as my mother once did, and finally explained that they were so dissimilar to her because I was the daughter of a *ferenǧ*. Of course, I knew I was "the Kkeywa," but it was a surprise to me that I could be any different from my cousins…Up until then, my father was just my father and that was enough. He was *ferenǧ*, but only now was it clear to me that I would also feel the effects of this. Only now did I understand why my neighbors' children called me *kəlləswa*, "mixed blood."

[311] Igiaba Scego is looking for answers. Hers is an almost natural destiny. It's written both in her DNA and in her name. In fact, "Igiaba" in Arabic has the same root as the word "answer." She discovered this a couple years ago in Tunis, in an Arabic school. "Now I've understood it all!" she told herself. "Elementary, my dear Watson, she added, even though Watson wasn't anywhere in the neighborhood.

Ge'ez (an Ethiopian language) means "servant of Saint Gabriel," and Netza, which Macoggi claims from the Medieval Latin, means "free woman." The name then, which is both an imposition and a choice, has a chiastic structure that makes visible an ironic mirroring between opposites, and recalls the duality that her protagonist Fiorella is too young to resist. "Amete G. Netza" is an untranslatably translingual play on words that mediates between the subservient "passivity" of its name and the creativity that characterizes the pseudonym, making it a paradoxical instrument of appropriation of Macoggi's own voice and Fiorella's story.

Several writers categorized under *letteratura migrante* have published collections of stories for children and young adults to help undo colonial amnesia. They resist the concourse of dislocation that Glissant described and promote knowledge about the under-taught histories of the Italian empire. Regardless of the genre, or the age of the audience to whom it's directed, a child protagonist is often a feature of these writings. [312] Much akin to using the second person as a rhetorical device, the use of a migrant child protagonist enables the reader to identify with a process of childhood abandonment, alienation from language, limited agency, and uncertainty. The reliance on a child protagonist demystifies the

[312] See: Nassera Chohra, *Volevo diventare bianca*; Jarmila Očkayová, *Appuntamento nel bosco* and *Occhio a Pinocchio*; Ornela Vorpsi, *Viaggio intorno alla madre*; Ron Kubati, *Il buio del mare*; Mohsen Melliti, *I bambini delle rose*; Erminia Dell'Oro, *L'abbandono*, *La pianta magica*, and *Dall'altra parte del mare*; Antonio Ferrara, *Casa Lampedusa*; Saidou Moussa Ba and Alessandro Micheletti, *La promessa di Hamadi*; Saidou Moussa Ba, *La memoria di A.*; Paolo Gavagna and Raffaele Taddeo, eds., *Carro di pickipò*; and Georg Maag, *Il misterioso viaggio nel Medioevo*; among dozens of others in this sub-genre of youth-centered Italian migration literature.

presumption of familiarity with language and culture, which need to be learned, and can establish a relationship of care. The assumption is that reader will have a strongly socialized tendency to let one's guard down and protect children, identifying with their initial unknowing, which is a standard heteronormative trope. However, the figure of the non-Italian, migrant, mixed-race or Other racialized child might not be afforded the same level of identification or desire to protect, as their racialization places them into a further unknown category. There might literally be "no future" for them, and their necessary figuration for heterosexual national ideals or "the emblem of futurity's unquestioned value" as Edelman argues for "the Child," is tenuous to non-existent. If queer temporality is anathema to the Child, then the never implicated Black and/or migrant child is more often aligned with it.[313]

When interned at a "boarding school" like those indigenous children were forced to attend in the U.S., she is made to assimilate her father's culture.[314] He is a former soldier in the Italian colonial army in Ethiopia garrisoned with her mother, an Ethiopian woman. In the novel, the relationship between the child and the adults represents a "privileged"

[313] Lee Edelman, *No Future*, 4. For a critique of Edelman, see: Bernstein, Robin. "Introduction." *Racial Innocence Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights*. New York: NYU Press, 2011, 1–30 and in particular José Esteban Muñoz who insists Edelman recognize that "[t]he future is the stuff of some kids. Racialized kids, queer kids, are not the sovereign princes of futurity. [Edelman's] framing nonetheless accepts and reproduces this monolithic future of the child that is indeed always already white." Muñoz. "Cruising the Toilet: Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka, Radical Black Traditions, and Queer Futurity." *GLQ 13*, 363.

[314] The boarding school analogy is salient since nuns represent the height of maternal surrogacy and cultural transmission and indoctrination for foreigner at the height of Fascist rule, which otherwise was an ostensibly secular and populist movement.

moment in which Fiorella is experiencing the assimilation of occupational knowledge and thus the knowledge of her lacking—as though identity were experienced quantitatively and could ever be "incomplete." The theme of learning (and indeed "un-learning") is an important time during which reveals the difficulties of living and unyielding *meticciato*.

The fact that our protagonist is herself a child allows for a more conversational and memoirist tone. As a rhetorical device, memoir and narrative flashbacks can appear to presume the reader's familiarity with a set of subjects, while defamiliarizing them on the level of language. This metahistorical style is powerful for its play on the imagination because colonial histories are still not taught in a mainstream way to Italian citizens at any stage of the education system. It is also radical because it inverts the student-teacher paradigm forcefully implemented in colonial settings, where indigenous children were bent to the will of imperial pedagogy, for example in the boarding schools Fiorella attends and must navigate the lack of agency or knowledge. In this case, it is the young girl who teaches an Italian audience of history through lived experience.

Unlike the many complicated and mostly supportive mothers and mother- figures that populate *Madre piccola*, in *Kkeywa*—while there are many women one might expect to responsibly hold that surrogate maternal position, such as nuns and foster mothers—there is no space for the sustained deepening of maternal instincts. Instead, it is a space of war, of occupation, and individualism. The adults in this novel are unsupportive, opportunistic, and brutal. The unyielding natures of the women Fiorella

encounters provide none of the familial or maternal comforts. The "sisters" who lead her reform school, members of the lay ecclesiastical Christian movement *Comunione e Liberazione* (CL), steal wages and exploit the welfare system by illegally claiming additional state subsidies.[315] A woman whom she is forced to refer to as her "aunt" is particularly oppressive as she plays into colonial stereotypes about mothers willingly abandoning their mixed children and completely engaging in an African discourse where here colonial stereotypes and fantasies could hold fast without any confirmation of facts behind them:

> Lui era una *ferenğ* e non aveva motivo per dichiarare il falso quando raccontava quel che sapeva del mondo degli indigeni: la mia esperienza personale non aveva alcun valore. . .I messaggi che ogni giorno mi trasmetteva sul mondo in cui avevo sempre vissuto erano totalmente nuovi. Mi fece capire che nel periodo in cui avevo vissuto con mia madre avevo creduto scioccamente che tutte le mamme fossero buone, ma ora, grazie alla zia, sapevo che la mia non mi amava. (41)[316]

[315] The Comunione e Liberazione (the "Communion and Liberation" movement, or CL) continues to have a significant historical role in partisan Italian politics. It is a conservative movement that primarily concerns itself with the regulation of secular education and catechesis, though it has also made political waves with its intervention on social issues regarding women's rights (e.g., anti-abortion and pre-marital childbirth), political issues (e.g., anti-communism), and Catholic integrism, which is an anti-internationalist and anti-liberal humanist ideology that shares some overlap with fascist ideology. For more on this movement, see: Luigi Giussani, *The Risk of Education*.

[316] She was a *ferenğ* [a white person or a foreigner] and so she had no reason to lie when speaking about what she knew of the indigenous world: my personal experience had no value. . .The information she'd transmit to me everyday about the world in which I lived were completely new. She helped me realize that during the time I lived with my mother I had foolishly believed that all mothers were good-natured, but now, thanks to this aunt, I knew mine did not love me at all.

Fiorella is totally confused about her placement with “the aunt” and moreover cannot yet fully understand what the “aunt” is saying, marked as Fiorella is by linguistic inadequacy. Both Fiorella and the reader become spectators of a sequence in a silent film without captions and live the alienation felt by the protagonist and the narrator who does not remember—or, does not report—the words of the interview but only the sense of misunderstanding that inhabits it. The choice of a child-narrator, combined with the alternation of tenses, marks the clear separation between the protagonist at the time of the experience and the adult looking back towards the already happened, and leads to a kind of alienation or disorientation in the reader that mirrors the protagonist’s as a young girl. Much of *letteratura migrante*’s origins had a pedagogical aspect to it, as the authors were actively trying to share unpopular histories of Italian colonization and occupation to a white Italian audience. Amongst the cast of characters is also a Catholic clergyman, who helps facilitate the crimes of the CL and then offers to pray to the Virgin Mary on behalf of the swindled. *Kkeywa* takes the site of learning and turns it into one of violence, alienation, and religious oppression.

Both Ali Farah’s and Macoggi’s literary portrayals of experiencing kinship under colonization and occupation show different facets of various kinship structures and interpersonal relationships, exploring the search for and establishment of home and family in transnational contexts. The women’s maternal failures demonstrate a kind of colonial success: since Fiorella’s father dies and her mother is separated from her while she is still

a child, *Kkeywa* traces the path of Italianization. At the beginning of the novel we see that Fiorella has been raised Italian, and feels that she has internalized the rejection of Ethiopian culture, since her voice and agency were plundered by many various powers (e.g., occupation, religion, personal tragedy) that have as a common denominator the lack of respect for those who are more socially fragile. Fiorella doesn't see herself anywhere, cannot identify a narrative or a space wherein the senselessness of her losses and of Italian occupation of Ethiopia can be made clear:

> No, no. Ho vissuto una vita non mia. Nulla di quel che è stato scritto parla di me. Nulla di quel che è scritto è mai stato attraversato dal moto del mio cuore e dal fluire del mio sangue…Venti anni sono passati da quel primo volo. Tempo di libri proibiti e di segreti. Che nessuno mai raccontò…Fiorella non smetteva di frugare nel suo passato che la lacerava. Gli anni trascorsi da quel primo volo erano stati pieni di giorni di dolore.
>
> Malinconia e tristezza. Voleva capire perché. Non trovava nessuno che le spiegasse.[317]

Throughout the novel, Fiorella fells completely *spaesata*. This is a word which in Italian can mean "mixed up," "confused," and "disoriented," but

[317] No, no. I've lived a life that isn't mine. Nothing of what has been written speaks about me. Nothing written has ever been across the beating of my heart or the flow of my blood. . .Twenty years have passed since that first flight. The time of banned books and secrets. That no one ever told her. . .Fiorella would not stop rummaging around in the past that tore through her. The years passed since that first flight had been days filled with pain. Melancholy and sadness. She wanted to understand why. She could not find anyone that would explain.

also etymologically contains the double meaning of "displaced" or "un-countryed." Many writers of Italian migrant and postcolonial literature have written about this multi-layered phenomenon, as well as the literary critics who study their work. In a dialogue between Italophone Brazilian writer Julio Monteiro Martins and French-Italian poet and translator Mia Lecomte, Martins remarks on the multi-layered feeling of estrangement, of *spaesamento*:

> Il fenomeno della migrazione letteraria e artistica attira una grande attenzione perché è il più importante effetto collaterale della globalizzazione economica. Il migrante, lo straniero, lo spaesato è un fenomeno sociologico, demografico, ma anche una metafora di tutti noi, anche di tutti quelli che non sono mai usciti dal loro paese d'origine. Perché in un senso o nell'altro siamo tutti migranti, migranti dentro la vita, nel tempo, anche l'infanzia è un paese. Se il mondo della maturità è in un certo senso ancora simile a quello dell'infanzia, tu non hai l'idea di essere stato esiliato. Però, quando con queste trasformazioni vertiginose, il mondo dell'età matura è così in contrasto con il mondo dell'infanzia, non ci sono più punti di riferimento del passato, allora tu sei uno straniero, hai perso il tuo paese, e devi ricrearne un altro nel tuo futuro, anche se continui a vivere nella stessa città dove sei nato.[318]

[318] The phenomenon of literary and artistic migration attracts a lot attention because it is the most important side effect of economic globalization. The migrant, the foreigner, the displaced person is a sociological and demographic phenomenon, but it's also a metaphor of all of us, including those who've never left their country of origin. Because in one sense or another we are all migrants, migrating into life, over time, even childhood is a country. If the world of adulthood is somewhat like that of childhood then you do not have the feeling of being exiled. However, if there are dizzying transformations, the world of adulthood is in stark contrast to that of childhood and there are no more points of reference from the past, then you are a stranger, you have lost your country, and you must recreate another one in your future, even if you continue to live in the same city you were born. Martins, Julio Monteiro. "Seminario II: Interventi di Julio Monteiro Martins, Mia

He goes on to describe the migrant writer as doubly *spaesato*, both as a writer and as a migrant:

> Sono due forme di essere esiliato e straniero nel mondo. In un certo senso una situazione illumina l'altra. Se uno è abituato come scrittore a restare fuori dalla meccanica del sistema, non è tanto difficile arrivare come straniero in un paese nuovo, perché anche lì resterai fuori dalla meccanica del sistema. Vi è identità tra la condizione profonda dello scrittore e la condizione profonda dello straniero.[319]

Where Ali Farah's text is resounding and polyvocal, Macoggi's narrative struggles through the solitary memories of childhood as the protagonist tries to compose for herself an origin story, one in which she can finally embody her voice:

> Voglio mettere ordine in questa confusione. Scrivere per eliminare l'imprecisione. Ripensare a tutto per cancellare lo scompiglio. Rimuovere l'incoerenza della vita con le parole. Nuove parole in sostituzione di quelle mai dette, mai pronunciate, diventate silenzio doloroso. Silenzio così intenso da diventare un dolore incontenibile. (23)[320]

Lecomte, Anilda Ibrahimi, e Amor Dekhis." 15 July 2002. http://tinyurl.com/yb9baaza. Accessed 10 August 2017.

[319] There are two forms of being exiled and foreign in the world. In a sense, one situation illuminates the other. If one is accustomed to being a writer to stay outside of the system, it's not so difficult to arrive as a stranger in a new country, because even there you will be outside the system. There is an identity in-between the writer's deep condition and the profound state of the foreigner. Ibid. For other literature on the trope of *spaesamento* or being *spaesato* in Italian migrant literature, see for example: Fulvio Pezzarossa, "Scrivere senza accento. L'italiano dopo la migrazione," *La lingua spaesata*, 135–162 and Graziella Parati, "Lo squardo dell'altro," *Destini sospesi di volti in cammino*, 17–26. In this essay, Parati talks about this kind of *spaesamento* as something that destabilization the cultural relationship between the *spaesato* and individuals in the destination culture.

[320] "I want to bring order to this confusion. To write and eliminate imprecision. Rethink everything and clear the confusion. To remove the inconsistency of life with words.

The *parole. . .mai dette* closely mirrors the veiled nature of loss and language in Scego's *Identità*, when the protagonist speaks of codes gesture and phrases that seemed to hold within them a *detto non detto*, a saying that goes unsaid but is still rife with meaning. The toxicity of the relationships to which Fiorella is subjected is high but her body endures in the name of decolonizing her mind: . . .*d'un tratto sentivo incontenibile il bisogno di fuggire a quella sua angoscia opprimente, prima che si diffondesse nell'aria e entrasse nei miei polmoni* ("I suddenly felt the overwhelming need to escape to the overwhelming anguish, before it spread in the air and came into my lungs") (24).[321] "I felt," "need," "air," and "lungs," are all words that lend an animistic aura to the things that used to define the invisible "contamination" of the mind, i.e., the experience of colonial education. And once, in a dream, Macoggi's twelve-year- old protagonist in *Kkeywa* imagines seeing her mother:

> Qualche ora dopo rividi mia madre. Sorrideva incredula, così tanto che mi accorsi che le mancava un canino. Cosa le era successo? Non aveva neanche quarant'anni e il suo viso era quello di sempre. Ricorderò per tutta la vita quel suo sguardo, quel suo sorriso e quella fretta di ridurre i pochi passi che ci separavano…
>
> Prendemmo un taxi verso *Lidetà*, lì mi aveva preparato una stanza e voleva assolutamente che mi riposassi, dovevo essere stanca, tanto stanca. Mi sdraiai sul letto e mi accorsi che aveva ragione. Ero stanca

New words to replace those never said, never uttered, that have become painful silence. A silence so intense as to become an uncontrollable pain."

[321] See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*.

> da dodici anni. Mia madre era felice così, con me sul letto a riposare e lei a guardarmi. Dovevo avere un'espressione interrogativa, perché mi chiese:
>
> – *Layšə Aləcələm*? Non posso guardarti (vederti)? Era una domanda così difficile, così terribile.[322]

In these two passages, the tropes of constant communication and the crushing silence of voicelessness highlight the fundamental role of autopoeisis, or self-making in the process of *meticciato* and of sociopolitical transformation. The search for words and the desire to respond only means that Fiorella can reconstruct a verbal thought that was deconstructed when she lost the memory of her *madrelingua*. She must reconfigure her thoughts into the language to which she has grown accustomed, even as she feels alien to it. She describes Amharic, an Ethiopian language, as pushing "into" primal and primary sound. This push and pull merges with the novel's syncopated rhythms and helps mobilize the novel's defamiliarizing tropes. The words are the same, but evermore uncanny.

What clearly emerges is the voice of female marginalization, worsened by racial discrimination within a society of constructed colonial

[322] A few hours later, I saw my mother. She smiled incredulously, so much so that I realized she was missing a canine. What had happened? She wasn't even forty and her face was the same as always. I remembered all my life that stare, that smile, and the rush to reduce the distance that separated us…We took a taxi to Lidetà, there I had a room ready and she absolutely insisted that I rest, I had to be tired, so tired. I lay on the bed and realized she was right. I'd been tired for twelve years. My mother was so happy, with me on the bed to rest. She looked at me. I must have had a puzzled look, because she asked: *Layšə Aləcələm*? ("Can't I look at you? See you?") It was such a difficult, terrible question.

whiteness, in which the mechanisms are so deeply rooted in the Italian national consciousness that they characterized not only the Italian colonial experience under Fascism, but can also be identified in the deeply racist Northern League propaganda. That macro-history, filtered through common and fragmentary private events is reminiscent of *testimonio*, a specific term referring to an autobiographical genre which was initially theorized in Latin and Central America. *Testimonio* is generally a first-person narrative where the protagonist serves as a witness to historical event and whose "testimony" or narration informs its audience. In *Kkeywa*, this form of testimony evidences the history of Italian colonial occupation and that its ongoing transnational effects have a profound effect on the contemporary form and structure of Italian cultural politics.[323] By slowly putting together the pieces of fragmented memory, Macoggi creates a portrait of a young woman that has survived, who reflects on the episodes, incidents and traumas that have marked her existence, the enthusiasm and ugliness woven into the fabric of her recent history.

This historically based narrative about colonialism produced in the contemporary moment of "increased" African presence in Italy, can be viewed as mirroring the way literary and cultural analyses must refuse a linear one-sided scrutiny of the "new" Africanness of Italy and its literature and culture. Instead, I've argued that this critical project must recognize and begin with a similar narrative premise as that of Macoggi's, of a circular

[323] See: Rosanna Morace, *Letteratura-mondo italiana*

and multifaceted exchange between continents and nations, between nation and race, between citizen and other, and between genders. The very process of identification is fluid, that is, "lodged in contingency" and multiply construed across intersecting discursive practices.[324] Thus, the self-identification or self-representation of the Euro-African mixed-race subject becomes a useful site for understanding and theorizing certain kinds of mixedness that legitimizes blackness as a viable political, social, and sexual identity rather than fomenting antiblack racisms and propagating a neoliberal "color blind" ideology that is really an amalgamation of whiteness actively striving (and failing) to eradicate blackness from its cultural ethnic makeup.[325] *Kkeywa*, a proliferating example of a text with a mixed-race character written by a mixed-race author who embraces the term, literally speaks to these exigencies where representations of interraciality, consciousness of historical traumas, and dispossession are concerned. As such, it is a novel of the Black Mediterranean *par excellence*. It reveals the farce of the European racial regime as "makeshift and mutable," to quote again from Cedric Robinson, by inhabiting the space of transhistoric cultural syncretism that is the geopolitical site of the Mediterranean and claiming power, writing back from a standpoint that embraces Blackness as central to its narrative but not in a way that is reductive or reinforces Manichean or bio-essentialist

[324] Stuart Hall, "Who Needs Identity?," 2–3. See also, Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes.*

[325] See: Jared Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*.

binaries. In fact, as Françoise Lionnet wrote in her examination of autobiographical narratives and literary métissage, *Kkeywa* effectively "subvert[s] all binary modes of thought by privileging…the intermediary spaces where boundaries become effaced and Manichean categories collapse into each other."[326] And it is precisely where binaries and essentialist codes of identity are subverted that the process of identification becomes constructive, rather than a site for problematic exclusion, inclusion, and marginalization.

As I discussed with my survey of the different categories of this genre of Italian literature in Chapter Two, the genre is expansive and somewhat unwieldy in relation to the labels used to describe it. Authors hailed within Italophone literature, *letteratura migrante*, Italian postcolonial literature, etc. often balk at their classification, though are often bound to it due to market demands. Still, some have expressed a desire for their work to be viewed outside of essentialist codes as much as for their identity and relationship to belonging. This desire can be linked to a politics that seeks to respond to the contemporary moment in an expansive, collective, or historicist sense. In an interview with scholar Simone Brioni, Igiaba Scego speaks to the homogenization that has been discussed throughout this study and continues to plague writers of African descent in Italy. She formerly directed a radio program, is a journalist, activist, and maintains an active social media presence, so it makes sense when she speaks about

[326] Lionnet, Françoise. *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-portraiture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989, 18.

her de-essentialized affinity to the genre known as New Italian Epic over an essentialist/phenotypical attachment to her fellow writers:

> In questo momento sto lavorando molto sulle fonti storiche e penso che i miei prossimi libri potranno inserirsi in quel contesto che i Wu Ming hanno definito New Italian Epic. L'importante per il futuro è che io come altri autori di origine africana, ciascuno dei quali ha una personalità e uno stile di scrittura molto diverso, venga considerato al pari di altri scrittori nati in Italia. Non esiste nulla come "la letteratura della migrazione," noi afrodiscendenti non siamo un movimento come il decadentismo o il futurismo. In questo momento, per esempio, mi sento più vicina a Wu Ming che non ad autori di origine africana come ad esempio Teju Cole, che pure ha scritto un romanzo pregevole come *Open City* (2012), perché abbiamo uno stesso modo di esplorare la storia. Non occorre avere lo stesso colore della pelle per sentirsi più o meno vicino ad uno scrittore.[327]

Wu Ming have also indicated that Scego's work constitutes New Italian Epic, thus leading me to think of the broader project linking Black and postcolonial Italian literature with collective and anonymous works. Polyphonous, playful, anarchic, resilient, and collective, *meticciato* can even be said to be queer and demonstrative of a new direction in postcolonial, Italophone, and otherwise "new" or experimental Italian

[327] Right now, I'm working a lot on historical sources and I think my next books will fit into that context that the Wu Ming have called New Italian Epic. The important thing for the future is that I, like other authors of African origin, each of whom has a very different personality and writing style, are considered like other writers born in Italy. There is no such thing as "the literature of migration." We of African descent are not a movement like Decadentism or Futurism. Right now, for example, I feel closer to Wu Ming than to authors of African origin like Teju Cole, who has also written a valuable novel called *Open City* (2012), because we have the same way of exploring a story. You don't have to have the same skin color to feel more, or less, close to a writer. An excerpt from Igiaba Scego in an interview with Simone Brioni, 22 November 2013.

literature. The multimedia project of the Wu Ming Collective is an example of this. In a conference dedicated to "New Italian Epic" and its futures, Wu Ming 1 delineates some of the genre's key tenets:

1. Ethical commitment to writing and storytelling, which means: a deep trust in the healing power of language and stories.
2. A sense of political necessity – and you can choose between the broader and the stricter sense of the adjective "political."
3. The choice of stories that have a complex allegorical value. The initial choice may not even be intentional: the author may feel compelled to tell the story and later on understand what he was trying to say.
4. An explicit preoccupation for the loss of the future, with a propensity to use alternative history and alternative realities to force our gaze into imagining the future.
5. A subtle subversion of registers and language. "Subtle" because what's important is not language experimentation in and of itself; what's important is telling your story in what you feel is the best possible way.
6. A way of blending fiction and non-fiction that's different from the ones we've gotten used to (e.g., Hunter S. Thompson's "gonzo journalism"), a manner that I dare describe as "distinctly Italian", which produces "unidentified narrative objects".
7. Last but certainly not least, a "communitarian" use of the Internet to—as Genna himself put it—share a hug with the reader."[328]

Several works published in Italy in the past few years share all or many of these features.[329] Each one gives an uncanny sense, and it sometimes

[328] Wu Ming 1, "New Italian Epic: We're Going to Have to Be the Parents"

[329] A few of the more popular novels from Wu Ming include: *54* (2002), *Manituana* (2007), *Altai* (2009), and *Timira* (2012). Wu Ming have also participated in multi- or mixed-media productions. For example, in 2004, they co-produced *54*, a concept album based on their novel co-developed and written by combat rock group Yo Yo Mundi. Some of their books

seems as though they don't resemble each other in the slightest: different aesthetics, plots, different historical backdrops, and even genres. However, the oeuvre of Wu Ming and their ancillaries do have shared themes that resonate throughout.

Wu Ming are an offshoot of another collective pseudonym, Luther Blissett, created in 1994 by *centinaia di artisti, attivisti e burloni* ("hundred of artists, activists, and pranksters") according to the foundation's website.[330] Though a collective pseudonym, Luther Blissett is a real person, a Black Jamaican footballer who played in Italy and the UK in the 1980s. The idea was to unite under one "multiple use" name to develop an "information folk hero," sort of a Robin Hood for the digital age, who could radicalize the literary industry and distribute resources more equitably in the face of censorship and repression. Their slogan, from Luther Blissett's first and only novel *Q* (1999), written by five Bologna-based Blissetts, was one that advertised their sort of identitarian open commons: *Chiunque può essere Luther Blissett, semplicemente adottando il nome Luther Blissett*. This refrain was immediately undermined in the since multiply revised and edited "Declaration of Rights" from the *Blissetzine*, an online zine dedicated to the actions of the Luther Blisset Project:

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also come with CDs as a soundtrack, like the singular fiction of Wu Ming 2: *Pontiac* (2010) and *Basta uno sparo* (*One Shot Is Enough*, 2010). Lastly, their co-written film *Lavorare con lentezza* (which means "working slowly" but was translated as *Radio Alice* during its international release in 2004), incorporates "gonzo journalism" as well as fictionalized characters and unrealistic narrative tropes.

[330] "Wu Ming Foundation." www.wumingfoundation.com. Accessed 4 September 2015.

> Non siamo tutti Luther Blissett. Ovvero nonostante tutti, senza distinzione di sesso, razza e età biologica, possano diventare dei lobotomizzati psichici che godono di fronte al potere masturbatorio della industria culturale, c'è qualcuno che ci riesce meglio, magari con l'aggiunta di un vibratore.[331]

This vision of solidarity and collective voices pushes the teleology of the proposition discussed by Françoise Lionnet regarding traditional Franchophone women's writing further along the horizon:

> A politics of solidarity thus implies the acceptance of métissage as the only racial ground on which liberation struggles can be fought. . .the possibility of emancipation is indeed linked to an implicit understanding of métissage as a concept of solidarity which demystifies all essentialist glorifications of unitary origins, be they racial, sexual, geographic, or cultural.[332]

While they adapted the name, they actively resisted any possibility of digital blackface, instead developing an avatar of "Luther Blissett" that had deep set eyes that had yellow or sepia-tinged sclera, slicked back hair, and a suit with a soft palette of neon blue, green, and pink accents. The image was swarthy and both ethnically ambiguous and temporally so. It seemed to be a facsimile of a 1960s photograph that was colorized, but also somewhat alien and futuristic. The Blissett pseudonym was deployed by writers, conceptual and visual artists, and media activists across multiple cities in Italy like Rome, Bologna (where it was founded), and

[331] Blissett, Luther. "Blissetzine e Dichiarazione dei Diritti." *Rivista Mondiale di Guerra Psichica*. 3: Winter 1995–96. http://tinyurl.com/ycqeghag. Accessed 18 July 2017.

[332] Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices*, 9.

Palermo. However, their brand of technology-focused pranks and pop-up cultural experiments took place in Slovenia, Germany, the UK, Spain, Brazil, the US, Canada, and possible in other countries, sometimes simultaneously from 1994–1999. In 2000, the Luther Blissett Project was retired and the Wu Ming foundation came into being under the same kind of anonymous circumstances, though the names of five of its members have been divulged. Since then, the men of Wu Ming have collectively or individually published numerous novels and short stories; the majority of which are offered as free downloads online, yet they have also been sold in bookstores and printed by major publishers such as Einaudi. Wu Ming 1's perspective on the future of multimediality in literature has been:

> Forse va creato un circolo virtuoso tra il web e la strada: i libri vanno concepiti come opere 'transmediali' affiancando loro musica, illustrazioni, video ed esecuzioni dal vivo che non siano solo 'promozione' ma facciano a tutti gli effetti parte dell'opera. Sono cose che già facciamo. Si tratta di farlo di più meglio. Il libro resta importante, ma sarà solo uno degli aspetti della narrazione.[333]

Novels like their *Timira* (2012) provide a radical alterity to the categorization of Italian writing. More specifically, it queers the model of "a

[333] Perhaps a virtuous circle between the Web and the street will be created: Books would be conceptualized as transmedial works accompanied by music, illustrations, video, and live performances that would not only be promotional, but would be, for all intents and purposes, part of the work. These are things we already do. It is just about doing it better and more often. The book remains important, but it will only be one of narration's many aspects.

See also Wu Ming 1's 2012 interview with Mauro Favale of *La Repubblica*, where he further discusses literature's open transmedial possibilities: http://www.wumingfoundation.com/giap/?p=8880. Accessed 5 September 2015.

quattro mani" tradition at the start of *letteratura migrante* in the late 1980s where, depending on the writer's facility with the Italian language, a ghost-writer or a native Italian- speaking editor made extensive grammatical and aesthetic changes to the "autobiographical" texts. The Italian writer or journalist would often translate the entire text through a mediatory language, usually another colonial language such as French or German, and received explicit co-writer credit for these endeavors.[334]

Timira is a novel authored by Antar Mohamed and Wu Ming 2. The authors describe the novel thus:

> *Timira* è un "romanzo meticcio" che mescola memoria, documenti di archivio e invenzione narrativa. Scritto da un cantastorie italiano dal nome cinese, insieme a un'attrice italosomala ottantacinquenne e a un esule somalo con Quattro lauree e due cittadinanze. Per interrogare, attraverso l'epopea del passato, un tempo che ci vede naufraghi, sulla sponda di un approdo in fiamme. Questo tempo dove ci salveremo insieme, o non si salver nessuno.[335]

Romanzo meticcio is the provocative definition chosen "by an Italian balladeer with a Chinese name, together with an 85-year-old Italian-Somali actress and a Somali man with four university degrees and dual

[334] For example, Oreste Pivetta translated for Pap Khouma via French. This history much different for the Francophone and Anglophone contexts, where the writers usually had some command and joint writing, mediation, and translation were less likely.

[335] *Timira* is a "mixed novel" combining memory, archival documents, and narrative imagination. Written by an Italian singer-storyteller who goes by a Chinese name, together with an eighty-five-year-old Italo-Somali actress and a Somali in exile who holds four degrees and two citizenships. Its goal is to examine, by means of an epic past, a time of shipwrecks, whose coastal mooring is up in flames. This is a time when we will either join together to save each other, or else no one will be saved at all.

citizenship" for their novel *Timira*, aimed at helping readers to understand what a collective intercultural approach can be, and therefore reconfiguring the hierarchical nature of linguistic competency from the first works of Italian/Italophone literature of migration in 1990 to the present sociopolitical moment. The Wu Ming collective continues to realize the transcultural, performative, and counterhegemonic aspect of *meticciato* that authors such as Macoggi and Ali Farah have been rendering for the last decade, either in their polyvocal novels, multimedia performances, and intercultural and plurimodal communication devices. The collective *romanzo meticcio* stands out because it shows how the different literary tendencies in texts written in Italian by native and non-native speakers converge, tendencies which should be considered in the wider debate about the need for "New Italian Epics."

Migrants in the popular Italian imagination are most often homogenized into one the category of "Other" while terms like "European" or "whiteness" to describe Italian culture; the discrete ethnocultural and racial experiences of those who have complex attachments to the *paese* are permanently on the margins of the Italian citizen-subject. In the Brioni interview, Scego speaks to the resistance of continued homogenization and thus stagnation and (sometime self-)limiting possiblites from writers of African descent in Italy, which literary critics like Parati, Romeo, and Lombardi-Diop expressed concerns about in previous phases of the literature.

> C'è una grande tendenza a ghettizzare gli scrittori africani in Europa. Una volta ad una conferenza in Svezia mi è capitato di sentir parlare con uno scrittore di fantascienza del Mali che diceva di scrivere racconti molto vicini alle Cronache di Narnia (1950-1956) di Clive Staples Lewis, ma di non avere un mercato in quanto scrittore di fantascienza africano. Perché a noi scrittori afrodiscendenti è negata la letteratura di genere?[336]

Scego has been very vocal in her journalism and in her interviews about her desires and demands for more liberated rather than tokenized position for Black Italians. She is certainly motivated towards this opinion for deeply personal reasons, but their political import is also bound to her creative capacity and those of the other writers with whom she is grouped but with which she does not share the same imaginative practices or understand of what their writing is meant to or able to do. In his speech, Wu Ming 1 drives home the vision of what literature "is" or can do, a question posed and reiterated from Sarte to the present day.

> Every act of literary and artistic creation, every work of art, every novel bears the signs of what happens around, in a way or another. The times we're living in are affected by the death of the founders, the "progenitors", the parents that passed away and left us with enormous problems. We are the heirs of their delusions, by now we're becoming aware that GROWTH, development, consumerism, the gross domestic product, all

[336] There is a strong tendency to ghettoize African writers in Europe. Once at a conference in Sweden I overheard a science fiction writer from Mali say he was writing stories very close to C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950–1956), but that there wasn't a market for African science fiction. Why are we writers of African descent being denied access to genre literature? An excerpt from Igiaba Scego in an interview with Simone Brioni, 22 November 2013.

> this keeps us running on a dead track, and we ask ourselves if there's any railroad switch and who's going to pull the lever.

In the actual manuscript *What Is Literature?*, Sarte also discussed the ontological nature and limits of literature via the metaphysics of freedom. As freedom and emancipation are arguably the highest political and moral stakes, he poses a series of questions to reconcile literature with the motivations of its author (e.g., "why write?" For writers who had deeply engaged political rationales for producing literature, Sartre would go on to describe that kind of writing "committed writing."[337] Wu Ming certainly have that kind of collective vision, which enables them to reconfigure their creative-collaborative practices and attempt to self-define their genre and their overarching political project while bound to the prison house of language, which we should remember from the discussion of Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou "always fails us."[338] A particular aspect of Wu Ming's political project is an abiding concern with how to develop new means and modalities of literary consumption and production while being bound to the extant realities of their present conceptual framework.

> We're trying to figure out what to do, but our thoughts are still prisoner of the old conceptual frames, which means our words are prisoner too. Think of the movements demanding a decrease of production and consumption. They call this process "de-growth"—*décroissance* in

[337] Jean-Paul Sartre, "What Is Literature?"

[338] See fn. 202. The term "prison-house of language" is borrowed from Fredric Jameson's eponymous monograph in which he relies on the Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic school of thought to discuss and provides layered criticisms of the methodologies of structuralism and Russian formalism.

> French, *decrescita* in Italian. “Degrowth” isn't even an antonym, it's a mere negation of the other concept, which means it is *dependent* on the other concept, and in fact every time you say “degrowth” you’re also saying “growth,” and “growth” is perceived as a good word, we instinctively associate it with good things, with processes that are necessary and benign, like the growing of our children, or the growing of plants we can eat. “Degrowth” is not an effective word, it doesn't do the job. Our thoughts and words are still prisoner. For years, we've been enunciating the concepts we believed in simply by adding prefixes like “de-“ or “post-“ as in “postmodern”—*adding prefixes* to the concepts we didn't believe in anymore. We only knew that we were “post-” something.

The frustration about growth and consumerism and the creation of an open-source “nebula” from which to conduct political projects and creative experiments, often available for free on their website as well as on the market, are all linked to the Italian politics of *operaismo* or Italian Workerism, a political theory and social movement that emphasizes the importance of working class individuals. *Operaismo* belongs to the broader economy of Marxism that encompasses strains of *autonomismo* and responded to the Fordist movement of mass-production assembly-line factories for things like automobiles in the United States.[339] Rather than

[339] According to Sergio Bologna, key texts from *operaismo* are *Quaderni Rossi* and *Classe Operaia*. “Raniero Panzieri, Mario Tronti, Toni Negri and Romano Alquati are the ones who laid the foundations of the system, and others, such as Gaspare De Caro, Guido Bianchini, Ferruccio Gambino, Alberto Magnaghi, made essential contributions on specific themes, such as historiography, agriculture, migration, and territory, which completed the horizon of workerist thought, giving it the impression of an internally coherent ‘system.’” Bologna, Sergio. “Workerism Beyond Fordism: On the Lineage of Italian Workerism.” *Viewpoint*. 15 December 2014. http://tinyurl.com/y7d5m6z8. Accessed 22 July 2017.

factory workers, Luther Blissett were set up to be knowledge workers who worked in the immaterial and were themselves nebulous, though in their "Declaration of Rights," they demanded a universal income for existing as citizens.

Their view about language aligns with Macoggi's politics of naming, and with Scego's earlier thought about *col trattino* ("hyphenated") identity. They reject terms like "postmodern" and would also reject terms like "post-migrant," which have been circulating in Italian literary criticism in the last few years.[340] This is because much like writers, critics—who are often in the business of coining genres to communicate effectively about a specific set of creative works—are often bound to previous conceptual frameworks and to the present language to which we have access rather than producing an "otherwise." For example, Parati notes that "[w]hat is at stake is the role of literature (and of film and art in general) as an agent of social change because of its ability to *imagine* change." She declares that in the migrant writers' "articulation of post-migrant and post-ethnic identities," they "have successfully theorized the complexity of the future of Italian culture" (103; italics Parati's). She notes their complexity and fluidity of their identification throughout *Migration Italy* even as they are still bound to those same aesthetic genre categories. Much like American literary critic and translator Barbara Johnson did in *A World of Difference* (1987), Wu Ming seeks "to transfer the analysis of difference out of the realm of

[340] See: Caterina Romeo, *Rewriting the Nation: Migrant and Post-Migrant Women Writers in Italy*; Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy*.

linguistic universality or deconstructive allegory and into contexts in which difference is very much at issue in the 'real world'" (2).

> *We're going to have to be the parents*, the progenitors, the new founders. We need to reappropriate a sense of the future, as something radically new is taking place under the sun. It's an unprecedented kind of danger, there's a BIG problem and disenchantment is not the best solution.

There is yet another link between Wu Ming and the other writers that I am identifying as acting within the broad performative economy of *meticciato*. From Scego to Ali Farah, to Macoggi and Wu Ming, all the writers in this study are concerned in some sense with heteronormative kinship structures and genealogies with which to propagate their literary tradition. In this sense, they would do well to delve deeper and borrow from the Black Radical Tradition which does not need to take such a linear effect. Especially considering that the Wu Ming Foundation consists primarily of men, perhaps it is not so much outside of the old conceptual framework to reappropriate futurity under a patriarchal structure. But that hierarchal concern is perhaps also mediated when considering the polyvocal nature of these writings and the contamination of different points of view and relegation of the absolute power over a narrative that comes with unilateral authorship. Writers like Wu Ming show us that a future that is collective, anti-capitalist, anarchic, and multifarious is possible and necessary. In speaking of the contamination of the native intellectual who has risked assimilating into "the culture of the occupying power," Frantz Fanon warns against remaining solely in the past, even as we are propelled towards it.

> The artist who has decided to illustrate the truth of the nation turns paradoxically toward the past and away from actual events. What he ultimately intends to embrace are in fact the cast offs of thought, its shells and corpses, a knowledge which has been stabilized once and for all. But the native intellectual who wishes to create an authentic work of art must realize that the truths of a nation are in the first place its realities. He must go on until he has found the seething pot out of which the learning of the future will emerge.[341]

All of the writers in this dissertaton can be read (con)textually categorical "Others" whose works direct us to consider what acknowledgments or elisions of difference respectively make possible and impossible for Italy. This is a relevant concern for a nation that continues to grapple with identity in relation to its own internal differences. This attention to the Other as it pertains to the unthinkability of Italy's embedded blackness, categorizations of nonnormativity, and the superscription of a foreignness might direct the gazes of those living in Italy inward—particularly those who claim "Italian" as an integral identifying marker. Rather than merely reversing who or what is thinkable as the subject, I suggest a reading praxis wherein "a non-identity-based critical, cultural and political practice that seeks to resist the humanist rights-bearing claims of collective identities understood to be based in a certain affective and sexual practice and a relation to same-sex object choice."[342] I amend Freccero's conceptualization to hold in tension a recollection (and resistance) of

[341] Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 225.

[342] Carla Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern*, 15.

"rematerialization" of categorical racial and national belonging with collective literary production.

The writers in this study all manage to articulate a narrative identity (in) formation by both returning to Fanon's historical "cast offs of thought" and attending to present realities. They maintain attention to contemporary events by keeping an unyielding eye on their historical continuities and forming new collectivities in the process. The at turns painful, violent, and humorous mixtures promoted by the *meticciato* evidenced in the Mediterranean include the remembrance of migrations, diasporas, traumas, and a narrating of time and territory.[343] This undoing and uprooting of the habitual accounting of time is disseminated widely throughout the genre of postcolonial, collective, and Black Italian literature as well as in other texts that examine the making of modernity. Thus, Black and migrant contributions are critical to the production of current Italian identity and its aesthetic categories due in part to cultural syncretism, colonialism, migration, and other forms of miscegenation and cultural exchange. The dynamic relation between the historical aspect of colonization and occupation, on the one hand, and the mixing of cultural and aesthetic elements such as the literary, the sonic, and/in representations of cultural memory, on the other, marks *meticciato* as a

[343] Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*.

contested and relational zone within the "cognitive ecologies" that these authors produce.[344]

Reading the Black Mediterranean as I have done in this study lends historical consciousness to the "crisis of migration" and the politics of belonging. It also offers a possibility for home that is psycho-geographically expansive, transnational, and queer:

> The point of the intersection between queer and diaspora might precisely be to show how the "where" of queer is shaped by other worldly horizons – by histories of capital, empire and nation – which give queer bodies different point of access to such worlds, and which make different objects reachable, whether at home or away.[345]

It takes the term "crisis" literally, etymologically, as a turning point that acknowledges that the contemporary social disintegration stemming from the calculated cruelty of those in power requires a collective response. One of many in its arsenal is a new politics of naming, and literary practices of complex collectivity, and sustained contradiction that carry with them a more liveable destiny for us all.[346] This is what the arbiters of New Italian Epic seek to do. The collective specter of Blackness in the Mediterranean raises its arms up and out of perceived and oppressive ubiquity. It continues to re-surface out of epistemological and ontological oppression. This along with the Black Italian literary and artistic production takes up

[344] "Since language *is* community, if the cognitive ecology of a language is altered, so is the community." Toni Morrison, "Home." *The House that Race Built*, 8.
[345] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 176.

[346] Cedric Robinson, *Terms of Order*, 251.

the matter of Black life and ancestry, to which we might always return, are always already returning, to teach us about the condition of belonging while traversing seas (psychosocial, geographical, and otherwise) that if claimed by Black imaginative practices can lead to re-emergences circulating within alternate economies of being together in true solidarity.

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