



# UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Women, Postcolonialism and *Italianità*: Exploring  
Female Subaltern Voices in 21st Century Italian  
Literature (post-2010)

**Hannah Charlotte Burton**

*Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Masters by Research.*

The University of Leeds  
School of Languages, Cultures and Societies  
October 2022

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement. The right of Hannah Charlotte Burton to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by Hannah Charlotte Burton in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my wonderful supervisors, Dr. Gigliola Sulis and Dr. Olivia Santovetti, for supporting and challenging me throughout the research process. I am very grateful for their invaluable guidance and expertise, which has been fundamental in the writing of this thesis.

## Abstract

This thesis explores the role of marginalised female voices in literary texts in the debate surrounding Italy's relationship with its colonial past, and how attitudes towards Italian colonialism impact conceptualisations of Italian identity today. The project focuses on a range of both fictional and autobiographical texts, namely Igiaba Scego's *Adua* (2015), Francesca Melandri's *Sangue giusto* (2017), Vittorio Longhi's *Il colore del nome* (2021), and a selection of short stories and essays from *Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi* (2019), a collection penned by a group of Afro-Italian women and curated by Scego. By entering the texts into a dialogue with each other and postcolonial literary theories, this thesis argues that the chosen texts attempt to combat Italian postcolonial amnesia by highlighting marginalised female voices that reveal suppressed and altered memories of Italy's colonial past. In doing so, the texts challenge traditional ideas of Italian identity by emphasising the significance of Italy's complex relationship with Africa, revealing names to be a significant marker of this relationship, as well as highlighting the increasing militancy of the youngest generation of Afro-Italian writers in dealing with Italy's colonial history and its impact on black Italians today. The project also argues that while colonial-era marginalised female voices are ultimately lost to history and cannot speak for themselves, drawing upon Spivak's conclusion that the subaltern "cannot speak" (1988), twenty-first century writers are able to keep their memory alive through these texts, allowing them to be included in the conversation regarding the ongoing legacy of Italian colonialism.

<b>Introduction</b> .....	5
<b>Chapter One: Combating Italian Postcolonial Amnesia</b> .....	16
- Italian Ignorance and Indifference .....	16
- Highlighting Suppressed and Altered Memories.....	20
<b>Chapter Two: Italy’s Relationship with Africa</b> .....	28
- Rewriting Italian Colonialism.....	28
- The Afro-Italian ‘Return’ .....	34
- Africa in Italy.....	36
- Migration and Citizenship Struggles.....	43
<b>Chapter Three: The Importance of Names</b> .....	49
- The Power of Names.....	49
- Names: Forgotten Histories and Hiding Behind Them.....	51
- Names as Resistance.....	57
<b>Chapter Four: Silenced Voices Finally Heard?</b> .....	61
- <i>Il colore del nome</i> .....	62
- <i>Sangue giusto</i> .....	69
- <i>Adua</i> .....	72
- <i>Future</i> .....	75
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	79
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	81

## Introduction

This work is a development of the topic of my undergraduate dissertation, which explored the representation of female migrant identities in two novels by Italian-Somali writer Igiaba Scego, *Adua* (2015) and *La linea del colore* (2020). The project argued that Scego's position as a second-generation migrant writer allows her to create female characters with complex migrant identities, and in doing so draws attention to repressed colonial histories that still impact Italian society today. The choice of topic came from my desire to investigate the impact of Italy's colonial history as told by voices that are underrepresented in the study of contemporary Italian literature, in this case Afro-Italian women. I wanted to explore the topic further by putting Scego's *Adua* in conversation with other texts that share similar themes of postcolonialism and Italian identity. However, instead of continuing to focus solely on Afro-Italian women writers, I wanted to expand my source material to encompass authors of different genders, and from various backgrounds and generations, to extract new meaning from each of the texts. This led me to choosing Vittorio Longhi's *Il colore del nome* (2021), Francesca Melandri's *Sangue giusto* (2017) and *Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi* (2019), a collection of short-form texts by Afro-Italian women curated by Igiaba Scego. By entering these texts into a dialogue with *Adua* and each other, this work seeks to highlight the importance of marginalised female voices in the ongoing debate surrounding Italy's relationship with its colonial past. This section will introduce the debates surrounding Italy's colonial memory and national identity, before moving onto contextualising my chosen texts within the sphere of Italian postcolonial literature. It will then give a brief overview of each of the texts, as well as giving some context about the authors themselves, before summarising the aims of each chapter.

### Italian Colonial Memory

Although Italian colonialism was not as widespread or enduring as other empires of the time, such as the British and the French, "it had no less impact on the development of metropolitan conceptions of race, national identity, and geopolitical imaginaries" (Ben-Ghiat and Fuller, 2005, p.1). Italy's

colonial ventures roughly began with the occupations of Eritrea (1890) and Somalia (1908) in the liberal era, followed by the additions of Libya (1912), the Dodecanese Islands (1923) and finally the Fascist occupation of Ethiopia in 1935<sup>1</sup>, before Italian colonial rule officially ended with the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty (Andall and Duncan, 2005; Ben-Ghiat, 2008). However, unlike many other empires of the time whose downfall involved uprisings by colonised peoples and lengthy processes of decolonisation, the Italian case differs in that “the Italian Empire saw defeat by Europeans, first through military conquest and then by diplomatic fiat” (Ben-Ghiat, 2008, p.265) following defeat by the Allied powers in World War II. This defeat

left a legacy of humiliation that worked against Italians’ acknowledgement of their colonial crimes, even as it fostered nostalgic attitudes towards the colonies that had been unjustly ‘taken away.’ In this climate, no real debate was carried out about the economic, moral and other costs of Italian imperialism, either in the immediate post-war period, or later on (Ben-Ghiat, 2008, p.265).

This ‘legacy of humiliation’ has therefore come to define how Italy interacts with its colonial history and its impacts on Italian society decades later:

Italy has yet to come to terms with its colonial past and critically re-examine it via a collective debate. Italians do not perceive their country as a former colonial power, and have never collectively discussed the cultural and political implications of their presence in Africa. The memory of colonisation is feeble and disengaged” (Del Boca, 2005, p.3; cited in Marzagora, 2015, p.214).

The phenomenon surrounding Italy’s colonial memory has been termed by many scholars as a kind of ‘postcolonial amnesia,’ which stems from a lack of education and re-evaluation of its role in the violent colonisation of foreign nations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lidia Curti highlights the contrast between the treatment of other uncomfortable aspects of Italian history, such as the Fascist period in Italy itself, and the lack of attention paid to addressing Italian colonialism:

The colonial adventure is removed from the Italian imaginary and from historical memory; it is not studied in school, and until recently has rarely been the object of research and reassessment. Fascism has been recalled and re-appraised, but Italy’s colonial chapter is still erased, consigned to cultural amnesia. Massacres, concentration camps, indiscriminate warfare, along with the everyday routine of authoritarian rule, are forgotten (2007, p.62).

---

<sup>1</sup> During WWII Italy also briefly took control of Albania, as well as parts of Yugoslavia, Greece and France.

Resulting from this ‘postcolonial amnesia,’ Italy’s colonial atrocities, like those of other colonial powers of the era, have not been “given adequate recognition as constitutive elements in the articulations of national identity,” bearing in mind that “many of the central concerns of contemporary European societies – migrations, trans-nationalism, the integration (or not) of diasporic communities, multiculturalism, xenophobia and racism – are made less incomprehensible through a careful interrogation of their colonial pasts” (Poddar, Patke and Jensen, 2008, p.3).

### Italian National Identity

It has been widely discussed that public perception of Italian identity has evolved over time to reflect changing political agendas. Critics have highlighted the “‘whitening’ of the South” (Virga, 2019, p.105) under Fascism to unite the nation under one homogenous identity, “constructed through its opposition to Black people in Africa, marked as Other” (Ponzanesi, 2016, p.376). Italy’s colonial expansion “fostered a sense of national identity and made Italians feel modern” (Labanca, 2008, p.286), after being plagued since unification by Italy’s own “internal Orientalism” that positioned southern Italians as “ethnically and biologically different from and inferior to northern Italians” (Lombardi-Diop, 2008, p.304). Consequently, although ‘whiteness’ has become a “normalised identity in Italy,” (Virga, 2019, p.105) it has “always been contextual,” (Panico, 2021, p.140) and “colonialism in East Africa has been an essential tool in order to whitewash Italian national identity” (Pesarini, 2021, p.52).

However, the perception of *italianità* is slowly changing, not only through the emergence of postcolonial narratives like those focused on in this project, but also in the Italian media. Scholars have drawn attention to the representation and treatment of prominent Afro-Italians such as politician Cécile Kyenge and footballer Mario Balotelli, calling them “symbol[s] of the changing image of Italian identity” (Smith, 2015, p.127). Similarly, the victory of Italian-Egyptian rapper Mahmood at the 2019 Sanremo Music Festival, which caused controversy and sparked debates surrounding the future of *italianità*, has been said to “reaffirm larger postcolonial transformations already in motion



in Italian society” (Ardizzoni, 2020, cited in Clò and Zammarchi, 2021, p.35). However, they also highlight how the negative portrayal of and reaction to such figures reveals an underlying racial prejudice in Italy today, created by a national identity resulting from “a system of racialisation that is centred on the Other” (Giuliani, 2016, p. 554).

The impact of immigration on contemporary ideas of Italian identity and the controversy surrounding Italian citizenship laws have also been widely discussed in the academic sphere, given that “the unprecedented numbers of new immigrants from Africa and South America have forced Italian society to reconsider its own identity” (Virga, 2019, p.102). Igiaba Scego argues that the current principle of *ius sanguinis* used to determine Italian citizenship<sup>2</sup> “has a clear colonial heritage, because it represents the racialised migrant not as a subject with rights but rather as a colonial subject” (cited in Panico, 2021, pp.143-144), following on from the suggestion that current immigration policy in Italy “might be classified as a continuum of former colonial approaches” (Andall, 2008, p.289). Under the restrictive citizenship legislation based on blood lineage and race as opposed to birthplace, “even when they are born and raised in Italy, children of immigrants are considered by law immigrants themselves” (Clò, 2012, p.276). Therefore, such exclusionary citizenship laws imply that it is “impossible to consider colonialism as a heritage that has been transcended, as a historical event that has been overcome in an authentic non-colonial present” (Bouchard, 2018, p.45).

Italian Postcolonial Literature in the 21st Century:

Italian postcolonial literature<sup>3</sup> since the 1990s has provided:

a symbolic representation of the many social changes that have taken place in Italy during this period, encouraging society to rethink itself and to conceive of migrants to Italy and subsequent generations of new Italians in ways that go far beyond rejection and victimisation (Romeo, 2017, p.1).

---

<sup>2</sup> See Noventa, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> For more on Italian postcolonial literature as a literary space, see Romeo, 2017.

The value of Italian postcolonial literary narratives lies in their “potential to overturn monolithic metanarratives that pervade settled identities and fundamentally destabilise a community’s notion of its own history and of its own self” (Fotheringham, 2019, p.118). Therefore, texts such as these should not be read in isolation, but rather seen “as a closely connected body of writings where individual examples serve to illuminate one another” (Burdett, 2019, p.51). Through such narratives, “the ‘invisible’ Other is now becoming visible, and the repressed identities are making their appearance on the surface of the Italian one” (Virga, 2019, p.109). The idea of Italian postcolonial narratives as agents of political and societal change highlights that the “double violence” suffered by victims of colonialism, first the physical colonisation and then the elimination of said colonial violence from the Italian public memory, can only be rectified by opening a “dialogue, requesting the Italians’ collaboration and provoking them into recognising, alongside the authors’ Ethiopianness, Eritreanness and Somaliness, also their Italianness” (Marzagora, 2015, p.216). Consequently, literature is seen as “the first step towards that dialogue, and becomes a tool of political healing” (Marzagora, 2015, p.216).

Within the sphere of Italian postcolonial literature, African women’s voices and experiences feature heavily, with some of the most prominent writers such as Igiaba Scego, Gabriella Ghermandi, and Uxax Cristina Ali Farah being Afro-Italian women. This phenomenon is unsurprising given that “women are the ones who suffered most from the colonial domination” and the “uses and abuses of women’s bodies, as mistresses and mothers, have become a crossroads for cultures” (Luraschi, 2009, p.68). However, within the last decade there appears to have been an expansion in the writing of literary texts which address Italy’s colonial history. This project will put some of these texts in conversation with each other, to examine how they work together to challenge modern conceptions of Italian identity. It will continue to analyse the work of Afro-Italian women, with Scego (b.1974) as a prominent example of the so-called ‘second-generation’<sup>4</sup> of Italian postcolonial writers, and Djarah Kan (b.1993) and Leaticia Ouedraogo (b.1997) from the *Future* collection representing a new

---

<sup>4</sup> See Luraschi, 2009; Carroli, 2010; Coppola, 2011; Romeo, 2012; Clò, 2012; Lombardi-Diop, 2020.

generation of young Afro-Italian women, with Angelica Pesarini (b.1978) and Alesa Herero (b.1984) occupying an intermediate space. It will also incorporate the male voice of Vittorio Longhi (b.1972), who despite being an Italian-Eritrean, knew little about his African heritage until recently, as well as involving Francesca Melandri (b.1964), the only writer discussed here not to have familial links to Africa. The following pages will outline each of the texts to be explored.

*Adua (2015)*

Igiaba Scego's *Adua* follows the life of the titular protagonist, a middle-aged Somali migrant living in Rome, with the novel being split into sections from three different narrative perspectives. 'Adua' chapters recount the protagonist's story in first person, recalling her childhood in Somalia, moving to Rome in the 1970s as a teenager to pursue her dreams of film stardom, and these dreams ultimately being shattered. These chapters also discuss her present situation in Rome, navigating life with her husband, a young Somali migrant who Adua nicknames 'Titanic', and the fallout from a troubled relationship with her father. 'Zoppe' chapters are told in third person, exploring her father's experience working as a translator for Mussolini's Fascist regime in the 1930s, the suffering he endured highlighting the atrocities of Italian colonialism and their enduring impact through generations. This impact is reinforced through 'Paternale' chapters, which form interjections between the two perspectives, using a second person narration to depict Zoppe directly rebuking his daughter. While the story itself is fictional, many of the characters are inspired by real people whose voices have been forgotten or silenced, from black actress Dorothy Dandridge who faced racism in post-war Hollywood, to young refugees in Italy, to Scego's grandfather who worked as an interpreter for Rodolfo Graziani during the colonial period.<sup>5</sup>

*Sangue giusto (2017)*

Francesca Melandri's *Sangue giusto* is an impressive work of postcolonial fiction dealing with Italy's +complex relationship with Africa. It tells the story of Ilaria, an Italian woman who one day is met

---

<sup>5</sup> See 'Nota storica' (Scego, 2015, pp.175-177).

with the arrival of a young Ethiopian man, Shimeta, on her doorstep, claiming to be the grandson of her father, Attilio Profeti. The rest of the novel alternates between Shimeta's experience travelling across the Mediterranean from Ethiopia to Italy in search of his grandfather, and Ilaria's exploration into the complicated relationship with her father and his controversial involvement in Italy's colonial project. Melandri uses a third person narration throughout, which conveys not only the thoughts and feelings of both Ilaria and Shimeta in their respective chapters, but also informs the reader of important social and political events happening alongside these personal stories. Similarly to *Adua*, while the story is fictional, there is an autobiographical element present, given that Melandri herself went through a similar experience to that of Ilaria, having discovered the true extent of her father Franco's involvement in Italian colonialism during the Fascist period, something which she explores in the documentary *Pagine nascoste*<sup>6</sup> (Varani, 2017) which was released alongside the novel's publication.

*Il colore del nome (2021)*

*Il colore del nome* is an autobiographical narrative text written by Italian-Eritrean journalist Vittorio Longhi. The text focuses on his family history in Eritrea, his grandfather's parents having been an Italian coloniser (Giacomo) and an Eritrean woman (Gabrù) living under Italian colonial rule. Longhi details his personal journey in discovering his connection to Africa, which is sparked by emails from his Eritrean cousin Aida, who encourages him to re-evaluate his troubled relationship with his father and explore his complex family history. He also seeks to better understand how his personal connection to Eritrea is part of a much larger, more complicated relationship between Italy and Africa, especially given his position as a journalist specialising in international labour rights, having been personally involved in reporting on migrant tragedies in Lampedusa. Longhi narrates the text largely in first person, apart from the sections that talk about his family's history, which are narrated in the

---

<sup>6</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was unable to go to Italy to access the documentary in full, however the trailer can be viewed here: [https://youtu.be/we\\_1qNtR330](https://youtu.be/we_1qNtR330).

third person, although given the autobiographical nature of the text this still constitutes Longhi's own narrative voice.

*Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi (2019)*

*Future* is a literary anthology curated by Igiaba Scego, comprising of both fictional and autobiographical narratives written by Afro-Italian women of varying ages and backgrounds, which highlight the experiences of black Italian women in Italy today. Although the collection encompasses eleven different texts by eleven different authors, due to word count restraints, I will focus on the following four: Leaticia Ouedraogo's *Nassan Tenga*, Angelica Pesarini's *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna*, Djarah Kan's *Il mio nome*, and Alesa Herero's *Eppure c'era odore di pioggia*.

The first half of *Nassan Tenga*, an autobiographical essay-style text, sees Ouedraogo explore her experience coming from an 'immigrant' family, having been born in Burkina Faso, and her encounters with racism in Italy. These experiences then serve as the context behind which she urges other young Afro-Italians to speak up about their experiences as a collective to make their voices heard and make their mark on Italian society. Ouedraogo writes in the first-person singular when exploring her personal experiences, switching to the first-person plural in the closing sections to express the collective desires of young Afro-Italians to create a better future for themselves in Italy. Being the youngest of the writers discussed here at just twenty-five, she is also the most militant in her literary approach, implying a greater urgency and determination for change amongst this new generation of Afro-Italians.

In *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna*, Pesarini, a university professor in race and cultural studies, tells the story of Maddalena, a young Italian-Eritrean girl living in a Catholic orphanage for abandoned 'mixed-race' children. Maddalena's story is told through letters found in Eritrean archives by an unnamed character who largely resembles Pesarini herself, given that the text was inspired by her own archival research in Eritrea as part of her doctoral studies regarding Afro-Italian female

identities. The text is told through a mixture of third person narration, which conveys the thoughts and feelings of the figure who discovers the letters, and through the letters themselves.

Djarah Kan's *Il mio nome* recounts the young narrator's Ghanaian aunt coming to visit her family in Italy for the first time. Through her aunt, Lisbeth learns the importance of knowing and being proud of where you come from, as seen through the discovery of her 'secret name,' which leaves her with arguably more questions than answers surrounding her Afro-Italian identity. While not officially autobiographical, being Italian-born and of Ghanaian heritage suggests that the text is at least inspired by Kan's own personal experience, especially given her choice to narrate the text from Lisbeth's first-person perspective.

Finally, Alesa Herero's *Eppure c'era odore di pioggia* tells the story of Mati, an Italian of Cape Verdean descent who reflects on the development of her hybrid identity as she returns to Rome after many years. The text looks back on her experiences of racist abuse growing up in the Italian capital, and how an old woman from Mozambique inspired her to change her name from Matilde (as she was known as a child), to Matimba. Told through a third-person subjective narration that conveys Mati's thoughts and feelings, Herero's text is similar to Kan's in that it is not completely autobiographical, but is definitely inspired by her own experiences and emotions.

This project will incorporate postcolonial and feminist theories to explore how the chosen texts use representations of Italian (post)colonialism and highlight marginalised voices to question more traditional concepts of Italian identity. When thinking about the general concept of 'postcolonial,' I will follow Ania Loomba's (1998) use of the term, "meaning continuity rather than fracture of the economic and cultural effects of colonialism" (cited in Rand, 2020, p.5).

The thesis will develop the idea that second-generation postcolonial women writers "rewrite Italian post/colonialism" (Carroli, 2010, p.205) through their literary works, which challenge ideas surrounding Italian identity that have been built upon a violent colonial history. While Carroli comes

to her conclusion through an analysing Scego's *Oltre Babilonia* (2008), this project will go one step further by applying the same concept to Italian women's postcolonial writing around a decade later, focusing in this respect on Scego's *Adua* and the *Future* collection, as well as incorporating a male writer, Longhi, and an Italian writer with no African heritage of her own, Melandri. In doing so, the project will enter the texts into a dialogue with each other to reveal the varying attitudes of writers from different backgrounds and generations towards the topic of Italian postcolonialism, both within the texts and through the approaches of the writers themselves. It will also consider the presence of autobiographical elements found across the texts, and what this may mean for Italian postcolonial literature going forward.

The first two chapters will focus on situating the chosen texts within the context of Italy's complex postcolonial relationship with Africa. Chapter One will investigate how the texts deal with the issue of postcolonial amnesia, arguing that Longhi's and Melandri's texts do so by highlighting the indifference of their Italian protagonists towards Italy's colonial history, whereas Scego's text reveals a lack of knowledge regarding the true extent of Italian colonial violence through Adua's experience in Somalia, decades after the end of colonial rule. It will then suggest that all these texts, plus Ouedraogo's *Nassan Tenga*, try to combat postcolonial amnesia by highlighting the truth about suppressed and altered histories and memories of colonialism.

Chapter Two will analyse the texts' portrayal of Italy's connection to Africa, in a physical sense through colonialism and migration, as well as metaphorically and emotionally in terms of personal and collective identity. It will explore the different representations of Italian colonialism in Africa within the texts, as well as arguing that Longhi's and Pesarini's texts both depict a 'return' to Africa to learn more about their personal and national histories as Afro-Italians. It will then examine how each text represents the African presence within modern Italy and how this impacts ideas surrounding Italian identity, before focusing more specifically on how issues of migration and citizenship are dealt with in the texts.

The final two chapters will explore in more detail important threads that run throughout the texts, which have been identified through putting them in conversation with each other for the first

time. Chapter Three will focus on the significance of names, starting with a discussion of how Longhi and Melandri present names as powerful tools of opportunity and privilege. It will then explore how names in *Il colore del nome*, *Adua*, and *Il mio nome* reveal forgotten histories related to Italy's colonial past, and how names are often used by characters to avoid facing up to uncomfortable truths. The chapter concludes by highlighting how both Kan and Herero present names as a form of resistance against racial discrimination and cultural oppression.

Finally, Chapter Four will question to what extent the previously silenced women's voices represented are given the opportunity to speak and be heard, arguing that while these voices are able to resist complete silencing through the writing of the texts, many of the voices presented have been lost to history, with writers only able to keep their memory alive instead of allowing them to speak for themselves. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) assertion that female subaltern voices within a postcolonial context are doubly silenced, by both epistemic violence on the part of the colonisers and by the patriarchal society to which those women belong, will form the basis of this argument, examining how the representation of female subaltern voices in the texts contribute to changing ideas surrounding Italian identity. Considering this, it will argue that the texts have a shared aim of highlighting silenced women's voices to inspire a change in attitudes and behaviours within Italy in relation to race, migration and national identity. It will discuss how Longhi foregrounds marginalised female voices throughout his text, positioning them as the driving force behind his journey of self-discovery, as well as exploring how Melandri incorporates the underrepresented experiences of African migrants and colonised women into her narrative. It will also analyse how Scego structures the narrative to allow Adua to tell her own story, as well as highlighting how she ultimately overcomes being silenced by others throughout her life. The chapter ends with an exploration of how *Nassan tenga*, *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna* and *Il mio nome* emphasise the importance of making marginalised voices heard as a way to undo the repression of the colonial past and rewrite the narrative of Italy's identity from a new perspective.



## 1. Combating Italian Postcolonial Amnesia

As explained in the introduction, the phenomenon of Italian ‘postcolonial amnesia’<sup>7</sup> has prevented Italian society from extensively re-evaluating how its colonial past impacts its present-day attitudes towards race and migration, and is inescapable when debating its modern-day relationship with Africa. As Smythe suggests, “in every European state, majorities cling to a set of myths and assumptions about national origin and character. Italy is no different than other nation states in this regard” (2018, p.7). This has manifested itself in “the persistence of stereotypes of Italians as more humane and less martial than other European peoples” and “difficulties in accessing both Italian and African archival collections,” contributing to a “grave general underestimation of Italian colonial repression” (Ben-Ghiat & Fuller, 2005, p.4). This chapter will argue that the chosen texts have at their core a desire to combat the ‘amnesia’ within Italian society. It will suggest that they achieve this in two ways: firstly, by emphasising the detachment of many Italians towards their own country’s colonial history and its continuing legacy, and secondly, by highlighting suppressed and/or altered histories and memories of victims of Italian colonial rule.

### Italian Ignorance and Indifference

Longhi opens *Il colore del nome* with this quote from Aimé Césaire, a writer best known for co-founding the ‘Négritude’<sup>8</sup> movement within Francophone literature: “Noi siamo tra quelli che si rifiutano di dimenticare. Noi siamo tra quelli che rifiutano l’amnesia come metodo” (p.9). Given that he opens his text with a quote emphasising the importance of remembering, it is interesting that early in the text, Longhi highlights his initial reluctance to dig into his family’s past. Upon arriving at a hotel in Jordan for a work trip in chapter one, Longhi recalls being immediately greeted in Arabic, something he admits has happened to him several times before. He describes his reaction to the misunderstanding:

---

<sup>7</sup> For more on amnesia in general, see Fletcher, 2012; Mazrui, 2013.

<sup>8</sup> See Césaire, 1972.

Sorrido con un leggero imbarazzo e spiego sbrigativamente in inglese o in francese che sono italiano. Aggiungo un commento banale sull'Italia e sul Mediterraneo per chiudere subito la conversazione e non entrare nel discorso sulle mie origini. (p.16)

Longhi's indifference towards his African ancestry is apparent, as he avoids discussing it and instead presents himself as solely Italian. However, it should be noted that this lack of interest in his Eritrean ancestry comes more from a troubled relationship with his father than anything else. This is illustrated when he first receives a message from his cousin Aida asking about the whereabouts of his father. Longhi doesn't reply straight away, instead avoiding his phone altogether. He describes being woken up by a storm upon returning to Brussels, mistaking the vibration of his phone for thunder:

A svegliarmi è stato temporale. [...] la pioggia si sente anche quando cadono poche gocce, quando arriva fitta e lieve. A farmi sobbalzare invece è stata una raffica di tuoni e lo scroscio fragoroso che ne è seguito. 'Batteria scarica, il telefono si spegnerà entro 30 secondi,' con la vibrazione e l'illuminazione del display mi si riaprono gli occhi (pp.20-21).

Longhi highlights the storm and its connection with his phone to symbolise his fear and reluctance to tackle the difficult memories of his father that he has suppressed for many years. The phone symbolises his desire to remain detached from this unknown side of his family history. He describes the flight, in which he is unable to use his phone, as "uno spazio sospeso," and that "il telefono è lì per ricordarti che l'oblio è finito e la beatitudine di quella disconnessione non può durare in eterno" (p.21). The message waiting for him on his phone from Aida is there to remind him that he cannot live in ignorance forever, avoiding any mention of his father and consequently refusing to acknowledge his connection to Eritrea and Italian colonialism. He even contemplates giving into his discomfort, thinking of ways to avoid confronting his difficult family history altogether:

Potrei sbrigarmela con due righe, dicendole che ha sbagliato persona. Eviterei di avviare un qualsiasi discorso, senza stare a spiegare la triste vicenda di mio padre. Oppure potrei semplicemente ignorarla (p.21).

Despite his reluctance, he gives into curiosity and replies to Aida, however even after this he is still apprehensive about what he may discover about his father, and consequently, about himself. At the end of the second chapter, he writes:

Che cosa mi posso aspettare riaprendo la porta sulla storia di mio padre e della sua famiglia? Ogni volta che penso a questa sparizione dopo anni di silenzio sento il tonfo di un macigno in fondo allo stomaco, sommerso da un mare di dubbi sempre più torbido (p.29).

He expresses nervousness and discomfort in addressing his complicated family history and bringing it to the surface to disrupt his ‘peaceful’ ignorant present. This is symbolic of a wider issue in Italy, in preferring not to address the true extent of Italian colonial violence and its lasting impacts on Italian society today, instead choosing to remain unaware.

However, it is important to note that the ‘choice’ to remain uninformed is not available to most afro-descendant people in Italy, as they are the ones who suffer these long-lasting effects in the form of deep-rooted racism still embedded within Italy today. Despite being afro-descendant himself, at this point in the text, Longhi’s detachment from his Eritrean heritage means that he does not see himself as Afro-Italian and can therefore emotionally distance himself somewhat from the effects of Italy’s racism. Nevertheless, as seen earlier when he is automatically greeted in Arabic, he can never fully distance himself from his African heritage because it manifests itself physically through the colour of his skin, implying that his ignorance was never truly ‘peaceful,’ as if it was, this text probably would never have been written.

Longhi’s ignorance towards Italy’s colonial past is intertwined with his ignorance towards his own family’s history. After seeing Aida’s posts online about Eritrea, he writes of his lack of knowledge of the country in which his father was born:

Conosco l’Eritrea solo dai racconti approssimativi dei rifugiati che ho incontrato nei porti della Sicilia dopo gli sbarchi. Erano racconti di fuga e riguardavano esclusivamente il viaggio infernale attraverso il deserto e poi in mare. Non parlavano mai del loro Paese, delle città, di come era la vita quotidiana lì. E perché avrebbero dovuto, in fondo? Scappavano da una dittatura di cui nessuno vuole raccontare e a nessuno sembra interessare davvero in Europa. Tanto meno interessa l’Eritrea del passato, un passato che invece Aida è determinata a ricordare in ogni post, in ogni riga, in ogni foto. Che cosa c’entra mio padre, che di quel Paese non ha mai detto nulla a mia madre né a me? (p.23)

Despite having family there, up until Aida’s message, Longhi’s only knowledge of Eritrea was from testimonies of refugees who had fled in search of a better life in Europe. He perceived Eritrea as a country that people want to escape from, instead of the home of his ancestors and family. Up until this point, as a journalist Longhi had been reporting on migrant experiences from a detached perspective, unable to relate to the African migrants he interviewed despite having a shared history

through his Eritrean heritage. This detachment is undone as the text continues, as Longhi realises he has a lot in common with these migrants, as will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Furthermore, Longhi feels almost guilty for lacking awareness of his family history, as seen when his colleague Fauziya, a black British woman, asks him about his parents:

Le ho detto che mio padre è nato ad Asmara ma che sapevo ben poco dell'Eritrea e della sua famiglia, perché non me ne ha mai parlato nessuno. Non ho aggiunto nulla sul mio nome, di cui non saprei neanche spiegare l'origine. Evidentemente ho mostrato il disagio di chi sta in piedi sulla porta con la fretta di andare perché poi le ha smesso di farmi domande (p.28).

Longhi's lack of knowledge is a result of his father Pietro choosing not to teach him about his Eritrean family. We learn later in the text that this stems from Pietro's trauma relating to the murder of his own father due to discrimination against Italian Eritreans in Eritrea following the end of colonial rule. Therefore, Longhi's detachment from his Eritrean background is an example of how colonialism continues to influence attitudes towards race and national identity in Italy today; Longhi's ignorance ultimately stems from the association of Italian Eritreans with Italy's colonial violence, an association that led to the murder of his grandfather, and the silence of his father.

Similarly, in *Sangue giusto*, Ilaria is initially clueless about the extent to which her father was involved in Italy's Fascist-era colonialism, to the point that she is so shocked when reading his white supremacist writing at the library that she walks all the way home before realising she had left without her purse and keys (p.161). After the work of historians and journalists like Angelo del Boca<sup>9</sup>, who brought the truth about Italy's colonial past to light after it had been suppressed for decades, Ilaria comes to realise that most of the information regarding Italy's involvement in Africa is now readily available: "Basta inserire le parole chiave 'Etiopia', 'cooperazione italiana', 'Mengistu' ed ecco: pagine e pagine di link [...] Tutto è a disposizione, nulla è segreto" (p.173). When Ilaria begins looking for more information about her father's involvement, she notes that this information is also easily accessible, she had just never sought it out before: "Meno di un'ora in giro per il web, e ha trovato tutte le informazioni necessarie. Come dice sua madre, è tutto facilissimo da trovare. Basta cercare."

---

<sup>9</sup> See Del Boca, 2005.

(p.176) This further emphasises that the problem now is indifference on the part of Italian society, and Melandri implies that what is needed is for more Italians to pay attention and search for this information about Italy's colonial history, to critically examine its impacts on Italy today. Melandri uses Ilaria's character as an example of what she believes more Italians should be doing; she takes the initiative to find out more about Italian colonialism and her family's involvement in it, and through doing so starts to consider how Italy's unspoken past still affects black people in Italy, like Shimeta, today: "'Visto che basta cercare,' si dice Ilaria, 'allora cerchiamo'" (p.178). Therefore, Melandri's text examines "how it is possible to develop a consciousness of the deepest workings of Italian colonialism, and what the consequences of that consciousness are" (Burdett, 2019, p.52). However, in the final chapter Melandri acknowledges the continued indifference of many powerful Italians towards the impacts of Italian colonial violence, describing Ilaria's reaction to the news of a memorial to convicted war criminal and former Fascist commander Rodolfo Graziani being built by the mayor of Affile, a village near Rome:

Gli ospedali chiudono, i disabili sono senza pensione, le strade hanno più crateri della Luna e decine di migliaia di euro vengono stanziati per onorare il macellaio di Addis Abeba, lo sterminatore della Cirenaica, il boia di Salò. Ilaria non trova parole per la sua indignazione (p.453).

By showing that controversies like this still happen, Melandri cements her view that Italians as a collective need to do more to recognise and confront the legacy of Italy's colonial past.

#### Highlighting suppressed and altered memories

Longhi's decision to open *Il colore del nome* with the quote from Césaire indicates that combating 'postcolonial amnesia' and the importance of remembering forgotten histories were key drivers behind the creation of the text. He writes in detail about the true extent of Italian colonial violence, both before and during the Fascist period, using his family's experiences to highlight his personal connection to Italy's colonial past. Longhi describes his great-grandfather Giacomo's arrival in Africa

as an early coloniser in the late 1800s, detailing the attitudes and ambitions behind Italy's decision to colonise African regions at the time, which will be discussed further in Chapter Two:

Si voleva dare all'Italia la sua degna porzione di colonie, la sua parte di prestigio internazionale, al pari di francesi, spagnoli, portoghesi, tedeschi e soprattutto inglesi, i veri protagonisti della scena imperialista (p.32).

This is interesting given the perpetuation of the myth of Italians as 'good colonisers' as mentioned earlier. The perception of Italians as an anomaly amongst other barbaric nations is dismissed by Longhi as he implies that Italians went to Africa with the same aspirations and intentions as other colonial powers of the time, framing them as being inspired by these other more established empires. Longhi's approach to addressing hidden aspects of Italian colonialism places him alongside many Afro-Italian women writers, whose texts "fill a void in official records" and "rupture the vision of a homogenous, white Italy," questioning how Italian identity is shaped following colonialism (Curti, 2021, p.226). The autobiographical nature of *Il colore del nome*, something it shares with the texts by Afro-Italian women that Curti mentions, allows it to act as Longhi's own scrutinization of himself and his identity as Afro-Italian. His story is a "telling of the self as a becoming" (Curti, 2021, p.226), a process that is shaped by his changing perception of Italy's colonial history and its lasting impacts, through learning about his personal connection to it. Through writing the text, Longhi attempts to combat postcolonial amnesia on both a personal and national scale. Personal refers to Longhi's journey of self-discovery throughout the text, and his transformation from ignorant bystander into active informer regarding the forgotten truths of Italian colonialism. This leads onto the national aspect, as Longhi chooses to publish his personal story to provoke these difficult debates within Italy today. Given that public memory of events such as colonialism has shaped Italy's identity as a nation, Longhi's contribution to "open[ing] the archives of memory" means that "the past can no longer be relegated to oblivion as memorialisation becomes an increasingly public process (Romeo, 2017, p.30).

On the other hand, another key aspect of Melandri's approach to combating postcolonial amnesia is through Attilio's involvement in censorship in colonial Ethiopia. He chooses to stay

following the end of the Second Italo-Ethiopian War to work on censoring post being sent back to Italy:

..fu adibito al controllo e alla censura della posta in uscita dalla nuova capitale [...] Esempi di frasi da ricoprire di pesante inchiostro nero: “Non abbiamo potuto compiere il tal spostamento per paura degli *sciftà*”; “Le strade non sono sicure”; “Spero di sopravvivere”. [...] Gli fu presto chiaro quale fosse il suo vero compito: censurare il fatto che appena finita la guerra era cominciata la guerriglia. Che la vittoria era stata solo un proclama; che l’impero pacificato e operoso che avrebbe reso prosperi i suoi coloni, in realtà non esisteva. Era invece in corso un’occupazione: ben pochi degli immensi territori abissini erano sicuri per gli italiani (pp.324-325).

Through making Attilio’s job censoring information about what was really happening in the Italian colonies, Melandri shows the reader not just *how* Italian public perception of the colonial and early postcolonial periods in Africa was shaped and manipulated by governing powers, but also *what* histories and truths were being suppressed and concealed. She also uses Attilio’s character to acknowledge that memories of the colonial period were altered and suppressed on both a national and personal scale; when he returns home to his parents in 1940, he mentions nothing about the true nature of his job in Ethiopia, nor his relationship with Abeba and their child he left behind: “Non nominava né morte né amore. Nelle sue storie non c’erano cadaveri, né processi per madamato. Non c’erano gas e nemmeno la tremenda dolcezza del corpo di Abeba” (p.255). The suppression of personal experiences and memories then directly impacts his own children, shown in this instance through Ilaria being unaware of her African relatives, and thus being ignorant to her personal connection to Italian colonialism.

Melandri further attempts to combat postcolonial amnesia with her inclusion of a passage regarding Maria Uva<sup>10</sup>, a woman who became a symbol of Italian patriotism during the Fascist period as she sang to welcome colonial troops on their arrival in Port Said:

Ma lei, la sirena di Porto Said, cantava per tutti senza distinzione. Cantava per i soldati diretti alle alture dell’Amba Aradam, alle gole del Tembien o al lago Ascianghi. Per quelli che avrebbero marciato nella polvere per giorni interi e orinato marrone per la disidratazione, per chi sarebbe stato sventrato da un pallottola dum-dum. Per chi avrebbe vomitato d’orrore vedendo cadaveri con il sesso ficcato in bocca e per chi avrebbe immobilizzato un uomo ancora vivo mentre un suo camerata lo evirava. Cantava per chi avrebbe dato fuoco ai tucul e pazienza se dentro c’erano ancora donne e bambini, che poi i superiori l’avrebbero sgridato

---

<sup>10</sup> See Isacchini, 2006.

perché non si spreca così la benzina: e anche per chi sarebbe morto dissanguato in un fosso mormorando: “Mamma...” Maria Uva cantò quindi anche per Attilio Profeti (p.307).

Melandri takes the stereotypically patriotic image of Maria Uva and turns it on its head, instead using it to highlight the brutal experiences in the colonies of both Italian soldiers and their colonised victims. She attempts to combat postcolonial amnesia by commenting on the difference between the patriotic image of Maria Uva, which goes hand in hand with Attilio’s role in altering the narrative of Italy’s colonial project, and the harsh reality of life in the Italian colonies.

Furthermore, Melandri directly references the post-war reframing of the colonial period as solely a Fascist endeavour, one of the main causes of postcolonial amnesia in Italy (Marzagora, 2015, p.214).

She writes:

Nell’Italia della Ricostruzione le colonie erano considerate roba da fascisti - pazienza se l’Eritrea era stata proclamata colonia alla fine dell’Ottocento e la Libia prima dello scoppio della grande guerra, ben prima quindi che la maggior parte degli italiani avessi mai sentito pronunciare il cognome Mussolini. E tutto ciò che, a torto o a ragione, era associato al fascismo veniva considerato un corpo estraneo, una parentesi, una deviazione dal *vero* corso della Storia patria, quello che univa l’eroismo del Risorgimento a quello della Resistenza. L’Italia era un ex alcolizzato che, come ogni nuovo adepto della sobrietà, non voleva essere confuso con il comportamento tenuto durante l’ultima, tragica sbronza (pp.208-209).

She directly addresses Italy’s refusal to accept its colonial past and face up to its wrongdoings as a nation to examine the impact they still have on Italian society today. She goes on to call out the silence of those directly involved in Italy’s colonial ventures, using Attilio as an embodiment of the collective desire to hide away and let the truth be forgotten:

..il più assoluto di tutti i silenzi fu quello dei reduci delle imprese coloniali. Pareva quasi che il Corno d’Africa si fosse invaso da solo. Nell’Italia degli anni cinquanta, gli ex coloni erano perfino più invisibili degli ex fascisti, ancora più chiusi in un pervicace mutismo. Attilio Profeti non fece eccezione. (p.209)

Non espresse né gli fu chiesta la sua opinione quando il giornalista Angelo Del Boca dimostrò in un saggio che, durante l’occupazione dell’Etiopia, era stato usato il tioetere del cloroetano, anche detto iprite; e allora un altro più famoso giornalista, Indro Montanelli, lo accusò di mentire perché lui in Abissinia c’era stato e i gas non li aveva mai visti; e quasi tutti credettero al secondo, perché se non lo sa chi è un testimone diretto come sono andate le cose a chi si può credere? (p.223)

She not only references the immediate suppression and manipulation of colonial memory after the period officially ended, but she also draws attention to the continued denial of and attempts to hide



the truth behind violent atrocities committed under Italian colonial rule, represented here by Montanelli, a now controversial figure in Italy given his abuse of colonised women. The fact that Melandri mentions Del Boca's work in the text further indicates that she was aware of the issues relating to Italian postcolonial amnesia when writing the novel, and that she included passages like these as a way to draw attention to it more explicitly.

On the other hand, manipulation of colonial memory in Africa is also presented in *Adua*, however Scego showcases a different perspective, highlighting how this also occurred to a certain extent in the former colonies themselves. In chapter thirteen, Adua reminisces on her experience growing up in 1960s Somalia, remembering the naivety of her idealised perception of Italy at the time. Scego hints that this image stemmed from two main factors: a lack of knowledge about the true extent of Italian colonial violence, largely due to the silence of those who had experienced it first-hand, and lingering Italian propaganda leftover from the colonial period.

Firstly, Adua recalls her father's silence when it came to his own experiences of Italian colonialism: "mio padre del passato preferiva non parlare. Sì, preferiva stare zitto" (p.72). The reason for Zoppe's silence stems from the guilt and shame<sup>11</sup> he harbours surrounding having been forced to play his own part in colonial violence against fellow East-Africans during the Fascist period, a "deep-rooted thread of shame that runs insidiously through the protagonists' lives" (Rand, 2020, p.5) that will be dealt with in more detail in the following two chapters. Adua explains that this was not just something personal to her father, but an attitude that was shared widely among others at the time who had experienced Italian colonial rule and were eager to leave it in the past:

Il fascismo non lo capivo all'epoca. La memoria era già persa. E trovavi sempre qualche Idris Shangani felice di raccontarti che sotto gli italiani non si era vissuti poi così male. Di solito erano ex ascari o ex madame. Ma poteva uno scricciolo come me capire quelle sfumature? [...] Nessuno ci aveva mai raccontato che il colonialismo era il male. Anche chi conosceva la verità ha taciuto. Mio padre, per esempio, ha taciuto (p.74).

Adua points to a generational issue, in which silence was used as a coping mechanism by those of her father's generation struggling to deal with the trauma they experienced during Italy's colonial rule.

---

<sup>11</sup> See Rand, 2020

Zoppe's silence being caused by the shame of his own collaboration with Fascist colonisers reveals a "transgenerational course of shame from Italian colonialism to the present day lay[ing] bare the implications of Italy's colonial amnesia" (Rand, 2020, p.15). By addressing it herself, Adua ultimately breaks the generational silence and attempts to combat 'postcolonial amnesia' by telling a distinctly personal story about the effects of Italian colonialism on her own family.

Moreover, Adua suggests that her ignorance towards the extent of Italian colonial violence was not only due to her father's generation silencing themselves due to trauma, but also the fact that those who did choose to talk about the colonial period, exemplified here by Idris Shangani, someone who profited from doing business with Italian colonisers, often altered the narrative by only portraying the Italians in a positive light. Additionally, Adua shares the fond memories she had for a cinema in Magalo where she grew up, "lo avevano costruito i fascisti negli anni Trenta, il veicolo eccellente, secondo loro, di propaganda" (p.71). After Shangani paid to restore the cinema following the end of colonial rule, Adua describes how visiting the cinema ignited her love for Italian culture and its people and fuelled her desires to move there herself:

E quel sottotitolo campeggiava anche nell'insegna colorata del cinemino. "Per perpetua gloria di Roma". A me, a furia di leggere quella scritta, era venuta una voglia pazza di quella Roma lontana, piena di dolce vita e cabaret. [...] L'Italia era ovunque nella mia vita. L'Italia erano i baci sulla bocca, la mano nella mano, l'abbraccio appassionato. L'Italia era la libertà. E io speravo tanto che potesse diventare il mio futuro" (pp.74-75).

Therefore, being uneducated on the suffering caused by Italian colonisers, and lingering propaganda glorifying Italian society and culture, created an idealised perception of Italy in Adua's mind. This image was ultimately shattered when she moved there herself, to be met with the reality of the racism and misogyny still rife in postcolonial Italy.

Finally, Leaticia Ouedraogo's *Nassan tenga* directly addresses the problem of Italy's 'postcolonial amnesia' and talks of a new generation taking a stand against it, by bringing forward new voices and restoring a collective memory. She writes of the work that has already been done in this regard:

Ci siamo rivolti alla storia, agli archivi fotografici e a quelle vicende ignorate nei nostri libri. Ci siamo dedicati al colonialismo, lo abbiamo collegato al fascismo e al razzismo. Il nostro progetto di decostruzione degli spazi, del linguaggio e degli sguardi non sarebbe stato degno di noi se avessimo ignorato questi fenomeni (pp.71-72).

However, she highlights that more needs to be done to reverse the decades of suppressed and altered colonial histories, emphasising that a new generation of young black Italians are ready for the challenge:

Vogliamo sovvertire gli sguardi consolidati e le versioni della storia che sembravano inconfutabili, siamo convinti che chi non vuole sapere, nonostante ne abbia i mezzi, si debba rendere conto di non essere innocente o al riparo dalla verità. All'amnesia selettiva, quella tendenza a selezionare sistematicamente degli eventi e delle storie da dimenticare, noi rispondiamo con una memoria collettiva. Senza omissioni. Senza pagine sbiadite o strappate. Il nostro rapporto con il passato, non lo vogliamo più arido e passivo, ma fecondo e conscio. [...] Stiamo rileggendo per riscrivere, per diffondere la verità a la Storia (pp.72-73).

She expresses the desire of many Afro-Italians to combat postcolonial amnesia in Italy by re-writing the stories that had previously been written for them, both physically by writing texts like this one and others in the *Future* collection, and symbolically by raising awareness of the lasting impacts of Italian colonial violence on the experiences of black Italians today. She uses the first-person plural here, as opposed to the first-person singular she uses when describing her personal struggles earlier in the text, to emphasise that Afro-Italians as a collective must speak out and make their voices heard together, to overcome the indifference within Italian society towards critically examining its colonial past. She argues that working as a team and drawing attention to all the individual fragments of the Afro-Italian experience without allowing them to be homogenised, the *Future* collection being a prime example of this, is the key to combating Italy's postcolonial amnesia. In doing so, Ouedraogo's approach to writing is more militant in nature compared to that of Longhi, Scego and Melandri, indicating a higher level of urgency and anger amongst the younger generation of Afro-Italians that she represents. Furthermore, Ouedraogo's text indicates that the need to re-examine colonialism's continuing impact does not just concern people with connections to Italy's former colonies, but it concerns all black people living and existing in Italy, as the effects of racist attitudes that stem from the absence of reckoning with the colonial past are not limited by nationality.

In conclusion, all these texts share the common aim of trying to combat postcolonial amnesia in Italy. This is evident from the ways in which some of the texts highlight the ignorant, indifferent, and uneducated attitudes of Italians towards colonialism, as in the case of Longhi in *Il colore del nome* and Ilaria in *Sangue giusto*. But more importantly, the attack on Italian ‘amnesia’ is also fought within the texts by highlighting suppressed and altered memories of not just the colonial period, but also the racism that it encouraged in Italian society decades later. This is seen through the silence of colonial victims and lingering Italian propaganda in *Adua*, Melandri’s exposure of Italian censorship through the character of Attilio, and Ouedraogo’s impassioned plea to young Afro-Italians to make their voices heard.

## 2. Italy's Relationship with Africa

Italy's relationship with Africa is significant when discussing changing conceptualisations of Italian identity, with *italianità* "far from being the result of a domestic, close and uncontaminated historical process," given that "the relationship with African cultural alterity [through colonialism] played a central role in the evolution of Italian culture" (Marzagora, 2015, p.222). The texts address this relationship not only by bringing suppressed colonial truths to the surface, but also by highlighting how colonial attitudes still impact the experiences of black people in Italy today, affecting Afro-Italians born and/or raised in Italy, as well as African migrants in search of better opportunities.

### Rewriting Italian Colonialism

Many of the texts use representations of Italy's colonial past to reframe and re-examine Italy's postcolonial present, specifically regarding attitudes towards race, migration, and national identity. Each text explores Italian colonialism slightly differently, with each writer presenting Italy's colonial history from a different, often underrepresented, perspective, giving the reader a more accurate image of Italy as a colonial power than has previously been painted by more prominent official histories and popular myths. As discussed previously, representing Italian colonialism accurately through these texts is crucial to being able to combat Italian postcolonial amnesia.

Longhi splits his representation of Italian colonialism into three main parts: pre-Fascism, the height of Fascism, and the after effects of colonialism<sup>12</sup>. He places these sections in chronological order throughout the text, further highlighting the connection between past and present, as the reader observes how life for Longhi's family in Eritrea changes with the progression of Italian involvement in the region. He begins in chapter three by describing his great-grandfather Giacomo's arrival in Asmara in 1890 as an Italian colonial soldier:

---

<sup>12</sup> Owing to word count restrictions, this chapter will mainly focus on the first two parts, with Longhi's representation of the after effects of colonialism being dealt with throughout the rest of the thesis.

Si imbarcò al porto di Genova, insieme a centinaia di altri militari di rinforzo a ciò che restava del Corpo Speciale Africa. Il governo aveva istituito il Corpo tre anni prima per potenziare la presenza italiana dopo la sconfitta sonora di Dogali. Su quelle colline aride dell'entroterra eritreo circa cinquecento uomini, tra soldati e ufficiali, erano stati sterminati dall'esercito del comandante etiope Ras Alula. (p.31)

Here Longhi establishes that Italy's colonial ambitions and involvement in Africa began long before the Fascist period, thus helping to overcome the common misconception that Italian colonialism was a purely Fascist endeavour. Longhi continues by explicitly outlining Italy's ambitions at the time, detailing, almost as if it were a history book, the government's motivations behind involvement in Africa and what it hoped the country would achieve from creating an empire:

Si andava alla ricerca di terre nuove da sfruttare, diceva il governo, tanto per l'agricoltura quanto per le materie prime utili alle industrie nascenti del Nord. [...] La classe dirigente borghese aveva fretta di far crescere l'economia di un Paese ancora povero, analfabeta e frammentato in un arcipelago di piccoli popoli. (pp.32-33)

He then explains how the government sold its colonial ambitions to the Italian public, framing the plans as a quest to spread 'morality' and 'civilisation' to the African continent, as was the case for other colonial powers at the time<sup>13</sup>:

Nella loro ottica liberale e progressista, i presidenti del Consiglio [...] avevano giustificato al parlamento e all'opinione pubblica quell'operazione costosa e dal futuro molto incerto come una missione umanitaria, mirata a portare civiltà, a eliminare ogni forma di arretratezza, a cominciare dalla schiavitù. Questo era il pretesto a cui anche Giacomo aveva voluto credere [...] Sentiva che quella missione era fatta per gli uomini come lui, quelli di una certa statura morale. (p.33)

Here, Longhi also incorporates his own family's involvement in early colonialism, suggesting that his great-grandfather was also won over by the government's colonial propaganda. However, it is important to recognise that this propaganda was fuelled by a belief in racial superiority over the black Africans Italy intended to colonise, something that Longhi draws attention to when describing Italy's colonial ambitions:

Come gli altri europei partivano dal presupposto del diritto a quel possesso, della superiorità rispetto agli africani quasi fosse un fenomeno naturale, al pari dell'istinto animale o l'alternarsi delle stagioni. La convinzione della superiorità razziale era confermata dalla scienza del secolo e non trovava un contrasto effettivo nella Chiesa. I missionari partecipavano ai progetti coloniali e descrivevano le popolazioni dell'Africa subsahariana come masse indistinte di selvaggi superstiziosi, ma inoffensivi in fondo. (p.34)

---

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed history of Italian colonialism see Del Boca, 1992.

Acknowledging these historic beliefs in texts such as Longhi's is important, given that these beliefs evolved into the subjugation of thousands of black Africans during the colonial period, and ultimately still impact attitudes towards black Italians and migrants today, given that "racial discourses created during the colonial period and strengthened by fascism are still present and accepted in today's public discourse" (Virga, 2019, p.105). Longhi educates his reader through the text, intertwining his family's story with the history of the Italian nation, and highlighting the fact that Italy was committing colonial atrocities in Africa long before the rise of Fascism.

In chapter five, Longhi presents colonialism at the height of the Fascist period, emphasising the suffering of Italian-Eritreans in Eritrea under Mussolini's new racial legislation. Again, Longhi shows that institutional racism forced upon the colonies was not a Fascist invention, but instead was present from the earliest days of Italian involvement in Africa, and only continued to evolve as the years went on:

La questione razziale era sempre esistita in colonia, anche se in realtà nessuno ne parlava con la spudoratezza di Mussolini. Si era mantenuto un certo pudore persino nel pronunciare la parola 'razza', nonostante la discriminazione e la segregazione fossero state praticate fin dal primo giorno di occupazione, alla fine dell'Ottocento. L'ipocrisia del tempo imponeva riservatezza sulla questione, quella stessa con cui si parla sottovoce della povertà o di una malattia venerea, sperando che non nominandola piano piano sparisca. Oppure, peggio, sperando che nessuno se ne accorga. (p.72)

By showcasing colonial racism as part of Italy's national history and not just passing it off as a solely Fascist belief, Longhi's text highlights the role Italy's colonial past played in the evolution of Italy as a nation, colonial racial legislation contributing to the "culturally constructed myth of a homogenous [Italian] identity, recognised as white" (Virga, 2019, p.102), thus suggesting that racism is embedded within Italian society itself.

Furthermore, Longhi tells the story of his grandfather Vittorio, whose status as Italian-Eritrean led to him being caught in the middle of the complicated relationship between coloniser and colonised, when he was asked by Italian authorities to act as a translator in their negotiations with Ethiopian rebels after the invasion of Ethiopia in 1937. He describes the task as "come un'ammissione implicita dell'identità italiana da parte della più alta istituzione" (p.80) for his grandfather, however

ultimately Vittorio's involvement with the Italian authorities led to his murder just over a decade later, by terrorists who targeted Italian-Eritreans living in the former colony as they were still viewed as a connection to Italian colonisers. Longhi describes the negativity towards Afro-Italians in Eritrea in the years following the end of Italian colonial rule:

In Eritrea quel moto di rivolta non risparmiava i meticci. Il sospetto verso i *deqalà*, per la loro lealtà nei confronti degli italiani, aveva accompagnato i tanti anni del colonialismo come un fastidioso rumore di sottofondo che impedisce il sonno. Nel ventennio fascista l'ostilità si era estesa, ramificata e rinsaldata in modo vigoroso. (pp.89-90)

By showing how his family history is entangled within the history of the Italian nation, Longhi's text highlights just how significant an impact Italy's colonial past has had on Italian national identity on both a personal and national level, and emphasises the importance of re-examining this history in order to better understand Italian identity and society today.

Similarly, Melandri's *Sangue giusto* "confronts us with the unanticipated proximity of the colonial world" (Fotheringham, 2019, p.61) as she uses representations of Italian colonialism to educate the reader on lesser-known aspects of Italy's colonial past. However, since Melandri's text is fictional as opposed to Longhi's biographical account of his family's experiences, she can emphasise certain aspects more purposefully, given that she can pick and choose what kind of colonial experiences her characters have in the novel. With this in mind, it is interesting to note that *Sangue giusto* focuses on particularly controversial aspects of Italy's involvement in Africa, such as the use of mustard gas during the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, Fascist anthropologist Lidio Cipriani's studies of black Africans in the colonies, and the censorship of information being sent by colonial soldiers back to Italy after the war.<sup>14</sup> All of these aspects of Italian colonialism have been consciously foregrounded by Melandri within the text, as she uses the character of Attilio (senior) to unearth colonial violence that has largely been forgotten by the Italian public today. For example, Attilio is a member of the

---

<sup>14</sup> The issue of censorship within the novel will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.



*camicie nere* during the invasion of Ethiopia, and while he is unaware of the use of mustard gas by the Italians, his presence there allows Melandri to reveal the truth about the attacks to the reader:

Né Attilio, né gli altri soldati, né in generale il popolo italiano, sapevano il perché di questi improvvisi successi militari, in una campagna che fino ad allora aveva arrancato così tanto che il morale dei generali cominciava a essere cupamente lambito dall'ombra della sconfitta di Adua. Non avevano letto il messaggio del Duce riservato a Badoglio: "AutorizzoVi all'impiego, anche su vasta scala, di qualunque gas e lanciafiamme." C'era proprio scritto così: "qualunque". [...] E pazienza se la Società delle nazioni aveva stabilito che no, far annegare la gente nel proprio sangue mentre i polmoni escono dalle narici e la pelle scoppia, come era successo ai soldati a Ypres, non era più ammesso come modo di uccidere, nemmeno in guerra. Mussolini aveva scrollato le spalle dicendo una volta di più: "Me ne frego." E i piloti italiani erano decollati con il loro carico chimico, anche se di nascosto. Nessuno quindi – Attilio, truppa, popolo italiano – era a conoscenza di quel telegramma a Badoglio. Tutti però ne vedevano i risultati (p.309).

Additionally, Attilio assists Cipriani during his anthropological studies of Ethiopians, which Cipriani used as 'evidence' to try and justify his belief in racial superiority, allowing Melandri to highlight the widespread racist beliefs of the time. In fact, Melandri suggests Attilio is a kind of 'perfect specimen' of Italianness from Cipriani's perspective, describing him as "la conferma vivente, l'incarnazione si poteva dire, di quel razzismo scientifico a cui Cipriani aveva dedicato anni di lavoro sul campo" (p.267). Furthermore, when describing the presentation of Cipriani's research to the public, Melandri blends her fictional characters with real historical events to position Attilio as exactly that, the 'perfect specimen' of an Italian man:

Solo da vicino ci si rendeva conto che quelli non erano macabri souvenir bellici bensì maschere facciali in gesso, raccolte sul campo da Cipriani. Erano l'orgoglio della sua collezione. Le aveva ordinate per colore di pelle, dalla più scura alla più chiara, dai tratti più camusi e schiacciati fino a un volto da statua greca, in un crescendo esibito di pallore e quindi, come dichiaravano le didascalie, di "avvenenza e civiltà". Dai baria e i cunama agli amhara passando per i galla e i sidamo si arrivava alla perfezione del tipo italiano. Anche quest'ultimo aveva le palpebre chiuse a guisa di maschera funerale, e il colore degli occhi non era evidenziato. Ma la fronte alta, il naso dritto e le labbra ben disegnate erano quelli di una persona precisa: Attilio Profeti (p.269).

Therefore, through the character of Attilio and his involvement in Italian colonialism, Melandri draws attention to some of the most shocking, but also least acknowledged, aspects of Italy's colonial past.

Furthermore, the reader does not find out the true extent of Attilio's involvement until just over halfway through the novel, although it is hinted at throughout. The chapters that recount the story of his life are in reverse-chronological order, with the reader learning about his death straight

away in the opening of the novel, to then Attilio finding out about the death of his secret son in Ethiopia in the 1990s, and continuing backwards until finally the extent of his involvement in Italy's colonial project and the childhood that lead him to joining the *camicie nere*, are revealed in chapters eighteen and twenty. By structuring Attilio's story like this, the reader finds out information in the same way that Ilaria does; as she digs further into her father's past, the more she learns, and the more is revealed to the reader. This is interesting given the perspective from which Ilaria learns about the colonial past, as an Italian living in Rome whose family participated in Fascist-era colonialism. The novel "dramatizes how she becomes conscious that the co-ordinates of her identity stretch far beyond national confines and far beyond the notion of history to which she had become accustomed" (Burdett, 2019, p.61), mirroring Melandri's desired journey for Italy as a nation, to gradually become more aware of its colonial history and how it still influences societal issues today.

Finally, in *Adua* the reader encounters Italian colonialism mainly from Zoppe's perspective when he is forced to work as a translator for the Fascist Count Anselmi in East Africa during the height of Italy's colonial expansion in the region. While in Eritrea, he is tasked with translating a crucial encounter between Count Anselmi and Ethiopian dignitaries, in which they pledge their support for Italy's upcoming invasion and attack on Hailé Selassié's regime in Ethiopia, which results in the suffering and deaths of thousands of East Africans at the hands of Italian colonial soldiers:

L'italiano del conte, un tempo leggiadro, si era trasformato in un urlo primordiale. Anche le sue mani, un tempo eleganti, erano le zampe di un facocero in calore. Zoppe in mezzo a loro si sentì solo. Attraversato dalle frecce avvelenate del tradimento. Ogni parola lo feriva. Ogni gesto lo oltraggiava. Il vecchio stava offrendo all'Italia il suo appoggio per la guerra futura. Avrebbe fornito armi, uomini, ristoro, approvvigionamenti. Prometteva di uccidere l'imperatore Hailé Selassié in persona, se necessario. Il vecchio stava firmando con l'Italia un patto di sangue, di non ritorno. E lui, Zoppe, lo stava traducendo (p.165).

As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, this experience leads him to harbour an enormous amount of guilt and shame as he feels he has betrayed his own people. Consequently, his shame is ultimately inherited by his daughter, something which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter. Scego's decision to use Zoppe's perspective to present Italian colonialism to the reader highlights the experiences of those who suffered at the hands of Italian colonisers, and how this

impacts future generations, as well as showcasing an underrepresented perspective of Italy's colonial past.

Moreover, Scego uses the character of Count Anselmi to showcase some of the attitudes that fuelled Italy's colonial ambitions, similarly to Longhi as discussed previously. However, while Longhi's approach reads more like a history textbook, the inclusion of the Count as a character allows Scego to bring these attitudes to life for the reader and arguably makes for a more impactful result. For example, the Count treats Zoppe as inherently below him, and taunts Zoppe with racist jokes for his own amusement:

“Sai danzare?” chiese il Conte accennando un *pas de deux*. “Ah, che sciocco, praticherai le danze selvagge dei tuoi luoghi.” C'era nelle sue parole un misto di arroganza e lussuria. “Quei balli dove siete nudi e agitati. Come bisce, per intendersi.” (p.87)

In another instance, the Count racially taunts Zoppe yet again, this time with the help of a French hotel owner:

“Bello il vostro servo,” disse il francese “è la prima volta che vedo un negro, uno di questi somali, con un turbante blu.” “I negri sono stravaganti, non lo sapeva?” replicò il conte Anselmi facendo un occholino d'intesa al francese. I due europei risero. Zoppe ne fu umiliato. (p.96)

In both of these examples, Scego uses the Count to expose the racist beliefs of the vast majority of high-profile Italian colonisers, emphasising that Italy's endeavours in the colonies were fuelled by racist propaganda. Therefore, the fact that this racism resulted in Zoppe's daughter inheriting generational trauma due to her father's experiences, only emphasises the fact that colonial-era suffering can still be felt decades after the official end of colonial rule.

#### The Afro-Italian 'Return'

In contrast to the violent and invasive nature of the Italian colonisers' arrival in Africa, *Il colore del nome*, and *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna* both depict twenty-first century Afro-Italians

‘returning’<sup>15</sup> to former Italian colonies in Africa to learn more about the personal and national histories left behind there. Although Pesarini’s text focuses on the story of Italo-Eritrean Maddalena, a young girl growing up in a Catholic orphanage for mixed-race children in Asmara, the opening paragraphs describe the unnamed narrator’s journey from Italy to Eritrea to undertake research into the archives within which Maddalena’s story is found. Pesarini admits that while she changed some names and dates, and created a fictional ending, “the documents used in the story are almost verbatim transcriptions” of “real archival sources” (Bonifazio and Pesarini, 2021, p.62) she found during her doctoral research into the identities of black ‘mixed-race’ Italian women, indicating an autobiographical element to the narrator’s character. Pesarini has explained: “I wanted to be a bridge between the reader and Maddalena. That’s why there is very little information about the researcher in the story. It was about her and her life, and I wanted the reader to get to know her without my intervention” (2021, p.64). Likewise, in this opening section, the narrator describes her motivation for travelling to Asmara:

voleva capire quel legame tra Africa e Italia seguendo le storie di chi, quella Storia, l’aveva vissuta sulla propria pelle, letteralmente. Le storie di bambine e bambini nati da una ‘impresa coloniale’, in un crocevia di razza e identità, in cui il sangue non era acqua (p.42).

During an interview about *Future*, Pesarini spoke about her own struggles reckoning with her identity as a black Italian, explaining that growing up her parents never told her much about her African roots, which she then discovered for herself in adulthood: “I managed to go to Eritrea for the first time as an adult, and when I went there many things suddenly made sense to me. It was really a very important journey” (The African Italian Female Voice, 2020, 0:16:27-0:16:34).

Similarly, *Il colore del nome* culminates with Longhi’s own trip to Eritrea to visit some of his African relatives for the first time. He writes of the encounter:

Sembrano meravigliati di avere qui un italiano, un europeo venuto a scavare, a indagare, a ricomporre i tasselli di un’origine dispersa. Li sorprende che io vada cercando questa identità, caparbio come un raddomante cerca l’acqua. Solo questa terra, ora capisco, può esserne la sorgente.” (p.187)

---

<sup>15</sup> I refer to ‘returning’ here in inverted commas, because both Longhi and Pesarini were born in Italy, thus their ‘return’ to Africa is more symbolic in terms of their family heritage rather than a physical return to their places of birth.

Longhi highlights his personal journey of identity (re)discovery, emphasising the importance of a physical ‘return’ to Eritrea as well as a symbolic one. In the last few pages of the text, when contemplating what to say to his friends in Brussels about his experience in Eritrea, he further highlights the significance of the physical journey as an essential component alongside an internal one:

Se senti che qui sta una parte delle tue radici, se l’Africa ti scorre nelle vene non bastano i dibattiti accademici [...] Devi venire qui, ascoltare in silenzio le preghiere di questi ragazzi al mondo indifferente, sentire la paura degli uomini umiliati dalla violenza della dittatura, unirti al pianto delle madri per i figli scomparsi nelle carceri segrete, divorati dal deserto o dal mare. (p.211)

Pesarini also stresses a ‘return’ to Africa as essential to her understanding of and reckoning with her identity as Afro-Italian. Her text emphasises the importance of uncovering previously forgotten colonial archives and investigating lived experiences of Italian colonialism to better understand the history of not only her family, but also countless others, as shown through the decision to feature Maddalena’s story instead of that of her own family. Like Pesarini, Longhi also makes a point of bringing previously silenced women’s voices to the forefront of his text. Although he makes the journey to Eritrea himself, he is encouraged by his correspondances with his cousin Aida, “una donna eritrea che non conosceva[a]” as he refers to her in the prologue (p.10), who he credits with kick-starting his renewed interest in uncovering the mystery behind his father’s Eritrean ancestry.<sup>16</sup>

### Africa in Italy

After discussing the texts’ representations of Italy’s past and present involvement in Africa, this project will now move on to explore the presence of Africa in Italy within the texts. Firstly, Ouedraogo’s *Nassan tenga* explores the experiences of racism in Italy from the perspective of young Afro-Italians, highlighting the need to speak up about these experiences as a collective in order

---

<sup>16</sup> This will be addressed in more detail in the final chapter.

to make their voices heard and provoke change. The text opens with Ouedraogo using her own family to illustrate the extent to which racism is prevalent in twenty-first century Italian society:

Papà e io siamo nati in Burkina e in Italia abbiamo scoperto di essere neri, come tanti altri. Mathys invece è stato molto più fortunato di noi due: è nato in Italia, e lo ha scoperto quasi subito di essere nero. Negro di merda a papà per la prima volta è toccato a trent'anni, Sporca negra a me a undici anni [...] A Mathys invece Negro, e poi Negro scemo, e poi Negro brutto, lo hanno detto per la prima volta i suoi compagni di classe in prima elementare, a sei anni. (p.57)

In these opening lines, Ouedraogo highlights the racism black Italians face daily, which only becomes more entrenched in the lives of Afro-Italians as the generations continue. She highlights that while she and her parents experienced racial discrimination for the first time upon their arrival in Italy, her brother Mathys was *born* into a state of 'Otherness' in which Italian society categorises anyone who doesn't fit into the perceived 'whiteness' of Italian national identity. This links back to colonial-era racialisation of the 'Other', which "still permeate[s] the cultural representations of the Other" today (Ponzanesi, 2016, p.374). Therefore, she makes it clear that the experiences of second and third-generation Afro-Italians differ substantially from those of their parents and grandparents, who were the ones to initially make the decision to leave their homes in search of a 'better' life in Europe.

Ouedraogo highlights differing attitudes towards memory and time to express these differences in experience between generations. For example, she explains that her father, who migrated to Italy alone before being joined by the rest of his family, refuses to talk about his own recent past experiences in Europe before his family's arrival, however he will happily recount his distant past memories of life in Burkina Faso before his daughter's birth:

Del suo passato remoto abbiamo qualche fotografia, perfetta e intatta come quelle fragole geneticamente modificate da discount di qualità. Del suo passato prossimo, coventrizzato, non esistono tracce (p.58).

Furthermore, Ouedraogo describes arriving in Italy with her mother to reunite with her father, at a time when she didn't speak Italian, so her father would avoid translating anything racist or misogynistic to try and protect them and their view of Italy, which had been based on an idealistic

perception of the country without the knowledge of just how much the colour of their skin would impact their experience within it. She explains:

Papà si è abituato a silenziare l'odio per proteggerci, così come si è abituato a mettere sottovuoto i suoi ricordi per nutrire le sue illusioni. Del suo passato so poco, fortunatamente il suo presente lo conosco perché è il mio stesso presente, anche se lo viviamo in modi totalmente diversi (p.61).

While she and her father both live in the same physical present, they experience that present very differently as a result of their past experiences. It is apparent from her father's reluctance to talk about his early, and presumably very difficult, experiences in Italy, and his attempts to shield his family from the racism he now has to deal with every day, that it is difficult for him to come to terms with the less than desirable outcome of his decision to leave his home country for "l'Europa della televisione," as Ouedraogo describes her family's idealised perception of Italy before experiencing it for themselves (p.60). However, while the present experience of her father is arguably preoccupied with memories of the past, Ouedraogo's experience largely revolves around worries for the future. She writes of feeling the need to always be saving money, fuelled by the constant fear that one day one of her family members will pass away and they will not be able to afford to send the body back home for a proper burial:

C'è chi risparmia per approdare a Lampedusa e chi lo fa pur di fare il viaggio in senso inverso perché il proprio corpo possa essere divorato dalla terra argillosa e rossa del proprio villaggio. Questi sono i pensieri, maligni come un irrefrenabile tumore al seno, in cui mi perdo mentre servo il gelato o mentre resto in apnea pulendo i cessi. Spero solo di riuscire a mettere da parte ciò che servirà perché il corpo, morto, mio, di mamma, di papà, o anche di Mathys stesso possa tornare in Burkina, per poter essere sepolti semplicemente come persone e non come negri di merda, o ancora come migranti, rifugiati, profughi, africani, irregolari (p.62).

As well as the uncertainty of being able to afford a proper burial for their loved ones and for themselves, another underrepresented experience of young Afro-Italians highlighted by Ouedraogo is the complicated relationship with their parents already hinted at in the previous extracts. She explains the difficulties faced by children of migrants like herself, whose parents had sacrificed everything to give them a better life in Europe, and yet this 'better' life is ultimately an illusion crushed by the deep-rooted racism still left over from the colonial period:

Dovevamo accontentarci e ringraziarli all'infinito per aver sacrificato tutto. Per portarci in Italia. E continuavano ad ammazzarsi giorno e notte per dare a noi quello che loro nemmeno si sarebbero sognati. Tutto questo non era falso, ma noi non avevamo chiesto nulla [...] E in fin dei conti non potevano proprio concepire che ci potessimo lamentare, che potessimo soffrire, perché a soffrire per primi erano loro che avevano tutta l'Africa sulle spalle, oltre a noi, figli ingrati. Non lo capivano che noi non volevamo competere con la loro sofferenza. Vederci soffrire sarebbe stata l'ennesima prova del loro fallimento. [...] Non potevano sopportare che, nonostante avessero sputato le loro interiora per non avere quasi niente, anche i figli fallissero (pp.65-66).

Here Ouedraogo implies that not only does racism in Italy affect individuals personally, but it also damages relationships between young Afro-Italians and their migrant parents. All generations of black Italians suffer as a result of postcolonial racism, however the differences in how different generations experience this suffering is what Ouedraogo suggests often leads to feelings of resentment and anger that can have a negative effect on family relationships.

However, despite this negativity, Ouedraogo ends her text with a more hopeful, positive outlook on the future. After explaining that neither their parents nor the Italian education system are useful in helping young black Italians to combat racism within Italian society, she highlights the determination of a new generation of Afro-Italians to have their own voices heard and make their mark on Italian society and culture.<sup>17</sup> She writes:

volevamo marcare la nostra presenza in televisione, alla radio, nell'università come studiosi del Paradiso dantesco e del razzismo, perché per noi non erano intenzioni dicotomiche, ma rispecchiavano la nostra pluralità identitaria e culturale (pp.70-71).

By referencing Dante alongside racism, Ouedraogo emphasises the duality of the identity of this new generation of Afro-Italians. She also highlights the two sides of Italian identity itself: a country with a renowned artistic and cultural heritage, as well as a nation whose identity is haunted by its colonial history, a history now “embodied by the black Italian, a real presence that is increasingly difficult to ignore” (Virga, 2019, p.111).

---

<sup>17</sup> This idea will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.



Ouedraogo continues by highlighting the hopes and desires of this new generation, who are determined not to follow in their parents footsteps by becoming victims of the toxic duality of Italian national identity:

Noi, in Italia, volevamo lavorare, sognare, comprare delle case e fondare delle famiglie. Volevamo usare tutti i modi e i tempi verbali come e quando ci pareva, senza limitarci al presente com'era successo a quelli primi di noi. Tutto questo esigeva da noi un'attenzione seria e costante alla nostra salute mentale. I nostri genitori avevano negato che l'essere nero in una società razzista e razzializzante compromettesse il nostro equilibrio psicofisico e avevano ignorato la depressione, l'ansia e lo stress da trauma, le idee suicide. E noi dovevamo ribaltare l'ordine delle cose (p.71).

Here Ouedraogo makes reference to a line from the start of the text, in which she explains that “per Mathys, me e papà, non c'è né passato né futuro: per noi solo il presente, l'emergenza del momento chi si spera non lasci tracce [...] Noi tre siamo l'eterna emergenza: siamo minoranza [...] il popolo degli alieni” (p.58). With this statement, she highlights that being black in Italy means constantly being seen as an outsider, a temporary visitor who has no past or future in Italy. Therefore, by reversing this later in her text and showcasing the desire to be able to use all the verb tenses freely, she emphasises the desire of young Afro-Italians like herself to have both their Italianness and their blackness equally acknowledged and valued within Italian society.

On the other hand, although Scego's Somali protagonist in *Adua* moves to Italy in the 1970s, several decades after the end of Italian colonial rule, how she is treated in Italy mirrors the treatment of many African women at the hands of Italian colonisers in the past. Adua moves to Rome as a teenager with the promise of becoming a film star, however she ends up being sexually exploited on and off screen, her body exoticised by the Italian filmmakers.<sup>18</sup> When contemplating her situation after being taken to director Arturo's house and being fed lots of alcohol, she remembers something that a friend had told her, warning her about how the Italians would inevitably treat her:

Sapevo che miravano al mio corpo. Non ero così ingenua. Sapevo che prima o poi avrei dovuto pagare quella tassa. Un'amica mi aveva preavvertito. “Ti chiederanno il tuo corpo. Gli italiani con mia nonna hanno fatto così. Non credo che questi siano così diversi, sai?” (p.122)

---

<sup>18</sup> This scene will be discussed in more detail in the final chapter.

Here it is implied that Adua's friend's grandmother, who would have been a young woman during the colonial period, was sexually exploited by Italian colonisers, suggesting that attitudes of many Italians towards black women had not changed much since then, indicating that colonial beliefs regarding racial superiority were still prevalent in Italy decades later. The commodification and exotification of the black female body is also referenced in the previous chapter, when Count Anselmi is advising Zoppe about what to do with his day off in Ethiopia. The Count tells him, "i bisogni corporali vanno assecondati. Queste piccole etiopi sono come il buon vino delle colline, basta mezzo fiaschetto per star bene per i dieci anni successivi" (p.110). In this way, Scego highlights the connection between the attitudes of Italian colonisers and the attitudes of influential Italians long after the end of colonialism. Adua's body is seen as an exotic 'Other' in Italy, which is a direct result of colonial era beliefs about black African women, who were the "subject/objects through which Italy's particular brand of Orientalism<sup>19</sup> unabashedly expressed fantasies of domination of the racialised 'Other'" (Iyob, 2008, p.311). Furthermore, colonial era "literature, postcards and cinematography represented the female subject as a sensual animal to be conquered, tamed and used as an adornment to the masculine ego of the coloniser" (Iyob, 2008, p.312). Therefore, the abuse of thousands of African women in the Italian colonies can be seen mirrored in the text through the abuse of Adua and her body. By bringing this abuse into a modern Italian context, situating the violence in Rome rather than in Somalia where Adua was born, Scego arguably makes it more impactful and thought-provoking to an Italian reader, as they are forced to confront the fact that colonial attitudes and violence remain prevalent in Italy.

In *Il colore del nome*, the presence of Africa in Italy is more symbolic rather than physical. As an Afro-Italian, Longhi himself is a personification of Africa in Italy, given that his identity is a mix of both Italian and African heritage and culture. However, the text itself represents Longhi's

---

<sup>19</sup> See Said, 1978.

journey to becoming developing his hybrid identity, since it is evident that it was something he had to discover about himself over a long time, instead of simply growing up embracing both aspects of his identity. With this in mind, *Il colore del nome* exemplifies the influence of Africa on changing ideas of Italian identity today. As the text unfolds, Longhi realises that he can be both African and Italian, both black and Italian, connected to and identifying with both a former coloniser and its colonised victims. Like other Afro-Italian writers, Longhi ultimately finds the “freedom of being plural” through the writing process (Marzagora, 2015, p.222). However, Longhi also presents grappling with these two sides of himself as confusing and difficult to comprehend, as he compares his privileged life in Europe with the difficulties faced by his Eritrean relatives:

Mi si affollano in testa ragionamenti confusi sui monumenti delle capitali europee e le pianure africane, sull'allegria ferocia dei militari italiani e l'innocenza delle ragazze abissine, sulla vita tranquilla dei miei cugini in Umbria e quella tormentata degli eritrei sparsi per il mondo, in fuga come Aida, mia cugina anche lei (p.55).

Ultimately, the presence of Africa in his life pushes Longhi to re-examine his relationship with his identity, his family, and his home country. Within the text, the African presence is represented by Aida's emails, which then lead to Longhi discovering more and more about his African ancestry, culminating in him transforming into his own African presence within the Italian cultural sphere, in the form of writing the text.

Longhi's struggle to embrace his hybrid identity can also be seen mirrored in some ways by similar identity struggles of his grandfather Vittorio. For example, as mentioned earlier, Vittorio's position as caught between coloniser and colonised caused him significant problems throughout his life, ultimately leading to his early death. Longhi describes how while his grandfather was imprisoned by Ethiopian rebels in the mid-1930s due to his collaboration with the Italians, he was treated more harshly because he was Italian-Eritrean. Here Longhi speculates on his grandfather's identity struggles, similar to his own but with much more at stake:

Era la concretizzazione di un incubo antico e profondo, di una paura che lo seguiva fin dalla nascita come un'ombra. Ora veniva processato per l'origine mista, che nella guerra tra italiani ed etiopi diventava una colpa impossibile da confutare, un reato per cui non c'era difesa né appello (p.81).

In the grandfather's case, he is aware of his hybrid identity, however he sees it for both the opportunity it brings (in hopefully being able to follow in his father's footsteps and leave Eritrea for a new life in Italy) as well as the danger it poses. Unfortunately for Vittorio, his duality tragically results in his murder, despite his death certificate bearing no mention of his Italian heritage, instead reading "Nome del padre: N.N.<sup>20</sup>" (p.92).

#### Migration and Citizenship Struggles

With his grandfather's status in mind, hybrid Italian-Eritrean identity is also discussed by Longhi on a more practical level, in terms of his ancestors' struggles to gain Italian citizenship. As Camilla Hawthorne argues, "the question of citizenship has re-emerged as one of the key terrains of struggle over the boundaries of race and nation in contemporary Italy, and this question is frequently framed as a referendum on Italy's relationship to the African continent" (2021, p.180). The issue of citizenship has been widely debated in Italy, with children of African immigrants born in Italy having campaigned for over a decade for a reform of the restrictive *jus sanguinis* citizenship policy (De Franceschi, 2018) which often makes it difficult for Afro-Italians born to foreign parents to gain Italian citizenship, even if they were born and raised in Italy (Ben-Ghiat, 2008, p.267). Both Longhi's and Pesarini's texts focus on the experiences of Italian-Eritreans, and their struggles gaining recognition as Italian citizens during the colonial period and beyond. In chapter five of *Il colore del nome*, Longhi explains the situation of those born to Eritrean mothers and Italian fathers during the mid-1930s:

Dopo anni di approssimazione sulla questione della cittadinanza, le nuove leggi del governo fascista definivano in modo sempre più netto l'identità dei sudditi in Africa Orientale. [...] Ottenere quel riconoscimento significava moltissimo per loro, per le ragazze e per i ragazzi giunti a diciotto anni e cresciuti dalle madri sole o lasciati ai religiosi, agli "istituti per l'infanzia abbandonata." [...] Dal 1933 potevano chiedere la cittadinanza i figli di padri italiano, anche se ignoto, ma solo con alcuni requisiti: "la maggiore età, un'educazione perfettamente italiana, caratteri somatici e indizi che facciano ritenere il padre di razza bianca." [...] I meticci con le carte in regola per la cittadinanza erano pochi e la discrezionalità dei burocrati era totale. "Questa legge è un inganno," lamentavano molti italoeritrei, "non è

---

<sup>20</sup> From the latin 'nescio nomen' signifying an unknown name - Longhi explains this himself on p.42 (this will be discussed further in the following chapter).

fatta per includerci ma per separarci ancora di più, per segregarci in modo legale, dunque inoppugnabile, definitivo.” (p.74)

Longhi exposes the corrupt, racist citizenship policy implemented by the Italians in Eritrea during the 1930s. This only intensified in 1940, when the Fascist government enacted the following rules, as described by Longhi in the text and which his own grandfather ultimately fell victim to:

“Articolo 3: Il meticcio non può essere riconosciuto dal genitore cittadino. Articolo 4: Al meticcio non può essere attribuito il cognome del genitore cittadino. Articolo 5: Il mantenimento, l’educazione e l’istruzione del meticcio sono a totale ed esclusivo carico del genitore nativo.” Erano questi i primi articoli della legge più razzista di tutte, la legge del 13 maggio 1940, e punivano in modo netto il crimine della mescolanza. [...] Con quella legge si metteva in discussione la loro stessa legittimità, quasi non avessero più il diritto di essere quello che erano sempre stati, il punto di contatto tra i due popoli, tra le due culture. (pp.84-85)

However, the high number of Afro-Italian children abandoned by their Italian fathers in the colonies even before the introduction of the above laws “shows that a hierarchical separation of citizens and subjects based on supposed racial differences was in place as a form of widely shared common sense and daily practice in the Italian colonial territory” (Sòrgoni, 2008, p.307), which can be seen in *Il colore del nome* through Giacomo’s abandoning of his son years before these laws were introduced. Therefore, the struggle to gain Italian citizenship for Italian-Eritreans like Vittorio was not just down to the restrictiveness of racial laws enacted by Mussolini’s government, but also given that the laws contributed to “a sense of italianità defined in relation to the Other – now the colonial body – who was darker, less civilised, and ultimately inferior” (Virga, 2019, p.105). Consequently, his own father was unable to view him as ‘worthy’ of Italian citizenship due to him being ‘mixed-race.’

Pesarini also sheds light on the colonial-era struggles of Italian-Eritrean children to gain recognition from their Italian fathers. She tells the story of Maddalena, a teenage girl living with her brother in a Catholic orphanage for abandoned ‘mixed-race’ children in Eritrea, through a series of letters on her behalf. Unlike Longhi’s grandfather, Maddalena was one of the many unfortunate Italian-Eritrean children whose mother was no longer able to look after them. In fact, as Pesarini describes in the text, this situation became so common at the time that “il governo coloniale decise di finanziare istituzioni *ad hoc* per nascondere la 'vergogna' di questi piccoli italiani neri, abbandonati

dai propri padri italiani: brefotrofi, noti come collegi, gestiti da missionari cattolici” (p.42). However, Maddalena’s case seems confusing to Pesarini’s narrator, as the initial letters from 1931 indicate that Maddalena’s father “inizialmente aveva confermato la propria paternità pagando anche, a differenza di molti altri, le rette mensili del collegio per poi scomparire dichiarandosi un benefattore” (p.45), declaring that he “non intende riconoscere come sua la meticcia Maddalena” (p.45). However, together with this letter the narrator finds another, dated seven months later, that was addressed from their father in British Somaliland directly to Maddalena and her brother. In this letter, the father apologises for how he treated them previously, asking them to contact him as soon as possible so that he can continue to provide for them, explaining his absence vaguely by saying: “mi hanno obbligato a mantenere il silenzio, fino a questo momento, in cui posso ritornare nelle vostre vite” (p.46). However, the narrator discovers that unbeknownst to him, the letter “era stata sequestrata dal Vicariato e mai recapitata ai due giovani” (p.45), leading to Maddalena ultimately being expelled from the institute a year later due to continued attempts to escape in search of her father. The final letter explaining her expulsion ends with the line: “Non s’intravede speranza alcuna per il futuro di detta fanciulla” (p.47).

Maddalena’s story therefore highlights the suffering of Italian-Eritrean children caused by the racist attitudes of the Fascist colonial project. Despite the whole saga taking place before the official introduction of the restrictive citizenship laws surrounding the recognition of ‘mixed-race’ children in the colonies as detailed above, the father’s initial behaviour and subsequent letter sent from British-controlled Somalia rather than an Italian-controlled region, shows the recognition of Afro-Italian children by their Italian fathers was still a controversial and potentially dangerous situation. Inter-racial relationships in the colonies were “tolerated provided that it was not openly acknowledged,” leading to the majority deciding not to “legitimise their so-called ‘mixed-race’ offspring despite the fact that the law consented to it” (Sòrgoni, 2008, p.307). Therefore, the fact that Maddalena ends up alone without the support of the institute or her father, despite his best efforts to re-establish contact with her, emphasises the suffering and trauma endured at the hands of the Italian colonial authorities, not just by abandoned children like Maddalena, but also by those Italian colonial

soldiers who did want to provide for and have a relationship with their African children. However, as Luraschi points out:

Native women and their children are the ones who suffered most from Italian colonialism. These people's sorrow is in their bodies: in the bodies of women violated in their rights, in the bodies of mixed race children deprived of fathers and of a community. Once again in the history of Africa, the bodies of black colonised women have been used by white colonised men (2009, p.70).

Moving on from citizenship struggles to a broader discussion of migration, in *Sangue giusto*, Melandri describes Shimeta's two-year ordeal fleeing from persecution in Ethiopia, his sights set on finding his Italian relatives in Rome. In chapter two, she details how Shimeta's family pay for him to be smuggled across the desert and into Libya, where he is later taken prisoner in a detention centre with other African migrants. There he meets Tesfalem, an Eritrean military deserter who tells Shimeta of his previous horrific experience as a prisoner on the island of Nokhra<sup>21</sup>, the site of a prison built by Italian colonisers a century earlier. His account highlights the extent to which the legacy of Italian colonialism is still felt in the former colonies decades after it officially ended:

Tesfalem raccontò al ragazzo che una volta lo avevano messo sdraiato bocconi, le mani e i piedi legati dietro la schiena. Lo avevano tenuto così per due settimane, poteva alzarsi solo una volta al giorno per mangiare e andare alla latrina. *Elicotero*, si chiamava questa posizione. Poi c'erano il *Gesucristo*, l'*otto*, il *ferro*, la *gomma*, tutte affidabili tecniche di tortura eredità dei tempi coloniali. (p.42)

The 'inheritance' of torture techniques used by Italian colonisers and the subsequent use of these techniques against African migrants in the twenty-first century emphasises the complex link between Italian colonial history and migration within the Mediterranean today. For writers like Melandri, "a historical injustice (colonial oppression) and a historiographical injustice (the cancellation of colonial oppression from collective memory) add to the contemporary socio-political injustices in the condition of migrants" (Marzagora, 2015, p.216).

This link is further exemplified within Melandri's text as Shimeta's migration experience is clearly intertwined with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's relationship with Libyan leader

---

<sup>21</sup> This island prison is also referenced by Longhi when talking about Giacomo's arrival in Africa. He describes it as "l'isola da cui nessuno poteva fuggire" (2021, p.35).

Muammar Gaddafi. At the end of the chapter Shimeta is finally freed by his Libyan captors, which Melandri implies is a direct consequence of the Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya, signed in August 2008 in an attempt to close disputes related to Italian colonialism (Ronzitti, 2009). She writes:

Intanto dall'altra parte di Tripoli, nello stesso istante in cui il ragazzo strizzava gli occhi per la troppa luce, ai piedi della scaletta di un aereo appena atterrato da Roma, il neorieletto primo ministro italiano stava sfiorando con le labbra la mano di Muhammad Gheddafi. [...] Il ragazzo nulla sapeva di questa visita; Silvio Berlusconi nulla sapeva dell'esistenza del ragazzo né mai l'avrebbe considerata. Eppure, l'inaspettata liberazione dell'uno era stata causata proprio dalla venuta a Tripoli, per firmare l'accordo dal poetico nome di *Trattato di amicizia, partenariato e cooperazione*, dell'altro (p.67).

Amongst other things, the treaty implemented a more stringent policy of immigration control between the two nations; this included the provision of Italian patrol boats across the Libyan coast, as well as the joint Italian-EU funded policing of Libyan land borders via a satellite detection system (Ronzitti, 2009, p.130). Melandri goes on to explain how the agreement directly impacts Shimeta's journey:

La storica firma tra gli ex occupanti e l'ex Colonia portò in Libia un buon numero di giornalisti, non solo italiani. Certi chiesero di verificare le condizioni dei Centri di detenzione per gli immigrati - come quello dov'era stato il ragazzo. [...] Il colonnello Muhammad Gheddafi non desiderava che fossero scritti articoli su quanti uomini si possono pigiare in uno stanzone [...] Ecco come mai quel giorno aveva ordinato alle guardie di aprire le porte e lasciarli tutti andare (p.68).

By choosing to highlight the direct link between postcolonial Italian-Libyan relations and Shimeta's experience as an Ethiopian migrant crossing the Mediterranean, Melandri draws attention to the "shamelessness of the Italian state regarding its colonial past [which] is brought into sharp focus by the contemporary Mediterranean situation," an idea which Scego also points to in *Adua* (Rand, 2020, p.13). Scego's depiction of Adua's relationship with her husband Ahmed, who is described as "ragazzino," "un Titanic, uno sbarcato a Lampedusa, un balordo" (Scego, 2015, p.28), exemplifies the "persistent social injustice between Fortress Europe and Africa" (Rand, 2020, pp.13-14), almost as if Adua feels responsible for looking after the young Somali migrant (Rand, 2020, p.14), which is highlighted in the way Scego describes their relationship as closer to that of mother and son, as opposed to husband and wife:



Ogni sera il mio piccolo uomo si addormenta sul mio seno flaccido come un pupo voglioso di latte. Gli accarezzo la testa e tengo la mia mano dentro la sua chioma. Così non pensa alle crudeli onde del Mar Mediterraneo che stavano per travolgerlo. Non pensa ai tranquillanti che gli hanno messo nelle zuppe insipide del centro di accoglienza. Non pensa alla ragazza che amava, stuprata e uccisa nel deserto dai libici (Scego, 2015, p.30).

In light of this, the responsibility Adua feels towards Ahmed as a Somali migrant herself, given that the Italian state alone would have provided him with little support, shines a light on Italy's "failure to remember and recognise the causal link between the current situation and its colonial past" (Rand, 2020, p.14).

Moreover, as previously discussed, *Sangue giusto* highlights Shimeta's migrant experience as he travels from Ethiopia to Italy. However, once he reaches Italy, he is detained in a facility awaiting expatriation. Chapter Seventeen opens with a description of the detention centre, which is compared to the Libyan prison where he had previously been held:

Eccola ancora qui, il tempo-catrame della reclusione, dei posti dove Dio sta più zitto di un muro; cola vischioso dentro un buco nel petto, lo riempie di nero. Questa però non è la Libia, questa è la civile Italia, Per dormire c'è un intero materasso anche se sporco, non tre mattonelle. [...] I guardiani [...] non entrano nelle stanze perché no, questa non è una prigione. È un *centro*. E il ragazzo, come gli altri insieme a lui, è un *ospite*, non un detenuto. Eppure, proprio come nello stanzone di Tripoli, nessuno sa quando potrà uscire (p.297).

Melandri highlights here that although Shimeta has reached his intended destination, he has survived the treacherous journey and he is now in the country where his great-grandfather was born, he is treated not too differently to when he was held captive in Libya. Therefore, with Shimeta's story, Melandri also draws attention to the complex relationship between migration, citizenship, and race.

### 3. The Importance of Names

Throughout the different texts, names emerge as an important aspect when it comes to the navigation of Afro-Italian identities, particularly given that “identity relies to a great extent on recognition: one is what one is recognised as being by those in the surrounding environment” (Burns, 2013, p.22). This chapter will explore how recognition is established through attitudes towards names, and how some characters use their names to take control of this recognition, thus taking control of their own identities.

#### The Power of Names

“The act of naming is inevitably connected to relations of power” (Chifane, 2017, p.24), and in *Sangue giusto*, names are powerful because they provide a person with privilege and opportunity, particularly regarding citizenship. One example of this is the Italian Judge Carnaroli’s daughter Clara, whose mother is Eritrean. Partly due to good timing and his high-status position in the colonial courts in Asmara, Carnaroli is able to legally recognise his daughter before the recognition of mixed-race children in the Italian colonies was banned in 1940, thus giving her his Italian surname and consequently Italian citizenship. Therefore, Carnaroli decides it would be best for his daughter to go and live with his family in Rome, ensuring that her personal and legal identity as an Italian citizen is cemented. However, in doing so, he chooses to tell Clara that her mother is dead, even though this is not true. His reasoning behind this is as follows:

Le madri di sangue sbagliato non hanno nome quindi sono morte anche da vive. Alla figlia, riconoscendola solo pochi anni prima che farlo diventasse illegale, aveva garantito lo status di cittadina. N.N. invece non l’aveva potuta salvare dagli abissi di una vita da nativa (p.261).

Clara’s mother’s name is not revealed to the reader, instead she is referred to as *N.N.*, signifying that her name is unknown. By doing this, Melandri draws attention to the wilful erasure of Clara’s mother by the Italian state during the colonial era, highlighting how this erasure carries on into the present day as her name is excluded from the Italian collective memory and thus from the text, lost forever as a result of colonial epistemic violence. Given that “the visibility of family connections through a

shared surname[...]carries a wide range of consequences for individual identity” (Finch, 2008, p.718), being legally recognised by her father and carrying his surname not only strengthens Clara’s Italian identity as she is able to move to Rome and grow up in Italy, but it also strips her of her Eritrean identity by silencing the voice of her mother.

*Sangue giusto* also illustrates the power of names through Senay’s decision to use his deceased cousin Shimeta’s name to steal his identity and thus claim the privileges that come with it. He explains the situation to Ilaria and her brother at the end of the novel:

“Shimeta era mio cugino, mia madre Saba e suo padre erano i figli di *ayat* Abeba ma fratelli a metà, come voi due. Il padre di Saba era amhara, quello di Ietmgeta italiano - il vostro. Quello che vi ho raccontato è tutto vero, solo che io ero lui e lui era me.” (p.449)

The power of names thus becomes even clearer as the reader realises that whilst Senay and Shimeta both grew up as part of the same family in the same place at the same time, owing to one of them having an African name (Senay Bantiwalu) and the other having an Italian one (Shimeta Ietmgeta Attilaprofeti), they are presented with very different possibilities in life. Furthermore, Melandri highlights that it is Abeba who gives Senay Shimeta’s documents and tells him to use them to travel to Italy - she even writes that Abeba “lo teneva [il documento di Shimeta] lei sotto il letto per non farglielo confiscare” (p.449). This implies that Abeba recognised the power of having an Italian surname and a document testifying it, and wanted to take advantage of the privileges that it carries, helping to create opportunity for her family’s future that she was unable to enjoy herself. However, it should be noted that when choosing a name for her own son, Shimeta’s father Ietmgeta, Abeba places just as much importance on giving him a powerful Ethiopian first name as she does on giving him an Italian surname after his father. After finding out that Ietmgeta was alive and in prison after having gone missing for several months as a young man, Abeba said to herself:

Ho chiamato mio figlio Ietmgeta che vuol dire 'Sono nobile ovunque'. E infatti è sempre stato nobile in casa di sua madre, è nobile quando cammina per strada, è nobile quando insegna agli studenti. Gabriele Arcangelo, proteggilo mentre è nobile anche in prigione (p.171).

The importance of names for Abeba becomes twofold: on the one hand, she wants her son to have an Italian surname like his father because she knows it carries with it the possibility of a better life, but at the same time she makes a point of giving Ietmgeta a meaningful Ethiopian first name, to ensure his Ethiopian heritage is treasured instead of lost.

Names: Forgotten Histories and Hiding Behind Them

*Il colore del nome* explores the importance of names by drawing attention to the forgotten histories that can lay hidden behind them. During Longhi's visit to Eritrea, which he writes about in the final chapter of the book, he meets his cousin Adhanet, who knew his grandfather Vittorio before he was killed. Together with her son, Adhanet fills him in on the history of his Eritrean family, something that was virtually unknown to him up until this point. He writes of the encounter:

Adhanet e il figlio mi parlano con la confidenza che si riserva quasi a un fratello rientrato dopo una lunga assenza. Raramente provo la stessa sensazione in Italia ormai, anche quando torno da lunghi viaggi. Non è solo la gratificazione di un'accoglienza semplice, con i riti, i colori, il fascino delle differenze e la sorpresa delle somiglianze. È il valore che loro danno a questa discendenza. [...] Questo mio nome, poi, l'importanza che continuano ad attribuirgli. Vedono nella parola un valore a me oscuro. Prescindono dalla sua origine, bianca e coloniale, tutto quello che invece io detesto (p.187).

Although Longhi is essentially a stranger to them, through his name Adhanet and her son recognise him as one of their own, connected and bonded together by blood rather than shared experience. Longhi is welcomed into a family that he had almost no knowledge of all because they share a name, and therefore an unbreakable bond, emphasising how names “can act as a connector which locks an individual into a cross-generational history which stretches into both the past and the future” (Finch, 2008, p.722). The inescapable nature of this bond is hinted at early in the text, when Longhi talks about his identity and how he is viewed as an Afro-Italian living abroad in another European country: “Solo il nome resta italiano, granitico, immutabile. Dal nome non puoi sfuggire, è inciso come un marchio a fuoco sulla pelle, un segno che non hai scelto e che forse neanche vorresti” (p.27).

Furthermore, Longhi implies his Eritrean relatives ‘disregard’ the fact that the name which bonds them together is representative of the racist colonial heritage of his great-grandfather Giacomo, something Longhi himself feels ashamed to be connected to. Earlier in the text, after seeing a photo

of his paternal grandparents for the first time, Longhi reflects on the complex feelings he has towards his own name and what it represents:

Il nome che porto, ecco da dove viene. Ora so che appartiene a uomini di un altro tempo, di un'altra storia. In realtà non ho mai sentito questo nome come se fosse stato pensato per me. [...] Questo nome invece mi sta addosso come una giacca avuta in prestito, un indumento vecchio e polveroso di una, se non due taglie più grandi della mia. Non mi sono mai voluto chiedere davvero da quale oscuro armadio venisse, dove fosse stata cucita e rammendata, indossata, consumata fino a logorare gomiti e polsini, fino a perdere ogni indizio sulla sua origine. Se si tratta di una giacca è la giacca di una divisa. L'uniforme chiara con i bottoni dorati degli italiani che occuparono l'Eritrea, la colonia primogenita. Questo è il colore del mio nome, il colore della divisa: coloniale. [...] In queste due parole dalle iniziali sottili e taglienti, dalle consonanti dure non c'è traccia dello sguardo radioso di mia madre né delle mani forti e rassicuranti dei nonni materni che mi hanno cresciuto. Non c'è l'eco delle voci sincere che mi hanno accompagnato dall'infanzia all'età adulta. C'è tutta la superbia dei militari che sbarcavano tronfi nel porto di Massawa, c'è l'omaggio stolto di Savoia, un promemoria eterno della vergogna dell'8 settembre. Pagine di storia tragiche e penose. Che cosa c'entrano con me, con la mia vita, con le mie scelte? (pp.52-53).

Longhi has always had a complicated relationship with his name, presumably due to his difficult relationship with his father. However, here he also displays a sense of guilt and shame in baring a name that so vividly recalls Italy's past colonial violence, something which at this point in the text Longhi appears to still be mentally distanced from. Furthermore, he also exhibits a frustration with the fact that his name is a tribute to the men in his family who he does not feel proud to be associated with, namely his father and his coloniser great-grandfather, instead of his name paying homage to the women who raised him and contributed positively to his life. His name therefore also plays a role in the silencing of female colonial victims, given that it pays tribute to the colonial powers that silenced them, instead of keeping their memory alive, which is ultimately Longhi's goal in writing the text. With all this combined, it is no surprise that at this stage of the text Longhi feels a deep disconnect with his own name.

In fact, towards the end of the final chapter, Longhi suggests that his name is "inutile," given that inheriting it has done nothing to prevent his family's history from being "sepolta sotto la polvere" (p.216) as a result of colonial violence and Italian postcolonial amnesia. However, on the anniversary of his grandfather's murder, Longhi comes to a realisation about the true importance of his name, in part influenced by the previous encounter he has with Adhanet and her son. The author describes this

epiphany of sorts through the voice of his grandfather speaking to him from beyond the grave, in which he urges him:

“Il nome che porti non è inutile. Non è solamente quello dei padri, dei padri indegni. Non c’è solo la violenza degli invasori, solo quella vergogna. È il nome che hanno voluto le nostre madri e racconta la loro storia, contiene tutto il loro amore. Porta questo nome con orgoglio. Fallo per noi, perché siamo esistiti.” (p.217)

Therefore, Longhi’s name has been the key to his journey to better understanding his own identity as an Italo-Eritrean. Despite its negative connotations, his name is what connects him to women like Adhanet, Aida, and his great-grandmother Gabrù. Through this connection, Longhi is able to uncover the hidden experiences of these women and many more like them, elevating their long-silenced voices and embracing them not only into his own personal history, but also within Italy’s collective historical memory, which will be discussed further in the final chapter.

Moving onto *Adua*, Scego presents her protagonist’s name as a significant part of her identity by highlighting to the reader the story behind it. After her mother dies in childbirth, Adua and her sister live with a non-biological family who name her ‘Habiba,’ a loving term of endearment in Arabic. Adua first meets her biological father Zoppe at the age of seven, when he comes to take her and her sister away to live with him. It is revealed that upon meeting, Zoppe changes Habiba’s name to Adua, a reference to the 1896 Battle of Adwa, a key African victory during the First Italo-Ethiopian War as Zoppe explains:

Dovresti ringraziarmi, ti ho dato il nome della prima vittoria africana contro l'imperialismo. Io, tuo padre, stavo dalla parte giusta. E non devi mai credere il contrario. Io ho fatto solo cose giuste nella vita, unicamente cose giuste[.]Dentro il tuo nome c’è una battaglia, la mia.. (p.49)

This name is significant given the fact that a large part of the novel documents Zoppe’s experience working as a translator for Mussolini’s government in the 1930s, a collaboration which is “an irretrievably high moral price for Zoppe to pay for perceived financial comfort, and it sows the seeds of a shame that he experiences but does not address during his lifetime” (Rand, 2020, p.6). Therefore, Adua’s name change represents her transformation into a “depository for her father’s unresolved shame” in which her body is “moulded into the form of Zoppe’s unrealized need to defeat, as in the

Battle of Adwa, Italian colonialism and the shame of his involvement in it” (Rand, 2020, p.11). With this in mind, Scego presents Adua’s name change as an act of resistance against the colonial forces that Zoppe felt powerless to stand up to himself. Adua’s name is representative of African resistance, power, and pride, and giving his daughter a name with such strong connotations shows Zoppe’s attempts to retaliate against the colonial violence he has experienced and to atone for the guilt he feels for having contributed to it himself by working with the Italian Fascists. However, Adua’s name change is also representative of Zoppe hiding from his past and refusing to face up to the guilt he feels, which explains why his own personal shame ends up being passed down to his daughter. In the novel’s closing scene set in *Piazza dei Cinquecento* in Rome, a significant location due to its memorial to five hundred Italian colonial soldiers, Scego describes a seagull lifting Adua’s turban, something which she had inherited from her father, and flying away with it. In this scene, “Adua takes ownership of her fate, and in doing so symbolically transfers her long-held shame onto the landscape of Rome” (Rand, 2020, p.14), something which Scego also does by writing the text itself. Through writing Adua’s story in relation to the experiences of her father, Scego highlights that the personal ‘shame’ stemming from colonialism should not be harboured by those who are victims of it but should instead be re-examined and re-evaluated by Italian society as a whole. Furthermore, it is significant that Scego chooses to use Adua’s name to title the novel itself, emphasising the extent to which forgotten, repressed histories can be hidden behind a single name.

Djarah Kan’s *Il mio nome* also touches on the importance and hidden meanings behind names. The short story recounts young narrator and protagonist Lisbeth’s first meeting with her Ghanaian aunt, who comes to visit the family living in Italy. During the visit, *la Zia* is shocked when she asks for Lisbeth’s ‘secret name’ and she has no idea what it is. Consequently, throughout the rest of the story *la Zia* teaches Lisbeth the importance of having a ‘secret name’ which connects her to her Ghanaian family and ancestors, allowing her to feel a sense of cultural belonging even when she has grown up and now lives in a different culture altogether. *La Zia* explains:

È il nome che ti permette di stare con la tua famiglia e con i tuoi antenati sempre, ovunque tu vada. Puoi vivere anche alla fine del mondo, da sola e senza nessuno, ma quel nome ti ricorderà sempre da dove puoi arrivare. [...] Non un nome europeo per non dare fastidio ai bianchi quando devono imparare come pronunciare il tuo nome, ma un nome segreto, soltanto tuo, nostro e di nessun altro. Un nome di potere che ti fa guardare avanti, e che tiene insieme tutto. Dio, i tuoi antenati, il tuo futuro (pp.38-39).

This description of the ‘secret name’ links back to Finch’s argument that names can become a powerful connection between an individual and a cross-generational history (2008, p.722). Much importance is placed on the ‘secret name’ because it allows the bearer to feel connected to a family and a culture that they are separated from in their daily life, for example in Lisbeth and her parents’ case, having migrated to a new country. However, Lisbeth’s parents have chosen not to give her a ‘secret name.’ Zittoun argues that in choosing a name for their child, parents are “not only defining the personhood of their child but they are also taking a key step in defining their own new identity as parents. They are identifying ‘what sort of child they want to be the parent of’” (2004, p.143). This idea becomes relevant when delving deeper into the experience of Lisbeth’s parents as Ghanaian immigrants in Italy and thus their potential motivations for choosing not to carry on this naming tradition. It is apparent from the text that Lisbeth’s parents are struggling to adapt to life in Italy, and Lisbeth herself is very aware of this. She describes her parents, particularly her father, trying their best to hide their financial struggles from their family back in Ghana in an attempt to justify their decision to leave their home and move to Italy:

Dice tante balle. Sa che i suoi parenti sono troppo poveri per verificare dove abiti e che cosa faccia per mantenere sé e la sua famiglia. Così mente. Se ammettesse a sé stesso che è per questo che odia così tanto la Zia, si litigherebbe di meno in questa gabbia di matti. E invece continua a dare la colpa a tutti per la sua rabbia. [...] siamo una famiglia di finti ricchi. (p.37)

The struggle to thrive in Italian society is partly what has motivated Lisbeth’s parents not to carry on the tradition and give her a ‘secret name,’ as they don’t want her to have to struggle in the same way. In fact, Lisbeth admits that her lack of a *nome segreto* may be the reason why she feels a certain sense of shame surrounding her Africanness in Italy, something which most likely stems from the racist attitudes perpetuated throughout Italian society that largely stem from the colonial era: “Se sapessi qual è il mio vero nome. Non mi arrabbierei più con chi mi chiama negra. Se sapessi da dove viene il



mio vero nome l’Africa non sarebbe solo il sinonimo di tutto ciò che mi fa vergognare” (p.40). It is clear from this statement alone that racism has been a key component of Lisbeth and her parents’ experience living in Italy, therefore, by giving their daughter a ‘European’ name and choosing not to give her a ‘secret name,’ Lisbeth’s parents are attempting to shield her as best they can from the racism they have experienced themselves. A name is a “visiting card which indicates who one is in the eyes of others” (Elias, 1991, p.184), thus Lisbeth’s parents could believe that giving their daughter a ‘European’ name will help her fit into Italian society better, as Italian people would see her as a fellow European rather than associating an unfamiliar name with a threatening ‘Other.’ Furthermore, returning to Zittoun’s argument, Lisbeth’s parents are also hiding behind her name to try and better fit into Italian society, and as a result build the successful life for themselves in Europe that they have been pretending to have all along. By using Lisbeth’s name to position themselves as the parents of a ‘European’ child, it is possible that they believe this will also help them become more integrated and connected within Italian society, instead of being overlooked and discriminated against for their supposed ‘difference.’ Similar to Longhi’s previous assertion that names are inescapable, “inciso come un marchio a fuoco sulla pelle” (p.27), Lisbeth’s parents recognise that names greatly influence how a person is perceived by others. However, the skin cannot be changed, and given that they both harbour a sense of discomfort surrounding their African heritage, for both Longhi and Lisbeth their blackness still greatly impacts how they are perceived in Italian society.

Moreover, Kan highlights why the absence of her ‘secret name’ is ultimately a bad thing for Lisbeth, and that her parents’ decision to not give her one stems from internalised racism. Towards the end of the text, Lisbeth recalls *la Zia*’s reasoning as to why her parents chose not to educate her about Ghanaian culture, including their choice to not give her a ‘secret name’:

I bianchi conoscono a fondo il potere di una parola. Le loro parole creano mondi insopportabili e pieni di insidie, riesco a vedere come mamma e papà si sono arresi a questa loro stregoneria. Per questo non mi hanno dato il mio vero nome, mi dice la Zia. <<Hanno creduto alle loro sciocchezze, cercando un futuro che fosse più alla loro maniera. Alla maniera occidentale. Non lo ammetteranno mai che sono vittime della magia dei bianchi, del loro mondo di utilizzare le parole contro la nostra gente e la nostra storia.>> (p.40)

*La Zia* explains that Lisbeth's parents have not raised her with the essential knowledge of their own culture because they harbour their own internalised racism as a result of being victims of this "stregoneria," an allusion to the racist attitudes still prevalent in Italy today resulting from a lack of interrogation of its colonial past.

Lisbeth's lack of a 'secret name' can also be read as representative of a general loss of cultural memory, which over time could result in the history of her Ghanaian ancestors being lost and forgotten by future generations. After learning about her 'secret name' Lisbeth suddenly feels that she is lacking something, that her identity is incomplete and has always been that way, she was just unable to recognise it before:

Ma senza un nome mi sento monca. E quel calore perfetto che avverto si trasforma in paura, paura che mai e poi mai, la mia gente e i miei antenati, coi loro nomi segreti, potranno donare uno straccio di futuro a una Lisbeth nera d'Italia. Una Lisbeth senza nome, e dunque senza futuro. (p.40)

Again, the connection between the significance of names and the inescapability of skin colour is made evident here, as she feels that without the connection to her Ghanaian family and ancestors that a 'secret name' brings, she will be unable to thrive in her life as a black woman in Italy. Despite being born and having lived her whole life there up until this point, she doesn't have the strong African cultural background necessary, symbolised by the 'secret name,' to combat the deep-rooted racism of Italian society. Lisbeth's story reveals a fragmented identity in which several pieces come together to form a whole, and that when one is missing, she is not fully herself.

#### Names as resistance

Continuing with the discussion of *Il mio nome*, *la Zia* teaching Lisbeth about her 'secret name,' as well as many other aspects of Ghanaian culture that were unknown to her up until this point, is a form of resistance against the aspects of Italian society that have resulted in the internalised racism of her parents. In titling the story *Il mio nome*, Kan allows Lisbeth to take control over her own identity, emphasising the use of names to resist against discrimination and cultural oppression. Moreover, neither Lisbeth's 'secret name,' nor those of her parents or her aunt are explicitly included in the text,

which underlines their entire purpose: the ‘secret names’ are so powerful because they are secret, because they cannot be appropriated or hijacked in order to oppress those who bear them. Not including them in the text, which is written in Italian for an Italian audience, allows them to remain secret and therefore a powerful form of resistance and self-identification, even in a fictional context.

Using names as a form of resistance can also be seen in Alesa Herero’s *Eppure c’era odore di pioggia*, a fictional short story which recounts Cape Verdean protagonist Matimba’s return to Rome after growing up there many years ago. It is revealed that during her childhood and adolescence, Matimba’s name was Matilde, however she recalls how she decided to change it after speaking to an old woman from Mozambique whilst living in Portugal. After hearing her being referred to as ‘Mati,’ the old woman assumes based on her looks that her name is Matimba: “I tuoi occhi dicono che il tuo nome è Matimba. Matimba significa Forza. Ti garantisco figlia mia, non hai mai avuto altro nome che questo” (p.97). After this encounter, Matilde decides to change her name to Matimba:

Col tempo si rese conto che la donna che stava diventando era piuttosto lontana dalla vecchia Matilde. Quel nome non diceva più molto di lei. Fu allora che si ricordò della signora e pensò di poter diventare Matimba - in fondo ‘Mati’ era contenuta in Matimba e quindi avrebbe mantenuto entrambe le identità. (p.97)

Tian writes of a similar situation in Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*, in which the young Indian protagonist, after being continuously mocked for his name, “decides to subvert the authority of colonial culture by changing his French name, Piscine Molitor Patel, to Pi Patel” (2018, p.62). This is mirrored in Herero’s text as Mati chooses to change her name from the European ‘Matilde’ to the African ‘Matimba.’ She also recalls being called racist names and tormented as a child, something which ultimately plays a role in her wanting to take greater control over her identity instead of succumbing to the identity placed upon her by others:

Sì, era quello che era: *Negra*. Ma quel che lei intendeva per *Negra* non sarebbe mai stato compreso nello stesso modo da chi, prima che lei se ne impossessasse, le aveva affibbiato questa identità, da chi aveva costruito questa identità per poi vomitargliela adesso. (p.95)

However, while Tian argues that Pi’s name change is “not an act of resistance against Western colonial culture, but still mimicry of Western culture,” (2018, p.62) given that he changes his French

name to a Greek one instead of choosing something Indian to embrace his own culture, Matimba's name change *is* an act of resistance against a Western postcolonial culture that continues to discriminate against her. Matimba's name change embraces her African heritage and allows her to define her own identity on her own terms: "Sì, era Negra, era Nera, ma solo da quando l'aveva deciso lei, e lo era nel modo in cui aveva deciso lei" (p.96). For Mati, "naming is a speech act, shaping the life course and the person involved" (Palsson, 2014, p.621). Kan's choice to title her short story *Il mio nome* also alludes to the idea of using names as a way to take ownership over one's identity, as the title implies that Lisbeth's 'secret name' is a name that is all hers, that no one can manipulate or take away from her.

Moreover, it is important to note that Matimba does not simply give up her 'old' identity when she changes her name. In fact, much like Lisbeth's discovery of the 'secret name' in *Il mio nome*, Matimba's new name represents another aspect of her hybrid identity. After reuniting with her childhood friend Nano in front of their old school in Rome, Matimba "ritrovò i suoi frammenti ed ebbe la certezza che Matimba conteneva Matilde e che l'una non sarebbe potuta esistere senza l'altra" (pp.97-98). Matimba chooses to embrace both aspects of her identity, her European upbringing and her African heritage, and having control over her own name is presented as a powerful and impactful way to do so. Going by her nickname 'Mati' highlights this even further, as it encompasses both names whilst also giving her the final choice as to which she prefers to go by. In this sense, both her name and her identity are presented as fluid, connecting her to different memories and relationships across her life: "Un tempo lei era stata Matilde, e forse in parte lo era ancora, visto che quando il Nano la chiamava semplicemente Mati, non era con Matimba che pensava parlare" (p.96). However, while Mati's story reveals names to be fluid just like her identity, the fact remains that her skin colour is not, and her blackness still plays a significant role in how she is perceived by others, no matter what name she uses.

This chapter has revealed the significance of names to be an important element in many of the texts. Not only do names have the power to create opportunities for people like Clara and Senay in *Sangue*

*giusto*, but they are also used to resist racism and cultural oppression, in the cases of Lisbeth and Mati. Names have been shown to be crucial in revealing suppressed and forgotten histories in *Adua*, as well as allowing Longhi and Lisbeth to reconnect with their African roots and re-evaluate their complex identities as Afro-Italians. Alongside this, while names themselves have been shown to be as fluid as the identities they define, ultimately their intrinsic link with the body and skin colour makes them only partially responsible for how Afro-Italians in the texts are perceived by others.

#### 4. Silenced Voices Finally Heard?

This chapter seeks to examine the ways in which previously silenced and marginalised women's voices are represented in the texts, exploring how their silencing is portrayed, and utilising Spivak's argument that female subaltern voices "cannot speak" (1988, p.309) to question whether the texts allow these voices to speak and be heard.

As editor of *Future*, Igiaba Scego explains the premise behind the collection and why it was important that such a text be created. She compares *Future* to the open letter "J'accuse...!" published in French newspaper *L'Aurore* by novelist Émile Zola in 1898, which accused the French government of antisemitism following the imprisonment of Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus. She writes:

il libro che avete in mano è di fatto un moderno *J'accuse*. Giovani e meno giovani donne italiane di origine africana hanno preso in mano una penna, o più realisticamente il loro computer, e hanno scritto dei racconti che ci parlano di futuro. Ognuna di loro ha scelto un'angolazione e uno stile propri. Ma ognuna di loro è partita da questo presente distopico, da questa Italia distopica, dove viviamo, amiamo, mangiamo, dormiamo, piangiamo e ridiamo. Un'Italia feroce che se non hai il supposto colore nazionale (un bianco candido che nessun italiano ha di fatto veramente, visto che il paese è mediterraneo e frutto di incroci) ti mette ai margini, e nemmeno ti ascolta. Il nostro *J'accuse* non solo vuole essere ascoltato, ma vuole urlare il proprio disappunto per lo stato di questo presente che ci sta sempre più stretto (Scego, 2019, p.8).

With this statement Scego frames the collection as a political piece of work, highlighting the importance of elevating individual voices and stories as part of a collective to bring attention to a common feeling and goal amongst the Afro-Italian community for the future of Italian society and culture. Scego alludes to the necessity of Black Italians to make their mark on Italian society and raise their voices in order to combat the long-held image of a homogenous Italian identity. Just one year prior to *Future*'s publication, Smythe also referenced the previous efforts of Black Italian women writers like Scego in deconstructing and debunking this idea through their literary production, describing these works as "radical acts in a society that has historically and erroneously constructed itself as White and Catholic (and afforded primacy to heterosexual men)" (2018, p.8). The same can be said of *Future*, both as a collection as a whole and as individual texts by each individual author. Scego's dubbing of the collection as a 'j'accuse' alone positions the texts within as radical acts by the

writers, with the joint aim of creating a conversation about attitudes towards race and migration in Italy today and hoping to ignite change for a better future.

While not quite so explicit in their intentions, the other texts explored in this project also share a similar aim to *Future*. Taking a slightly different approach, Scego dedicates her text “a Dorothy Jean Dandridge, Anna May Wong, Nina Mae McKinney, Hattie McDaniel, Marilyn Monroe e tante altre che hanno tentato di far cinema nonostante la gabbia che il sistema ha costruito loro addosso” (2015, p.5). Given Adua’s experience and exploitation in the film industry being a key aspect of the novel (which will be examined in more detail later), Scego’s tribute to these actresses who were victims of the misogyny and racism of Hollywood in the mid-twentieth century, the majority of them African-American bar Wong and Monroe, highlights that *Adua* as a text is an attempt to fight back against these universal struggles by telling one woman’s story and elevating her voice. Longhi’s text also opens with a dedication that points to the shared aim of raising the voices of previously silenced black women and welcoming their stories into the collective narrative of the Italian nation. He writes: “Per le donne che oltrepassano i confini. Del nome, del colore, del tempo” (2021, p.8). These dedications alone show that Scego’s and Longhi’s texts are allied with *Future* in their intent to highlight previously silenced and marginalised female voices in order to inspire a change in attitudes and behaviours within Italian society. *Sangue giusto* also shares the same aim, only Melandri illustrates this through her depictions of the experiences of colonised African women like Abeba in the text rather than outlining it so explicitly to the reader.

### *Il colore del nome*

Beyond the dedication, Longhi foregrounds marginalised female voices throughout the text, highlighting how his personal journey of self-discovery and reckoning with Italy’s colonial past is facilitated and driven by the women in his life. The most obvious of these female voices is that of Aida, Longhi’s Eritrean cousin now living in Sweden, who sends him the initial email asking about the whereabouts of his father, which then becomes the catalyst for his subsequent physical and emotional journey throughout the rest of the text. The opening lines of the prologue highlight just

how much Aida has impacted Longhi's life: "Erano quasi vent'anni che nessuno mi chiedeva di mio padre. Diciotto anni per essere precisi. Li ho contati subito dopo ricevuto quel messaggio da una donna eritrea che non conoscevo" (p.10). By encouraging him to rethink his relationship with his father, Aida's email acts as the impetus for Longhi to re-examine not just his personal connection to Eritrea, but also Italy's complicated relationship with its colonial past. Furthermore, Longhi emphasises the importance of uplifting marginalised female voices by allowing Aida to speak for herself through his text. Instead of simply recounting the contents of Aida's emails in his own words, Longhi carves out dedicated spaces within the text in which he displays her emails in full,<sup>22</sup> therefore showcasing Aida's own voice instead of speaking for her. This correspondence with Aida guides Longhi throughout his journey in the text, and it is through her that he gets in contact with Adhanet, another of his cousins who still lives in Eritrea. She writes in one of her emails to Longhi: "Ho parlato di te alla cugina Adhanet, ha conosciuto tuo nonno Vittorio e mi ha mandato alcuni documenti che lo riguardano, che raccontano come e perché lo hanno ucciso" (p.70). Adhanet then provides him with vital information about his father's family, as well as the opportunity to visit Eritrea for himself and follow in the footsteps of his father and grandfather to reconnect with his forgotten African heritage.

After visiting Adhanet and her son Kiflay, Longhi sends Aida an email thanking her for her help and emphasising how much she has impacted his life and his relationship with his identity: "Con i tuoi racconti e con questo viaggio sto ritrovando una parte di famiglia e di me stesso che nemmeno immaginavo esistesse. Te ne sono grato. Spero di poterne parlare di persona, presto" (p.212). With this email, Longhi further cements the importance of Aida's voice in the evolution of his identity as an Italo-Eritrean, as well as implying that his journey is ongoing, his relationship with Eritrea continuing to develop in the future. In this way, Longhi's personal journey also acts as a parallel to the collective journey of the Italian nation in reckoning with its colonial past and how this impacts its postcolonial present.

---

<sup>22</sup> Even if the authenticity of the emails is not explicitly confirmed in the text itself, the way Longhi chooses to insert emails instead of just relaying Aida's words through the text is still significant.



Another black female voice intrinsic to the text is that of Longhi's British colleague Fauziya, whose family originates from Kenya. Early in the text, Fauziya's voice is a consistent presence, as the passion and pride she displays for her African heritage begins to influence Longhi's thoughts regarding his own connection to Africa:

Fauziya non è certo una che nasconde l'origine africana, anzi [...] Lei porta l'Africa in ogni discorso e in ogni gesto come una presa di posizione politica [...] è stata lei a chiedere a me che origine avessi [...] Per quanto gli italiani possano essere misti lei riconosceva meglio di altri i miei tratti somatici. Neanche la storia sbrigativa della mescolanza mediterranea a cui di solito ricorro in Medio Oriente avrebbe funzionato. Mi ha domandato direttamente di mia madre e di mio padre e io mi sono limitato all'essenziale, trattenendo tutto il resto (pp.27-28).

Fauziya is proud to identify as both African and European, and she pushes Longhi to break out of his comfort zone and interrogate his identity as Afro-Italian, something he has neglected and avoided for years. Fauziya's voice represents a more transnational perspective compared to those of Aida and Adhanet; while the latter voices focus on Longhi's family connections and therefore directly influence his personal journey of self-discovery, Fauziya's voice encourages Longhi to make the connection between his personal journey and the Afro-European experience as a whole:

Fauziya dice che anche io mi posso considerare uno dei nipoti o dei pronipoti delle colonie, un afrodiscendente, un afroeuropeo. Non siamo diversi dagli afroamericani, sostiene, e dovremmo affermare con orgoglio la nostra discendenza [...] Le ho risposto sarcastico che già faccio fatica a definire la mia identità di italiano nel mondo, ci mancherebbe confondermi le idee con l'appartenenza africana o afroeuropea, qualunque cosa significhi (pp.53-54).

Despite initially brushing off Fauziya's assertions, they have undoubtedly influenced Longhi, as later in the text when he describes his moment of realisation about his personal connection to Africa after witnessing a tragedy involving migrants in Lampedusa, he recalls Fauziya's words and admits that she was right all along. He writes:

Ho capito. Ho capito. Tergiverso da mesi, è vero. Ho allontanato questa storia per evitare ogni coinvolgimento, per sfuggire a quei fantasmi. Hanno ragione Fauziya e Aida, mi riguarda l'Eritrea, mi riguarda l'Africa. Non posso più scappare, non posso rimandare. Devo fare questo viaggio. Qualcosa mi aspetta, in fondo a un altro abisso (p.162).

The final prominent woman's voice that Longhi incorporates is that of his great-grandmother Gabrù, who is the foundation of Longhi's connection to Eritrea thanks to her relationship with his great-grandfather Giacomo, an Italian coloniser. In chapter three, Longhi recounts how the couple met, and highlights how Gabrù suffered after Giacomo abandoned her not long before she discovered she was pregnant with their second child. Longhi details how poorly colonised women were treated, after being exploited and left to fend for themselves:

Erano militari di passaggio, usavano le ragazze come qualsiasi altra cosa l'Eritrea avesse da offrire. Se da questo poi nasceva un bambino il problema non era loro e facevano perdere ogni traccia con la complicità delle autorità. [...] Quando rimanevano incinte e sole, le ragazze dovevano scegliere se lasciare i neonati negli istituti religiosi o tenerli con sé, denunciando la generalità del padre, come voleva una consuetudine eritrea a tutela delle madri (Longhi, 2021, p.42).

Despite her suffering, Longhi chooses to highlight Gabrù's strength and determination in the face of such hardship, which can be seen when he describes the sacrifices she and other Eritrean women in her position made to try and secure a brighter future for their children:

Le madri dei meticci facevano grandi sacrifici e si privavano del necessario per comprare ai figli vestiti e cibo venuti dalla madrepatria, l'Italia, il cui nome già evocava benessere. Tentavano di cucinare la pasta e la lasagna anche se questo significava fare chilometri a piedi per trovare gli ingredienti nei negozi dei coloniali, quando anche l'acqua potabile era un lusso. [...] Gabrù era determinata a dare a Vittorio e Amedeo un'istruzione che assicurasse loro un futuro, un destino diverso da quello degli altri meticci cresciuti dalle madri sole (pp.46-47).

For both Italians and Eritreans, "paternal descent defined individual identity. In particular, the attitudes of the colonised towards descent and identity played a crucial role in shaping an Italian identity for Italo-Eritreans" (Barrera, 2005, p.98). This is important given the marginalised position of Italo-Eritreans in both Italian and Eritrean society at this time, something which Longhi describes:

"I meticci sono i più cattivi" dicevano gli eritrei anziani che mai avevano visto tanti figli illegittimi prima di allora. Il mantenimento di quei figli, i figli degli invasori, avrebbe gravato sulle loro comunità. Perciò scacciavano i piccoli quando venivano riportati nei villaggi e tentavano di isolare sia loro sia le madri, considerate indegne e trattate come prostitute. Temevano che questa impurità avrebbe compromesso per sempre i loro equilibri, la loro tradizione. [...] I meticci erano un elemento impreveduto e incomprensibile, un effetto collaterale dell'occupazione italiana, al pari dello sfruttamento nei campi, degli espropri e delle prigionie. I *deqalà* erano il frutto di un legame carnale tanto inevitabile quanto scandaloso. Questa mescolanza era una chiara minaccia all'identità, una provocazione, una bestemmia. Sia per gli invasori sia per i sudditi (p.42).

Here he explains that Italo-Eritreans like his grandfather Vittorio were seen as a threat to Eritrean culture and tradition, as to the local population they were often viewed as a reminder of the Italian invaders, and as yet another way for their homeland to be taken over.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, not only does the inclusion of Gabrù's experience highlight the unacknowledged suffering of Eritrean women at the hands of Italian colonisers, but it also highlights the suffering of the Italo-Eritreans born as a result of these controversial relationships. Thus, similarly to other writers of Italian postcolonial texts, Longhi's representation of the experiences of women like Gabrù serves to "legitimise, empower, and dignify the memories of the victims of colonialism in the Horn of Africa" (Fotheringham, 2019, p.126). Longhi dedicates some of his final words in the text to the memory of silenced women like Gabrù, and to the women like Aida and Adhanet who fight to keep their memory alive:

E le donne eritree. Abbandonate con i figli meticci come vuoti a perdere, scarti della memoria. Vivono ormai solo nei ricordi delle altre donne, in fuga come Aida o intrappolate in questo Paese morente, come Adhanet. Neanche un cenno, neanche una riga sui libri, un nome sotto i monumenti che l'Italia e l'Europa hanno dedicato agli eroi coloniali, ai bianchi, ai maschi (p.216).

Longhi aims to highlight marginalised female voices in his text and give them a platform to speak as best he can. He explains his intention during a special edition of Rai 3's literary discussion programme *Quante storie*, in reference to the defacing of a statue of controversial Italian journalist Indro Montanelli, who himself bought and married a young Eritrean girl during his time in the colony in the 1930s:

Mi ha sempre un po' messo a disagio l'idea che il colonialismo italiano fosse raccontato da questa voce, dalla voce degli uomini, dei maschi, quando la voce di quelle ragazze non era stata considerata (2022, 26:20-26:31).

However, as previously mentioned, in the original version of her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak concludes that "the subaltern [woman] cannot speak" (1988, p.104), given that "if, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Spivak, 1988, p.83). In the 1999 revised version of the same essay, Spivak elaborates on the meaning behind her original assertion, offering a slightly different

---

<sup>23</sup> See Barrera, 2005.

interpretation. She references the story of Bhuvanewari Bhaduri, a young Indian woman whose death by suicide in 1926 was a mystery to those around her since she was menstruating at the time, indicating it was not due to an illicit pregnancy. It was later revealed Bhuvanewari had been tasked with a political execution as part of the struggle for Indian independence, which upon realising she could not go through with but recognising the plot must be kept secret, she killed herself, deliberately waiting until she was menstruating so that her death would not “be diagnosed as the outcome of illegitimate passion” (Spivak, 1988, p.103). However, when Spivak initially began her research into Bhuvanewari’s death, she consulted a Bengali woman whose response to Spivak’s enquiries was simply: “I asked her nieces. It appears that it was a case of illicit love” (Spivak, 1988, p.104). She writes in the revised version:

Bhuvanewari attempted to ‘speak’ by turning her body into a text of woman/writing. The immediate passion of my declaration, ‘the subaltern cannot speak,’ came from the despair that, in her own family, among women, in no more than fifty years, her attempt had failed. I am not laying the blame for the muting on the colonial authorities here [...] I am pointing, rather, at her silencing by her own more emancipated granddaughters: a new mainstream (1999, p.53).

Spivak references the fact that Bhuvanewari’s own nieces seemingly ignored her attempts to speak through her dying body, instead simply categorising the cause for her death as exactly what she had tried to avoid, and in doing so, silencing her. It thus becomes even more apparent that *Il colore del nome* is an attempt to allow subaltern female voices to speak and be heard, after having been silenced for too long. In Longhi’s case, he too has taken a similar stance to that of Bhuvanewari’s nieces in the past, refusing to acknowledge his Eritrean heritage out of discomfort and lack of knowledge from his father. This resulted in the double erasure of the black female voices in his family, first due to their marginalisation under Italian colonial rule, and second by the reluctance of Longhi’s father to carry on their legacy and share their memory with his own children. However, in writing this text, and more specifically in writing about the experiences of his Eritrean great-grandmother Gabrù, he attempts to undo this erasure and gives her voice a platform on which to be symbolically heard. Despite this, it must be acknowledged that Gabrù’s own voice has been doubly silenced and lost forever; there is no way to fully retrieve it. Nevertheless, Aida, Adhanet and Longhi himself can

preserve her memory, rather than let her and her experiences be forgotten to history. In keeping with Spivak's argument, Gabrù herself cannot speak, however her family can use their own voices to speak about her and keep her memory alive. Consequently, although the suffering of silenced women like Gabrù has been largely ignored and erased from official colonial histories, their memory lives on through their family. Moreover, it should be noted that it is the other women in Gabrù's family who have worked to keep her memory alive, thus having played a crucial role in this memory continuing to be acknowledged more concretely through Longhi writing his text. Through incorporating her memory into a text which deals in such detail with the link between personal and national colonial memory, Longhi attempts to insert Gabrù's memory into the Italian collective memory, giving her the recognition she deserves. This approach can be seen in other Italian postcolonial texts such as those by Scego, which, like Longhi's, feature memory as a key component given that:

it serves to rewrite the personal history of individuals and the collective history of communities. The way in which events are publicly remembered (or forgotten) shapes how a nation builds its own historical memory and identity: once these writers have opened the archives of memory, the past can no longer be relegated to oblivion as memorialisation becomes an increasingly public process (Romeo, 2017, p.30).

On the other hand, *Il colore del nome* also represents Longhi's journey to unearthing his own 'silenced' voice for the first time, as the text explores his journey of self-discovery through learning about a family history that had been hidden from him for most of his life, as well as coming to understand his own connection to Eritrea, and how this connects him to the many African migrants making the treacherous journey to Europe today. Choosing to publish this personal journey serves to empower this voice and embrace a previously dismissed aspect of his identity. Longhi's role as a journalist should also be noted here, given that in the Italian media "immigration has too often been treated as a political issue and therefore attacked or defended rather than explored and described" (Bond, Bonsaver and Faloppa, 2015, pp.3-4). In *Il colore del nome*, Longhi not only gives a platform for marginalised female voices, but he also allows migrant voices to shine and focuses on exploring the migrant experience. The moment of realisation about his connection to the African migrants mentioned previously comes as a result of him finally connecting with them as people rather than

viewing them as an anonymous collective, an unknown ‘Other.’ Upon discovering that some of the survivors he encounters in Lampedusa are from Keren, just like his own family, he finally understands the personal connection he has to them, and chooses to present this realisation in the text as if it were coming from the voices of the Eritrean migrants themselves:

“Una parte di te, in fondo a te, è come noi. Siamo vicini, siamo cugini, come sei cugino di Aida. Ieri ci sarebbe potuta essere lei su quel barcone, sul peschereccio di venti metri tra gli altri cinquecentocinquanta partiti da Misurata, Libia, Africa. E se avessero sedici anni oggi, si sarebbero imbarcate anche Gabrù e Nainè, le tue bisnonne di Keren, Eritrea, altra Africa. Persino i tuoi nonni paterni potrebbero stare tra quei rifugiati se oggi fossero ragazzi come noi. Chi dice che in mezzo a quelle onde non ci fossero meticci, discendenti di italiani, nipoti dei colonizzatori? E dove sarebbero ora? In questo hangar o in fondo al mare, intrappolati nel relitto, abbandonati nell’abisso?” (p.161)

This is significant given the “almost overwhelming absence of migrant voices” in the Italian mainstream media (Jacomella, 2015, p.158), a silencing of migrant voices which “must be broken” (Jacomella, 2015, p.162) to improve Italian public perception of migration and migrants themselves. By exploring his personal connection to these Eritrean migrants and detailing their struggles, Longhi’s text works to humanise them in the eyes of the Italian public, given that “the more information is made available, the less our understanding of [migration] will be hampered by ignorance and prejudices” (Jacomella, 2015, p.156).

### *Sangue giusto*

Moving onto *Sangue giusto*, Melandri has explained that the inspiration for writing the character of Shimeta/Senay came from speaking to a real African migrant about his own experience traversing the Mediterranean to reach Italy. When describing Shimeta/Senay preparing to leave his home in Ethiopia and travel to Italy, the third person narration is interrupted briefly to express the following almost directly to the reader:

Immagina questo: stai facendo un sogno meraviglioso mentre sei appollaiato sui rami di un albero. Devi svegliarti ogni minuto, però. Perché non devi cadere e anche perché vuoi tenere vivo il tuo sogno. Questo vuol dire emigrare (2017, p.35).

In a 2018 interview for *Esquire*, when asked about the origins of this quote, Melandri explained:

Mentre costruivo il personaggio ho intervistato gente che quel viaggio lo aveva fatto davvero e, infatti, quella frase me l'ha detta uno di loro. Esattamente come l'ho riportata. È la voce di un migrante, che mi ha raccontato cos'è stato per lui avere il sogno di arrivare in Italia, ma nello stesso tempo resistere ai pericoli.

Therefore, Melandri also shares the belief and understanding in the importance of elevating silenced voices to change attitudes towards race and migration within Italy. When speaking about migration, “migrants ought to be included in the list of sources” (Jacomella, 2015, p.155), and by incorporating a quote from a real migrant, Melandri does just that. She, like Scego, “gives voice to the migrants whom the mass media call the masses, the wave” by focusing on individual experiences (Skalle, 2017, p.84). However, Melandri goes one step further than this, by incorporating the real lived experience of an African migrant in Italy and allowing him to tell his story by including his own words into her fiction, thus giving a platform to one of the thousands of migrants who risk crossing the Mediterranean only to be stripped of their identity and humanity by the European mass media. Furthermore, the fact that Melandri breaks the third person narration just for this quote, creates the impression that the reader is being addressed directly and allows for the message behind the quote to become more impactful. This is particularly important given that “listening to these migrant voices can add a human element to often highly politicised discussions of immigrants and their place in the nation” (Smith, 2015, p.140).

However, while she does give a platform for marginalised migrant voices within her text, Melandri's own voice is arguably the most external out of all the texts discussed in this project, given that she is white and Italian, and therefore not a part of the community being silenced in this case. *Sangue giusto* is an example of an Italian novel that has “started interrogating the memory of [Italian] colonialism” by speaking “on the side of postcolonial voices” instead of speaking for or about them (Curti, 2021, p.230). In fact, Melandri's personal perspective is not unlike that of her protagonist Ilaria, given that Melandri's father was also involved in the Italian colonial project, albeit on a lesser scale than Ilaria's. Therefore, Melandri plays a similar role to her protagonist in learning about her family's involvement in Italian colonial violence and using that research as a way to combat current prejudices surrounding race and migration which largely stem from attitudes of the colonial period.

In fact, while Ilaria's father Attilio works in censoring information coming out of the colonies in the text, in writing the novel itself Melandri is doing the opposite and shedding light on forgotten truths about Italy's colonial past and its entanglement with the present day. While it is impossible for her to let those censored voices speak for themselves as they have been silenced by history, by writing the text, like Longhi she is able to preserve the memory of these people and their experiences.

Also in the interview with *Esquire*, when asked her thoughts on the success of the novel in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, but the apparent lack of debate being generated around it in Italy, Melandri suggests:

I recensori tedeschi e olandesi non l'hanno presentato come un romanzo storico, bensì come un romanzo di grande attualità: non racconta solo il colonialismo e il razzismo di Stato del fascismo ma anche l'immigrazione e, soprattutto, il razzismo di oggi. Per questo molti, sia in Olanda che in Germania, l'hanno definito un romanzo che non riguarda solo l'Italia, ma l'Europa (Melandri, 2018).

This apparent difference between the novel's reception in Italy versus elsewhere in Europe further highlights the necessity for marginalised voices to be featured more prominently within Italian cultural production. Italian society still fails to see itself as “a transnational and dis-homogenous society” (Virga, 2019, p.111), and the fact that many Italians have struggled to see *Sangue giusto* as more than simply a novel about the Fascist past emphasises the continued reluctance to critically examine the nation's history and its impacts on Italy's present and future.

Melandri takes a similar approach to Longhi, as she also highlights the experiences of the African women abandoned by Italian colonisers after giving birth to their half-Italian children. In this case, the text describes Abeba's experience living in Ethiopia and raising her son Ietmgeta in the early 1940s, after being abandoned by his father Attilio:

Ogni tanto, quando camminava con il piccolo Ietmgeta dalla pelle così più chiara della sua, gli uomini le cantavano dietro. *Bella ragazza scura/hai disonorato i tuoi/quando mi passi/accanto abbassa la testa*. Ma erano motti di spirito, più che giudizi. Ad Addis Abeba erano tante, le ex madame nelle sue condizioni. [...] Certo, nei primi anni ogni tanto qualcuno chiamava Ietmgeta “figlio delle due bandiere”, oppure *solato*, storpiando il nome italiano di quelli che arrivano armati e si lasciano dietro uno strascico di bambini. O anche, semplicemente, *dikala* - bastardo. [...] Abeba non aveva dubbi sull'educazione che avrebbe impartito a suo figlio: Ietmgeta era un maschio quindi apparteneva a suo padre. Poco, anzi, nulla importava che non l'avrebbe mai conosciuto (2017, p.232).



Here she presents a similar experience to that which Longhi describes in *Il colore del nome*, showcasing the negative attitudes towards Afro-Italians in the Horn of Africa at the time and highlighting the cultural importance of the paternal figure on the identity shaping of a young boy, even when the father was a perpetrator of colonial violence. Again, like Longhi, Melandri chooses to emphasise the strength and determination of Abeba in trying to raise her son to have the best possible outcome in life, even if that means prioritising having him educated in line with the invader's cultural traditions instead of her own. With this in mind, like Longhi, Melandri's inclusion of Abeba's experience highlights the legacy of a subaltern woman that had been previously silenced and hidden. By acknowledging the role Abeba played in encouraging the Italian aspect of her son's identity to flourish, at the detriment to herself, Melandri positions Abeba as playing a crucial part in Shimeta/Senay's eventual journey to Italy, which becomes the catalyst for Ilaria discovering her personal connection to Italy's colonial past. Consequently, Melandri includes the legacy of a silenced woman like Abeba within the ongoing development of Italian national identity in the twenty-first century.

### *Adua*

A key driver behind the concept of Scego's *Adua* also involves the elevation of a previously ignored and marginalised black woman's voice, something which is evident to the reader right down to the title itself. By choosing to title the novel simply with Adua's name, Scego instantly establishes that the novel revolves around Adua's own unique thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and that her voice is intrinsic to the text. This is also evident in the way the text is structured. With the narrative alternating between Adua's first person perspective, a third-person account of her father Zoppe's experiences, and interjections from a second-person narration in which Zoppe speaks directly to his daughter, the novel encompasses every aspect of Adua's voice and identity, and in doing so Adua can tell her own story.

Scego also highlights why it is so important for Adua to be able to tell her story and utilise her own voice within the text itself. When she arrives in Italy under the promise of becoming a film

star, she is ultimately exploited and sexually assaulted by the film's director, and the film itself ends up being an illusion shattered by false promises and sexual violence. Moreover, in the film her voice is dubbed over, which "functions symbolically for the loss of agency that Adua undergoes, epitomised by the replacement of her "harsh" voice, deemed an unfit match for the audience's implied fantasies (Cariello, 2021, p.164). Considering this, the importance of Adua regaining agency and control over her voice and her story in the form of the text itself becomes even more apparent. In fact, she expresses this desire in the very first pages, in which she addresses her first-person narration to Bernini's 'Elephant and Obelisk' statue in Rome:

Anche mio padre aveva le orecchie grandi, ma lui non mi ha mai saputo ascoltare, né io sono mai riuscita a parlarci. Con te è diverso. [...] Lo sai, io ho bisogno di te. Lul è partita e non so ancora se la ritroverò. Ma tu me la ricordi. Sai ascoltare. Ho bisogno di essere ascoltata, altrimenti le parole si sciogliono e si perdono" (2015, p.11)

Here Adua declares her longing to be heard, settling for a statue of an elephant in the absence of her father and her best friend Lul. She highlights exactly what is at stake if her words are not listened to and not heard; they will be forgotten and lost forever. This mirrors the situation of many African women who were victims of Italian colonialism, whose voices and experiences were doubly silenced as Spivak has argued, and as a result lost to history.

However, it is not just Adua's father who refuses to listen to her, effectively silencing her, but several other figures in the novel follow in his footsteps. Firstly, there is Adua's husband Ahmed, a Somali migrant temporarily living in Rome, who is too focused on his own future to really listen to Adua's voice. She laments to the statue once again: "Con mio marito, il ragazzino che mi sono sposata, non parlo mai. Non so nemmeno perché ci siamo sposati [...] Tu e le tue grandi orecchie siete rimasti gli unici ad ascoltare la mia voce. Il mondo ormai mi ha dimenticata" (pp.28-31). Again, she suggests that the statue is the only thing that really listens to her, while the people around her are too focused on their own struggles to hear what she has to say. In Ahmed's case, Italy is just a stepping stone for him to reach other parts of Europe, and so is Adua, just a stepping stone that helps him to reach his idealised new life.

Furthermore, Adua recalls her experience when she first moved to Rome as a young woman decades earlier, and how she was exploited and silenced then as well. This time, her voice was muted by Italian film director Arturo and his wife Sissi, who take advantage of her naive vulnerability and coerce her into being sexually exploited on and off screen. She writes of her experience with Arturo:

Lui mi fa paura. Lui è il regista del mio film, però. È il mio padrone, mi ha comprato per pochi spiccioli ai saldi laggiù in Africa orientale. Non posso contraddirlo. Quindi annuisco, ubbidiente, passiva come si addice a quelle senza protezione come me (p.130).

Here she highlights how she was manipulated and silenced out of fear of being alone and unprotected in a new country. In this case, the silencing is not only verbal but physical as well, as Adua's own cultural and religious beliefs are ignored and her body is violated for the pleasure and profit of the Italian filmmakers. This can be seen when Arturo and Sissi are shocked to discover that Adua has been infibulated, and instead of listening to her belief at the time that the procedure would be undone once she gets married, Sissi rejects her wishes, declaring, "Non serve l'amore, stupida. Bastano un paio di forbici per aprirti. E poi finalmente Arturo ti potrà assaggiare" (p.124), before mutilating her yet again.

However, as she looks back on these experiences towards the end of the novel, a more mature Adua reflects on how she has changed since the time of the film, and declares to herself, "Ora non sto più zitta" (p.139). Here she indicates her desire to no longer allow herself to be silenced by others, which is reflected in the writing of the novel itself, given the way Scego chooses to structure the narration as previously mentioned. Furthermore, at the very end of the novel, as Adua accompanies Ahmed to the train station to say goodbye as he leaves Italy for Germany, he gives her a video camera as a gift, thanking her for all her support and love that has helped him on his journey. He explains to her: "Ora potrai filmare quello che vuoi, ora potrai narrarti come ti pare e piace" (p.174), essentially giving her the opportunity to speak for herself and make her own voice heard, the fact it is a video camera also a symbolic retaliation against her voice being silenced in the film decades earlier. It is interesting that Scego chooses another African migrant to present this new opportunity to Adua, given that as a writer she:

gives voice to identities formed at the intersection of colonial and postcolonial contexts and explores the forging of immigrant and emigrant subjectivities that straddle multiple cultures and traditions while advancing a notion of an Italianità, that is (and has always been) hybrid, multiple and irreducibly crisscrossed (Bouchard, 2018, p.39).

Therefore, *Adua* joins the other texts discussed in this project in highlighting and empowering previously neglected perspectives of the Italian experience in the hopes of changing contemporary attitudes towards race and migration and how this impacts the changing concept of Italian national identity. Furthermore, her ability to take control over her own voice at the end of the novel mirrors the desire of the Afro-Italian women who contributed to the *Future* collection as discussed earlier, to make their voices heard and make their mark on Italian identity and culture, on their own terms. However, it is important to note that while *Adua* can speak, she is also fictional, whereas other women in other texts, such as Longhi's female ancestors in *Il colore del nome* and the young Maddalena featured in *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna*, are based on real people whose voices really have been silenced by history. Despite this, *Adua* can still be seen as a fictional representation of real women who have been silenced in the past, and in giving her the opportunity to speak, Scego symbolically gives a voice to these real women in the only way she physically can. In doing so, writers like Scego "offer a narrative that goes beyond what has been permitted and promoted by the national and linguistic purity of the canon" (Curti, 2021, p.226).

### *Future*

Finally returning to *Future*, although the text is a collection of voices that come together with a shared aim, it is also important to explore some of the individual voices that make up such a rich collective voice. In *Nassan tenga*, Ouedraogo highlights the power of voices and emphasises the importance of marginalised and previously silenced voices being brought to the forefront to undo the repression of the colonial past and rewrite the narrative of Italy's national identity from a new perspective. It is worth noting here that unlike the other works discussed in this project, the *Future* collection is unique in that the array of Afro-Italian voices presented throughout the different texts within it can speak, because they are still present and writing for themselves. With this in mind, Ouedraogo writes:

Vogliamo sovvertire gli sguardi consolidati e le versioni della storia che sembravano inconfutabili, siamo convinti che chi non vuole sapere, nonostante ne abbia i mezzi, si debba rendere conto di non essere innocente o al riparo dalla verità. [...] Ci stiamo appropriando del diritto e del dovere di reinvenzione, della nostra voce per cambiare la narrazione. Perché sempre più menti e sensibilità possano capire che l'identità collettiva è aleatoria, complessa e sempre soggetta a nuove rielaborazioni (2019, pp.72-73).

Ouedraogo emphasises the necessity and desire to speak up as a collective voice as well as individuals in order to make the most impact, again linking back to the main aim of the *Future* collection as a whole, given that “the more voices [that] have the possibility to be heard, the less pressure will be put on the few ones that emerge from underground” (Aidoo, 2022). Furthermore, she highlights the importance of using said voices, both individual and collective, to ‘change the narrative’ surrounding what it means to be Italian, which itself requires a re-evaluation of racial biases stemming from the colonial period as well as a re-framing of the migrant experience in the mainstream Italian media. Therefore, in presenting more and more diverse previously silenced or ignored perspectives, Italian postcolonial writers increase their potential influence on changing attitudes within Italian society. Through showcasing and empowering these voices within the texts, “the ‘invisible’ Other is now becoming visible, and the repressed identities are making their appearance on the surface of the Italian one, to such an extent that black Italians can claim a place within the national canon of Italian literature” (Virga, 2019, p.109).

As mentioned previously, in *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna* Pesarini uses real archival documents to tell the story of an Italo-Eritrean girl, Maddalena, who is raised in a Catholic orphanage for mixed-race children in Eritrea. The use of Pesarini’s own research in writing the story highlights her aim to bring previously silenced voices like Maddalena’s to the forefront of Italian literary production. However, it is interesting to note that while Maddalena’s story *is* told, it is told through letters written to or about her, meaning that her own unique voice is not actually present within the text. This emphasises the initial erasure of her voice, given that a record of it probably does not exist because it was never recorded or written down. Therefore, Maddalena’s voice is lost to history, in keeping with Spivak’s argument that the subaltern can never truly speak for themselves (1988). Nevertheless, what Pesarini attempts to do with this text is to combat this erasure as much as possible,

by revealing Maddalena's situation and how she was treated by the authorities and her own family, indicating her personal struggles but unfortunately never being able to explore them fully due to the absence of her own voice. In this way, similarly to Longhi and Melandri, Pesarini keeps her memory alive, instead of letting her be completely forgotten to history.

Finally, in *Il mio nome*, it is the powerful voice of the protagonist's Ghanaian auntie who shines through the text, as she provides the opportunity and knowledge for Lisbeth to learn more about her African heritage, and in turn, learn more about herself. In this case, the auntie's voice can be seen as representative of the Ghanaian culture and tradition that Lisbeth's parents have been trying to distance themselves from since moving to Italy. By teaching Lisbeth about her 'secret name', the auntie unlocks another aspect of Lisbeth's voice for the first time, opening up the door for her to continue exploring her hybrid Afro-Italian identity as she grows up. In this text, instead of focusing on the silencing of a black woman's voice, Kan highlights the impact that the auntie's strong voice has on Lisbeth and her understanding of her own identity, emphasising the importance of cultural awareness in the development of personal and national identities.

Ultimately, these three texts may appear very different on the surface, and they certainly do present diverse perspectives and situations using different narrative approaches. However, what unites them all, along with the rest of the *Future* collection and the texts by Longhi, Melandri and Scego, is a common goal to push the boundaries of stereotypical ideas of *italianità* and challenge racist attitudes in Italy by showcasing marginalised female voices and fighting back against the silencing they have previously endured.

As can be seen throughout the different texts, silenced voices appear in many different forms, from the colonial archives delved into by Ilaria in *Sangue giusto*, to the letters discovered by Pesarini's narrator in *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna*, to the emails received by Longhi in *Il colore del nome*, and the oral stories passed down in *Adua*. These voices are clearly all fragments of a much bigger picture, that picture being the experiences of victims of Italian colonialism that have been lost to history. It is interesting to note that these fragments have resisted silencing through non-official

means, with the more obvious examples being personal emails, letters and oral stories, but also the researching into previously inaccessible colonial archives by Ilaria, which can also be seen as going against the official desired narrative of the Italian state.

However, despite the voices resisting complete silencing, it must be recognised that their fragmented nature highlights the fact that the majority of these colonial-era voices are lost to history and can no longer speak for themselves, as Spivak suggests. Whilst texts like those studied in this project help to shed light on the suffering endured by African women at the hands of Italian colonisers, their effects continuing long after the official end of Italian colonial rule, voices belonging to women like Gabrù, Abeba and Maddalena, who are no longer around to speak for themselves, have indeed been doubly silenced and lost to history. While these texts can speak on their behalf, or speak “beside,” borrowing the term used by Curti (2021, p.230) to define voices like Melandri’s, the recovery will never be enough to allow these voices to speak on their own. As Curti suggests, texts like those discussed in this project “recall a mourning for a loss that Italian history and culture have not addressed” (2021, p.230).

## 6. Conclusion

This project has highlighted the significant impact of marginalised female voices in the conversation surrounding the connection between Italy's colonial past and the conceptualisation of Italian identity today, by establishing an important dialogue between Scego's *Adua*, Melandri's *Sangue giusto*, Longhi's *Il colore del nome*, and four of the short stories from the *Future* collection, namely Ouedraogo's *Nassan tenga*, Pesarini's *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna*, Kan's *Il mio nome* and Herero's *Eppure c'era odore di pioggia*. With all of the texts having been published in the latter half of the 2010s, this dialogue between texts from writers of different ages, genders and from a wide range of backgrounds is a reflection of the increasing public conversation regarding issues of colonialism and migration in Italy, spearheaded by the debate surrounding Italian citizenship laws.

Chapter One revealed that the texts share a common goal in combating Italy's postcolonial amnesia, firstly by calling attention to the ignorance and indifference of Italians like Longhi and *Sangue giusto*'s Ilaria towards Italy's colonial past and their own connections to it, as well as highlighting the suppression and distortion of colonial memories throughout the different texts. In *Adua*, this comes in the form of the self-silencing of colonial victims as a coping mechanism for their trauma, combined with an idealised image of Italy being created by colonial propaganda, leading to a lack of awareness about the extent of colonial violence in ex-colonies themselves. Ouedraogo's *Nassan tenga* is shown to take a more militant approach with her call for the younger generation of Afro-Italians to stand up against postcolonial amnesia by re-writing history from new perspectives, bringing forward new voices and restoring a collective memory.

Chapter Two investigated Italy's relationship with Africa, analysing the representation of Italian colonialism in *Sangue giusto*, *Adua*, and *Il colore del nome*, before exploring the idea of both a physical and symbolic Afro-Italian 'return' to former Italian colonies in Africa in Longhi's text and *Non s'intravede speranza alcuna*. It also delved into how the texts present the presence of Africa in Italy, with *Nassan tenga* highlighting experiences of racism in Italy and how this impacts how young Afro-Italians today interact with their families and their own identities. The discussion of *Adua*



explored exoticisation of the black female body in Italy, whereas *Il colore del nome* calls attention to the complexities of living with a hybrid Afro-Italian identity for both Longhi and his grandfather. The chapter also explored the representation of both colonial-era and present-day migration and citizenship struggles throughout the texts. Examples of this include the specific struggles faced by Italo-Eritreans in Longhi's and Pesarini's texts, Shimeta's migration experience in *Sangue giusto*, and Adua's relationship with her husband Ahmed.

Chapter Three revealed the significance of names to be a key component of identity navigation across the texts, illustrated by the perception of Afro-Italians as 'Other' in Italian society and their desire to be accepted and perceived as Italians in their own right. This conflict is exemplified in the texts by the fluidity of names and the inescapable rigidity of skin colour. Names are presented as powerful ways to define the self, and in turn as an opportunity to define how one is perceived by others. Consequently, names become a form of resistance, as demonstrated by Mati's name change in *Eppure c'era odore di pioggia* and Lisbeth's embracing of her secret name in *Il mio nome*. Names also serve as a connection to forgotten or hidden pasts, in Longhi's case his surname linking him not only to Italy's colonial history via his great-grandfather Giacomo, but also connecting him to victims of colonialism like his great-grandmother Gabrù, and providing him with a connection to women like Aida and Adhanet who have been influential in the development of his Afro-Italian identity. In *Sangue giusto*, having an Italian surname is presented as a gateway to better opportunities for Afro-Italians like Clara and Senay.

Finally, Chapter Four has shown that although colonial-era female subaltern voices are unable to speak for themselves through the texts, the inclusion and uplifting of their memories has shone throughout, ensuring that while their unique voices cannot be heard, their experiences are not forgotten and remain an important contribution to Afro-Italian identity today. These separate colonial memories and voices are distinct fragments of a larger construction of Italy's colonial history, uniting through a conversation between the texts in a collaborative effort to combat postcolonial amnesia. Autobiography has also emerged as a prominent thread linking the texts together, providing a starting point for a possible continuation of this discussion by exploring how autobiographical elements are

employed by writers across different generations when dealing with Italy's colonial past. Moreover, the *Future* collection has emphasised that the future of Italian identity already exists, and its Afro-Italian writers are the embodiment of that future, not only because they represent a younger generation who will become the future of Italy as a country, but also because they challenge the traditional homogeneity of *italianità*. In the words of Ouedraogo: "Noi ci siamo. E siamo pronti" (p.72).

## Bibliography

### Primary sources

- Herero, A. 2019. Eppure c'era odore di pioggia *In: Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*. Florence: Effequ, pp.87–101.
- Kan, D. 2019. Il mio nome *In: Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*. Florence: Effequ, pp.36–41.
- Longhi, V. 2021. *Il colore del nome*. Milan: Solferino.
- Melandri, F. 2017. *Sangue giusto*. Milan: Rizzoli.
- Ouedraogo, L. 2019. Nassan tenga *In: Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*. Florence: Effequ, pp.57–74.
- Pesarini, A. 2019. Non s'intravede speranza alcuna *In: Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*. Florence: Effequ, pp.42–47.
- Scego, I. (ed.). 2019. *Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*. Florence: Effequ.
- Scego, I. 2015. *Adua*. Florence: Giunti.
- Scego, I. 2019. Nota della curatrice *In: Future: il domani narrato dalle voci di oggi*. Florence: Effequ, pp.8–15.

### Secondary sources

- Aidoo, N. 2022. Black History Month From My Afro-Italian Gaze. *Women\* Writing Berlin Lab*. [Online]. [Accessed 23 June 2022]. Available from: <https://www.wearewwbl.com/online-magazine/2021/2/22/black-history-month-from-my-afro-italian-gaze>.
- Aimi, G. 2018. Francesca Melandri: 'Il mio romanzo su colonialismo e razzismo, capito piu' all'estero che in Italia'. *Esquire*. [Online]. [Accessed 8 February 2022]. Available from: <https://www.esquire.com/it/cultura/libri/a22750641/francesca-melandri-intervista/>.
- Andall, J. 2008. Immigration *In: A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.287–289.
- Andall, J. and Duncan, D. (eds.). 2005. *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Barrera, G. 2005. Patrilinearity, Race, and Identity: The Upbringing of Italo-Eritreans during Italian Colonialism. *In: R. Ben-Ghiat and M. Fuller, eds. Italian Colonialism*. New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.97–108.
- Ben-Ghiat, R. 2008. Italy and its colonies: Introduction. *In: A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.263–267.

- Ben-Ghiat, R. and Fuller, M. (eds.). 2005. *Italian Colonialism*. New York/Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bond, E., Bonsaver, G. and Faloppa, F. (eds.). 2015. *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Bonifazio, P. and Pesarini, A. 2021. Raccontare e raccontarsi: A Conversation with Angelica Pesarini. *gender/sexuality/italy*. **8**, pp.61–66.
- Bouchard, N. 2018. Colonial Legacies and Postcolonial Interruptions. *Studi di italianistica in Africa australe/Italian Studies in Southern Africa*. **31**(1), pp.25–59.
- Burdett, C. 2019. Secrets and Lies: Francesca Melandri's *Sangue giusto* (2017) and the Uncovered Memory of Italian East Africa. *Forum for Modern Language Studies*. **56**(1), pp.49–65.
- Burns, J. 2013. *Migrant Imaginaries: Figures in Italian Migration Literature*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Cariello, M. 2021. Reconfiguring 'la donna del Sud': Trans-Mediterranean Narratives In: *Contemporary Italian Diversity in Critical and Fictional Narratives*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, pp.159–170.
- Carroli, P. 2010. Oltre Babilonia? Postcolonial Female Trajectories towards Nomadic Subjectivity. *Italian Studies*. **65**(2), pp.204–218.
- Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, 2020. *Future: il domani narrato della voci di oggi* [Online]. New York University. [Accessed 23 June 2022]. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDvaxRwkAns>.
- Césaire, A. 1972. *Discourse on Colonialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Chifane, L. 2017. Patterns of Names and Naming in Postcolonial Novels. *Translation Studies: Retrospective and Prospective Views*. **20**, pp.22–31.
- Clò, C. 2012. Hip Pop Italian Style: The Postcolonial Imagination of Second-Generation Authors in Italy. In: C. Lombardi-Diop, ed. *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.275–291.
- Clò, C. and Zammarchi, E. 2021. 'Stran(i)ero nella mia nazione': Hip-Hop from Southern Alienation to Afro-Italian Nation-Hood. In: *Contemporary Italian Diversity in Critical and Fictional Narratives*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, pp.23–42.
- Coppola, M. 2011. 'Rented spaces': Italian postcolonial literature. *Social Identities*. **17**(1), pp.121–135.
- Curti, L. 2007. Female Literature of Migration in Italy. *Feminist Review*. (87), pp.60–75.
- Curti, L. 2021. Beyond the Canon: Women's Italian Writings of Migration In: *Contemporary Italian Diversity in Critical and Fictional Narratives*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, pp.223–236.
- De Franceschi, L. 2018. *La cittadinanza come luogo di lotta. Le seconde generazioni in Italia fra cinema e serialità*. Rome: Arcane Editrice.
- Del Boca, A. 2005. *Italiani, brava gente? Un mito duro a morire*. Vicenza: Neri Pozza.
- Elias, N. 1991. *The Society of Individuals*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fanon, F. 1986. *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto Press.
- Finch, J. 2008. Naming Names: Kinship, Individuality and Personal Names. *Sociology*. **42**(4), pp.709–725.
- Fletcher, R. 2012. The Art of Forgetting: imperialist amnesia and public secrecy. *Third world quarterly*. **33**(3), pp.423–439.
- Fotheringham, C. 2019. History's Flagstones: Nuruddin Farah and Other Literary Responses to Italian Imperialism in East Africa. *Interventions*. **21**(1), pp.111–130.
- Giuliani, G. 2016. Gender, Race and the Colonial Archive. Sexualized Exoticism and Gendered Racism in Contemporary Italy. *Italian Studies*. **71**(4), pp.550–567.
- Hawthorne, C. 2021. L'Italia Meticcica? The Black Mediterranean and the Racial Cartographies of Citizenship In: *The Black Mediterranean. Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.169–198.
- Isacchini, V. 2006. Maria Uva, un mito dimenticato. *Il Corno d'Africa*. [Online]. [Accessed 26 October 2022]. Available from: <https://www.ilcornodafrica.it/maria-uva-un-mito-dimenticato/>.

- Italics, 2020. *The African Female Voice* [Online]. Available from: <https://tv.cuny.edu/show/italics/PR2009103>.
- Iyob, R. 2008. Women's Histories *In: A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.311–313.
- Jacomella, G. 2015. The Silence of Migrants: The Underrepresentation of Migrant Voices in the Mainstream Media *In: Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*. Bern: Peter Lang, pp.149–164.
- Labanca, N. 2008. Historiography *In: A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.286–287.
- Lombardi-Diop, C. 2008. Orientalism *In: A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.304–306.
- Lombardi-Diop, C. 2020. Filial Descent: The African Roots of Postcolonial Literature in Italy. *Forum for Modern Language Studies*. **56**(1), pp.66–77.
- Luraschi, M. 2009. Beyond Words: Mirroring Identities of Italian Postcolonial Women Writers. *ENQUIRE*. **2**(1), pp.64–83.
- Marzagora, S. 2015. Re-writing history in the literature of the Ethiopia diaspora in Italy. *African Identities*. **13**(3), pp.211–225.
- Mazrui, A. 2013. Cultural Amnesia, Cultural Nostalgia and False Memory: Africa's Identity Crisis Revisited. *African and Asian Studies*. **12**(2), pp.13–29.
- Noventa, J. 2014. Identity and Citizenship: The Case of Italy Within Europe. *Iperstoria*. **0**(3).
- Palsson, G. 2014. Personal Names: Embodiment, Differentiation, Exclusion, and Belonging. *Science, Technology & Human Values*. **39**(4), pp.618–630.
- Panico, C. 2021. The re/production of a (white) people: confronting Italian nationalist populism as a gender and race issue. *European Journal of English Studies*. **25**(2), pp.133–153.
- Pesarini, A. 2021. When the Mediterranean 'Became' Black: Diasporic Hopes and (Post)colonial Traumas *In: The Black Mediterranean. Bodies, Borders and Citizenship*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.31–56.
- Poddar, P., Patke, R.S. and Jensen, L. (eds.). 2008. *A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ponzanesi, S. 2016. Edges of Empire: Italy's Postcolonial Entanglements and the Gender Legacy. *Cultural Studies - Critical Methodologies*. **16**(4), pp.373–386.
- Rai 3, 07/01/2022. Quante storie. *Quante storie*.
- Rand, L. 2020. Transgenerational shame in postcolonial Italy: Igiaba Scego's Adua. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*. **56**(1), pp.4–17.
- Romeo, C. 2012. Racial Evaporations: Representing Blackness in African Italian Postcolonial Literature. *In: C. Lombardi-Diop, ed. Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp.221–236.
- Romeo, C. 2017. Italian Postcolonial Literature. *California Italian Studies*. **7**(2), pp.1–43.
- Ronzitti, N. 2009. The Treaty on Friendship, Partnership and Cooperation between Italy and Libya: New Prospects for Cooperation in the Mediterranean? *Bulletin of Italian Politics*. **1**(1), pp.125–133.
- Said, E. 1978. *Orientalism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Skalle, C.E. 2017. Nostalgia and Hybrid Identity in Italian Migrant Literature: The Case of Igiaba Scego. *Bergen Language and Linguistic Studies*. **7**, pp.73–86.
- Smith, M. 2015. Multilingual Practices of Senegalese Immigrants in Rome: Construction of Identities and Negotiation of Boundaries. *Italian Culture*. **33**(2), pp.126–146.
- Smythe, S.A. 2018. The Black Mediterranean and the Politics of Imagination. *Middle East Report*. **286**, pp.3–9.
- Sòrgoni, B. 2008. Racial Policies *In: A historical companion to postcolonial literatures: continental Europe and its empires*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.306–307.
- Spivak, G.C. 1988. Can the Subaltern Speak? *In: C. N. L. Grossberg, ed. Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, pp.271–313.

- Spivak, G.C. 1999. Can the Subaltern Speak? *In: A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp.244–311.
- Tian, J. 2018. Postcolonial Metaphor of Name Change in Yann Martel’s *Life of Pi*. *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*. **31**(1), pp.61–63.
- Varani, S. 2017. *Pagine nascoste*. B&B Film.
- Virga, A. 2019. African “ghosts” and the myth of “Italianness”: the presence of migrant writers in Italian literature. *Tydskrif vir letterkunde*. **56**(1), pp.102–112.
- Zittoun, T. 2004. Symbolic Competencies for Developmental Transitions: The Case of the Choice of First Names. *Culture and Psychology*. **10**(2), pp.131–161.