



**Universiteit Utrecht**

Thesis RMA Comparative Literary Studies

Trans-nationality and Postcolonialism  
Through Education and Cultural Agency:  
Revisiting the Canon of Italian Literature

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## Acknowledgments

This research was born from the idea of looking at Italian universities and their relation to Italian postcolonial literature. In the last decades, an increasing proliferation of perspectives and themes have developed in this field, which are strictly intertwined with the Italian cultural and social fabric. Italy, as well as other Western countries, has its own responsibilities for the colonial exploitation in the past, and has been complicit in the creation of a West in contraposition to the East, for the perpetration of blackness as a discriminative feature, for stereotyping “otherness”, for the racial tensions that dominate the debate around the massive flux of migration of the last years. In this sense, postcolonialism is not only a socio-political condition, but also a narration. By “narration,” I mean literature, the text, and the words, words that have power beyond the page, that allow the creation of parallel spaces for debate, that create platforms of discussion. Actually, as far as I am concerned, literature is not ideological per se, and is not inevitably embedded with political choices. Nevertheless, it is a field of research, personal and collective, a site of representation, of fiction, of invention. Especially, it is a space for everybody. It is a site for the deconstruction of binary oppositions, which generates the possibility to choose. It is a space that creates meetings, in which new happenings occur. With this view in mind, I wish to generate new paradigms of discussion and ideas in this thesis.

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Anna Finozzi

In memoria di Novella

## Introduction

### i. Italian Postcolonial Literature

During my last visit to London, I took the overground from Victoria Station and I travelled for almost thirty minutes to get to my friend's house. I was really surprised to hear the black woman sitting next to me speaking to me in Italian. "Sei italiana, signorina?" Yes, I am. She explained to me that her father had been an Eritrean prisoner during the Italian colonization, and that she used to speak Italian when she was at school. What I did not expect was to be in England speaking Italian with a black woman, and how little historical knowledge I had. I almost did not know anything about Italian colonies, and it was nearly unbelievable for her (and even frustrating) that an Italian girl could not add any information to her personal story. My fault, I have to say. However, educational institutions in Italy did not address this topic in depth. Colonization was only mentioned in my high school programmes when we were studying the Second World War. Apart from some historiographical data, about the Trattato di Uccialli and the first colonial expansion in Eritrea (1882) and Somalia (1889), and the conquest of Libya (1912) and Ethiopia (1936), the Italian educational system does not offer any further in-depth analysis of it. Neither is it connected to the sociological impact of Italian colonization on African populations and its relation to the present. As Lidia Curti writes, "the Italian adventure is removed from the Italian imaginary and from historical memory; it is not studied in school."<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the adjective "postcolonial" in Italy means after and in relation with colonization, but it also

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<sup>1</sup> Curti, Lidia. "Female Literature of Migration in Italy." *Feminist Review* 87 (2007): 62.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

means the urgency to re-read the colonial past and to reallocate it within Italian collective memory.<sup>2</sup>

In 1988 *Asmara Addio* by Erminia Dell'Oro was published and, as she declared, was one of the first novels on the Italian history in Eritrea because before that "there was a huge ignorance on colonialism and on this city, Asmara."<sup>3</sup> From the 1990s onwards, the proliferation of literature written by descendants or sons of descendants of ex-colonies migrated in Italy and writing in Italian has started to circulate in the market place. Some of the most-known names are those of the Italian Somali writers Ali Mumin Ahad, Igiaba Scego, Cristina Ali Farah, Shirin Ramzalani Fazel, the Italian Eritrean writers Erminia Dell'Oro and Ribka Sibhato, the Italian Ethiopian authors Maria Abaebù Viarengo and Gabriella Ghermandi, and the Italian Libyan writer Annamaria Ortese. However, as Caterina Romeo acknowledges, the emergence of the second-generation writers in 2000s to which Scego, Ghermandi and Ali Farah belong, has carried Italian postcolonialism through its more markedly literary phase.<sup>4</sup>

## ii. Italian Academia and Italian Postcolonial Studies: a Trans-national Turn

Roberto Derobertis denounces that the delay of a criticism on Italian postcolonialism occurred because of the lack of a debate in Italian academia on postcolonial Anglo-American theoretical texts, feminist and gender studies, and post-structuralism.<sup>5</sup> Overall, there never happened a structural revision of the national literary canon in the wake of what was proposed by Cultural Studies.<sup>6</sup> As Matteo Di Gesù writes, in the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Dell'Oro, Erminia. "E se domani, dialoghi di convivenza." (06/12/2011) Clip on web. Accessed: 01/03/ 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dm0WakzZui8>

<sup>4</sup> Romeo, Caterina. "Vent'anni di letteratura della migrazione e di letteratura postcoloniale in Italia: un excursus." *Bollettino di italianistica*. Carocci editore 8.2 (2011): 392.

<sup>5</sup> Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 24.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 25.



1990s Italian academia conspicuously reflected on the changes coming from the Anglo-American and Hispanic American countries, but the wage of works was not proportional to its efficiency in letting Italian studies moving towards “quell’itinerario evolutivo che viene invocato da tempo.”<sup>7</sup> The decisive emergence of Italian postcolonialism as a recognised field of research occurred only in the last ten years, when the translations of classical postcolonial texts, included those of C.L.R. James, Aimé Césaire and Franz Fanon, started to circulate in Italian translation.<sup>8</sup> Since 2004, when for the first time the adjective “postcolonial” was applied by Sandra Ponzanesi to literature written in Italy by ex-colonies descendants, Italian postcolonial literature has increasingly acquired a space in literary academic research, both in Italy and abroad.<sup>9</sup> In 2006, Fabrizio De Donno and Neelam Srivastava argued that Italian postcolonialism was still too embedded in an Anglo-French matrix, and that scholars had to overstep these “theoretical directions” in order to make a substantial contribution to the field.<sup>10</sup> Although is not a finished process, I would argue that the work of scholars such as Sandra Ponzanesi, Lidia Curti, Graziella Parati, Daniela Merolla, Franca Sinopoli, Caterina Romeo, Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Daniele Comberiati and others has contributed to a methodical consideration of postcolonial studies based on the particularities of the Italian case.

Especially, one of the most recent works of Caterina Romeo and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (2012), shows how the awareness of Italy’s own postcolonial specificity has reached a consistent maturity, highlighting how “postcolonial” is a necessary step towards the redefinition of “history

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<sup>7</sup> Di Gesù, Matteo. *Palinsesti del moderno: canoni, generi, forme nella postmodernità letteraria*. (Milano: Francoangeli, 2005), 25. [Eng.: “that evolutive itinerary that has been invoked since a long time”]. In this thesis, all the translations from the Italian are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>8</sup> Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women’s Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*. (New York: SUNY P, 2004).

<sup>10</sup> De Donno, Fabrizio & Srivastava, Neelam. “Colonial and Postcolonial Italy.” *Interventions* 8.3 (2006): 372.

and national identity” in contemporary Italy.<sup>11</sup> In this sense, due to the initial primary importance of looking at the hidden colonial history of Italian imperialism, the accent has shifted toward the inclusion of postcolonial theoretical and critical practices within the canonical boundaries of Italianness.<sup>12</sup> Italian postcolonialism has been defined as inclusive of “racialization, gendering, and cultural transformation engendered within contemporary Italy by the legacy of colonialism, emigration and global migrations.”<sup>13</sup> Monica Venturini writes that contemporary interpretative categories and the whole imaginary are changing on the basis of this legacy.<sup>14</sup> Through Italian postcolonial authors, blackness and femininity are deeply employed to dismantle racist colonial stereotypes still present in contemporary Italy. In this sense, the image of the savage black woman, subjugated and civilized by the male white colonizer, is a national topos contained, as noticed by Sandra Ponzanesi, in the Fascist song *Faccetta nera*, written by Renato Micheli in 1935.<sup>15</sup>

However, “the reassessment of the project of *Italianità*” on the basis of the postcolonial paradigm is still not entirely involving the literary canon, contrary to what happened in other European countries.<sup>16</sup> Besides the re-evaluation of texts written from the nineteenth century onwards, the necessity to look at the canon of contemporary Italian literature in its relationship to Italian postcolonial studies remains crucial, both

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<sup>11</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

<sup>12</sup> In defining Italianness or *Italianità*, Romeo and Lombardi-Diop write: “This belonging is not linked to legal status but rather to new ways of being Italian, whether by virtue of being born in Italy, through everyday experiences and practices, or through participation in the educational system and in a dynamic use of the national language. Hence it is not the legal principle of descendant that holds the truth of the migrants’ sense of belonging, but rather the shared cultural practices that transcend the biologically determined (and historically determined) idea of the nation [...]” Romeo, Caterina and Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>14</sup> Venturini, Monica. *Controcànone. Per una cartografia della scrittura coloniale e postcoloniale in Italia*. (Rome: Aracne, 2010), 95.

<sup>15</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women’s Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*, (New York: SUNY P, 2004), 115. An interesting article on the history of *Faccetta Nera*, written by Igiaba Scego can be found in the *Internazionale*, 06/08/2012. Accessed 12/08/2016. <http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2015/08/06/faccetta-nera-razzismo>.

<sup>16</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy*, 11.

for the national internal dynamics and for a reassessment of Italy as a site of literary production within the international panorama. It seems that especially Italian postcolonial studies have been studied mostly as an autonomous field of research, which is useful to the extent that these studies legitimise their presence in academia. For this reason, I believe that an empirical study of the interaction between Italian postcolonial literature and the Italian contemporary literary canon would promote a different approach towards its diffusion, focused on the assimilation of postcolonial literature, considered traditionally as coming from “outside Italy”, and canonical literature as a product conceived within the national space.

Moreover, looking at their points of contact the two fields could eventually lead to a more aware formation of the literary canon, which seems to be based on a constant exchange between national internal and trans-national external forces. In Franca Sinopoli’s words, the issue of a bipolar division between “inside Italy” and “outside Italy” has “polarised Italian studies in a way that is subservient to a monocultural and monotonous vision of literature.”<sup>17</sup> This duality, which can be translated in the dichotomy “centre/periphery” seems to be perpetrated in the reception of Italian postcolonialism, often taught in academia as connected with the notion of “outside Italy.” The strategies of this estrangement within Italian universities has been denounced by a “Manifesto” (2014) of Italian postcolonial studies, in which Romeo and Lombardi-Diop argue against the tendency to relegate Italian postcolonial literature to courses of comparative literature without legitimising them within the canon of Italian literature *tout-court*.<sup>18</sup> I believe that this “eccentric” position, if on one side it produces a difficult integration, on the other it enables Italian postcolonial literature to have a privileged perspective on the construction of the national literary canon by means of

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<sup>17</sup> Sinopoli, Franca. “Deterritorializing the Nation-Based Approach to Literature or the Trans-national dimension of Italian Literature.” In Giuliani, Luigi; Trapassi, Leonarda; Martos, Javier (eds.). *Far Away is Here. Lejos es aquí*. (Berlin: Frank and Timme, 2013), 11.

<sup>18</sup> Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Romeo, Caterina. “The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto.” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 433.

“trans-nationality”. “Trans-nationality” is a notion that has recently started to circulate within Italian postcolonial studies.<sup>19</sup> It includes all those geographical and temporal migrant patterns that encompass the notion of postcolonialism in Italy, from the contemporary fluxes of immigrants to the migration of Italians towards the United States and Northern Europe, while also considering the internal movement of people from the South towards the North of Italy. Emma Bond reflects especially on trans-nationality as an “interpretative lens” in Italian studies, justifying a hyphenated “trans-nationality” for Italy because of its being an in-between migration territory.<sup>20</sup> She argues that Italian trans-nationality, as an intrinsic property of the peninsula as a peripheral territory, is a terrain especially suited to exchange and to create hybrid subjectivities.<sup>21</sup>

## ii. The Process of Canonization: Methodology

As Sandra Ponzanesi notices, even if postcolonial literature “is integrated into the global culture industry as a cultural commodity”, it does not necessarily follow that “it has lost its critical edge and that it will necessarily comply with the grand narrative of neo-capitalism.”<sup>22</sup> In other words, the postcolonial text, even if subjected to the commodification of its content as “exotic” and thus eligible to a high saleability,

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<sup>19</sup> Looking at the titles of some major studies on Italian postcolonialism, such as *Migrating Modernities in the Mediterranean*, *Multicultural Literature in Contemporary Italy*, *Migrant Cartographies*, and so on, it becomes clear that Italy as a nation and Italianness as an identity have become broader, including both a new geographical space of action which embraces the whole Mediterranean territory and more complex intersections of migratory trajectories. Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005). Orton, Marie & Parati, Graziella (eds.). *Multicultural Literature in Contemporary Italy*. (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007). Chambers, Iain, & Lidia Curti. “Migrating Modernities in the Mediterranean.” *Postcolonial Studies* 11.4 (2008): 387-99.

<sup>20</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies.” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 415-16.

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. Balibar, Etienne. *We, the People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*, trans. by James Swenson, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004); Hannerz, Ulf. *Transnational Connections: Culture, People, Places*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 70.

<sup>22</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism: Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry*. (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 109.

maintains a certain resistance towards the flattening of its local “subversiveness.” Ponzanesi reflects on this fluid movement of the postcolonial text with its commodification in cultural industry and how it enables postcolonialism to keep circulating in the market without losing its influence on the enlargement of the national canonical borders. Between the “moment of production” and the “institutionalization” of a postcolonial text in the market, external forces, defined as “cultural agents”, work in order to “confer merit” to the artefact.<sup>23</sup> With globalisation, and thus the exchange of local markets within a worldwide one, they have increased their power and especially literary prizes have acquired a prominent position in the guidance of the readership. However, this effect is not long lasting, since it has been pointed out how the award-winning books have an immediate increase in sales soon after the success, which decreases quickly. What Ponzanesi is interested in is how this phenomenon interacts with the large-scale formation of the literary canon. To answer this question, she recalls the study of the Israeli Rakefet Sela-Sheffy, who combines the existence of a short-term and changeable influence of the canon with its long-term canonization.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Ponzanesi reflects on the effects caused by literary prizes on the dissemination of postcolonial literature in the Western market, pointing out how the initial subversive supply was neutralized by the absorption of postcolonialism into a neo-colonial logic – a logic which does not exclude, however, the still ongoing production of knowledge by postcolonial authors.

In her analysis, Ponzanesi refers especially to literary prizes, whose influence drives the market choices on a short-term period base. It seems interesting to apply her research to the Italian case in two ways. Firstly, by accepting the notion of canon formation by the commodification of postcolonial narrations; secondly, by borrowing

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. “Canon Formation Revisited: Canon and Cultural Production.” *Neohelicon* 29. 2 (2002): 141-159.

the notion of “cultural agent”. Using the example of authors such as Salman Rushdie, the role of the author in the making of his or her own commercial success has become increasingly important. Speaking about the success of Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), Ponzanesi writes: “The author herself was a perfect icon of the new commodified personality: a young, talented, good-looking rebel, and most of all one capable of manipulating the media as much as the media managed to manipulate her.”<sup>25</sup> Apart from their works and interplays with her or his commercialization, the very figure of the author has also been commodified. However, the manipulation of the media is eventually useful, since it allows the author to gain visibility and to produce knowledge, even when driven by economic motives. Igiaba Scego is also an example of this mechanism, since her blackness and Somali origins are employed to promote her with the label of migrant or postcolonial author on the Italian market. It seems that the “subversiveness” is kept in her works as a novelist, as a journalist and as a human activist to undermine the canonical boundaries of Italianness, even if her person has been “commodified.”

It seems useful in this sense to apply the notion of canon formation to the Italian case of postcolonial literature. By looking at how the national literary canon can be intertwined with Italian postcolonial literature, my thesis aims to understand what canals and what contents Italian postcolonialism employs to broaden the notion of national Italian identity, intended as an intersection of cultural and literary representations.

Therefore, academic reception becomes not only the basis of my theoretical framework, but also the site of investigation of how Italian postcolonialism is entering in the canon of contemporary Italian literature. As is stated by John Guillory in the “Preface” to *Cultural Capital. The problem of literary canon formation* (1993):

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<sup>25</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism: Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry*. (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 117.

... evaluative judgements are necessary but not sufficient condition for the process of canon formation, ... it is only by understanding the social function and institutional protocols of the school that we will understand how works are preserved, reproduced and disseminated over successive generations and centuries.<sup>26</sup>

Supposing that in order to understand canon formation one should look at the educational system and its social function, Guillory introduces the concept of “pedagogical canon” or “syllabus,” namely the description and the bibliography of a university course, in which a selected corpus of works are inserted. The totality of texts taught in a nation contributes to the creation of the “imaginary canon,” namely the literary canon *tout-court*. In 1992 the Swedish American scholar Bernth Lindfors carried out an empirical survey in South Africa harvesting syllabi from all the courses of English literature in Anglophone universities.<sup>27</sup> He lately compared the survey to another one, realised six years before. In this way, he researched the extent to which the canon of English literature in Africa was taking into account the variable of time, using the periodization of Apartheid as a watershed between these two similar researches and thus recording an increase of the presence of African literature soon after 1991. Despite the fact that Lindfors’ research has been conducted in a very extended time period and that the wage of material allowed a systematic quantitative analysis, my study will be as well an attempt to collect syllabi that contain both primary and secondary Italian postcolonial texts.

Finally, I start from the supposition that the notion of cultural agent applied to that of the Italian postcolonial author and to the collection of courses that teach Italian

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<sup>26</sup> Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital. The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), vii.

<sup>27</sup> Bernth Lindfors, “African Literature Teaching in South African University English Departments.” *Alternation* 3.1 (1995): 5-14.

postcolonial literature will allow an insight on the modalities through which academic and public discourses operate in the enlargement of the national literary canon. Moreover, my research aims to explore contents that are re-shaping the canonical notion of Italianness, among those the concept of “trans-nationality” as a content and as a perspective that allows for the inclusion of “subversive” identitarian and cultural representations within the borders of the canon of Italian literature.

### iii. Structure

As a first step, it would be necessary to analyse Italian postcolonial studies by looking at its scholarly development, by pointing out how the first attempt to describe “letteratura della migrazione” (literature of migration) has evolved into Italian postcolonialism as a structured field of research. Moreover, the first chapter will concentrate on the historical development of Italian postcolonial literature emphasising the erasure of colonial history from the Italian historical master narrative. This fact introduces the specificities of Italian postcolonialism, which primarily go back to the rediscovery of colonial literature and its representations. Representations that are still driving the contemporary perception of the African migrant “other” and that therefore need to be revisited by a postcolonial loupe. In order to understand how Italian postcolonialism is dismantling the canonical boundaries of Italianness, this chapter will concentrate on the discriminatory category of blackness, which is often stereotypically translated into the image of the uncultivated black woman of the Fascist propaganda. A trans-national turn in Italian Studies can perhaps help to surpass old canonical mechanisms of national identity. For this reason, I will recall Bond’s article, which aims to approach a trans-national “turn” in Italian studies. Eventually, the first chapter will introduce second-generation author Igiaba Scego through her scholarly critical reception and will explain



why she can be considered a prominent voice within the Italian contemporary public debate on postcolonial issues.

The second chapter sets out to examine the notion of the literary canon, in order to find out why during the last century scholars have tried to restructure its traditional definition. In the light of my research, understanding how Italian academia has failed to assimilate the changes proposed by cultural studies means to understand why the teaching of Italian postcolonialism remains marginal in its relationship with the teaching of Italian contemporary literature. Moreover, the chapter introduces the issue of authority in the formation of the Italian literary canon; during the last decades, since cultural and academic criticism have lost their exclusivity of knowledge of quality, new voices of critical and literary production are rising through different media platforms, among which the Internet represents the most fruitful space. In this way I will lay the basis for the theorization of the function of “cultural agent” performed by postcolonial authors.

The third chapter deals with the texts that have helped me frame my empirical research, both in the use of the syllabus and the conceptualization of the notion of cultural agent. While drawing on the notion of “pedagogical syllabus” of John Guillory, Susan Gallagher discusses the cultural dynamics of assimilation of a Zimbabwean novel into the American literary canon. The systematic use of the syllabus for empirical investigation is further developed by Bernth Lindfors, whose research takes into account the collection of course descriptions of South African universities. On the other hand, by looking at the process of canon formation described by Ponzanesi which focuses on the extra-academic agents that interact in the cultural global market, I will refer to the self-commodification operated by the postcolonial author himself. Moreover, the chapter discusses the notion of canon formation that I intend to use in my analysis, taking into account the shifting of canonical boundaries by means of postcolonial texts.

Finally, the fourth chapter will analyse the material collected both on university courses and on Igiaba Scego and her activity as a cultural agent. By means of their comparison, I expect to investigate the means by which Italian postcolonial literature is enlarging the Italian contemporary literary canon and to show how trans-nationality can be considered a perspective that promotes their mutual assimilation.

To promote a tear in the textures of knowledge means, then, to insist on the historical, cultural and political importance of discontinuity. Such a discontinuity evokes not so much the cancellation of previous understandings and their disciplinary protocols, but rather the development of an unfolding series of reconfigurations that come out of the past, hence potentially already exist, to dissect the present.

Ponzanesi and Merolla, in *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe (After the Empire)*, 388.

## Chapter One

### Italian Postcolonial Literature and Trans-nationality:

#### The Case of Igiaba Scego

The first chapter serves as an outline of Italian postcolonialism and how this field of research has developed over time in academia in the last twenty years. From the definition of “*letteratura della migrazione*” (1998) to the rise of Italian postcolonial studies as a structured field of research, Italian postcolonialism has acquired a precise theoretical form. Despite the fact that the field is in constant evolution, it has already acquired its own specificity, and deals in particular with trans-nationality, the rediscovery of colonial propaganda portraying black African women as sexually available, and the stereotypization of blackness as something that does not belong to Italy. Especially, I will discuss how the female body became a way to critically rethink the colonial past and the complex postcolonial present. This chapter aims to lay the basis of the theoretical framework which I will use in my analysis. Moreover, it also introduces the objects of my empirical research. Since my analysis will carry out the study of syllabi on Italian postcolonial literature, the academic reception of Italian postcolonialism is central to this investigation. In the concluding section I will introduce Igiaba Scego, whom I have chosen as an example of a “cultural agent,” through the scholarly reception of her position as a second-generation Somali Italian postcolonial writer.

Eventually, I expect to provide the knowledge necessary to investigate the topics of Italian postcolonialism in order to analyse how postcolonial scholarship contributes to the formation of the contemporary Italian literary canon.

## 1.1. The Critical Reception: from “letteratura della migrazione” to Italian Postcolonial Literature

“Che io sia di seconda generazione l’ho scoperto poco fa perché ... una mia amica, la scrittrice Igiaba Scego m’ha telefonato e m’ha detto ‘Gabri ma lo sai che tu sei 2G?’ Io di fronte a questa lettera e questo numero le ho detto ‘ma cosa significa?’. ‘Che saresti di seconda generazione.’ E poi m’ha anche spiegato ‘guarda che tu comunque non sei una 2G d.o.c. Sei una 2G tarocca ... perché i veri 2G sono figli di genitori stranieri mentre tua mamma è italiana.’”<sup>28</sup> This ironic answer, given by Gabriella Kuruvilla during an interview in 2013, introduces the controversial discussion on the definition of Italian authors who write in Italian but have a different geographical and cultural background due to their parents’ migration to Italy, and who are called “second-generation” authors for this reason. Kuruvilla’s humoristic approach is emblematic of what is currently happening, at least of what has been happening since the 1990s: critics have produced a wide range of labels in order to encapsulate the Italian literature written by first and second-generation migrant authors who, paradoxically, seem to have difficulties identifying themselves with the category or group to which they supposedly belong.

Within the Italian critical debate, the first definition of Italian migrant literature is attributed to the scholar Armando Gnisci. Although he had worked on similar literature before (see for instance *Il rovescio del gioco*, 1992), he systematically recognized its existence in 1998 when he published the volume *La letteratura italiana della*

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<sup>28</sup> Kuruvilla, Gabriella. “E se domani, dialoghi di convivenza.” (13/10/2012) Clip on web. Accessed 22/04/2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjR4BJ4-iEo> [Eng.: “That I am a second-generation author, I have discovered it because a friend of mine, the writer Igiaba Scego, called me and told me: ‘Gabri, you know you are a 2G, don’t you?’ In front of this letter and this number I have answered ‘What does it mean?’ ‘That you are a second-generation one.’ And then she also explained to me: ‘you are not a real 2G. You are a fake 2G because the real 2G are sons of foreign parents, while your mum is Italian.’”]

*migrazione*.<sup>29</sup> Ever since, he uses the label “letteratura della migrazione” [migration literature] to refer to a corpus of texts written by Italophone writers since 1990, defining them as a “fenomeno della modernità avanzata” [phenomenon of advanced modernity] and a “versione italiana dell’emergere delle letterature post-coloniali nelle lingue europee della grande colonizzazione e del parlamento mondiale degli scrittori migranti che caratterizza questo fine di secolo.”<sup>30</sup> This was the very first attempt to describe a new Italophone literary production, which was a result of the reception of migrant influxes in Italy, whose “unexpected exuberance” produced “a corollary of repercussions in different areas of Italian society.”<sup>31</sup>

After Gnisci’s recognition, an increasing number of scholars have attempted to find a more exhaustive and inclusive category to encompass the heterogeneity of migrant works. The difficulties experienced while searching for a definition reflect the intrinsically dynamic and changeable nature that characterizes the contribution of these authors to the contemporary Italian literary sphere. The term “migrant” is preferred over “immigrant” by some, because the latter is “uncomfortably sharp since the term ‘immigration’ recalls governmental or inter-governmental policy, border controls, alarmist public discourse, and, most importantly, suggests a single movement in one direction from ‘origin’ to ‘destination’.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the use of the word “literature” has also been contested. As Caterina Romeo acknowledges, scholars such as Fulvio Pezzarossa and Roberto Derobertis refer to “scritture migrant” in the sense of a general composition in order to avoid making a distinction between high and low culture (since

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<sup>29</sup> Gnisci, Armando. *La letteratura italiana della migrazione*. (Roma: Lilith, 1998). Gnisci, Armando. *Il rovescio del gioco*. (Roma: Carucci, 1992). It is also important to mention that Gnisci founded the BASILI (Banca dati sugli scrittori immigrati in lingua italiana) in 1997, an archive on migrant writers in Italian.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 28. [Eng.: “Italian version of the rise of postcolonial literatures in the European languages of the big colonization and of the worldwide parliament of migrant writers at the end of this century.”]

<sup>31</sup> Wright, Simona. “Can the Subaltern Speak? The Politics of Identity and Difference in Italian Postcolonial Women's Writing.” *Italian Culture* 22.1 (2004): 94.

<sup>32</sup> Burns, Jennifer. *Migrant Imaginaries. Figures in Italian Migration Literature*. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), 8.

the first works were mainly biographical and autobiographical testimonies).<sup>33</sup> As an alternative, some scholars (Brogi, Portelli, Ponzanesi) have proposed hyphenated terms such as “Italian African” or “Afro-Italian” based on the author’s ethnic roots.<sup>34</sup>

As Romeo explains, “literature of migration” as a label has been quite useful in the beginning for these authors in order to enter the publishing houses’ marketplace and thus to be considered as an existing reality.<sup>35</sup> To this day, it still is the most used definition. However, this term also carries very strong discriminatory connotations concerning ghettoization, exoticism, and “otherness.”<sup>36</sup> The term can be discriminatory because it does not allow a critical shift from the first wave of socio-political migrant writings (during the 1980s), to the more complex literary texts of the later decades, by only considering them as testimonies of “memory,” “traveling,” or “displacement.”<sup>37</sup> The ethical and aesthetic aspects of the so-called second-generation writers are subjected to a flattening conception of literature that fails to address more sophisticated intersections of themes, structures, and languages. In 2011, Daniela Brogi wrote an article entitled “Smettiamo di chiamarla letteratura della migrazione?” in which she sharply addresses Italian academia and cultural institutions. She wonders if it is still appropriate to use the definition of “letteratura della migrazione” for authors such as Igiaba Scego, who use Italian as a literary medium and not only as a language of communication. She further dismisses those critics who make a distinction between

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<sup>33</sup> Romeo, Caterina. “Vent’anni di letteratura della migrazione e di letteratura postcoloniale in Italia: un excursus.” In *La letteratura Italiana e l’esilio*. Bollettino di italianistica. Carocci editore 8.2 (2011): 383.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 383. The tradition of hyphenated identities is common in the Anglophone world. See for instance: Caglar, Ayse S. “Hyphenated Identities and the Limits of ‘Culture’” in Modood, Tariq and Werbner, Pnina. (eds) *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe. Racism, Identity and Community*. (London: Zed Study Editions, 1997).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 384.

<sup>36</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Orton, Marie & Parati, Graziella (eds.). *Multicultural Literature in Contemporary Italy*. (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007), 12.

Scego and other Italian authors.<sup>38</sup> Other definitions connect Italian migrant literature to a more open-minded perspective on Europe, which includes new postcolonial trajectories; accordingly, some scholars have preferred to speak of “migrant cartographies” (Merolla and Ponzanesi 2005), “migrant imaginaries” (Burns), “migrating modernities” (Iain and Curti), or “multicultural literature” (Orton and Parati).<sup>39</sup>

The definition of postcolonial literature cannot be confused with literature of migration, even if these terms are sometimes used interchangeably. These definitions do overlap in relation to some works, since they are both representative of something that is considered external. Although I do agree with the label of “postcolonial,” I do not entirely agree with that of “letteratura della migrazione,” because it reveals the intrinsic inequity in respect to the category of Italian literature. In fact, “della migrazione” precisely refers to exclusion rather than inclusion. In other words, while postcolonialism is based on the demolition of a hierarchical structure between Italy and “outside Italy” and between first and second generations, “letteratura della migrazione” reinforces the subalternity of a corpus of texts coming from “outside Italy” and “tolerated” by the country of arrival.

However, I shall use both these terms in this research because a conventional definition of these terminologies has already been formed and because they are both used in the debate on the canon of Italian literature and in the course descriptions analysed. As mentioned above, despite the fact that “letteratura della migrazione” can have a discriminatory connotation when applied to second-generation writers, for example for writers born in Italy such as Igiaba Scego or Gabriella Kuruvilla, it would not be completely fair to eliminate this category from literary terminology altogether

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<sup>38</sup> Brogi, Daniela. “Smettiamo di chiamarla ‘letteratura della migrazione’?”. *Nazione Indiana* (23/03/2011). Accessed 29/02/2016.

<http://www.nazioneindiana.com/2011/03/23/smettiamo-di-chiamarla-«letteratura-della-migrazione»/>

<sup>39</sup> Cfr. Introduction.



because it refers to a precise periodization, since it was used in the first phase of recognition.

The adjective “postcolonial” was applied to the Italian literary context for the first time by Sandra Ponzanesi in 2004. She analysed how postcolonial theories can be applied to the relationship between an Italian imperialistic past and its contemporaneity as a clear consequence of a non-explored discourse on colonial paradigms.<sup>40</sup> Ponzanesi stated that:

While in other European countries the legacy of colonialism and the recent global migratory flows have contributed to the redefinition of national subjectivities, only in recent years has Italy started confronting its colonial past and the consequences of global mass migration.<sup>41</sup>

Adopted from English and French critical theories, postcolonialism in Italy is, on the one hand, an interdisciplinary approach that explores Italian migrant literature written by descendants of the former colonies, and is, on the other, a way to constantly forge a strong connection to Italian political and social responsibilities towards contemporary migration fluxes from its colonial territories.

In *Fuori centro: studi postcoloniali e letteratura italiana* (2010), Derobertis discusses two main reasons why postcolonial studies need to engage with Italian literature. Firstly, he highlights the historiographical lack of interest in the Italian colonial period, which has led to its general underestimation. This is connected with the insufficient, and often unsystematic, studies on migrant writings that have not been

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<sup>40</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women's Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*, (New York: SUNY P, 2004)

<sup>41</sup> Coppola, Manuela. ““Rented spaces”: Italian postcolonial literature.” *Social Identities* 17.1 (2011): 121.

adequately researched with respect to their ideological content (race, genre, class). Secondly, he illustrates how the same notion of *Italianità* has not been satisfactorily explored in relation to the trans-national movements from and toward Italy, which he considers an irreducible feature of Italian contemporary national identity.<sup>42</sup>

Italian postcolonialism was initially connected to foreign theories, but over time it has developed its own particularities. As has been said, postcolonial in the Italian context means to concentrate on Italy's hidden colonial past as a necessary step to better understand and critically engage with the present. Adopting a postcolonial critical engagement also means focusing on colonial amnesia, on the memory and testimonies of decolonized subjectivities, to read colonial literature and colonial history with a more aware consciousness, to build a bridge between the past and the present, and to foster political responsibilities towards migratory influxes from the former colonies. *Post* in this sense is not used as a fracture, a chronological and epistemological discontinuity.<sup>43</sup> It is rather used to underline the will to re-open the black box at the centre of the debate. The field of Italian postcolonialism further aims to reconsider and reanalyse the historical, political, social, and cultural circumstances that led to the conquest of Eritrea, Somalia, Libya, and Ethiopia and the other territories.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, the fact that the number of xenophobic political movements is rising on the Italian political scene, along with an increasing debate on the hosting of new immigrants vividly present in Europe, calls for an urgent examination of narratives, paradigms, and perpetrations of Fascist racial representations.<sup>45</sup> Especially, Italian

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<sup>42</sup> Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 10-11.

<sup>43</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2-10 and Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 11-19.

<sup>45</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Il postcolonialismo italiano. Figlie dell'impero e letteratura meticciasa." *Quaderni del '900* 4.4 (2004): 24. ("La rivisitazione del periodo coloniale italiano non esplora solamente le tassonomie razziali, specifiche alle

postcolonialism deals with an interaction of new elements in the reshaping of traditional Italian identity which associated blackness with the “Other,” a concept that I will explore further in the next section.

For the analysis of the topics that I will refer to, it is particularly interesting to consider what Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo wrote in their “The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto,” referring to the importance to the use of postcolonial theories in Italy:

[postcolonial studies] apply the postcolonial critical paradigm to scrutinize the cultural subalternity of emigrants in Italy’s ‘colonies’ around the world; they connect trans-Mediterranean and transoceanic migrations; they place the Mediterranean at the centre of contemporary diaspora studies, thus connecting the central position that the Mediterranean has acquired recently to its centrality in antiquity; they highlight Gramsci’s emphasis on anticapitalist and anticolonial struggles as a necessary step toward any liberation; they include emigration, colonization, intranational migrations and contemporary immigration within the same continuum; they connect Italian colonial history with historical processes of racialization and contemporary racisms; they reflect on how contemporary postcolonial cultural production creates a sense of cultural belonging that strongly questions and redefines the biological attribution of citizenship; they formulate new conceptualizations of blackness and its intersection with Italianness; they connect the contemporary exploitation of black women — especially as care-givers and sex workers — with their exploitation in colonial societies.<sup>46</sup>

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politiche di apartheid durante il regime fascista, ma anche la protrazione di tali sistemi di rappresentazione fino al momento attuale”).)

<sup>46</sup> Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Romeo, Caterina. “The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto.” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 427.

This research will follow the postcolonial critical approach since I strongly support the manifesto's claim the term "postcolonialism" to enter Italian academia and, hopefully, the public debate as well in order to rethink Italy's geographical and canonical borders. In the light of my research, "postcolonialism" means investigating the specificity of the Italian case, as already mentioned, but especially to examine its relation to Italian Studies. Following Romeo and Lombardi-Diop's *Postcolonial Italy*, I believe it is currently necessary to create connections between Italian postcolonialism and contemporary Italian literature starting with studying how Italian postcolonialism can be combined with Italian contemporary literature.

## 1.2. The Development of Postcolonial Discourse in Italy

The question why the Italian colonial past has been hidden from mainstream history has been extensively explored by both Italian and international scholars. First of all, with the Paris Peace Treaties (1947), Italy lost all its colonial territories and this inglorious end of Italian imperialism was perceived as a cause of shame and thus removed from collective memory. Secondly, as highlighted by the common expression "imperialismo straccione" allegedly coined by Lenin, the Italian colonial adventure was generally seen as not as cruel as that of other European countries.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the slogan of *Italiani Brava Gente* ("Italians good people") perpetuated the idea that Italians "invested heavily in the colonies without economic return (through infrastructure, schooling and road systems)" rather than exploiting and subjugating its former colonies.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, as Chambers and Curti note, "such a repression of the violent and brutal character of colonialism also expresses the will to ignore the defeat and the loss of the colonies: a

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<sup>47</sup> Trento, Giovanna. "Madamato and Colonial Concubinage in Ethiopia: A Comparative Perspective." *Aethiopica* 14 (2013): 186.

<sup>48</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "The Past Holds No Terror?." *Wasafiri*, 15.31 (2000): 16.

working through of a mourning that is never confronted.”<sup>49</sup> Thirdly, and connected to the above, the brief duration and unsuccessful conclusion led Italian colonialism to be identified as “minor colonialism,” and as such it was distinguished from the major imperial expansion of Great Britain and France. It is important to keep in mind that this distinction is based on a comparison, and it “does not mean they were experienced as minor by those who were subjected to this domination.”<sup>50</sup>

The interest in colonial and postcolonial literature and the specific “Italian” approach developed relatively late compared to other European countries. This occurred mainly because of the previously mentioned amnesia of the colonial historical past, but other factors also played a role. As Ponzanesi writes, in contrast to other countries, Italy did not have an immediate and substantial arrival of migrants from the former colonies.<sup>51</sup> The post-colonial flux of migrants from the periphery towards the centre reached its peak only in the last twenty years, during which Italians had already forgotten about their political and social responsibilities towards the former territories. The relatively recent migrant waves have opened up the issue of this accountability and indeed the necessity for a post-colonial revisitation of the present.<sup>52</sup> Italian imperialism was a political movement rather than an economic one, pushed by a sense of duty through the alliance with Germany and by a feeling of inferiority with respect to the other nations that had already expanded their borders beyond European boundaries.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the cultural conversion, on which Great Britain and France built their empires, did not interest the Italian conquerers. On the contrary, Italian schooling was denied to African

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<sup>49</sup> Chambers, Iain, & Lidia Curti. “Migrating modernities in the Mediterranean”. *Postcolonial Studies* 11.4 (2008): 392.

<sup>50</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 19

<sup>51</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Il postcolonialismo italiano.” (2004), 29.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Gundle, Stephen. “Miss Italia in Black and White: Feminine Beauty and Ethnic Identity in Modern Italy.” In Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 32.

children after the fifth year.<sup>54</sup> Hence, a similar production of Italophone literature was very limited, and it started to grow only with the second-generation migrants.

Another cause that hindered Italians in the exploration of their colonial memory was the fact that Italy had always been a country of emigration since its unification in 1861. It is worthwhile to remember that after decolonization, in the second post-war period, Italy still witnessed millions of emigrants going to America, Northern Europe, and Canada, while in other European countries the population started to increase due to the influx of previous colonies' migrants.<sup>55</sup> The fact that Italy already had a trans-national orientation and that the postcolonial migration started just around 1980 "corroborated its self-perception as a demographically and culturally homogenous nation," which can also help to explain why the new migrant waves ignited such strong xenophobic sentiments.<sup>56</sup>

Starting from the 1980s, the colonial experience began to be rediscovered in relation to its literary expression. It has been pointed out how from 1927 onwards, culture was employed by Fascist colonialists as a medium of ideological cohesion for the formation of a "mentalità colonialista," [colonial mentality] as a system of stimulating an "imperialismo spirituale" [spiritual imperialism] and political action.<sup>57</sup> One of the most important channels of this movement was the journal *L'Oltremare* (1927), which was the first to focus on colonial affairs. The subsequent publication of *L'Azione Coloniale* (1931) showed how the, still uncertain, existence of colonial literature by Italian authors

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<sup>54</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "The Past Holds," 26.

<sup>55</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies*, 19. "Unlike Britain, France, and the Netherlands, Italy did not experience large-scale spontaneous immigration from its former colonies after decolonization. In the United Kingdom, the population of New Commonwealth origin increased rapidly after 1951, reaching 1.2 million in 1971 and 1.5 million in 1981. By 1970 there were more than 600,000 Algerians, 140,000 Moroccans, and 90,000 Tunisians in France. The Netherlands had two main inflows from the former colonies. Between 1945 and the early 1960s, immigrants arrived from the former Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia), and after 1965, increasing number of immigrants came to the Netherlands from the Caribbean Suriname."

<sup>56</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 7.

<sup>57</sup> Venturini, Monica. *Controcànone. Per una cartografia della scrittura coloniale e postcoloniale in Italia*. (Rome: Aracne, 2010), 30. In 1927, the journal *L'Oltremare* was founded.

was considered as a necessary form of Italian self-representation through two referendums (1931-1933).<sup>58</sup> Before Mussolini announced the Second Italo-Ethiopian War (1935), periodicals and newspapers were already encouraging intellectuals to produce colonial literature, which increased its production. However, according to Mario Palmieri, cited in Venturini's study, the number of colonial narrations was not proportional to its quality.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the crisis of the colonial project also coincided with the completion of the failure of colonial literature, especially characterized by the lack of public acknowledgment. The success of the anti-imperialistic novel *Mal d'Africa* by Riccardo Bacchelli, which strongly contrasted with official propaganda, is in Venturini's view indicative of the fact that colonial literature never really reached Italian readers.<sup>60</sup>

At the end of the 1980s, scholars started to integrate studies on colonialism with the debate on literature of migration, which was rethought through a postcolonial critical approach, while personal memories describing migration began to circulate. Erminia Dell'Oro's *Asmara Addio* (1988) was one of the pioneering novels about the Italian colonial experience in Eritrea, where the author was born in 1938.<sup>61</sup> From the 1990s onwards, a consistent number of works written by migrants was published in Italy in the form of autobiographies and biographies with the collaboration of "linguistic experts" (native speakers, often writers or journalists).<sup>62</sup> Some examples are Pap Khouma (and Oreste Pivetta) *Io, venditore di elefanti* (1990), Mohamed Bouchane (with Carlo de Girolamo and Daniele Miccione) *Chiamatemi Ali* (1991), and Salah Methnani (with

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<sup>58</sup> Some of the most successful colonial fictional works are: Gaslini Dei, Mario. *Piccolo amore beduino*. (Milano: l'Eroica, 1926); *Natisc fiore dell'oasi*. (Bologna: Cappelli Editore, 1928); Mitrano Sani, Gino. *E pei solchi millenari delle carovaniere*. (Roma: Tipo-Litografia della Scuola d'Arti e Mestieri, 1926); *Femina Somala. Romanzo coloniale del Benadir*. (Napoli: Detken and Rocholl, 1933).

<sup>59</sup> Venturini. *Controcànone*, 33-36.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Dell'Oro, Erminia. *Asmara Addio*. (Pordenone, Ed. dello Zibaldone, 1988)

<sup>62</sup> Orton, Marie & Parati, Graziella (eds.). *Multicultural Literature in Contemporary Italy*. (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007), 12.

Mario Fortunato) *Immigrato* (1990).<sup>63</sup> However, in some cases the intervention of these experts concerned “serious manipulation,” displaying the resistance of publishers to launch these first attempts of literary texts onto the market.<sup>64</sup> It is important to note, as Simona Wright wrote when recalling Edward Said, that “the emergence of the other could only be effected through the mediation and supervision of a concealed censoring mechanism, making writing “a quattro mani” an operation fraught with cultural and political consequences,” since the “Other” is always embedded in the “literary system” of the main culture.<sup>65</sup>

This first wave of first-generation migrant texts was mostly about themes such as “exile, displacement, cultural fragmentation, otherness, and racism.”<sup>66</sup> This trend has resulted in a strong resistance to consider migrant authors as a “social document,” as stated by Coppola:

Many critics still perpetuate the stereotype of migrant writers writing exclusively autobiographical stories, denying them the literary imaginative ability to create fictional characters and implicitly repeating the negative image attached to autobiography as a minor genre.<sup>67</sup>

As a consequence, this attitude also led to analyses of migrant and postcolonial studies being conducted through a sociological and political approach rather than an ethical and aesthetic one.

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<sup>63</sup> Romeo, Caterina. “Vent’anni di letteratura della migrazione e di letteratura postcoloniale in Italia: un excursus.” *Bollettino di italianistica*. Carocci editore 8.2 (2011): 386.

<sup>64</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), Introduction.

<sup>65</sup> Wright, Simona. “Can the Subaltern Speak? The Politics of Identity and Difference in Italian Postcolonial Women's Writing.” *Italian Culture* 22.1 (2004): 96.

<sup>66</sup> Orton, Marie & Parati, Graziella (eds.). *Multicultural Literature in Contemporary Italy*. (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2007), 12.

<sup>67</sup> Coppola, Manuela. “Rented spaces’: Italian postcolonial literature.” *Social Identities*, 17.1 (2011): 124.



Second-generation migrants have given a different orientation to their corpus of works. Among this group it is worth to remember figures such as Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, Igiaba Scego, Gabriella Ghermandi, Maria Abbebù Viarengo, Marta Nasibù, Elisa Kidanè, Ribka Sibhatu, Luciana Capretti, Christiana de Caldas Brito, Tahar Lamri, Laila Wadia, Sumaya Abdel Qader, Jadelin Mabilia Gangbo, and many others. Fiction instead of autobiographical works, and linguistic pastiche instead of research for an Italian standardized grammar are some of the features that diversify the first group of writers (1980s) from the second one (2000s).

### 1.3. Trans-nationality: A Loupe to Rethink Italian National Borders

The concept of trans-nationality is increasingly used within Italian postcolonial studies. Specifically, it is used in relation to multidirectional patterns that undermine the notion of Italian postcolonialism itself. Trans-nationality thus embraces the migratory fluxes from the former colonies of the Horn of Africa, contemporary trans-Mediterranean migrations, the internal migration from the South to the North of Italy, the Great Migration of Italians to the United States during the second postwar period and other countries of Northern Europe.<sup>68</sup> As Romeo and Lombardi-Diop argue, these patterns encompass a geographical movement but also a temporal one, both covered by the inclusivity of Italian postcolonialism.<sup>69</sup> In this sense, trans-nationality also opens up new spaces beyond national boundaries, in order to better configure the multifaceted and heterogeneous nature of Italian identity since the country's unification.

In 2014, Emma Bond wrote an article on Italian literary trans-nationality, focusing on its use as a category in Italian academia and on its productivity within a global

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<sup>68</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 2-5.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

reception.<sup>70</sup> The concept of trans-nationality is adopted by Italian critical texts with terms such as “global” [*globale*] or “worldly” [*mondiale*] in the sense of “a sustained critical engagement with the real-life processes of transnationalism or globalization itself.”<sup>71</sup> However, “their focus is still closely aligned with a core desire to stretch or go beyond the notionally tight confines of a national context, culture, or language.”<sup>72</sup>

As far as Italian studies are concerned, trans-nationality has many different connotations. Firstly, it is connected to the categories of “translatability” and “visibility” for authors such as Umberto Eco and their “global” reception. In 2011 Vittorio Coletti, for instance, defined “world” literature in a negative sense as a set of works that can suit every culture.<sup>73</sup> In this way, he both denied the existence of a relation between the local aspect and the global one as a mechanism of exclusivity and suggested ‘trans-national’ as a way to enter the global marketplace; thus, the “lettore mondiale” [worldwide reader] can become interested in a standardised Italian text with “local flavours.”<sup>74</sup> Looking at what I have stated before, also the term “migrant” [della migrazione] has been criticized as a commercial term. This connotation will be examined in the third chapter, in which I employ the notion of “commodified exotica” by Sandra Ponzanesi. The commercialisation of both “trans-national”, “migrant” and “postcolonial” within the cultural market does not necessarily mean that the content of these works has not quality.

Secondly, Italian academia embraces “a significant attempt at re-evaluating and recuperating the position of cultural production originating outside traditionally conceived national borders.”<sup>75</sup> For instance, both Teresa Fiore and Franca Sinopoli explore the connection between past Italian emigration and contemporary migration

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<sup>70</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies.” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 415-24.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 415.

<sup>73</sup> Coletti, Vittorio. *Romanzo mondo: La letteratura nel villaggio globale*. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011).

<sup>74</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn,” 418.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 419.

towards Italy, combining the geographical mobility with a temporal one. Especially, Italian-American literature has been explored by Fiore as part of the Italian literary canon in a perspective that “interweaves time and space,” which I intend to investigate in the analysis of the syllabi.

The third aspect on which Italian scholars have based their reflections is the exclusion of postcolonial and migration literature from a discourse on the “spatial extension” of contemporary Italian literature, again bypassing the relation between the local and the global.<sup>76</sup> Effectively, a trans-national approach means to foreground the “spatial stretch” of contemporary Italian literature and not to ghettoise migrant writers.<sup>77</sup> I will extensively come back to this point in the next chapter, in which I address the conservatism of Italian scholarship.

Trans-nationality is surely one of the most discussed features of Italian postcolonialism, both as a subject matter and as a lens through which postcolonial literature should enter in the formation of a new literary canon. These aspects will be investigated in the fourth chapter, in which I will examine how trans-nationality connects both the topics of the courses and Scego’s work, and can be considered a loupe through which one can look at postcolonialism.

#### 1.4. Italian Feminization of Postcolonial Literature

There are more female than male second-generation writers. As Monica Venurini argues, in postcolonial migrant narrations the chosen perspective is always the female

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<sup>76</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn,” 419.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

one; the passive role of the subdued Africa has transformed into the woman narrator, whose figure subverts the stereotype of the woman as subaltern.<sup>78</sup>

As Daniele Comberiati remarks in the preface to his book *La quarta sponda* (2007), the female voice after decolonization has been the most compelling one; colonialism victimized women to a greater extent, since they were objectified and considered as part of the land to be exploited.<sup>79</sup> As Ponzanesi explains, the cohabitation between male colonizers and colonized women (*madamismo*) was initially encouraged, was repressed in 1938 by a law that imposed the prohibition for Italian men to marry or cohabit with a colonized woman.<sup>80</sup> In this way, the racial mix was avoided. However, Fascist propaganda did not highlight the negative connotation of this change, but started to spread the idea of superiority of Italians over African women. In Ponzanesi's words, "the representations of the native as exotic and alluring served the purpose of instigating the virile and adventurous spirit of the Italian soldiers and workers to venture into the unknown, uncharted, and virgin soil of Africa."<sup>81</sup> Due to the fact that after 1938 mixed families could not exist anymore, children were not officially recognized and they were left with the mother while the father usually went back to his country.<sup>82</sup>

The feminization of postcolonial subjectivity is not an Italian innovation, since it has its roots in previous postcolonial theories.<sup>83</sup> However, it seems considerably useful to refer to this tendency for a comprehensive discourse on Italian postcolonialism, as well as for my specific discourse on Igiaba Scego as a cultural signifier, and to look at how scholars have applied it to the Italian case. It has been acknowledged how Italian

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<sup>78</sup> Venturini. *Controcànone*, 93.

<sup>79</sup> Comberiati, Daniele. *La quarta sponda. Scrittrici in viaggio dall'Africa coloniale all'Italia di oggi*. (Roma: Edizioni Pigreco, 2007), introduction.

<sup>80</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women's Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*. (New York: SUNY P, 2004), 124. See also: Trento, Giovanna. "Madamato and Colonial Concubinage in Ethiopia: a Comparative Perspective." *Aethiopica* 14 (2011): 184-205.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Comberiati, Daniele. *La quarta sponda*, introduction.

<sup>83</sup> Gayatri Chackravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?." In Nelson. C., and Grossberg, L. (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, (Chicago:Illinois UP, 1988), 271-313.

colonial literary expressions and, in general, the Fascist mass media system (1922-1943) had stereotyped the African woman, who was depicted as a black, naked, and savage female subject to be saved from her uncivilized country. With this in mind, it is useful to consider an article written by Stephen Gundle, entitled “Miss Italia in Black and White: Feminine Beauty and Ethnic Identity in Modern Italy” (2005), where he comments upon the formation of an Italian aesthetic canon to see how in 1996 the Italian-Dominican Denny Mendez won Miss Italia, the first black woman to ever compete in an Italian beauty contest<sup>84</sup> He links his analysis to the colonial period, citing Ponzanesi’s *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora* (2004) and her reflection on the stereotype of “faccetta nera”/ “bella abissinia,” arguing how this period influenced the already strong prejudice on female blackness in Italy.<sup>85</sup>

According to Manuela Coppola, postcolonial women writers in Italy are still subjected to “exotic objectification” and they “occupy a ... multiple and precarious space in society,” a fact that enables them to be both inside and outside the literary, linguistic, and geographical Italian boundaries at the same time.<sup>86</sup> Their production of knowledge takes form from a set of Italian literary and creative tropes already in existence and, by reframing to them, they give birth to a critical narrative counterpart. Migrants reside in concrete spaces, such as the Italian marketplace and Italian public urban areas. Nonetheless, domestic spaces are also “rented” (because of their constant temporary condition, according to Michel De Certeau) by foreign women, whose main stereotypical occupation, apart from that of stealing husbands, is the one of

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<sup>84</sup> Gundle, Stephen. “Miss Italia in Black and White: Feminine Beauty and Ethnic Identity in Modern Italy.” In Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005).

<sup>85</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women’s Writing of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora*. (New York: SUNY P, 2004); Campani, Giovanna. *Genere, etnia e classe. Migrazione femminile tra esclusione e identità* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> Coppola, Manuela. “Rented Spaces,” 121-22.

housekeeper.<sup>87</sup> The metaphor of the migrant woman who occupies someone else's house has been discussed by Lidia Curti in "Female Literature of Migration in Italy" (2007). She argues that "space is essential in the immigrant's condition life" and especially in the representation of female immigrants, where the kitchen is both the "everyday space of activity and social exchange," with a positive connotation, and a "hostile environment," where "profound cultural differences can emerge around food and ways of cooking" between autochthonous and foreign women.<sup>88</sup>

### 1.5. The Representation of Blackness and Otherness: Geneviève Makaping

In postcolonial Italy, the African 'alterity' is dealt with, culturally and socially, through the ambiguous return of colonial clichés together with representations of modernity and citizenship which, while including sanitized narratives of the country's colonial past, exclude African migrants from full participation in cultural, social or political life.<sup>89</sup>

The concept of "alterity," as described above by Alessandro Triulzi, is based on the fact of being re-evaluated by postcolonial studies and being a social issue at the same time. Sonia Sabelli in an article analyses the Italian book *Traiettorie di sguardi. E se gli altri foste voi?* (2001) by Geneviève Makaping.<sup>90</sup> Makaping is an Italian professor born in Cameroon. Her *Traiettorie di sguardi* is particularly relevant in the Italian context, because for the first time a black woman criticized the already mentioned slogan of

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 122. Cited: De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. S. Randall, Trans (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984).

<sup>88</sup> Curti, Lidia. "Female Literature of Migration in Italy." *Feminist Review* 87 (2007): 62.

<sup>89</sup> Triulzi, Alessandro. "Displacing the colonial event." *Interventions*, 8.3 (2006): 433.

<sup>90</sup> Sabelli, Sonia. "Quando la subalterna parla. Le traiettorie di sguardi di Geneviève Makaping." In Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 131-47. Cited: Makaping, Geneviève. *Traiettorie di sguardi. E se gli altri foste voi?* (Soveria: Rubbettino, 2001).

*Italiani Brava Gente* by looking at Italian people from the perspective of the “Other,”<sup>91</sup> the same other that for ages has been observed and catalogued by the West. Makaping experienced daily discrimination because of the colour of her skin, and was labelled as “foreign” despite being Italian, as if blackness could not be part of Italianness. Makaping, according to Sabelli, places herself outside the space given to others and poses herself as “soggetto eccentrico” [eccentric subject], a definition proposed by Teresa de Laurentis.<sup>92</sup> In this sense, she uses this eccentric (out of the centre) position in order to draw her creativity from a space she was initially placed in and she later independently decided to be part of. Sabelli employs the theories of the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who explained that overturning the perspective (as Makaping does) means to confer a familiar characteristic to something inexplicable (the “Other”) in order to subvert the beliefs of the Western reader.<sup>93</sup>

According to Sabelli, Makaping succeeded in her representation of what it means to be different in Italy, by avoiding the binary opposition between whiteness and blackness. In this sense, reflecting on the position she has in Italian society, Makaping recognised her elitist position, that allowed her to speak for the rest of people “like her” who do not have access to expressive tools. Specifically, she speaks of the discrimination of black people and of the differences between black identities that are formed on the basis of multiple experiences, and does not consider blackness as a homogeneous category, but rather as something “dynamic and relational.”<sup>94</sup> In relation to the “black Atlantic” of Paul Gilroy, Makaping’s work is part of the constellation of texts that describe blackness worldwide in a way that allows the texts of black diaspora

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 138. Cited: De Laurentis, Teresa. *Technologies for Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987).

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 139. Cited: Geertz, Clifford. *Works and Lives. The Anthropologist as Author*. Stanford UP (1988).

<sup>94</sup> Sabelli, “Quando la subalterna parla,” 143.

to circulate on a trans-national level.<sup>95</sup> *Traiettorie di sguardi* is then important in the Italian context, because it tries to deconstruct the notion of the “Other” on the basis of a redefinition of Italianness by Italians themselves.

In Makaping’s description of her experience as a black person in Italy, she recalls episodes in which she was discriminated for being black, as for instance the comment of a woman who suggested that she bleached her skin in order to become “less tanned.”<sup>96</sup> This episode is just one example of the numerous accounts of racial discrimination in Italy. A very significant document can be found in the study by Jacqueline Andall, who in 2002 published the results of several interviews she carried out in Milan with young second-generation African-Italians.<sup>97</sup> A twenty-one year old interviewee, speaking with a colleague in the factory in which they were both working, described this experience:

One guy, I remember, one day even said to me ‘Hey what are you going to do this summer, are you going selling on the beach?’ I said, no, like you I’m here working and then in the summer I’m going away. So, no, I will not be selling on the beach. So he said, ‘Don’t take offence, it’s a highly respected job, it’s dignified and they earn good money’. So I said to him, well you and I are both working here in this factory so why don’t you go and sell on the beach!<sup>98</sup>

In this case, since the 1980s onwards the increasing number of black street-sellers in Milan (and in the rest of Italy) has contributed to the popularity of the phrase “vu cumprà?” [do you want to buy?] as a label for all the black migrants.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 145. Cited: Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic. Modernity and Double Consciousness*. (London:Verso, 1993).

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>97</sup> Andall, Jacqueline. “Second-generation attitude? African-Italians in Milan.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 28.3 (2002): 389-407.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 398.

<sup>99</sup> On the term “vu cumprà” see also: Parati, Graziella. *Mediterranean Crossroads: Migration Literature in Italy*. (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 1999), 20.



## 1.6. Igiaba Scego as a Postcolonial Italian Writer

Igiaba Scego is an Italian writer who was born in Rome in 1974. Her parents came from Somalia to Italy after the coup d'état of Said Barre in 1969. She is a prominent figure in the Italian public sphere as a “leading personality in a new generation of writers,” as Alessandro Portelli defined her.<sup>100</sup> Her name began to circulate between 2003 and 2004 when she won the Eks&Tra prize with “Salsicce,” a short story contained in the volume *Pecore Nere* about second-generation migration experience and the difficulties of having a double identity.<sup>101</sup> She has been actively present for ten years on the Italian scene as a novelist (*La nomade che amava Alfred Hitchcock*, *Rhoda*, *Oltre Babilonia*, *La mia casa è dove sono*, *Adua*) a journalist (for *L'Internazionale*, *El Ghibli*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Manifesto*), and a scholar (she finished her Ph.D. on Italian literature of migration in 2008 at the University of Roma Tre).<sup>102</sup> In Scego's novels, her role as an activist for human rights within the Italian public sphere is quite prominent. Her activity concerns issues of Italian politics, postcolonialism, identity, racism, migration, integration, and blackness.

Especially in her novels and short stories, she investigates the relationships between the colonial past in relation to the Italian present, where racist and sexist attitudes still dominate the common mentality. In an interview, she spoke about the heterogeneous mix of citizens in Italian society in these terms:

Oggi c'è una semplificazione di tutti i discorsi: si parla di “migranti” come se fossero una categoria omogenea. Si parla di “migranti” contrapposti a “italiani”

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<sup>100</sup> Portelli, Alessandro. “Fingertips Stained With Ink.” *Interventions* 8.3 (2007): 475.

<sup>101</sup> Brioni, Simone, “Igiaba Scego.” Accessed 29/02/2016.

<http://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/igiaba-scego>

<sup>102</sup> Scego has published the novels *La nomade che amava Alfred Hitchcock* (Roma: Sinnos, 2003); *Rhoda* (Roma: Sinnos, 2004); *Oltre Babilonia* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2008); *La mia casa sono* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2010); *Adua* (Firenze: Giunti, 2015).

come se si trattasse di due squadre di calcio. Ma alla fine, chi sono gli italiani? Sono milanesi, veneti, napoletani? La realtà italiana è complessa, fatta di dinamiche regionali, di genere, di classe. Lo stesso vale per i migranti: ci sono quelli che sono approdati qui negli anni 70 e quelli che arrivano oggi. Quelli che provengono dagli Stati Uniti (perché anche loro sono migranti!) e quelli che arrivano dalla Somalia. Quelli che giungono qui con i barconi e quelli che prendono l'aereo.<sup>103</sup>

Using mostly female characters that are undermined by this double identity, Somali and Italian, she deals, as Susanne Kleinert asserts, with the oscillation between a “vuoto identitario” [identitarian emptiness] and a “identità multipla” [multiple identity].<sup>104</sup> Kleinert describes in her article on *Oltre Babilonia* (2008) that Scego's characters are always hybrids, in the sense that they are portrayed during their search for a position in society, both as strangers and as women. Mar and Zuhra, characters from Scego's *Oltre Babilonia*, are part of the already mentioned second-generation, and have to deal with hybridity on the spatial and linguistic level, and on the level of perspective.<sup>105</sup> As Simona Wright explains, in Scego's work “the ‘other’ emerges as a contamination, a hybrid that defies authenticity, sameness, pointing with its syncretism on one hand at the possibility of mutation and cultural synthesis, and on the other at the decentralization of knowledge.”<sup>106</sup> The external oppressive reality is not only Italian, but

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<sup>103</sup> Grasso, Gabriella. “Adua: Intervista a Igiaba Scego” Q Cod Magazine (09/12/2015). Accessed (03-05-2016): <http://www.qcodemag.it/2015/12/09/adua-intervista-a-igiaba-scego/>

[Eng.: “Today there is a simplification of all discourses: it is common to speak about ‘migrants’ as a homogenous category. It is common to speak about ‘migrants’ in opposition to ‘Italians’ as for football teams. But, eventually, who are these Italians? Are they Milanese, Venetians, Neapolitans? Italian reality is complex, made up by regional, gender and class dynamics. The same is true for migrants: there are those who arrived here in the 1970s and those who arrive today, those who arrived from the United States (because even they are migrants!) and those who arrive from Somalia, those who arrive by boat and those who arrive by plane!”].

<sup>104</sup> Kleinert, Susanne. “Memoria postcoloniale e spazio ibrido del soggetto in *Oltre Babilonia* di Igiaba Scego.” *Narrativa* 33.34 (2012): 206.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 208-9.

<sup>106</sup> Wright, Simona. “Can the Subaltern Speak? The Politics of Identity and Difference in Italian Postcolonial Women's Writing.” *Italian Culture* 22.1 (2004): 105.

it can also be a Somali one, especially when it comes to feminine oppressive methods of education (such as infibulation).

Scego, as well as Makaping, investigates the different meanings of being Italian and being considered “Other” because of her coloured skin. The complexity of identity is examined profoundly through literature, where Scego creates characters that deal with multiple influences and experiences, surpassing the flat division between migrant and the local. It is the life path of each individual that can enrich the construction of a person; the complexity of events enables the characters to escape stereotypes and eventually find themselves facing the issue of dealing with their own features, not accepting any identitarian categorization. According to Anna Proto-Pisani, Scego creates a multitude of opportunities as well as the possibility of different choices for second-generation migrants, as witnessed in numerous works such as *Rhoda* (2005), and *Oltre Babilonia* (2008).<sup>107</sup>

Moreover, Scego’s narrative prominently features the matter of the female body. The impact of colonial violence against African populations is metaphorically portrayed in the violence against women, by means of rapes and violations. In *Rhoda* (2005) for instance, a dead prostitute speaks about her previous life, while in her most recent novel *Adua* (2015), the eponymous protagonist who came from Somalia to Italy to undertake a career as an actress and eventually ends up in squalid Italian soft-porn movies. The topic of the female body is explored extensively, and I will elaborate on it in the fourth chapter where I analyse the usage of female body as the “hyphen” of transnationality cited by Bond. Roberto Taddeo points out that in the online journal *El Ghibli*, Scego extensively employs corporal and concrete images, constantly contrasting Western “asceticism” with a cruel materiality.<sup>108</sup> Scego’s novels have a strong attachment to

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<sup>107</sup> Proto Pisani, Anna. “Igiaba Scego, scrittrice postcoloniale in Italia.” *Italies* 14 (2010). Accessed 15/06/2016. <http://italies.revues.org/4042#abstract>

<sup>108</sup> Taddeo, Roberto. “Rhoda.” *El Ghibli* (20/11/2005). Accessed 03/05/2016. <http://www.el-ghibli.org/rhoda/>

corporal images of strong-impact content. Proto-Pisani cites the group rape endured by the parents of Elias, Famey, and Majid, in *Oltre Babilonia* as an example of this. Words such as “sangue” [blood], “sperma” [sperm], “culo” [ass] are used to describe the pain and the sufferance of two people who are physically humiliated, but also of a population exposed to the whims of colonization (the rape was the consequence of a bet).<sup>109</sup>

Language, in its different forms, is functional for Scego’s stories. As for other postcolonial writers, language is central for the representation of the hybridity of migrant subjectivity. In presenting her book *Adua* at Rai Cultura, she clarifies her choice to use a language that can embrace all influences, which already in other books, such as *Oltre Babilonia*, was a distinctive feature of her writing (from the Roman dialect to a more noble vocabulary):

Io ho lavorato molto in *Adua* sulla lingua italiana, perché ho voluto creare una lingua che fosse diretta ma anche che ricordasse il mito ... una lingua, come la definisco io, *multi-tasking*, che in qualche modo si lega al personaggio ... quindi c’è sia la crudezza ma c’è anche un retroterra che mi viene dal Somalo ... la mitologia, la magia e anche questo parlare di animali ... ho cercato di trovare una lingua *in between* ... tra il Somalo e l’Italiano, ma non solo, tra due strutture linguistiche ... l’italiano che è la mia lingua ... non scriverei in nessun’altra lingua ... io non ci rinuncerei per nulla al mondo perché ti lega a una tradizione ... ti lega idealmente a Dante, a Boccaccio, a Calvino, a Ippolito Nievo.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Scego, Igiaba. “Igiaba Scego: il sogno dell’Italia.” Accessed 03/05/2016.

<http://www.letteratura.rai.it/articoli/igiaba-scego-il-sogno-dellitalia/30921/default.aspx>

[Eng.: “I have worked a lot in *Adua* on the Italian language, because I wanted to create a language that was direct but also reminded of myth ... a language, as I define it, *multi-tasking*, that in some ways is linked to the character ... therefore there is bluntness but also the Somali background ... mythology and magic and this speaking about animals ... I have tried to find an *in-between* language between Somali and Italian, but not only, between two linguistic structures ... Italian is my language, I will never write in any other language ... I won’t ever give up because Italian connects you to a tradition ... it ideally connects you to Dante, Boccaccio, Calvino, Ippolito Nievo.”]

In Lidia Curti's words, "Italian, as language, as culture, as history, is inhabited by others," as well as English, French, Dutch, and German.<sup>111</sup> In fact, Sandra Ponzanesi reflects on the paradox that postcolonialism risks becoming a new elitist structure because English is considered to be the most influential language, while it should be an inclusive, heterogeneous, and non-hierarchical field of study.<sup>112</sup> The Italian language, therefore, should become a site for the creation of a postcolonial investigation, where postcolonialism is understood as an intersection of different narratives and trajectories as described above. Manuela Coppola recalls Édouard Glissant's reflection on the reappropriation of colonial language through creativity, allowing the creation of a Caribbean rhizomatic identity.<sup>113</sup> She writes that "what seems to be troubling is that these [postcolonial] subjects may have access to practices of self-representation through the appropriation of the Italian language from a speaking position which is simultaneously inside and outside Italian society."<sup>114</sup> The space reserved for migrants, described by Makaping as "soggetto eccentrico," is strictly intertwined with the Italian language. Reappropriating the Italian language, once a medium of cultural colonization (even if not as strong as in other countries), is now being critically engaged by postcolonial authors. Scego, a native speaker of Italian, explores the local (regional dialects) and trans-national (Somali words) ramification of her language in order to release it from its provincialism. In the fourth chapter, I will show how she functions as a trans-national cultural agent, by investigating the continuous exchange between the local and the global.

By connecting Africa and Italy for instance, she often employs the tool of memory, used by various characters, through which she compares the colonial past within the

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<sup>111</sup> Curti, Lidia. "Female Literature of Migration in Italy." *Feminist Review* 87 (2007): 64.

<sup>112</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Il postcolonialismo italiano," 25.

<sup>113</sup> Coppola, Manuela. "Rented spaces." *Italian Postcolonial literature, Social Identities* 17.1 (2011): 130. Cited: Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1989).

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

postcolonial present. Most of her novels deal with characters that directly or indirectly have had contact with Italian imperialism in the Horn of Africa. *Oltre Babilonia* is a clear example of this attitude, since it is about two sisters, Mar (Italian) and Zuhra (Somali), and the differences between them that are intertwined with the multi-generational stories of their families, from the rape of Zuhra's grandparents in Somalia to contemporary Rome. The tension between different spatial levels and different chronological occurrences are part of the rediscovery of the colonial past in contemporary Italian literature and, according to Emma Bond, this tension is entirely expressed in *La mia casa è dove sono* (2010), an autobiographical work. Trying to map out the topography of Mogadishu, the protagonist inevitably is confronted with the complicated networks of her family and her belonging. As Bond writes, Scego succeeded in "tracing superimposed cartographies of interactive belonging where places intersect through memory and imagination"<sup>115</sup> Moreover, Scego's *La mia casa è dove sono* is representative of the turn Italian trans-nationality should undertake since the recent migration from the former colonies and postcolonial discourse have been only recently explored. The coexistence, within Scego's novel, of "specific Italian locations" and a global temporal and geographical space allow for "a choral expression of globalization and diaspora stories."<sup>116</sup>

## 1.7. Conclusion

By devoting greater attention to memories of imperialism, the rethinking of the Italian social fabric has been enriched by different perspectives, including the transnational approach, the demolition of Italian identity built on binary characteristics (black/white,

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<sup>115</sup> Bond, Emma. "Towards a Trans-national Turn," 424.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 424.

migrant/Italian, female/male) and the revisiting of the colonial past as a still painful memory in the present.

Especially, the recovery of colonial literature and the investigation of its tropes, together with its placement in the official history are producing different levels of speculations. In the last decade, the literary works of migrant writers have been evaluated with more attention, as demonstrated by the reaction against labels such as Gnisci's "letteratura della migrazione." Criticizing definitions in this sense means to break with categories constructed in order to limit the expansion and the potential risk of letting the "Other" blend with the local or national. Rather, postcolonialism defined in the ways described above is an open and trans-national space where the exchange is possibly rendered equal and multilateral. Trans-nationality also embraces the other side of Italian history, namely that of internal migration from Southern towards Northern Italy, and the massive migration of Italians towards America. The position of Italians as migrants has contributed to obfuscate the issue of immigration, which has interested the peninsula since the 1980s. It is part of the postcolonial task to connect these hinges of Italian history and to create a space for a more inclusive representation.

The history of colonialism is then a necessary step for the Italian re-evaluation of the canonical representation of *Italianità*, which has to be enriched with new forms in order to abolish stereotyping. In this sense, works such as *Traiettorie di sguardi* represent a qualitative leap for the construction of new identities, whose features are not canonical ones. In this sense, both femininity and blackness are explored by means of representation through the mediation of the body by female voices such as Igiaba Scego's. The body becomes the hyphen of trans-nationality, as Emma Bond points out,

namely the connection between physical settlement and the spatial site for the construction of meaning.<sup>117</sup>

How Italian postcolonial literature interacts with the national literary canon is perhaps a way to look at the assimilation of these elements in the representation of Italianness, which takes place both inside and outside academia. For this reason, in the second chapter, I will analyse the concept and features of the literary canon, and subsequently examine how the cultural revolution of the 1990s has been perceived in Italian academia. By pointing out its weaknesses, I will show how Italian academia has limited the development of postcolonial studies in Italy, and how the integration of Italian postcolonialism represents a challenge for Italian university programmes even in the present day.

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. The dichotomy *space-place* is suggested by Zygmunt Bauman in *Intimations of Postmodernity* (London: Routledge, 1992).



In the circumstances, it may seem somewhat of an exaggeration to speak of “the” literary canon, almost paranoid to call it an institution, downright hysterical to characterize that institution as restrictive. The whole business is so much more informal, after all, than any of these terms implies, the concomitant processes so much more gentlemanly. Surely, it is more like a gentlemen's agreement than a repressive instrument? isn't it?

But a gentleman is inescapably—that is, by definition—a member of a privileged class and of the male sex.

Robinson, in “Feminist Challenges to the Literary Canon,” 84.

## The Academic Revision of the Western Literary Canon in the 1990s: Italian Postcolonialism and Its Reception in Italian Universities

In this chapter, I describe what the literary canon is, how its definition has evolved in the twentieth century, and how during the 1990s the notion of the literary canon was discussed within Anglophone academia and, subsequently, in Italy.

I use the examples of Marinetti's "Manifesto of Futurism" (1909) and "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" (1912) to frame the dialectical relation between canon and anti-canon, which I will explore in the next chapter, and the concept of authority. The concept of authority will be deepened in the last section, in relation to the loss of power of literary criticism, which in the last years has been replaced by a multiplication of voices on the World Wide Web, among others the ones of postcolonial authors such as Igiaba Scego.

In order to understand the relation between Italian postcolonialism and the canon of Italian contemporary literature, I will point out how the debate of the 1990s has changed the perception of the Western literary canon, reflecting on its ideological function.<sup>118</sup> Effectively, since the second half of the twentieth century, the Western literary canon has been recognized as a perpetuation of the ideal division between oppressors and oppressed, and as a way of reinforcing the ideological superiority of the white heterosexual bourgeois through the mechanism of exclusion and inclusion of certain texts in favour of others. The issues in the reception of these changes in Italian postmodernism have caused the belated entrance of postcolonial theories in Italian academia and the hesitation to introduce Italian postcolonial literature in the teaching of Italian literature.

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<sup>118</sup> In my discussion, I refer to the Western literary canon, narrowing it down to the Italian one. By the Western literary canon, I mean all the norms that have regulated the Western cultural sphere, by giving some (ethical and aesthetic) models, by creating an ideal representation of reality, but also of the interior discourse, confined to the dominant narratives of the West. Domenichelli, Mario. "Il canone letterario Europeo." *Enciclopedia Treccani* (2009). Accessed 13/05/2016.  
[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-canone-letterario-europeo\\_\(XXI-Secolo\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-canone-letterario-europeo_(XXI-Secolo)/)

## 2.1. Defining the Literary Canon: *Futurism's* Reaction Against the Authority of the Canon

The word “canon” comes from the Greek κανών (kanòn), which means “reed” in the sense of “metre of comparison,” and thus “rule.” In Latin, it became “canon,” which was then transferred in Italian as “canone” (from the same root, Italian has the word “canna,” which means “reed”). Etymologically, canon is already a form of judgment, since it refers to a measurement. Looking at the definitions in various dictionaries, the canon implies a set of rules that decides whether something is included or not.<sup>119</sup> It also deals with adjectives such as “standard,” “authoritative,” and “accepted.” Looking at dictionary definitions, the literary canon is a set of works (texts, books) that are considered to be the most influential, authoritative, and representative of a community during a determinate period of time.<sup>120</sup>

Massimo Onofri, in his *Il canone letterario* (2001), asserts that most of the debates around the literary canon concern the concept of authority, since there cannot be a canon without an authority who establishes it.<sup>121</sup> Who is in charge of defining the literary canon? And what does this authority entail? As I will show in the next section,

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<sup>119</sup> Oxford Dictionary/Merriam-Webster Dictionary/ Zanichelli.

<sup>120</sup> Going back to Polykleitos (V century B.C.) and Vitruvius (I century B.C.), for instance, the canon was defined as a set of aesthetic norms and proportions, that could be applied to a person, a building or a sculpture. Literature as well was part of this discussion on form and one of the first attempts to fix some literary parameters was undertaken by Marcus Fabius Quintilianus (35-100 A.D.). In his *Institutio Oratoria*, he reflected on the pedagogical formation of the orator and individuated two models of writers aspiring orators should imitate: Cicero for prose and Virgil for poetry. Quintilianus' classical taste contrasts with the imperial style, whose main exponent was Lucius Anneus Seneca (4B.C.-65 A.D.). Besides the firm division between Latin authors who deserved to be read or not read, the *Institutio Oratoria* referred also to other lists, that were compiled by grammarians of Alessandria already between the third and second century B.C. Onofri, Massimo. *Il canone letterario*. (Bari: Laterza, 2015 [2001]) Kindle Edition, 65. D'Anna, Giovanni. “Cicerone e Quintiliano” *Ciceroniana Online* 12 (2006): 206-15. Citroni, Mario. “I canoni di autori antichi: alle origini del concetto di classico.” (2006). Accessed 11/05/2016. <http://etabeta.univ.trieste.it/dspace/bitstream/10077/897/1/04%20citroni.pdf>

<sup>121</sup> Onofri, Massimo *Il canone letterario*. As Onofri points out, the first significant Western canon is the Bible, whose authority is considered both spiritual and worldly and whose authenticity is based on a selection of a *corpus* of texts (Old and New Testament) out of many others (the so-called apocryphal texts).

revisionists of the Western canon mainly criticize the power relations between colonizers and political minorities, and the imposition of a Western model.

The twentieth century has been defined as the century in which the canon was most discussed. In the first decades of the century, Italy witnessed the reaction of the avant-gardes, mostly of Futurism and its will to destroy the link with the past and its literary tradition. Futurism was an artistic movement founded in Italy in 1909 whose main features were its attachment to speed, violence, machines, strength, cities, instinct, impulsiveness, and youth. Futurism's name itself stresses the intrinsic annihilation of everything that is old. Breaking with all that came before was extremist, and the Manifesto clearly supported values that later would become part of the Fascist propaganda, such as the exhortation to violence and the glorification of male youthfulness. However, it is useful to look at some of the elements that Marinetti pointed out to reflect on the notion of the canon and its features, the authority and the relation canon/anticanon. Moreover, I find Marinetti's "Manifesto" emblematic for the Italian canon formation, as it is one of the first attempts to structurally undermine the conservatism of Italian academia. In fact, Marinetti openly contests the Italian literary canon, recognizing the sterility of academia towards the reception of innovations and its attachment to traditional aesthetic and ethical values, a criticism that recurred in another framework in the debate on the canon of the 1990s.

The first attempt to programmatically describe the purposes and features of the group was the "Manifesto of Futurism" (Bologna, 5<sup>th</sup> February 1909), in which the Futurists stated their intention to break with tradition.<sup>122</sup> The notion of authority is aggressively addressed in the "Manifesto." Accordingly, the enemies of creativity and evolution are "museums," "libraries," "academies" which Marinetti considers as "cemeteries of

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<sup>122</sup> Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. "Il Manifesto del futurismo" (1909), Luciano de Maria (ed.), *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti e i manifesti futuristi*. (Milano: Mondadori, 1973). Also on Web. 11/07/2016. The "Manifesto of Futurism" was published on Le Figaro in Paris, 20/02/1909.

[http://www.classicitaliani.it/futurismo/manifesti/marinetti\\_fondazione.htm](http://www.classicitaliani.it/futurismo/manifesti/marinetti_fondazione.htm)

empty exertion, Calvaries of crucified dreams, registries of aborted beginnings.”<sup>123</sup> He stigmatizes the authority of cultural institutions, as carriers of traditional values that suspend any connections with progress by deflecting the attention towards the future. As Christine Poggi states, “Futurism itself could be viewed as a noise machine, spewing forth a stream of sonic blasts and sound pollution intended to contest the authority of the Italian state and its traditional culture.”<sup>124</sup>

In 1912, Marinetti published the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” in which he developed a theory of literature based on intuition, the juxtaposition of words, and the elimination of verbal tenses and adverbs.<sup>125</sup> It is interesting to look especially at the incipit of the Manifesto, where Marinetti “urges the poets to take inspiration from the action of mechanical pianos and the cinematic dance of objects”<sup>126</sup> In the Manifesto, the notion of the canon inevitably involves its opposite, the so-called anticanon. Canonical in the Manifesto is “the ridiculous inanity of the old syntaxes inherited from Homer” and “the prison of the Latin period,” which is based on the obsession with the Italian education of the past in its very stereotypical representation of corrupting the innovative forms of writing with ancient Greek and Latin grammar. The usefulness of the contraposition canon/anticanon has been criticized in the 1990s by John Guillory in his *Cultural Capital*, which I will recall below, because of the absence of a real division between the two lists of works. In his words, “it is only *as* noncanonical works that certain other texts can truly represent socially subordinated groups.”<sup>127</sup> Nevertheless, the anticanon in my discussion will be used in order to ideally divide those works that are

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<sup>123</sup> English translation of Manifesto: “Italian Futurism.” Accessed 05/08/2016.

<http://www.italianfuturism.org/manifestos/foundingmanifesto/>

<sup>124</sup> Poggi, Christine. “The Futurist Noise Machine.” *The European Legacy* 14:7 (2009), 838.

<sup>125</sup> Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. “Manifesto Tecnico della Letteratura Futurista” (1912) eds. Luciano de Maria, *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti e i manifesti futuristi*, Mondadori (1973). English translation: “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature.” Accessed 05/08/2016.

<http://greeninteger.com/pdfs/marinetti-technical-manifesto-of-futurist-literature.pdf>

<sup>126</sup> Poggi. “The Futurist Noise Machine,” 825.

<sup>127</sup> Guillory. *Cultural Capital*, 9.

considered to be representative and authoritative in a determined context from those that still struggle to enter the (in my own case) national canon, keeping into account that both canon and anticanon are not part of rigid lists. It seems, on the other hand, that the canon strictly depends on the anticanon and *vice versa*, and their mutual coexistence is discussed whenever one puts the one of them in doubt.

As Onofri acknowledges, citing the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and literary critic Fausto Curi, “ogni letteratura, insomma, ha un suo momento decisivo in cui avverte il bisogno di autogiustificarsi e autolegittimarsi, affidandosi a un codice e a regole ben definite.”<sup>128</sup> The history of literature shows us that this dialectical relationship constantly comes to the fore whenever the cultural sphere enters a period of crisis, when influences from outside start to undermine the traditional canon. This oscillation between canon and anticanon will be one of the focal points of Ponzanesi’s and Sela-Sheffy’s studies on canon formation. In fact, the presence of postcolonial texts in the Western canon depends on the integration of anticanonical, and thus “subversive,” contents in the realm of Western literature by means of different agents, which I will extensively discuss in the third chapter.

## 2.2. 1980s-1990s: Contesting the Western Literary Canon

Questions concerning what works have to be part of the canon or not have involved scholars and have been discussed especially within cultural studies at least from the 1980s onwards, when the Western canon was opposed and criticized by American feminists and the American “academic Left.”<sup>129</sup> In 1991, the debate on literary works

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<sup>128</sup> Onofri. *Il canone letterario*, 108. [Eng.: ‘Every literature has its decisive moment in which it notices the need to justify and legitimates itself, confiding in a code and roles well defined.’]

<sup>129</sup> *Cultural studies* is an expression that was used for the first time in 1964 by the British scholar Richard Hoggart to address the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. With Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson,

taught in American universities started with the contestation of the so-called “core curriculum courses,” which at the Columbia University were Literature Humanities and Contemporary Civilization.<sup>130</sup> These core courses were institutionalized in the main American universities with the purpose to bequeath and conserve the literary and philosophical texts that were considered to be the most important, namely those that transmitted human knowledge. Once the debate took form, the main contestation regarded not the excellences of these cornerstones of culture, but the fact that through the institutional imposition of this selection the university was perpetuating the idea of a hierarchical structure in the cultural sphere as well as in society, where social minorities were excluded. With the rise of new interdisciplinary approaches within the humanities (especially comparative literature), the literary canon taught in the American universities started to be associated with the predominance of Western narratives, completely excluding other categories of texts on the basis of race, gender, and class. As Onofri explains, there was precisely a kind of “cultural war” against the supremacy of the “Dead White European Males” who has oppressed women and ethnical minorities (such as the Indigenous people from America) for centuries.<sup>131</sup> The canon was considered as “historical,” strictly embedded in its geographical and chronological context, as Frank Kermode pointed out.<sup>132</sup>

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Hoggart shaped this new wave of literary criticism based on Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser, a global movement that contested previous academic research. In Douglas Kellner’s words, these first academics “came to concentrate on the interplay of representations and ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality in cultural texts, especially concentrating on media culture. They were among the first to study the effects of newspapers, radio, television, film, and other popular cultural forms on audiences. They also engaged how assorted audiences interpreted and used media culture in varied and different ways and contexts, analyzing the factors that made audiences respond in contrasting ways to media texts.” Kellner, Douglas. “Cultural Studies and Social Theory: A Critical Intervention.” Accessed 19/05/2016. <http://markdpepper.com/3070/packets/birmingham.pdf>

<sup>130</sup> Onofri, Massimo. *Il canone letterario*, 199. In order to map the development of the American debate, Onofri uses the book *Great Books* (1996) written by the cinematography critic David Denby, who came back to Columbia university at the age of forty-eight.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Zompetta, Michela. “Bloom: un canone occidentale per l’Europa.” *Sinestesie*. Accessed 10/06/2016.

<http://www.rivistasinestesie.it/PDF/2013/MAGGIO/6.pdf>. Cited: Kermode, Frank. *The Classic: Literary Images of Permanence and Change*. (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1983).

The reclaiming of a socio-political, relativist and historical perspective of the canon met the opposition of its counterpart. In 1994 *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* by Harold Bloom was one of the main oppositions to the revaluation of the Western canon proposed by the “School of Resentment,” as Bloom himself called the exponents (feminists and neo-Marxists) of this new literary criticism.<sup>133</sup> Pointing out twenty-six authors (among whom the only Italian is Dante Alighieri), Bloom strongly defended the necessity of the canon in order to preserve Western culture. He upheld the aesthetic qualities of the texts over their political ones, arguing that arts, as literature, cannot be the basis for a democratic education nor the place for social struggles.<sup>134</sup>

### 2.2.1. Guillory and *Cultural Capital*: The Institutionalisation of the Literary Canon

The debate of the 1990s on the literary canon mainly regarded the authority and its ideological and political position, as John Guillory criticized in his *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (1993).<sup>135</sup> His study of the literary canon started from the critique of traditional studies, which almost exclusively concentrated on the content of literature rather than on its institutional circulation. Guillory started his argumentation by employing the notion of “cultural capital” from sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Accordingly, there exists a symbolic capital, denominated thereby “cultural capital,” whose circulation depends on the social context in which it takes form. Therefore, cultural capital, as any other economic good, is distributed unevenly.<sup>136</sup> In Guillory’s argumentation, schooling is the medium through which cultural capital is

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<sup>133</sup> Bloom, Harold. *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1994), 7.

<sup>134</sup> Zompetta. “Bloom,” 5.

<sup>135</sup> Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital. The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993)

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., preface viii.



subject to class differentiation by mirroring the social texture in which it is created. Schooling acts through syllabi, which are thereby “the institutional form by means of which this knowledge is disseminated,” being both “linguistic capital,” which gives access to standard English literacy, and “symbolic capital,” which “entitles its possessor to the cultural and material rewards of well-educated person.”<sup>137</sup>

Guillory’s main concern is that in order to question the literary canon, and to not fail in investigating it as in all previous attempts, scholars have to assume that literature is not ideological per se and therefore it is not useful to look at the contents of authors’ works. What is ideological is the institutionalization of these works, namely “in the context of their institutional presentation, or more simply, in the way in which they are taught”.<sup>138</sup> I will examine the notion of “syllabus” in the third chapter, where I will discuss the articles of Susan Gallagher and Bernth Lindfors, who both use the concept of the syllabus in relation to its institutional use.

According to Guillory, the university represents social minorities, since American liberalism had failed to give them an appropriate space within society.<sup>139</sup> Translating the questions of social texture into an academic structure means that the university becomes a site of representation, allowing people to express their identity through the formation of a literary canon. Consequently, the concept of “social identity” cannot be distinguished from that of representation. If it is true that the canon represents a group of individuals, and thus represents their social identity, it is also essential to keep in mind that the same concept of social identity is created by and can exist only within a certain culture.<sup>140</sup> This necessity of a certain community to affirm itself through the definition of a literary canon implies a very strong link between the community, its identity, and its cultural production. For Guillory, the process of exclusion is aprioristic

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid., preface ix.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., 5.

to an eventual voluntary judgment: nobody excluded women from education, but women were not literate for a long time and thus “the greater number of writers, *canonical or noncanonical*, were men.”<sup>141</sup> Eventually, “exclusion should be defined not as exclusion from representation but from access to *the means of literary production*.”<sup>142</sup>

### 2.3. 1990s: The Revision of the Italian Literary Canon

The cultural studies debate of the twentieth century and the influences of postcolonial, gender, and feminist studies in Italy forced intellectuals and critics to revisit the national canon. The Italian history of literature was questioned on this basis, but also the emerging notion of anticanon, introduced by the avant-gardes and still discussed during the late postmodern phase. The main questions concern what set of works should be representative of Italian literature, how to integrate new critical approaches in teaching Italian literature at university and in what way, how to define new subjectivities in the new literary sphere, including “cannibali,” migrant and postcolonial writers. Fausto Curi’s *Canone e anticanone. Viatico per una ricognizione* (1997) is one of the first attempts to redefine the notion of the canon, partially based on Bloom’s *The Western Canon*. It mostly focuses on the process of auto-legitimation of a society through the formation of a literary canon, remembering that Pietro Bembo’s *Prose nelle quali si ragiona della volgar lingua* (1525) deliberately excluded Dante Alighieri from the list of Italian canonical authors.<sup>143</sup>

As has been said, in the 1990s in Italy, the debate on the canon occurred at the same time as the development of two literary tendencies, “letteratura cannibale” and

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 17

<sup>143</sup> In *Il dialogo e il conflitto* (1999). Onofri, Massimo. *Il canone letterario*. (Bari: Laterza, 2015 [2001]) Kindle Edition, 345.

“letteratura della migrazione”; tendencies that were discussed in their relation to the so-called end of postmodernism.<sup>144</sup> To this regard, most Italian scholars agree about the saturation of postmodern discourse by the end of the 1990s. Romano Luperini writes in *La fine del postmoderno* (2005) that the crucial date for the turning point of the beginning of a new periodization is September 11, 2001. After the attack on the Twin Towers, a new group of intellectuals started to be active in the Italian cultural landscape. Luperini writes that they were aware of a chronological threshold [soglia estrema] and they were searching for new responsibilities and new references [nuove responsabilità e nuovi punti di riferimento].<sup>145</sup> In this occasion, Luperini identifies also another group of young writers, that of second-generation migrants:

Nel frattempo gli immigrati provenienti dall’Est e dal Sud del mondo entrano nelle nostre scuole, imparano la nostra lingua, mescolano i loro figli ai nostri, portano nel nostro mondo la memoria e la coscienza di esperienze tragiche e incancellabili, si apprestano a farle vivere all’interno della nostra cultura, della nostra letteratura, della nostra filosofia.<sup>146</sup>

In the same period, the group of writers defined with the label of “scrittori cannibali” [cannibal writers] produced works consequently addressed with the term “letteratura cannibale” [cannibal literature], coined by Daniele Brolli for the anthology *Gioventù*

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<sup>144</sup> According to the phases in which Remo Ceserani divides the postmodern period, only during the third one (which begun around the 1970s) the postmodern debate reached Europe from the United States and it entered the French academic debate thanks to the contribution of French philosophy (Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard). Ceserani, Remo. *Raccontare il postmoderno*. (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1997), 54.

<sup>145</sup> Luperini, Romano. *La fine del postmoderno*. (Napoli: Alfredo Guida Editore, 2005), 22.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. [Eng.: “meanwhile, migrants from the East and South of the world are entering in our schools, learning our language, mix their children with ours, bringing to our world the memory and the awareness of tragic and non-erasable experiences, getting ready to make them living in our culture, our literature, our philosophy.”]

*Cannibale. La prima antologia italiana dell'orrore estremo*, published by Einaudi in 1996.<sup>147</sup>

Matteo Di Gesù's *Palinsesti del moderno: canoni, generi, forme nella postmodernità letteraria* (2005) helps to have a broad overview on the chronological development of the debate, which initially started in the 1990s in literary journals (such as *Allegoria*) and slowly started to take place on other platforms (conferences, journals, cultural institutions, and universities).<sup>148</sup> In his opinion, the debate was mostly concerned with the anxiety of the arrival of the new millennium and the urgency felt by intellectuals and scholars for the transmission of literature to future generations. Only a few interventions were actually trying to redefine the epistemology of the national canon by recognizing the influence of postmodernism on Italian culture. Several important figures who participated in this discussion were Margherita Ganeri, Alfonso Berardinelli, Franco Brioschi, Sharon Wood, and Graziella Parano.<sup>149</sup>

Di Gesù has recognized in two publications the actual breakthrough of the debate. The first one is a thematized 1998 edition of *Allegoria*, which featured contributions by Romano Luperini, Christian Rivoletti, Hans Robert Jauss, Andrea Battistini, Remo Ceserani, Giulio Ferroni, Guido Guglielmi, Nicolò Pasero, and Cesare Segre.<sup>150</sup> In this occasion, Battistini reflected on the shift towards the anthropological nature of the canon emphasized by American academia and cultural studies. He strongly criticized the scepticism (and, to some extent, snobbism) of Italian academia toward the “political

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<sup>147</sup> Brolli, Daniele (eds). *Gioventù cannibale. La prima antologia italiana dell'orrore estremo*. (Torino: Einaudi, 1996). The anthology contains works of eleven authors: Niccolò Ammaniti, Luisa Brancaccio, Aida Teodorani, Aldo Nove, Daniele Luttazzi, Andrea G. Pinketts, Massimiliano Governi, Matteo Curtoni, Matteo Gializzo, Stefano Massaron, and Paolo Caredda. On the relationship between letteratura cannibale and postmodernismo: Donnarumma, Raffaele. “Nuovi realismi e persistenze postmoderne: narratori italiani di oggi” *Allegoria* 57 (2008): 26-54; Simonetti, Gianluigi. “I nuovi assetti della narrativa italiana (1996-2006).” *Allegoria* 57 (2008): 95-136. On postmodernism in the Anglo-American matrix: Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. (Durham: Duke UP, 1991); Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>148</sup> Di Gesù, Matteo. *Palinsesti del moderno: canoni, generi, forme nella postmodernità letteraria*. (Milano: Francoangeli, 2005), 17.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 20. Cited: “Sul Canone,” *Allegoria* 10 (1998): 29-30.

correctness” imported by the Anglophone world, arguing for a more conscious and responsible consideration of it. Secondly, the volume *Un canone per il terzo millennio. Testi e problemi per lo studio del Novecento tra teoria della letteratura, antropologia e storia* (2005) curated by Ugo M. Olivieri is fundamental, since it investigates the opening of the canon towards cultural studies, anthropology, and historiography.<sup>151</sup>

Scholars such as Romano Luperini have discussed the notion of the canon in relation to the nation in terms of cultural or collective memory. For Luperini, therefore, the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion cannot be denied:

Il canone è capriccioso e mobile; varia nei suoi contenuti, ma esprime una esigenza storico-antropologica permanente e irrinunciabile: quella di conservare la memoria di una comunità. E, come ogni memoria, anche individuale, la memoria sociale è selettiva.<sup>152</sup>

The transmission of a list of national works means to remember the glorious past, which Luperini considers not to be of central importance anymore due to the increasing disinterest for what has no links with the present. For this reason he suggests the “attualizzazione” [bringing up to date] of classics through the crossreading of a classic with a contemporary author. He cites the example of Dante, who should be read through T.S. Eliot, Montale, or Pasolini for instance.<sup>153</sup>

This concept is very prominent within the Italian context, since it has been said that the Italian contemporary canon cannot disregard the heavy and prestigious cultural past

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 21. Cited: Olivieri, Ugo M. *Un canone per il terzo millennio. Testi e problemi per lo studio del Novecento tra teoria della letteratura, antropologia e storia*. (Milano: Mondadori, 2005).

<sup>152</sup> Luperini, Romano. “Sul canone. Risposta alle domande di Quaderns d’Italia.” In R. Antonelli, R. Ceserani, V. Coletti, C. Di Girolamo, G. Ferroni, R. Luperini, V. Spinazzola, M. Colsar (eds.) “Riflessioni sul canone della letteratura italiana nella prospettiva dell’insegnamento all’estero.” *Quaderns d’Italia* 4.5 (1999-2000): 40. [Eng.: “The canon is spoiled and fickle; it changes its contents, but it also expresses a historical-anthropological enduring and undeniable need: that of preserving the memory of a community. And, as every memory, also individual, social memory is selective”].

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., 41.

that the country has experienced and exported abroad as a distinctive matrix. In this sense, Giulio Ferroni speaks about “quei testi classici” [those classical texts], referring to that set of works that were present (at least until the eighteenth century) in the European landscape, in some cases as models to follow.<sup>154</sup> Names such as Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, Macchiavelli, Guicciardini, Goldoni, Manzoni, Porta, Belli, Leopardi, and Foscolo represent that canon, in Ferroni’s view, on which Italian society and culture is founded, both outside and inside its national boundaries.<sup>155</sup>

The difficulty of defining a canon of the twentieth century, according to Luperini, mirrors the difficulty encountered by Italian society of attaining a “cultural identity and, maybe, an identity tout court.”<sup>156</sup> Effectively, the nineteenth century witnessed a strong commitment of the literary medium to create a national identity soon after the unification of 1861, and literature participated in that process of the consolidation of values and narrations that Italy was building.<sup>157</sup> According to Luperini, this loss of identity has increased the gap between society and literature and, therefore, between school and literature. In other words, he sees in this collapse of the national canon the increasing independence of educational institutions from any canonical order.<sup>158</sup> This assertion opens up one of the most discussed concerns of the Italian debate of the 1990s: the loss of authority of critics and scholars, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The actual failure at the end of the last century, acknowledged by Di Gesù, of Italian intellectuals to revisit the canon in relation to postmodern influences, seems to have its roots in the conservatorism that has characterized Italian academia in the last century.

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<sup>154</sup> Ferroni, Giulio. “Verso una letteratura Europea.” In R. Antonelli, R. Ceserani, V. Coletti, C. Di Girolamo, G. Ferroni, R. Luperini, V. Spinazzola, M. Colsar (eds.) “Riflessioni sul canone della letteratura italiana nella prospettiva dell’insegnamento all’estero.” *Quaderns d’Italia* 4.5 (1999-2000): 37.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Luperini, Romano. “Il canone del Novecento e le istituzioni educative.” In Merola, Nicola (ed.) *Il canone letterario del Novecento Italiano*. (Soveria: Rubbettino Editore, 2000), 17.

<sup>157</sup> Alberto Mario Banti has extensively treated the notion of ‘canone risorgimentale’ in his *La nazione del Risorgimento. Parentela, santità ed onore alle origini dell’Italia unita*. (Torino: Einaudi, 2000).

<sup>158</sup> Luperini, Romano. “Il canone del Novecento e le istituzioni educative,” 17-18.

The scant reception of cultural studies and its innovations, even if debatable, seems to have arrested the process which other European countries have underwent during the last twenty years. To recall the words of Di Gesù, the inefficiency of the debate on the canon deals with the lack of structural changes, which did not follow the debate that actually took place.<sup>159</sup> What Italian scholars were not able to actualize was the revaluation of the whole traditional asset of university teaching through the lens of cultural studies. They just included the innovations by adding them to traditional knowledge without revisiting it by means of them. In Di Gesù's words the revision should have aimed to the redefinition and the investigation of the old canon system through the structural transformation of the society, the modes of production, the imaginary, the reception and the literariness, and not as it occurred within the old literary systems.<sup>160</sup>

Gesù cites an article written by Robert S. Dombroski as an introduction to the volume *Italian Cultural Studies* (1998).<sup>161</sup> In defining Italian academia as conservative and traditionalist in its refusal of cultural studies and, in general, all "subversive" movements, Dombroski attributes this refusal to a political matter. In the United States, where Marxism had less influence than neoliberalism, leftist cultural studies were met with less suspicion than in Italy. The Marxist critic reminds that Antonio Gramsci, one of the first who laid the basis for the development of cultural studies, struggled to find a place within the Italian cultural scenario, where the Left had a prominent role in the political history of the country.

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<sup>159</sup> Di Gesù, Matteo. *Palinsesti del moderno*, 25.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid. Cited: Dombroski, Robert. "Foreword," in *Italian Cultural Studies*. *Annali di Italianistica* (1998).

## 2.4. Postcolonialism and the Italian Literary Canon: The Academic Reception

Taking into account that the university, as pointed out by Guillory in the 1990s, articulates the literary canon, it is important to look at how Italian academia dealt with Italian postcolonial literature, both in the form of primary and secondary texts. In the first chapter, I have discussed the features and development of Italian postcolonial studies by scholars who introduced it in Italian universities; what follows is a discussion of the relationship between the university teaching of Italian contemporary literature *tout-court*, and thus the Italian literary canon, and its (failed) assimilation of Italian postcolonial studies.

According to what has been said in the previous section, it was only at the end of the 1990s that in Italy migration started to be studied in relation to colonization. Postcolonial interdisciplinary approaches started to circulate within the national education system. The shift was especially due to the contribution of translators who introduced Italian intellectuals to postcolonialism (such as the works of Bhabha, Said, Spivak, Hall, Chambers, etc.).<sup>162</sup> It is worth to remember, as an example, that Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which represents a fundamental turn in our concept of modernity, was translated in Italian only in 1991. Scholars such as Armando Gnisci, Graziella Parati, Lidia Curti, Silvia Albertazzi, Daniele Comberiati, Roberto Derobertis, Ugo Fracassa, Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Caterina Romeo, Franca Sinopoli, and Fulvio Pezzarossa are only some of the scholars who helped to amplify the debate around migrant and postcolonial writings.

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<sup>162</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11.



This significant delay reflects, what has already been mentioned, the attempts to erase the colonial past and its historical failure, but it is also due to the conservatism of Italian universities, a conservatism similar to the one addressed by Marinetti. Reclaiming Lombardi-Diop and Romeo's "Manifesto," a colonial mentality is still present in Italian modernity by means of mass media, cultural sites, and universities. More specifically, the Italian academic system has not opened itself to postcolonial theory, refusing to integrate interdisciplinary educational methods to the traditional ones in the teaching of literature and, in general, in the circulation of culture. The "Manifesto" aptly summarizes some of the fundamental ways in which departments of "Italianistica" exclude everything that is not purely Italian or *Italianità*, the latter intended by the authors as an archaic cultural canon:

In this field, the risk of exclusion and delegitimization is constantly looming, and it materializes through apparently innocuous or unrelated strategies, which include considering the literature that Italian postcolonial writers produce as sociological explorations rather than literature in its own right; cataloguing their texts as 'foreign literature' and therefore deeming the study of their work as legitimate only in comparative literature courses, rather than Italian courses; keeping scholars in the field at the margins of the academic system by regarding postcolonial studies, race studies, and gender studies as lesser fields of inquiry and publications in these fields as irrelevant for the advancement of academic careers; considering the postcolonial exclusively as an Anglophone theoretical and cultural paradigm that has no relevance for Italy or, if it does, as a nonetheless 'minor' and insignificant one.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Lombardi-Diop & Caterina Romeo, "A Manifesto," 433.

Looking at what Romeo and Lombardi-Diop state, since postcolonial studies were introduced in Italy in departments of foreign literature, in Italian academia postcolonial critique has been ignored or confined to the Anglophone world (especially American and English departments).<sup>164</sup> In addition, Italian and migrant texts, labelled as literature coming from “outside,” highlighting the ethnic roots of the authors, has increased the tendency of academia to consider Italian postcolonial literature as “foreign.” In this sense, it is perhaps interesting to recall what Emma Bond writes about Coletti’s discussion of Nicolai Lilin. In fact, the critic, speaking about a “straordinario narratore siberiano” [extraordinary Siberian narrator] defines Lilin’s “capolavoro” *Caduta libera* as “mondiale,” not Italian, again presupposing the impossibility for a narrative to encompass both a local and a global perspective.”<sup>165</sup> These reasons, together with the traditional exclusion of extra-national literature in Italian studies led to the scarce reception of cultural studies. As Roberto Derobertis notes, the Italian academic scene has been sceptical towards postcolonial studies for several reasons, such as the fear of an Anglo-American hegemony.<sup>166</sup> It is not a coincidence, he continues, that gender studies, feminist studies, and post-structuralism, practically all the interdisciplinary approaches that are related to post-colonialism, have been almost ignored by Italian universities.<sup>167</sup> The consequence is that Italian postcolonialism is “legitimate only in comparative literature courses, rather than Italian courses.”<sup>168</sup> As I will show in the fourth chapter, only one of the syllabi collected is a course of Italian contemporary literature, while all the others are of comparative literature or literary criticism, which shows that the integration is still in progress. However, if on one side the teaching of Italian postcolonialism seems to be excluded from Italian contemporary literature by

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<sup>164</sup> Romeo, Caterina & Lombardi-Diop, Cristina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 5.

<sup>165</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn,” 419.

<sup>166</sup> Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 24.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>168</sup> Lombardi-Diop & Caterina Romeo, “A Manifesto,” 433.

being labelled as “foreign,” it is important to look at how it enters in Italian universities and which approaches can help to work in the direction of a more inclusive approach towards Italian postcolonial literature.

It is also interesting that comparative methodologies allow for the inclusion of canonical texts from other countries. This collaboration between Italian and foreign literature represents the will to open the national canon in a trans-national way. It will be shown in the fourth chapter how Igiaba Scego, in her novels as well as in her activity as a cultural agent, works in this sense in order to contest the traditional provincialism in the Italian cultural sphere, by including different extra-Italian issues.

The fact that migrant and postcolonial texts, in the wake of first-generation works, are often considered as social documents has been pointed out in the first chapter. This kind of approach has obstructed the aesthetic analysis of postcolonial works and, consequently, the reticence on their integration in courses of Italian literature. In other words, it seems that the lack of recognition of migrant texts serves as an alibi for their exclusion from Italian literature. As a consequence, these texts remain confined to courses of comparative literature. On the other side, the “sociological explorations” have opened the doors to an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach. Effectively, Italian postcolonialism involves socio-cultural (gender and feminist studies), economic, and political evaluations, being an intersection of different narratives. I will recall this concept in the third chapter with the analysis of Gallagher, where interdisciplinarity is explained as an intrinsic property of the postcolonial text.

Another issue pointed out in the “Manifesto” is the widespread opinion that applying postcolonialism to the Italian case is useless, since it is considered as something “insignificant” and “minor.” As explained in the first chapter, this assumption directly demonstrates the public ignorance of Italian colonialism, which is considered as a marginal phenomenon when compared to European imperialistic endeavours. It has to

be said that the diffusion of Italian postcolonialism within the national borders is still not very systematic, as the difficulty in collecting data on course descriptions and their fragmentary nature witness. The presence of authors such as Scego is in this sense very fruitful, since postcolonial themes are constantly addressed in articles, conferences, and narratives.

#### 2.4.1. Italian Contemporary Literature and the Use of Postcolonial Tools

As far as the relation between postcolonial studies and teaching is concerned, there are not many sources available for scholars of Italian literature. Among these, Emanuele Zinato, professor of Italian contemporary literature in Padua, tries to delineate a way to include postcolonial studies through the means of teaching the classics.<sup>169</sup> Once it is established that postcolonial studies exist and that they have caused a considerable change in the reception of culture, especially in relation to schooling, together with the increased multiculturalism of the classes, Zinato argues that teachers can no longer ignore these tendencies. At the same time, he criticizes the postcolonial perspective when it becomes, as the literature of 1968 in Italy, an instrument of political propaganda, which runs the risk of downplaying the aesthetic of literature as such. In any case, the cultural changes of the last twenty years have led to a discussion on topics such as that of “otherness,” “subjectivity,” and “difference.”<sup>170</sup>

Therefore, Zinato suggests revisiting Italian classics through the means of these notions. In particular, the notion of “the Other,” which first appeared after the discovery of the New World in the fifteenth century, can be studied through Tasso’s *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1565-1575), Parini’s poem “Mattino” (1763), Levi’s poem “Huayna Capac”

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<sup>169</sup> Zinato, Emanuele. “Una scuola postcoloniale?” *Allegoria* 55 (2007): 231-41.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

(1978).<sup>171</sup> In the fifteenth canto of *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the warrior Ubaldo asks his guide to inform him on civilizations living beyond the ocean. He receives a very imperialistic answer: these civilizations are described as barbarian societies. Parini is instead ironic in his verses, claiming that due to the conquest of the Americas, the Young Gentlemen can consume exotic products. In “Huayna Capac,” a poem inserted in the volume *Ad ora incerta* (1984), the Emperor Capac, speaking to his harbinger, invites his population to give all the gold they possess to the Western conquerors, because it will bring hate in their far land.

## 2.5. The End of Literary Criticism and the Proliferation of Platforms

The authority of the literary canon has been traditionally carried out by literary critics, who at least until the last century were leading figures in the formation of the literary canon. The cultural debate of the twentieth century also addressed the category of criticism in order to reshape the cultural paradigms of society. Critics lost their function of prescribing what works should or shouldn't be read and the reasons of this change have been widely discussed by Italian critics themselves, especially in relation to the postmodern condition.

One of the causes is the limited focus on an ideal list of canonical authors to be transmitted to the new millennium, which has led to the creation of numerous “personal canons,” causing the loss of a connection between the critic and the reader.<sup>172</sup> Carla Benedetti, who recognized in this attitude a conviction of critics to teach the reader in a sort of hierarchical structure, reveals the complexity of this statement.<sup>173</sup> Especially,

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 237-40.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 41-42.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. Cited: Benedetti, Carla. *Il tradimento dei critici*. (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002), 116-117

postmodernism, along with Foucauldian and post-structuralist philosophy and cultural studies, has argued against unquestionably authoritative, didactic interpretations.

Another reason for literary criticism's loss of authority is the gap between readers and literary criticism caused by the market, which in the last years has increased its power on the formation of the canon; the democratization of judgment, due to the increasing access to communicative tools, such as the Internet; the continuous distinction between "high culture" and "low culture" that led to an increasing estrangement of the critic from the public of readers.<sup>174</sup>

As Francesco Guglieri and Michele Sisto point out in "Verifica dei poteri 2.0. Critica e militanza letteraria in Internet (1999-2009)," the crisis of the 1990s depends especially on the reduction of the traditional spaces for literary criticism.<sup>175</sup> Literary journals disappear, together with the figure of "militant critic" [critica militante] who is confined to a marginal role in magazines, while the academic critic, and not only the Italian one, is isolated himself in its ivory tower. The cultural industry neutralized literary criticism, generated the pessimistic idea of the end of literature and literary criticism, and overshadowed the last phase of postmodernism.<sup>176</sup>

A new space for the literary debate arose with the World Wide Web and has revealed itself to be a way to surpass publishers and the cultural industry. Authors such as the Wu Ming collective, Valerio Evangelisti, Giuseppe Genna, Tiziano Scarpa, Dario Voltolini, Giulio Mozzi, Antonio Moresco, and Carla Benedetti use cyberspace as a

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<sup>174</sup> For a deeper analysis on the crisis of literary criticism see Berardinelli, Alfonso. "I rischi della lettura." *Studi Urbinati, B-Scienze umane e sociali* 82 (2013): 105-11; Berardinelli, Alfonso. "Lo scrittore, il critico e l'ossessione della performance. Lettera a Tiziano Scarpa." In Ferroni, G., Onofri, M., La Porta F., Berardinelli A. (eds.) *Sul banco dei cattivi. A proposito di Baricco e di altri scrittori alla moda*. (Roma: Donizzelli, 2006); Ferroni, Giulio. *Dopo la fine. Sulla condizione postuma della letteratura*. (Torino: Einaudi, 1996); Onofri, Massimo. *Il canone letterario* (Bari: Laterza, 2015 [2001]) Kindle Edition; Capozzi, Rocco & Guido Almansì. *Scrittori, critici e industria culturale dagli anni '60 ad oggi*. (Lecce: Manni, 1991).

<sup>175</sup> Guglieri, Francesco & Sisto, Michele. "Verifica dei poteri 2.0. Critica e militanza letteraria in Internet (1999-2009)." *Allegoria* 61 (2009): 153-74.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 154

place to express their art.<sup>177</sup> The changes the Internet has caused have to be taken into account for several reasons. Firstly, the critical debate on contemporary literature has moved to the Internet, which is the place where both literature and literary institutions, the publishing market, and critics intersect. Moreover, the online debate, even though it is criticized and uncontrollable, has produced notable changes in society and has especially extended the public of such a debate beyond traditional thresholds.<sup>178</sup>

Thus, the Internet has become one of the primary spaces of aggregation and discussion. Examples are blogs and online magazines. One of these is *Nazione Indiana*, founded in 2004, to which Igiaba Scego contributed with several articles. In 2010, the magazine gathered together a series of interviews on the responsibilities of the writer, since one of their collaborators, Paolo Nori, started to collaborate with the rightwing newspaper *Libero*. Questions on the status of contemporary literature were addressed, as well as the power of the cultural industry, and the related decline of the quality of published works, on the role of newspapers and magazines to reflect on the status of contemporary literature, on the work of publishing houses in the selection of works, on the role of the web in the distribution of literature, on the role of the author in the political debate in relation to the crisis of the democracy.<sup>179</sup> Beside the answers that would be interesting to deepen, I suggest that the themes addressed by the editorial of *Nazione Indiana* are not so different from the ones that ignited the Italian debate in the 1990s on the formation of the literary canon.

In the fourth chapter, I will analyse how Scego uses a combination of different platforms in order to spread her knowledge on colonialism, postcolonialism, and present society.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>179</sup> “La responsabilità dell’autore” in *Nazione Indiana* (2010). Accessed: 08/08/2016.  
<https://www.nazioneindiana.com/wp-content/2012/05/La-responsabilita-dellautore9.pdf>

## 2.6. Conclusion

The exploration of the notion of the literary canon, using the example of Futurism, has helped me to bring up elements of reflection and to situate the Italian context of the debate of the 1990s. Firstly, the relation between the canon and the anticanon as opposite forces regulated the entry into the canon of movements such as Futurism, which aggressively posed itself outside tradition. Effectively, Marinetti's "Manifesto" has become a canonical text, whose presence within educational programmes cannot be denied. In this way, traditional and new texts permanently interact, a process I explore in the third chapter.

Because of the failure of a structural reception of cultural studies in Italy, postcolonial theories were belatedly included in university teaching, especially in foreign literature departments. Therefore, the subsequent application of these theories to Italian literature written by descendants of former colonies seems not to have been taken up in the teaching of Italian contemporary literature. However, this displacement has created a bridge between Italian studies and foreign canonical texts, allowing the gradual enlargement of the national literary canon in a trans-national direction. Moreover, because migrant and postcolonial texts were initially considered as social documents rather than as literary texts, Italian postcolonial studies did not examine aesthetic aspects. This emphasis has fostered the interdisciplinary critical approach, already characteristic of postcolonial texts by the confluences of different discourses (which I will discuss extensively in the third chapter). Since the teaching of Italian contemporary literature has hindered the entrance of Italian postcolonialism, a systematic analysis of how Italian postcolonial literature functions in the Italian universities by means of comparative and interdisciplinary approaches is necessary. The study of the commonalities between Italian postcolonialism and Italian contemporary



literature, including teaching in foreign universities and the presence of active promotion by postcolonial authors themselves, can give insight into how the boundaries of the national literary canon are being redefined.

Both academics and literary critics have always been considered as the guardians of the canon. During the 1990s, they re-evaluated their traditional role and reconsidered their position within the public cultural landscape. Since older ministerial programmes failed to be structural, Italian universities slowly distanced themselves from society, while critics lost their influence in the public debate, and were excluded from the mainstream canals of information. The void caused by the loss of authority facilitated the rise of new subjectivities, such as Igiaba Scego, who came to prominence through the Internet and online blogs. In the next chapters, I delineate how these changes, together with the inclusion of Italian postcolonial literature in syllabi, can contribute to a revision of the national canon.

My contention ... is that this liminal moment of identification – eluding resemblance – produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative ‘unpicking’ and incommensurable, insurgent rethinking.

Bhabha, in *The location of culture*, 185.

## Chapter Three

### Canonizing Postcolonial Literature:

### The Syllabus and the Cultural Agent

In this chapter, I present the researches that showcase the methodological development of my empirical analysis. As shown in the previous chapter, the canon has been subjected to a radical revision during the 1990s, both abroad and in Italy. I shall therefore outline the definition of the canon that I intend to use in my research, by looking at the process of canon formation, as theorized by Susan V. Gallagher and Sandra Ponzanesi. They have a different approach: while Gallagher takes into consideration the formation of the canon within academic teaching, Ponzanesi focuses on extra-academic agents, namely the literary awards of postcolonial texts and the mediation by the cultural industry. On the one hand, drawing on the concept of syllabus from Guillory's discussion on the institutionalization of university teaching, Gallagher analyses the inclusion of the volume *Nervous Conditions* in the American literary canon by means of different features, among others the intrinsic interdisciplinarity of the postcolonial text. This notion will be useful in the next chapter to look at the modalities Italian postcolonial literature is entering the Italian literary canon. The syllabus as object of investigation has been examined by Bernth Lindfors in 1992. His methodology and empirical approach serve as an outline of my analysis of university descriptions.

On the other hand, the dynamics of canonization of the postcolonial text pointed out by Ponzanesi are linked to the presence of postcolonialism in the cultural market. Among the factors that cooperate in the enlargement of the national canon in favour of postcolonial texts, borrowing her notion of "cultural agent," I argue that the postcolonial author is functional to the assimilation of his/her texts in the literary canon. By combining these two perspectives, I will be able to look at how Italian postcolonial studies is entering, and perhaps enlarging, the canon of Italian contemporary literature.

### 3.1. The Pedagogical Canon: Interdisciplinarity

In *Cultural Capital*, John Guillory analysed canon formation by arguing that the debate mostly concentrated on canonicity as representative of dominant classes or minorities. Instead, the discussion should focus on its formation within the educational programmes, because the canon exists only in relation to its institutionalization.<sup>180</sup> For this reason, he introduced the concept of “syllabus,” defined as a list of works taught in a determinate “institutional context” in contrast to the literary canon as such. This latter is then defined as “an imaginary totality of works” which is imaginary because it keeps changing under different external pressures. Therefore, it is not the canon that superimposes itself on the syllabus, but it is the syllabus that “posits the existence of the canon as its imaginary totality.”<sup>181</sup> Eventually, “the imaginary list is projected out of the multiple individual syllabi functioning as individual pedagogic institutions over a relatively extended period of time.”<sup>182</sup>

In her article “Contingencies and Intersections: The Formation of Pedagogical Canons” (2001), Susan Gallagher draws on Guillory’s distinction between the “imaginary canon” and the “pedagogical canon.” By borrowing these concepts, she explores the formation of the syllabus. The pedagogical canon, or syllabus, as Gallagher argues, depends on a book’s external contingencies (aesthetic and moral judgments, interest of publishing houses, “professional structures—such as conferences, journal publications, book exhibits, and lectures”) and intrinsic properties (content, genre, language).<sup>183</sup> Using the book of the Zimbabwean writer Dangarembga *Nervous Conditions* (1988), she examines the admission of the volume in the American syllabi

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<sup>180</sup> Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital. The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), vii.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>183</sup> Gallagher, Susan V. “Contingencies and Intersections: The Formation of Pedagogical Canons.” *Pedagogy* 1 (2001): 53-67.

through time and geographical shifts (from South African universities to North American ones). *Nervous Conditions* was initially sent to a Zimbabwean publishing house which ignored it. After some months, Dangarembga sent the manuscript to Women's Press in London, where the director de Lanerolle, interested in African female writers, made its publication possible. Later on, the Seal Press in Seattle expanded the public of *Nervous Conditions* in America (1996). The text entered university courses, the volume was finally published in Zimbabwe and, according to Lindfors's survey, it was the sixth in ranking to be taught in South Africa. The success in the States, as the author stated, depends greatly on interactions between teachers and professors during conferences. As she explains, she herself came to know *Nervous Conditions* during a MLA conference.

In order to clarify the reasons why a book starts to be taught, she recalls Kaplan and Rose's notion of "common reader," who may play a central role mainly because the book should correspond to his/her desires and his/her cultural interests.<sup>184</sup> However, the encounter with the reader's expectations cannot be the only factor of success of a book within the canon. One of the main reasons for the fortune of *Nervous Conditions* is its interdisciplinary content: its complexity can be interesting on an ideological and ethical level for various fields of research addressing gender, colonialism, and postcolonialism, youth and cultural differences united with a well working linguistic and structural aesthetic. Gallagher interestingly recalls the words of Faith Conlon, the publisher of Seal Press, who thinks that:

The novel examines some of the implications of feminism and colonialism for two African women from very different backgrounds. ... Since *Nervous Conditions*

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid., 62-63. Cited: Carey, Kaplan & Ellen Cronan Rose, *The Canon and the Common Reader* (Knoxville: The U of Tennessee P, 1999)

addresses both gender and cultural issues, it conveniently complements the contemporary cultural and institutional criteria governing what is taught on American university campus. ... [I]t deals with ‘themes relevant to young people’ ... concerned with the thematic usefulness of the book.<sup>185</sup>

In a personal email, Gareth Griffiths states: “The modern texts like Dangarembga’s deserve to be read not through one discourse and practice (contemporary feminism) but as a site for the intersection of numerous discourses, themes and generic practices.”<sup>186</sup>

The quality, described by Gallagher, of a text to fit in the intersection of different discourses allows me to carry out two considerations. Firstly, what I am addressing as “interdisciplinarity” is a congenital feature of postcolonial literature, as has been discussed in the second chapter, and allows the intersection of different fields of research, for instance historical (colonial past), socio-political (different migration patterns and racial issues), economic (new presences in the job market), and socio-cultural issues (representations of femininity and blackness). In the texts of Igiaba Scego, these different levels of representations and narratives are made very explicit. Moreover, her presence in the syllabi testifies to the transversality of her novels in connection to postcolonialism in Italy. This transversality is also present in her work as a journalist and an activist, as will be demonstrated in the fourth chapter.

Consequently, the approach *towards* the study of postcolonialism is interdisciplinary, namely in its use of different fields of study to look at it, as already mentioned in the second chapter. Geographical and historical perspectives, sociological and political, just to collect some examples, contribute to the construction of a deeper, and thus multifaceted, methodology. In the “Manifesto” of postcolonialism in Italy, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo criticize the fact that “interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary projects

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

are still regarded with suspicion,” and wis[h] to ‘brea[k] away from stifling academic practices that still govern Italian academia ... [by] dictating what can be investigated and what not, within the strict confines of narrowly defined disciplinary fields.”<sup>187</sup> In this sense, it is interesting to look at how interdisciplinarity is used by Italian postcolonialism to enter Italian universities and foreign universities, and how the intersection of different discourses is used as well by Igiaba Scego to move in a transnational direction.

### 3.1.1. Lindfors’s Survey and the Empirical Use of the Syllabus

The research Bernth Lindfors did in South Africa in 1992 had as its aim to find out which African authors texts were taught in English in South Africa. He investigated “the instructional canon in Anglophone African literature studies in South Africa.”<sup>188</sup> In order to do so, he carried on surveys from twenty-two Anglophone African universities, for a total of 139 course descriptions, in order to compare his first results (from six years before, before the end of the Apartheid) to the second ones. He compiled a table with all the results, and tried to identify which authors and books were taught after the colonial period; in other words, “the extent to which the English curriculum of these universities had been decolonised since independence.”<sup>189</sup> What changed between the two phases of the research was that the quantities of African literature increased; however, African literature was still considered a corollary of the British one.

To determine the influence within the university teaching of an author compared to the other, he built a table in which he sums up the following points: a) how many titles

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<sup>187</sup> Lombardi-Diop & Caterina Romeo. “The Italian Postcolonial,” 433.

<sup>188</sup> Bernth Lindfors. “African Literature Teaching in South African University English Departments.” *Alternation*, 3.1 (1995): 5.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

were taught of the author; b) in how many courses texts by the author were included; c) what grade level these courses were (1<sup>st</sup> year; 2<sup>nd</sup> year, etc.); d) how many universities taught the author in question. Summing up all the numbers for each author, he could eventually determine the “most-taught” writers: Gordimer, Fugard, and J.M. Coetzee. In the second table, he lists the titles assigned most frequently in South African courses, and in the third table he made a comparison between the authors taught in the first survey, made mostly in countries above the river Limpopo, and South African universities. This last analysis reveals the differences in the choice of authors coming from one region or another, demonstrating a necessity for a “Pan-African” conception of African contemporary literature.<sup>190</sup> The results obtained by Lindfors are very significant for the configuration of African literature and its relationship with canonical English texts; especially, its far-reaching collection of data can provide an overview of how syllabi have changed after Mandela’s release.

However, in this context, my main interest is the method he employed for the analysis of the canon and how it has been affected by native literature. His collection of syllabi as indicative of the change of the national canon is what has inspired my own analysis. Despite the fact that his research is much more exhaustive than mine, I have tried, where possible, to apply some of his conclusions, for instance the quantitative collection of data, paying attention to how many titles of every author have been taught, and a systematic approach to bibliographies. These aspects are to be examined in the fourth chapter, in which I explain my methodological choices.

Following Lindfors and Gallagher, it could be argued that the interaction between Italian postcolonial literature and Italian contemporary literature and the extent to which the former affects the national canon can therefore be determined on the basis of the study of the course descriptions of national universities, since “works that are repeatedly

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 11.



incorporated into pedagogical canons eventually become a part of the imaginary canon.”<sup>191</sup>

### 3.2. The Cultural Industry and the Author as a Cultural Agent

In “Boutique Postcolonialism; Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” (2014), Sandra Ponzanesi investigates the ways in which the cultural industry, through different media and especially through literary prizes, is intertwined with the canonization of postcolonial literature. Moreover, she investigates how this condition, if on the one hand it creates a neo-colonialist dependence between the foreign exotic book and the Western readers, on the other hand it helps literature to escape from the limitations of national canons.<sup>192</sup>

The particularity of our times is the fact that, within the cultural industry, local and national artefacts can claim a space for themselves and their particular expressions, but they are also commodities of global exchange. Postcolonial literature is thus part of “commodified exotica,” subject to the logic of the cultural market.<sup>193</sup> However, it would not be fair to say that postcolonialism only exists inside this logic and consequently it is inextricably connected to capitalist production. Effectively, the fact of being genuinely attached to local values does not exclude any tension between *postcoloniality* (the mechanism of regulation of postcolonial value within the global market) and *postcolonialism* (the tendency to resist the valorisation created by the market) theorised by Graham Huggan, a tension that is of interest to this topic.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>191</sup> Gallagher Susan V. “Contingencies and Intersections,” 66.

<sup>192</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism: Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry*. (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 107-34.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 110. Cited: Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic. Marketing the Margins*. (London: Routledge, 2001).

An artistic object has always been judged by various aspects (aesthetic, ethical, ideological, and so on) and, consequently, assigned a value. This value is the basis of its exchange within the market. Between the production and the “recognition and institutionalization of what is defined as good art,” several agents are legitimizers of good art: publishing houses, the film industry, journalists, critics, academics, prizes.<sup>195</sup> These cultural agents have always existed, but nowadays they have a more decisive role, due to their interdependence from the global. Literary prizes especially have become more important, and the prestige they accredit outdoes the traditional relationship between value and saleability. The first book that stimulated the popularity of Indian literature, and by extension, of postcolonial art globally, is Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* (1981), whose author served as a spokesperson of the whole nation. In this way, “brand-authors” then become “a long-term investment” for the cultural market.<sup>196</sup>

It is interesting to examine this point, since my own research is based on the figure of the postcolonial author in the making of the canon. Sandra Ponzanesi refers precisely to Rushdie and Roy, who “as representatives of authentic voices from the Third World ... were invigorating in their innovative approach to language and genre as well as vibrant and committed in their depiction of multicultural and political issues.” At the same time, like their books, they also became commodities.<sup>197</sup> And, moreover, if “commodities are consumed not just for the prestige they confer but also for their symbolic value as tools in the construction of collective and individual identities,”<sup>198</sup> the author, commodified in the cultural industry, became on the one hand the object of this commodification and, on the other, the agent of his use as a self-commodified object. In other words, by being part of a global exchange, the author becomes a cultural agent himself. Through

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 117-18.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 118.

“mediation,” “sponsoring” and “promotion,” the author symbolically represented his nation and the voice of the “Other.” In the Italian context, Igiaba Scego occupies this role as a postcolonial and migrant writer within a Western market in which she is living and working. She uses this position to directly produce knowledge on the construction of this national representation. In other words, Ponzanesi points out this double perspective of playing the game of “commodified exotica” while at the same time resisting neo-capitalistic strives. In *La quarta sponda: Scrittrici in viaggio dall’Africa coloniale all’Italia di oggi*, Scego responds to Daniele Comberiati’s question about the use of labels in the publishing market:

Per la raccolta *Pecore nere* ci siamo scontrate di persona con il problema e la necessità delle etichette. L’idea del titolo l’ha avuta Emanuele Coen, uno dei due curatori. ... Noi all’inizio eravamo arrabbiate, però lui ci ha detto che per far capire in Italia il fenomeno delle ‘seconde generazioni’ dovevamo digerire questo titolo, perché in Italia se una cosa non viene urlata non raggiunge nessuno. Con *Pecore nere* lui intendeva una tradizione di controcorrente, mentre noi all’inizio lo trovavamo insultante. Adesso però gli do ragione, tanto più che l’editore Laterza non ha modificato i contenuti, non ci ha fatto un grosso editing.<sup>199</sup>

In this passage, it is important to notice the dialectical relation between the creation of the volume *Pecore Nere* (2005) as one of the first expressions of second-generation authors in the Italian market and the use of a title with a racist connotation suggested by editor Emanuele Coen. In Scego’s words, it is relevant to stress the double function of

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<sup>199</sup> Comberiati, Daniele. *La quarta sponda: Scrittrici in viaggio dall’Africa coloniale all’Italia di oggi*. (Roma: Edizioni Pigreco, 2007), 75. [Eng.: “For the volume *Pecore Nere* we personally collided with the problem and the necessity of labels. The idea of the title has been given by Emanuele Coen, one of the editors ... At the beginning we were angry, but he told us that in Italy in order to create comprehension for the phenomenon of ‘second-generations’ we should digest this title, because in Italy if something is not screamed out it reaches nobody. With *Pecore Nere* he meant a counter-current tradition, while at the beginning we found it insulting. Nowadays, however, I agree with him, even because publisher Laterza did not modify our contents, did not do any invasive editing.”]

postcolonial literature as a source of resistance and the compromise of being reduced to a commodity.

As far as the canonization of award-winning texts is concerned, Ponzanesi looks at the duration of the saleability of a book after the assignment of the prize, concluding it is not guaranteed that a prized book has a lasting success in the market.<sup>200</sup> Starting from this assumption she investigates the “complex dynamics” that allow a book to be canonized in a list, for instance, of the hundred best books of the century.<sup>201</sup> Looking at the BBC 2003 list of the “nation’s best-loved novels,” the favourite books in Great Britain were mostly film adaptations, new publications, classics, and awarded books, showing that canon formation is actually influenced by literary prizes. In the case of postcolonial texts, she recalls the article by the Israeli scholar Rakefet Sela-Sheffy on literary canon formation.

Sela-Sheffy’s notion on canon formation is also of importance to my research, since I apply her notion of canon to my specific case. In an article written in 2002 titled “Canon Formation Revisited: Canon and Cultural Production,” she explores how the canonization of an object interacts with the cultural production.<sup>202</sup>

She argues that the ongoing debate on the canon always focused on the notion of cultural value and on who is in charge of determining it, concluding with the simplistic solution emblematically contained in the ideological sentence “resisting to the canon is good.”<sup>203</sup> For Sela-Sheffy, the literary debate about canon formation failed on the one hand, because it did not address the problem of cultural *criteria of valorization*, by sticking to the evaluation of a text’s qualities, and by failing to question conservative cultural criticism. On the other hand, notwithstanding the celebration of a new historical

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 124. Cited: Ginsburgh, Victor. “Awards, Success, and Aesthetic Quality in the Arts”, *The Journal of Economic Perspective* 17.2 (2003): 99-111.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. “Canon Formation Revisited: Canon and Cultural Production.” *Neohelicon* 29.2 (2002): 141-59.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 142.

approach, scholars did not analyse in depth “the specific socio-cultural configurations ... which were responsible for canonizing certain cultural repertoires in the past.”<sup>204</sup>

They just used the historical attitude as another means of interpretation.

She finds it necessary to reframe the concept of the literary canon by clarifying:

- a) the shared opinion on the *canon's transitoriness*;
- b) the tendency to combine cultural valorization to the circulation in the marketplace (the canon does not necessarily play a *generative role*).

If the canon can always be changed and rejected, this would mean that it is “no more than a row of fleeting fashions,” which is constantly subjected to relativism.<sup>205</sup> On the contrary, there exists a “widely shared, accumulative and durable” canon, which does not necessarily exclude the coexistence of transitive forms of texts.<sup>206</sup> Accordingly, “*in addition* to a short-term routine of shifting trends, there is a long-term process of accumulation and creation of unshakably sanctioned cultural *reservoirs* by societies, which reservoirs we call canons.”<sup>207</sup> Despite the fact that cultural processes change, it is also true that processes of “accumulation,” “standardization” and “institutionalization” must be taken into account. From here, as Bourdieu said, the objectification of the canon results in the assimilation of the canon in a socio-cultural habitat.<sup>208</sup> Eventually, Sela-Sheffy does not deny the fluidity nor the dynamics of cultural development, but rejects relativism, and thus the conviction that the literary canon is just the result of the reflection of social hierarchies, that characterized the debate in the 1990s.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 85. Bourdieu, Pierre. “The Market of Symbolic Goods.” *Poetics* 14 (1985): 13-44.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 144. She refers to the Anglo-American debate I discussed in the previous chapter. In particular, she states: “The fascination with relativism and changing cultural hierarchies (as well as the confinement to this perspective) have determined the view of canonicity ever since Russian Formalism, although with the post-structuralist turn the sources of inspiration for dealing with these topics have changed.”

Moreover, the canonization of a text does not mean that it becomes a generative model. Therefore, she explains the distinction between the “high status” of an object and its generative power. She points out how the canonical status (“high status”) of an artefact seems to inhibit its availability as “an active model in the market” (“generativity”).<sup>210</sup> Even if in some cases, like for instance the works of Shakespeare, it seems that the canonical status makes them into a model, the generativity is unreal because it is based on the “interpretation and reinterpretation of canonized products, but not on recycling their generative models as standard options in the field of literary or theatrical production.”<sup>211</sup>

On the basis of these assumptions, she points out that cultural productions use the canon as “a stabilizing mechanism,” as a “shock-absorber” whenever one player needs to legitimize the circulation in the market of a certain product.<sup>212</sup> Sandra Ponzanesi repeatedly refers to Sela-Sheffy’s article, and defines it as “coherent, but rather classical” since it is “not able to account for the puzzling shift in the actual practical aesthetics of reception that is happening worldwide.”<sup>213</sup> Accordingly, Ponzanesi argues that, since in Sela-Sheffy’s words the canon is “actively constructed” and the so-called canonizers proceed to the designation of a canon through either consolidating (firstly) an already existing canon or prefiguring a new one (secondly), one should enquire what relation exists between the newness and the canon and how this relationship functions. The selection made by literary prize committees of postcolonial works actually “confirms older mechanisms of canonization,” thereby the prizes are conferred whenever the “new” carries to some extent the old “codification as prize-worthy.”<sup>214</sup> It is worthwhile to recall the words of Gallagher who refers to the fact that in *Nervous*

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>211</sup> Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. “Canon Formation Revisited,” 149.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>213</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism,” 128.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 129.

*Conditions* the coexistence of “familiar” (cultural similarities with the reader) and “unfamiliar” (cultural differences with the reader) is “the primary reason for its pedagogical success among both American and African students, graduates and undergraduates.”<sup>215</sup>

It has been said already that literary criticism has lost its traditional influence on the construction of a canon. In this sense, canon formation is “left to the whims and unpredictability of global market forces,” within which literary prizes help authors to gain publicity.<sup>216</sup>

Ponzanesi concludes that granting literary prizes to postcolonial authors highlights the resistance of a Western canon (to use Sela-Sheffy’s term, the “canonized reservoir”)<sup>217</sup> which, however, assimilates “subversive” forces, like the postcolonial one, by including and “normalizing” it. This occurred for instance with Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, which was incorporated in the British literary canon.<sup>218</sup> Thus, the formation of the canon relies on this sophisticated balance between the retrieval of the past and its use, creating a sort of elastic relationship between the previous set of works and the new ones in a way that allows dynamicity but does not reduce the formation of the canon to a simplistic fluidity. Today’s constellation allows for a more democratic emergence and inclusion of postcolonial literature by escaping the boundaries of national criticism through the award system. In other words, in a short-term period, postcolonial works are still considered commodified exotica, while on the long-term they are changing the canon’s “criteria of valorization.”<sup>219</sup>

The concept of canon that I use is faithful to what Sela-Sheffy has pointed out, especially in its meaning of a “legitimiser of revolution.” In this sense, the ideological

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<sup>215</sup> Gallagher. “Contingencies and Intersections,” 64.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. “Canon Formation Revisited,” 151.

<sup>218</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism,” 115. Cited: Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight’s Children*. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1981).

<sup>219</sup> Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. “Canon Formation Revisited,” 143.

decision of creating a set of works that excludes certain categories is not denied, but it is not even treated as a pure political instrument. Accordingly, the canon is both fluid and changeable, while it also maintains some durable features, whose aesthetic and ethic qualities do not necessarily correspond to traditional ones.

### 3.3. Conclusion

Susan Gallagher's article is relevant for several reasons. Firstly, it revitalizes the notion of the syllabus, recalling the reflection of Guillory on the institutionalization of literature and, consequently, of the notion of the canon. Effectively, this argument helps to highlight that the authority of the canon has to be determined by its use within a social community and that the university still plays a decisive role in shaping the canon. Gallagher's theoretical framework shows the contemporary tendency to define the literary canon as mobile and changeable, like Sela-Sheffy does in her study. Both of them, by means of different theoretical assumptions, show that beside the re-evaluation of the canon and its integration of new texts and new currents of thought, the canon is a concept that still exists and still carries its traditional features, like the presence of someone who determines it and of a corpus of books traditionally perceived as bearers of values. In this sense, the canon is not a restrictive category, but rather a tool for change.

Lindfors and Gallagher's usages of the syllabus are useful for several reasons. Gallagher's reflections on the external contingencies and intrinsic properties that allow a text to be part of the canon has been useful, particularly for considering university teaching as a mediator between a text and the literary canon. Especially her questions have been useful for my analysis, since they helped me frame the literary canon within its institutionalization as a summa of texts that carry values, narratives, and tropes that



deserve to be read. Moreover, Gallagher stimulated me to consider postcolonial literature in Italy as an interdisciplinary intersection of multiple discourses and to understand why Italian postcolonialism interacts with different disciplines. Lindfors's survey has been decisive for the structure of my analysis of the course descriptions, supporting the systematic collection of syllabi for quantitative studies.

As Ponzanesi has discussed, one of the aspects pointed out by scholars in the last decades is the increasing importance of the postcolonial author, whose visibility is part of the process of globalization and the interrelation between markets. This phenomenon is made possible by new technologies, and especially the Internet is one of the most useful ways to create international and national connections. The increasing number of writers since the beginning of the twentieth century onwards has led scholars to reflect on these external contingencies which determine the success of a text, such as literary awards for instance.<sup>220</sup> Also in Italy, as has been shown in the second chapter, the literary landscape is continuously changing under the influence of new platforms (e.g. blogs), not only as a direct way to acquire a public space, but also as a way to connect people and writers without the mediation of institutional authorities. Since personalities such as Umberto Eco, the position of the author himself/herself in his/her auto-promotion, influenced by the increasing importance of the name of the author, rather than the titles of his/her books, was a source of debate and it still is.<sup>221</sup>

Ponzanesi's reflection on the effectiveness of literary prizes awarded to postcolonial authors to enter in the cultural market has helped me to evaluate the notion of the postcolonial author who works in a Western society and marketplace, and the transformation of the canon through the normalization of "subversive" currents. The postcolonial author, becoming a commodity within the Western cultural market, places

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<sup>220</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Boutique Postcolonialism," 112.

<sup>221</sup> For a deeper analysis of Italy: Ferroni, G., Onofri, M., La Porta F., Berardinelli A. (eds.) *Sul banco dei cattivi. A proposito di Barico e di altri scrittori alla moda*. (Roma: Donizzelli, 2006).

himself in a particular position as both the object and the agent of his commodification. In other words, by means of his “exoticism,” he is able to actively work inside the Western market despite the fact that his entry has been merchandized by a neo-colonial logic. Moreover, this entry moved the status of the postcolonial author from “other” to “familiar” for Western readers. This assumption does not necessary mean that the power of postcolonialism is less than when it was perceived as highly subversive. Therefore, the inclusion of postcolonialism enlarges the traditional boundaries of the literary canon by means of the normalization of its contents.

By combining the study of the pedagogical canon and the study of Ponzanesi on the importance of literary awards, I argue that the traditional formation of the canon by academics and literary critics in Italy can be enriched by the presence of postcolonial authors and their mediation within the cultural national landscape. In this sense, my thesis aims to investigate the ways in which Italian postcolonialism enters the literary canon, both through which pathways and in which form the knowledge is transferred. This necessitates an analysis that takes into account both the syllabi of Italian and foreign universities and the activity of postcolonial authors, which will be presented in the fourth chapter.

Nero? O piuttosto marroncino?  
Cannella o cioccolato? Caffè? Orzo in  
tazza piccola?

Sono un crocevia, mi sa. Un ponte,  
un'equilibrista, una che è sempre in  
bilico e non lo è mai. Alla fine sono  
solo la mia storia.

Scego, in *La mia casa è dove sono*, 31.

## Chapter Four

# Analysis: Italian Postcolonial Literature and its Assimilation in the Italian Contemporary Literary Canon

The fourth chapter is divided in two parts. In the first part, I analyse the collection of data on the teaching of Italian postcolonial literature (in Italy and abroad), while in the second one I investigate the role of Igiaba Scego as a cultural agent, by looking at her different roles within Italian society and academia. This chapter aims to explore the ways in which Italian postcolonial studies interact with the national canon by arguing that a trans-national approach, allowing both an internal and an “eccentric” position, improves their mutual integration.

## 4.1. Methodology and Acknowledgments

Recalling the notion of syllabus, it can be defined as a list of texts whose selection determines the process of canonization, and thus the exclusion or inclusion in the “imaginary canon.”<sup>222</sup> On the basis of this assumption, I examine how Italian postcolonial literature, the whole corpus of primary and secondary texts, can give an insight on how it is inserted in the Italian literary canon. This method draws on the survey conducted in South Africa by Bernth Lindfors, which I discussed in the third chapter. Spending two months in South Africa, he collected the materials *in loco*,

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<sup>222</sup> Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital. The Problem of Literary Canon Formation*. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993), 30.

searching in libraries and discussing with teachers and eventually covering ninety percent of the courses taught in 1992 in South African universities.<sup>223</sup>

The collection of my data started as an Internet research in order to look at the online availability of material on course descriptions that contain titles of Italian postcolonial literature.<sup>224</sup> By selecting keywords and typing them into different sequences both in Italian and English, I had a first insight into the field of university teaching in Italy.<sup>225</sup> After having gathered the material, I decided to directly contact professors of Italian departments, both in Italy and abroad. The conference at the Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense on the Italian contemporary literary canon gave me the opportunity directly communicate with some of them, who kindly helped me by sending their syllabi and bibliography, and recommended some of their colleagues who could help me with my thesis.<sup>226</sup> In so doing, I have been able to collect enough material for a systematic analysis of the syllabi.

However, my primary concern is not the extent of the assimilation since it has been pointed out in the previous chapter that the process is still relatively new, but the modalities through which it is developing.<sup>227</sup> For these reasons and for the availability of the material, the quantitative analysis that will follow is only indicative of the broader extent of the phenomenon.

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<sup>223</sup> Bernth Lindfors. "African Literature Teaching in South African University English Departments." *Alternation*, 3.1 (1995), 5-6.

<sup>224</sup> Through Google. I have been looking especially at websites of universities, personal websites of professors and writers. However, the results were very fragmentary, unclear, and difficult to research. Mostly, I came up with conferences, conventions, guest lectures, and publications, rather than proper university courses and bibliographies.

<sup>225</sup> Keywords such as "postcolonial," "university," "teaching," "syllabus," "course," "literature," composing sequences such as "Italian postcolonial course in university." Moreover, I have tried to combine these terms with the names of Italian postcolonial authors and the titles of their texts.

<sup>226</sup> Conference "Italia fuori Italia. Diffusione, canonizzazione, ricezione transnazionale della letteratura degli anni Duemila." 2-4 June 2016. Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense.

<sup>227</sup> Indicative of the fact that the process is just at its beginning, only one of the syllabi collected is titled "Italian contemporary literature." The other titles concern literary criticism and comparative literature. Only one is specifically on Italian postcolonialism. This fact responds to what Lombardi-Diop and Romeo stated in their "Manifesto": "cataloguing (Italian postcolonial texts) as "foreign literature" and therefore deem[ing] the study of their work as legitimate only in comparative literature courses, rather than Italian courses." Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Romeo, Caterina. "The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto." *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 433.

For the second part of my analysis, I borrow the term of “cultural agent” from Ponzanesi and I have transferred it to the postcolonial author Igiaba Scego.<sup>228</sup> Supposing that the cultural agent is part of the process of canonization of the postcolonial text, I believe that conferring an active role to the postcolonial author himself/herself can explain how Italian postcolonial literature, besides its integration within university teaching, can modify the boundaries of the national canon. In this way, the author is part of the process of his/her commodification through his/her texts but also through his/her physical body, as I will point out later on. Igiaba Scego, because she is one of the most discussed postcolonial authors in the Italian public debate and because she is a coloured woman, can be considered as an emblematic example of this dynamic.

Firstly, I concentrate on the reception, discussed in the first chapter, of her novels as part of Italian postcolonial literature. I have later examined the activity Scego is carrying out in parallel with her work as a writer. Her journalistic work is especially prolific, and this is also how I got to know her name some years ago. She collaborates with different newspapers, of which *Internazionale* and *L'Unità* are the best-known examples in Italy. Moreover, she is very active on Twitter and on Facebook, using her public visibility to sensitize her readers on themes such as immigration, racism, and integration. Her role as an activist concerns topics that are close to her position as a coloured woman and a second-generation migrant, but that also deal with the Italian political present. I will list some examples of her approaches to Italian society to show how Scego as a postcolonial author enters in the literary canon transversally, not as a passive object of study but through her person, by using the visibility of being “exotic.” In this way, she stimulates the enlargement of Italian canonical narratives.

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<sup>228</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism: Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry*. (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 112.

The analysis I have carried out on the material gathered on the university teaching and on Scego as a cultural agent regards the investigation of the modalities and the topics through which Italian postcolonialism is explored in relation to the concept of Italianness. Eventually, using academic teaching, pinpointed by Gallagher as one of the main “external contingencies” for the creation of the “imaginary canon,” and the role of cultural agent covered by Scego, I contribute to the debate on contemporary Italian literary canon formation conceived as an amalgamation of different structures, integrating the influences of the cultural market and the visibility of the postcolonial author in his/her being postcolonial into the traditional diffusion of culture operated by the university. This could help to understand how national literary boundaries are changing under the influence of endogenous forces traditionally relegated to an “other” space, outside Italianness.

#### 4.2. Italian Postcolonialism in Academia

Chronologically, the period of my study considers the last five academic years (from 2011 to 2016), and will also include some insights on new syllabi for the academic year 2016/2017 when available. My research draws a basic geographical division between Italian universities and foreign universities (comprehensive of Anglophone, Germanophone and Francophone areas). The choice to involve Italian departments abroad answers on the one hand to the need to have a term of comparison in analysing national methods of teaching Italian postcolonialism; on the other, to the purpose of being trans-national, which means for scholars to look at the construction of the canon by means of different perspectives, including the teaching of Italian studies abroad. In other words, since Italian postcolonialism has the purpose to open the national border

and has been introduced thanks to the contribution of “external” influences, it seems to be the responsibility of everyone who researches it to keep this broad perspective.

As for Italian universities, I have collected thirteen course descriptions of four different universities (Università della Calabria, Università per gli stranieri di Siena, Università La Sapienza and Università di Bologna). Most of the syllabi (nine) are from the Università La Sapienza in Rome and, among those, eight are taught by professor Caterina Romeo. Of those eight, some syllabi are of the same course taught for more than one year; thus I will consider each group as one. In total, there are six different courses. The second university in number of syllabi (two) is the Università di Bologna. Romeo, who is also an Italian postcolonial scholar, teaches most of the courses at the Università La Sapienza. Her critical works are taught in almost all the courses, both in Italy and abroad. For the part outside Italy, my empirical data come from ten different universities, six from North America (Stony Brook University, UCLA, The University of New York, Haverford College, The University of New Haven, Bryn Mawr College), two from France (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense and Université de Nantes), one from Germany (Universität des Saarlandes), and one from New Zealand (The University of Auckland). Most of the data on the syllabi collected from universities abroad were not complete.

Since I have examined more syllabi from the United States than from other areas, and most of them are taught by professor Lucia Re of UCLA, I have decided to insert a comparison of the syllabi of Lucia Re with those of Caterina Romeo.



#### 4.2.1. Analysis of the Syllabi

As far as the primary texts are concerned, they show that Igiaba Scego's texts are the most taught in Italian academia, with her name present in almost all of the courses, both in Italy and abroad.<sup>229</sup> Especially, her name is not only featured often in the syllabi, but also many different texts are taught: *La mia casa è dove sono* (2010), in two different courses, *Adua* (2015), *Oltre Bibilonia* (2008), the short stories "Salsicce" and "Dismatria" (2005) and "Il disegno" (2010). Actually, as my research shows, Scego is the only author with such a diversification. The second most taught author is Cristina Ali Farah, especially her *Il comandante del fiume* (2014) and *Madre piccola* (2007). One text of Gabriella Ghermandi is included, *Regina di fiori e di perle* (2007), one by Italian writer and journalist Ennio Flaiano with the anticolonialist novel *Tempo di uccidere* (1947) and two of first-generation writer Pap Khouma, with *Noi italiani neri* (2012) and *Io venditore di elefanti* (1990). This snapshot displays a common preference for second-generation texts (Scego, Ghermandi, and Ali Farah) rather than first-generation ones (Khouma).

As far as the secondary texts are concerned, it is not possible to have an objective overview, since it is quite common that professors who teach Italian postcolonialism are also writing most of the secondary texts that are taught, with few exceptions, such as Roberto Derobertis, whose name is very often mentioned in the bibliographies.

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<sup>229</sup> Through my research on the Internet, I have combined the name of Scego with the keywords mentioned above. However, since I also have tried to use other writers' names and the result did not change, Scego remains the most taught author in the syllabi I have collected.

#### 4.2.1.1. The Past and Present of the Historical Representation of Contemporary Italy

Professors seem to prefer a literary-historical approach, which is common both to Italian and foreign universities, while a thematic one is adopted by foreign ones. This different engagement of Italian postcolonialism is apparent in the bibliographies, where Italian universities deal much more with the history of literature, literary criticism, colonialism, and postcolonialism.<sup>230</sup> Also the “learning outcomes” of the course descriptions show the importance of a chronological understanding of the colonial and postcolonial evolution, both as knowledge of historical events and history of literature. Some examples of the first case can be found in the descriptions of the structure of the courses: “a historical and a thematic approach” (Brioni); “this course aims to foster historical understanding and critical discussion” (Re). This is probably also one of the reasons why Italian syllabi have a higher amount of secondary texts compared to their colleagues abroad, who privilege primary texts.

At the same time, history is also explored as content. As already mentioned, Italian postcolonialism aims to reconstruct the Italian past by looking at the history of imperialism and its representations. The will of going through it is visible in the title of historical texts (for instance by Labanca) and in the study of colonial novels.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Examples: Romano Luperini, Pietro Cataldi, Marianna Marrucci’s *Storia della letteratura italiana contemporanea* (2012); Caterina Romeo, “Vent’anni di letteratura della migrazione e di letteratura postcoloniale italiana” (2011). Some examples of a bibliography on literary criticism are the following titles: Alberto Casadei’s *La critica letteraria del Novecento* (2008), Francesco Muzzioli’s *Le teorie della critica letteraria* (2015), Ugo Fracassa’s “Riscontri testuali nel Flaiano coloniale.” In *Patria e lettere. Per una critica della letteratura postcoloniale e migrante in Italia* (2012), Miguel Mellino, *La critica postcoloniale: decolonizzazione, capitalismo e cosmopolitismo nei postcolonial studies* (2005). Some of the courses are specifically on literary criticism, such as those taught by Margherita Ganeri (Università della Calabria) and Caterina Romeo (Università La Sapienza).

<sup>231</sup> Primary texts are titles such as Ennio Flaiano’s *Tempo di uccidere* (1947), which is surely the most present, Curzio Malaparte’s *Viaggio in Etiopia e altri scritti* (1939-1940), Dino Buzzati’s *L’Africa di Buzzati* (Libia 1933, Etiopia, 1939-1940), Davide Longo’s *Un mattino a Irgalem* (2001), Luciano Marrocu’s *Debrà Libanòs* (2002); Gianni Celati’s *Avventure in Africa* (1998). Secondary texts are Nicola Labanca’s *Oltremare. Storia dell’espansione coloniale italiana* (2002) and “Nelle Colonie” (2001), Bruno Brunetti’s “Modernità malata. Note su Tempo di uccidere di Ennio Flaiano”

Effectively, historical contents are explored as exemplary statements in the learning outcomes: “students are expected to acquire a general knowledge of the history of Italian literature” (Ganeri); “At the end of the course the student has a knowledge of the key problems produced by the long history of European and Western colonial expansion” (Mezzadra); “at the end of the course the student will know the main historical and critical questions posed by authors and texts of contemporary Italian literature” (Benvenuti). Moreover, when it comes to colonial literature, Ennio Flaiano’s *Tempo di uccidere* is surely the most assigned text in the syllabi.

The thematic approach allows for a more inclusive choice of didactic paths, intersecting Italian postcolonial studies with Italian literature and, in some cases, with political issues. The presence of primary texts of Italian literature (Pasolini, Moravia, Marinetti, Moresco, Busi, Lucarelli and others) is an example of this.<sup>232</sup> This aspect of combining canonical Italian literature with second-generation migrant literature is almost completely absent in the Italian universities. The range of works is obviously due to the fact that the courses abroad are a general introduction to contemporary Italy, and that as such they approach less specific questions.

#### 4.2.1.2. Comparative and Interdisciplinary Approaches

Looking at bibliographies, it is noticeable that Italian names of scholars such as Cristina Lombardi-Diop, Caterina Romeo, Sandra Ponzanesi, and Daniele Comberiati are taught

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(2010) and Ugo Fracassa’s “Riscontri testuali nel Flaiano coloniale,” in *Patria e lettere. Per una critica della letteratura postcoloniale e migrante in Italia* (2012), Alessandro Aruffo’s, “Il colonialismo italiano” (2010), “Coloniale/Postcoloniale nella letteratura italiana degli anni 2000” in *Narrativa* (2010). The full bibliography of all the texts cited in this chapter is in the section dedicated to the collection of syllabi.

<sup>232</sup> Marinetti’s *Mafarka il futurista. Romanzo africano* (1910) is included in the syllabus of Lucia Re “Italy between Europe and Africa.” It is interesting to remind that Marinetti’s Manifesto was used in my Second Chapter as an example of a contestation of the twentieth century canon. Tiles of Italian literature: Roberto Saviano’s *Il contrario della morte*; Carmen Covito’s *Tempo parziale*; Carlo Lucarelli’s *Ferengi*; Aldo Busi’s *Sentire le donne*; Grazia Deledda’s *Canne al vento*; Carlo Levi’s *Cristo si è fermato ad Eboli*; Alberto Moravia’s *Il negro e il vecchio con la roncola* and *A quale tribù appartieni*; Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Il padre selvaggio*.

together with Bhabha, Said, Chakrabarty, Gilroy, Spivak, and other foreign postcolonial scholars.

This last observation reveals an interesting aspect, namely the fact that all the course descriptions on Italian postcolonialism compare foreign literature to Italian literature, which is indicative of the reception of cultural studies and its methodologies.

In other words, it seems impossible to teach Italian postcolonial and colonial literature without *Orientalism* (1978) or *The Location of Culture* (1991). There seems to be a connection between Anglo-American theoretical canonical works and the formation of a new Italian canon. This tendency to adopt a comparative approach is quite persistent in all the syllabi, where the various canonical works are studied together in order to let Italian postcolonial literature enter the pedagogical canon. An example can be the frequent comparison of the colonial texts *Heart of Darkness* (1899) by Joseph Conrad and *Tempo di uccidere* (1947) by Ennio Flaiano.

It is also positive that there are a lot of theoretical titles from gender studies, queer studies, and feminist studies, and that the texts are included in the course together with texts by Italian postcolonial writers. Looking again at Romeo and Lombardi-Diop's "Manifesto," the "interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary projects" are among the changes hoped for by the teaching of postcolonial texts.<sup>233</sup>

As Susan Gallagher points out, referring to the case of Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*:

Its singular textual qualities embody a thematic richness, with multiple levels of political, historical, psychological, and ethical themes. Because *Nervous Conditions* raises issues concerned with the development of identity, colonial rebellion and collaboration, psychological therapy and Africans, individualism and

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<sup>233</sup> Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Romeo, Caterina. 'The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto'. *Italian Studies* 69:3 (2014): 433.

communalism, the strengths and weaknesses of mission-school education, teenage rebellion, and the private and public roles of women— among others — it is teachable in a variety of contexts.<sup>234</sup>

In this passage, she addresses the value of the interdisciplinarity of the postcolonial text, a characteristic that enables it to be studied from various perspectives. The fact that Italian and foreign courses are approaching Italian postcolonialism through other disciplines (gender, feminist, and queer studies) demonstrates that “stifling academic practices that still govern Italian academia” are overtaken by interdisciplinarity approaches, becoming a modality through which Italian postcolonialism is being assimilated in courses of Italian universities.<sup>235</sup>

It is remarkable that professors themselves openly reinforce these attitudes in their course descriptions. In the case of Mezzadra (Università di Bologna), the course description says “this multidisciplinary research field is well established in Anglo-Saxon universities, but is still relatively underdeveloped in Italy and in continental Europe.” The description from Camilotti (Università di Bologna) states that the goal is “encouraging students to engage with a multidisciplinary as well as a transcultural perspective.” The description from Romeo (Università La Sapienza) reads “Through the methodology of intersectionalization, other topics will be introduced, such as those of globalization, migration, multiculturalism, postcolonial feminism, etc.”

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<sup>234</sup> Gallagher, Susan V. “Contingencies and Intersections: The Formation of Pedagogical Canons.” *Pedagogy* 1 (2001): 65.

<sup>235</sup> Lombardi-Diop & Caterina Romeo. “The Italian Postcolonial,” 433.

#### 4.2.1.3. Italian Outline: Blackness, Femininity, and Trans-nationality

The engagement with foreign canonical works is apparent, but it is important to acknowledge that Italian postcolonial studies are nonetheless acquiring their own characteristics.

The concept of *Italianità* is investigated in most of the courses, both in Italy and abroad, by means of the notion of race, which in Italy is still a controversial issue. As highlighted in the “Manifesto,” Italian postcolonial studies in Italy and abroad are active in trying to “formulate new conceptualizations of blackness and its intersection with Italianness.”<sup>236</sup> As Caterina Romeo points out in *Postcolonial Italy*, “racism is a pervasive element in Italian society and a constitutive factor in the process of national formation” and it thus is necessary “to uncover and make visible all those subtle mechanisms that strengthen the racist structures.”<sup>237</sup> She suggests then that a “strong boost in this direction” could be achieved by collaborating with feminist studies and by contesting “categories of oppression.”<sup>238</sup> This tendency is notable in the syllabi, where gender and feminist studies are very extensively interacting with Italian postcolonial

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<sup>236</sup> Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Romeo, Caterina. “The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto.” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 427. This attitude is showed through the admission in the syllabi of titles such as Nassera Chohra’s *Volevo diventare bianca* (1993), Genevieve Makaping’s *Traiettorie di sguardi. E se gli "altri" foste voi?* (2001), Pap Khouma’s *Noi italiani neri*, (2010), Cristina Lombardi-Diop’s “Igiene, pulizia, bellezza e razza. La “bianchezza” nella cultura italiana dal Fascismo al dopoguerra.” In *Parlare di razza. La lingua del colore tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (2012), Stuart Hall’s *Insegnare la razza, in Politiche del quotidiano. Culture, identità e senso comune* (2006), Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh’s “Gli italiani sono bianchi? Per una storia culturale della linea del colore in Italia.” In *Parlare di razza. La lingua del colore tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (2012), Caterina Romeo’s “Rappresentazioni di razza e nerezza in vent’anni di letteratura postcoloniale afroitaliana.” In *Leggere il testo e il mondo. Vent’anni di scritture della migrazione in Italia* (2011), Petrovich and Scacchi’s *La lingua del colore tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (2012), Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop’s *Bianco e nero. Storia dell’identità razziale degli italiani* (2013), Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Alessandra di Maio, “Black Italia. Contemporary Migrant Writers from Africa” (2009).

<sup>237</sup> Romeo, Caterina. “Racial evaporations. Representing Blackness in African Italian Postcolonial Literature.” In *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*. Palgrave Macmillan (2012), 230.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

studies.<sup>239</sup> Black femininity, by means of feminist studies, seems to be investigated as a primary topic of discussion.

I found a course taught at the Università della Calabria particularly relevant, in which Margherita Ganeri combines Scego's *Oltre Babilonia* with Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* (1906) and Elsa Morante's *La storia* (1974). The course description is particularly interesting:

This part of the course is focused on presenting and commenting on the main social shifts overcome during more than one century of Italian society over the perception of rape, both on masculine and on feminine sides, and on the conflicting ways of representing rapes in novels written by women and by men. Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* will be compared with *Suo marito* by Luigi Pirandello; Elsa Morante's *La Storia* with Alberto Moravia's *La ciociara*; Igiaba Scego's *Oltre Babilonia* will be considered as a rethinking of Ennio Flaiano's *Tempo di uccidere*.

What I found significant is the fact that in the description Ganeri reports her interest in the transgenerational “perception of rape” in Italy. Therefore, she uses three books from different decades (1906, 1974, 2008) and for the contemporary perspective she includes Igiaba Scego's *Oltre Babilonia*, showing the will to reshape the Italian concept of identity on the basis of new elements (the main character, Zuhra, is a black Italian). Effectively, the perception of the traditional notion of an Italian person as white is passing through the representation of the subjugated and violated female body.

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<sup>239</sup> Examples of texts on feminism taught in Italy can be found in Sabrina Marchetti's *Femministe a parole* (2012), Alice Walker's 'Alla ricerca dei giardini delle nostre madri' in *Critiche femministe e teorie letterarie* (1996), Chandra Talpade Mohanty's 'Sotto gli occhi dell'occidente' in *Letteratura e Femminismi* (2000), Stefania De Petris's *Tra «agency» e differenze. Percorsi del femminismo postcoloniale* (2005), Porpora Marcasciano's 'Trans, donne e femministe. Coscienze divergenti e/o sincroniche' in *Altri femminismi. Corpi, Culture, Lavoro* (2006), Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild 'Introduction' to *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (2002), Lidia Curti's *La voce dell'altra. Scritture ibride tra femminismo e postcoloniale* (2006), Daniela Corona's 'Critica letteraria femminista' in *Dizionario degli studi culturali* (2004).

*Italianità* as identity notion is investigated in its relation to the trans-nationality that had characterized Italians in the past, during the great migration to America soon after the Second World War and during Fascist propaganda. The notion of trans-nationality is still persistent in the present, in the dichotomy North-South, in the recent flows of migration of young Italians towards Northern Europe, and in the migrants coming to Italy from North and East Africa in search of new opportunities.

From the bibliographies, the concept of trans-nationality is prominently featured. The internal colonialism and the Southern question is investigated only in the courses of Lucia Re, whose content I will discuss later on, while Caterina Romeo's courses investigate Italian emigration towards North America.<sup>240</sup> An interest in contemporary migration patterns is displayed in the course outlines (my emphases): "the experience of two *contemporary* writers (Agota Kristof and Jhumpa Lahiri) will define a very recurrent feature of multicultural society: the bilingualism or trilingualism, namely the necessity and/or the desire –*imposed by the migration*– letting the mother tongue coexist with a second and even a third adopted language (De Rogatis)"; "the multiple ways in which gender and race inform *contemporary society* characterized by *global trans-national migrations*" (Romeo); "Starting from the assumption that "space" is not a universal concept and that a "place" is the result of the *multiple trajectories that define how a space is inhabited*, this course will examine the ways in which gender, race, and *migrations* inform, construct, and *redefine space*, and how they are represented in *contemporary societies*" (Romeo); "other topics will be introduced, such as those of *globalization, migration, multiculturalism, postcolonial feminism*" (Romeo); "in the frame of the *Italian cultural context* (particularly, the definition of "*trans-national*",

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<sup>240</sup> She inserts a considerable number of titles on Italian migration: Piero Bevilacqua's 'Una società mobile', Sebastiano Martelli 'Dal vecchio mondo al sogno americano. Realtà e immaginario dell'emigrazione nella letteratura italiana', Emilio Franzina's 'Partenze e arrivi', Rudolph Vecoli's 'Negli Stati Uniti, in Storia dell'emigrazione italiana' and Andreina De Clementi's 'La «grande emigrazione»: dalle origini alla chiusura degli sbocchi americani' in *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana* (2001).



“postcolonial” and of “intercanonical”)’ (Sinopoli); “illuminate the life, culture and behaviour of people in *contemporary Italy*, seen in a *global perspective*” (Re); “*migratory flows across the Mediterranean; citizenship and cultural integration in contemporary Europe and Italy*” (Re).

#### 4.2.2. Università La Sapienza and UCLA: a Comparison

The highest number of syllabi is coming from the course of Caterina Romeo (Università Sapienza) for Italian universities and Lucia Re (UCLA) for Italian Studies abroad. It is worth then to try to compare their syllabi on the basis of the data I have collected. Firstly, when reading the syllabi, the first things that catches one’s attention is that the bibliographies of Caterina Romeo consist of a very high number of critical texts compared to those of Lucia Re, whose titles are mainly primary texts. Romeo inserts in her courses some of her own works.<sup>241</sup> Other theoretical texts are about gender, feminism, and queer studies; some of the scholars (both Italian and foreign) she inserts in her bibliographies are for instance Sabrina Marchetti, Alice Walker, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Stefania de Petris, Francesca Manieri, Olivia Fiorilli, Porpora Marcasciano, Barbara Ehrenreich, Arlie Russell Hochschild. Moreover, as for the postcolonial scholars, she cites the canonical texts of Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, together with Italian postcolonial scholars such as Caterina Lombardi-Diop, Daniele Comberiati, Fulvio Pezzarossa, Sandra Ponzanesi, and Roberto Derobertis.

On the other hand, Lucia Re seems to adopt more primary texts than secondary ones. The scholars she mentions are very few compared to those of Romeo: Nelson Moe,

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<sup>241</sup> For instance: “Remapping Cityscapes: Postcolonial Diasporas and Representations of Urban Space in Contemporary Italian Literature,” “Ricordare, ricostruire, teorizzare: il memoir come pratica e teoria dell’autonarrazione,” “Una capacità quasi acrobatica,” *L'Italia postcoloniale*, (with Cristina Lombardi-Diop), “Vent'anni di letteratura della migrazione e di letteratura postcoloniale in Italia: un excursus.”

Graziella Parati, James Dickie, Kristina Von Henneberg, Alessandra di Maio (with the exception of di Maio, the scholars work outside of Italy). Among the titles of Romeo and Re, there are some matches among the primary texts, such as Igiaba's "Salsicce" and Cristina Ali Farah's "Punt Rap" and *Madre Piccola*. Re, in her course "Introduction to Modern Italian Literary and Cultural Studies: Writing Italy Today" combines Igiaba Scego with other Italian authors, such as Saviano and Busi. Re's courses stand out from the others because of her engagement with Italian internal colonialism; in her lesson programme, she introduces the complex problem of the South of Italy, by means of John Dickie's *The Darkest Italy* (1993), and Nelson More's *The View from Vesuvio: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (2002). In the "Manifesto" the necessity of treating the Southern question is among the priorities of a reformed education in order to overcome the biological concept of identity:

Italy's internal colonialism provides an example of how postcolonial discourse may emerge not only as an emanation of the colonial periphery, but as an expression of subalternity from within the nation-state, and therefore outside traditional geographies of power that have historically been juxtaposed.<sup>242</sup>

It is notable that Caterina Romeo, whom I have already cited in my theoretical framework, in "The Postcolonial: A Manifesto" argues against the conservative exclusivity of Italian academia, and supports a fight to "promote social and cultural change through the creation of larger models of inclusivity that are truly representative of Italy's contemporary postcolonial condition."<sup>243</sup> Through her syllabi, whose chronology covers a period starting from 2011 onwards without interruptions, she is actively involved in the battle of reshaping the concept of Italianness through the

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<sup>242</sup> Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Caterina Romeo. "The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto." *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 431.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 427.

mixture of Italian postcolonialism, second-generation migrant literature, and canonical Anglo-American and French criticism. Especially, Romeo adopts interdisciplinary and comparative approaches. For instance, she approaches Italian postcolonialism especially through gender and geographical perspectives. Through the latter topics, she especially investigates the notion of social space and the notion of gender.<sup>244</sup>

#### 4.3. Igiaba Scego as a Cultural Agent

Igiaba Scego, whom I chose for my analysis as a spokesperson for Italian postcolonial writers, is involved in many projects, such as presentations, conferences, lessons, presentations, interventions, and interviews. For this reason, besides her presence as an object of study in university courses, she functions as a “cultural agent,” borrowing the words of Sandra Ponzanesi.<sup>245</sup> In this sense, she transfers knowledge thanks to her work as a journalist and a writer and her continuous interaction with the public in debates, especially those regarding themes such as racism, blackness, and immigration. My attempt to analyse her multifaceted role as an intellectual is based on a detailed research on the Internet and it represents partially the contribution of Scego of the last years.

I have tried to summarize her activities of the last six years in order to let the reader have an idea of what I mean by “cultural agent.” What follows is a summary of all the data I have gathered together with the aim to demonstrate the different topics and platforms Scego uses in order to enlarge the national literary canon by entering with her persona in the cultural market.

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<sup>244</sup> Titles for geographical works: Rachele Borghi’s “Introduzione: (ad una geografia [de]genere).” In *Geografie di genere* (2009); David Bell and Jon Binnie’s “*Remapping Desire*. Riflessioni sulle geografie della sessualità.” In *Lo spazio della differenza*, (2011); Marianne Blidon’s “La città e gli effetti dell’eteronormatività. Emancipazione, normalizzazione e produzione di soggetti gay.” In *Lo spazio della differenza* (2011); Rachele Borghi and Antonella Rondinone’s “Donne di città in città da uomini: un’analisi geografica di *Sex and the City*” (2009); Caterina Romeo’s “Remapping Cityscapes: Postcolonial Diasporas and Representations of Urban Space in Contemporary Italian Literature” (2015).

<sup>245</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism: Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry*, Palgrave Macmillan (2014), 112.

As a journalist, Scego writes for national newspapers such as *Internazionale*, *L'Unità*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Manifesto*, and some webzines such as *El Ghibli* and *Carta*. Her articles complement her fictional work. To follow the comment of Anna Proto-Pisani upon the value of Scego's role:

Gli articoli trovano spunto in occasioni concrete, di attualità sociale, culturale ... descrivono percorsi e difficoltà dei cittadini immigrati o di seconda generazione, ... denunciano vivacemente il razzismo che attraversa la società italiana. Dietro questi spunti si celano le preoccupazioni costanti dell'autrice: la questione somala, la questione femminile, la critica sociale e politica dell'Italia, con particolare attenzione per la questione delle seconde generazioni, della mancanza di diritti per una parte della popolazione e della xenofobia.<sup>246</sup>

In fact, many titles of her articles recall the colonial past of Italy, the postcolonial condition and issues of blackness, denouncing racist strives and the female condition in contemporary Italy. Some examples are "Il silenzio dell'Italia sulle schiavitù di ieri e di oggi" [The Silence of Italy on the Slavery of Yesterday and Today], "La vera storia di Faccetta Nera" [The Real history of Faccetta Nera], "Quando gli italiani non erano bianchi" [When Italians weren't white], "E se il milite ignoto fosse nero?" [And if the Unknown Soldier was black?], "Lezioni di autorazzismo" [Lessons of Auto-racism].<sup>247</sup>

Recently (05/06/2016), Scego wrote an article for *Internazionale* about the exploitation of slaves in Italy, titled "Il silenzio dell'Italia sulle schiavitù di ieri e di

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<sup>246</sup> Proto Pisani, Anna. "Igiaba Scego, scrittrice postcoloniale in Italia." *Italies* 14 (2010). Accessed 15/06/2016. <http://italies.revues.org/4042#abstract> [Eng.: "The articles take inspirations from concrete occasions, of cultural and social actuality ... they denounce the racism that characterizes Italian society. Beyond these interventions, there are the constant preoccupations of the author: the Somali issue, the female issue, the social and political critique of Italy, with particular regards toward the issue of second generations, the lack of rights for a part of the population and of xenophobia."]

<sup>247</sup> For articles: on *l'Unità*, <http://www.unita.it/commenti/igiabascego?page=1> and on *L'Internazionale* <http://www.unita.it/commenti/igiabascego?page=1>

oggi.”<sup>248</sup> Beginning with a description of the monument situated near the harbour of Livorno with four “mori” (blacks) who carry cardinal Ferdinando I, she introduces the topic of Italian human exploitation. Today, numerous fruit fields in the South of Italy are filled by migrants from Africa, India, and Romania, who work for very few money under terrible working conditions. It is worthwhile to remember that most of these camps still have an illegal recruitment system. Scego went back in time by evoking the hidden slavery in the Italian peninsula, believing that one of the causes of the silence on the new slavery is the amnesia of the historical one. Since the sixteenth century Italy, witnessed large-scale slave trade. One of the biggest centres was Naples (in 1661 there were more than 20.000 slaves). Some testimonies collected by Salvatore Bono in his book *Schiavi. Una storia mediterranea (XVI-XIX)* are atrocious. Children and women were abused, and men were forced to work without breaks, examples which can give an overview on the Italian situation in that period; a situation that persisted until the beginning of the nineteenth century and, once finished, its history was buried. By means of remembering these past events, Scego wishes to reread of the present by revisiting the past.

She is also active on social networks; on Facebook, where she has two pages and one personal profile; on Twitter as @igiabas and 4.700 followers; on Instagram with 887 followers. Her posts and tweets mostly regard current political facts (for instance, in these days she uses as profile picture the sentence “Verità e giustizia per Giulio Regeni”) and about colonial and postcolonial issues.<sup>249</sup> One of the last posts on her Facebook profile says:

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<sup>248</sup> Scego, Igiaba. “Il silenzio dell’Italia sugli schiavi di ieri e di oggi.” *Internazionale* (05/06/2015). Accessed 09/07/2016. <http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2016/06/05/italia-schiavitu-schiavi>

<sup>249</sup> Accessed 15/06/2015 <https://www.facebook.com/igiaba.scego>

Molti di voi vogliono un sindaco di Roma migrante o figlio di migranti. Ma ecco prima servirebbe una legge sulla cittadinanza per farci votare tutti. Ci sono molti di noi senza diritti. Io sarei già molto contenta di vedere autisti dell'autobus, consiglieri comunali, speaker radiofonici, anchorman del telegiornale nazionale popolare figli di migranti o migranti. Non è solo (purtroppo!) la politica ad essere monocolora. Entrate in una redazione a caso di un giornale o di una radio. Entrate nelle aule scolastiche o universitarie. Serve una società (ed è qui lo sforzo da fare) che spinga il potere verso questi cambiamenti. Invece di dire che bella Londra da lontano, cominciate a spingere. Yes we “Khan”.<sup>250</sup>

Much of her interventions can be found in the form of interviews she releases in different journals.<sup>251</sup> In the interview for *L'Indice dei libri del mese* on 4 January 2016 ([www.lindiceonline.com](http://www.lindiceonline.com)), journalist Camilla Valletti asked her some questions related to the production of postcolonial literature in Italy. Scego asserted that the label of “letteratura della migrazione” in the last decade, as contrasted with the current “letteratura postcoloniale,” was useful to employ in the market, because it is a category which is considered to be fashionable. These labels on the one hand give books a space in the publishing houses and on the other hand confine them to a cage (“ingabbiare”). The language she uses in her books, and especially in the latest one (*Adua*, 2015) is always a hybridization of different levels. In fact, in *Adua*, each of the three characters adopts a different register, from literary Italian to dialects. The attention Scego pays to

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<sup>250</sup> Accessed 15/06/2015 <https://www.facebook.com/igiaba.scego> [Eng.: “Lots of you want a migrant or a son of migrants to become mayor of Rome. But firstly there would need to be a law on the citizenship to let everybody vote. There are a lot of us without rights. I would be happy to see bus drivers, council members, radio speakers, national newscast presenters being sons of migrants of migrants. It is not only (unfortunately) the politics to be self-coloured. Let’s enter in an editorial room or in a radio. Let’s enter in a classroom or at university. We need a society (and this is the effort that must be done) that pushes the power towards these changes. Instead of saying that London is beautiful from far away, you have to start to push. ‘Yes we Khan’ referred to Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London”]

<sup>251</sup> Some of them are in the following list: on Radio Radicale (11/12/2015) by Massimiliano Coccia and (8/05/2014) by Andrea Billau; in Q Code Magazine (09/12/2015) by Gabriella Grasso; on *L'indice dei libri del mese* (4/12/2016) by Camilla Valletti; on Articolo 21 (21/12/2014) by Roberto Bertoni; on Duedemag (7/01/2012) by Simone di Brango; on Timeforequality.org (03/2013) by Rosa Brignone; on Libreriamo (26/09/2015); on Nazione Indiana (27/10/2010).

language reflects her fight against generalization, standardization, and stereotypical “luoghi comuni” [commonplaces]. For example, she contests the use of the adjective “Muslim” when it is indifferently applied to Arabic Muslims or Afro-Asian Muslims. In the interview, the journalist recalled the article Scego wrote for *Internazionale*, titled “Not in My Name,” written after the attack on Charlie Hebdo in 2015.

As for conferences and seminars, Scego is constantly involved in Italy and abroad.<sup>252</sup> On 19 September 2013, she conducted a lecture at the University of New York, titled “My Home is Where I Am. Re-Mapping my Afro-Italian Identity” (from the title of, at that time, her last book *La mia casa è dove sono*).<sup>253</sup> She introduces the meeting by using a personal anecdote on her name, which her father simplified from Igiaba Ali Omar Scego to Igiaba Scego for the Italian bureaucracy. She interprets the loss of the name as a loss of identity. *La mia casa è dove sono* is therefore an attempt to map her identity and, in general, to ask for a remapping of Italy as a postcolonial and multicultural country. In presenting herself she said: “I am writer, I am activist, I am the president of an association called ‘Incontri di civiltà’ [culture, refugees, social issues] ... I love Italy and for this reason I decided to write, to denounce what does not work” in Italy.<sup>254</sup> Apart from the recollection of her own personal narratives, which come from the oral tradition inherited by her mother and from the city of Brava of her father, it is interesting to look at her constant effort to speak and to introduce people to current affairs in Italy.

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<sup>252</sup> For instance, in 2011 she took part in the conference on “Immigrati and Screening in Italia” in Viterbo. Last year (2015) she participated in Ferrara at the *XV Convegno Nazionale Franco Argento* with a lecture titled “Non solo acqua, non solo aria. La letteratura come bene commune” to promote the cultural integration within schools; at the convention “Sguardi al cuore della letteratura” in Florence sponsored by Giunti T.V.P. Editori and Treccani on literature taught in school; at the conference of the American Association of teachers of Italian organized in Siena at the Università per Stranieri on the teaching of Italian language and culture in Italy and North America; at the meeting “Italiano ponte tra culture nel Mediterraneo” at the University of Zürich connected to the Expo in Milan; at the twenty-first edition of MEDFILM Festival in Rome, where she was also part of the jury for the section of documentaries. In 2016, Scego already participated in the XIX Convegno Nazionale GISCEL on the Italian language spoken by “new Italians” (7-9 April).

<sup>253</sup> Scego, Igiaba. “Igiaba Scego at New York University” (19/09/2013). Accessed 09/08/2016.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_lhQN8pTW-o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lhQN8pTW-o)

<sup>254</sup> Ibid.

For instance, she speaks about the monument dedicated in Affile (Rome) to Fascist general Rodolfo Graziani inaugurated on August 11, 2012. Through an online petition (on change.org), Scego argued for the removal of the monument, since the budget for constructing the monument was initially going to be used to build a park. The case of Graziani is only one of the examples of the persisting colonial mentality of Italy in the twenty-first century. Apart from her speech, she often referred to other sources, such as books, articles, videos, advertisements, and movies. She also referred to social networks (Twitter and Facebook). She showed, among others, the advertisement of the laundry soap “Coloreria Italiana” in 2007, in which a white man was thrown in the washing machine and came out black, the advertisement of the candy brand Morositas in the 1980s, in which a black sexy woman was the protagonist, the video of the flash mob in Rome reported by *Il fatto quotidiano*, in 2014 and many others.<sup>255</sup> One of the topics she touched on is that of the stereotype created during the African campaign in the 1930s about the “dream of sexually available women” featured on postcards, a stereotype which is still present in Italy, where black women often have the part of prostitutes. Moreover, she recalled the Fascist songs “l’Africanina” and “Faccetta nera” about female black women who had to be brought to Italy to become properly “civilized.” Eventually, she concluded her lecture by remembering that nowadays sons of immigrants still cannot easily have access to Italian citizenship, and that she hopes for a prompt legal and socio-cultural change.

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<sup>255</sup> “Coloreria Italiana” (28/02/2009). Accessed 18/07/2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fyyEwBegIo>  
 “Morositas” (03/04/2012). Accessed 18/07/2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GsiAmzgKQ44>  
 Flash Mob in Rome (2/05/2012). Accessed 18/07/2016.  
<http://tv40.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/06/02/roma-flash-mob-per-cittadinanza-a-bimbi-stranieri-nati-in-italia-anche-per-noi-e/282821/>



#### 4.3.1. Between the Local and Trans-national

As these examples show, Igiaba Scego is present in the Italian cultural and social fabric as a human rights activist. The themes she deals with are connected with her being an Italian of African origins, a black Italian woman, and a female writer. Scego is transversal in her way of approaching topics, encompassing primary issues (racism, blackness, recognition of citizens) with others, regarding the present condition of the country. An example is the already mentioned case of Giulio Regeni, the Ph.D. student whose body was found in Egypt.<sup>256</sup>

Approaching contemporary Italy by means of postcolonial issues Scego reintroduces the Italian colonial past into the public debate. As mentioned above, her predilection to discuss themes of gender, ethnicity, and racism are combined with the Italian hidden history of colonialism and slavery. The recollection of the past in her work as a cultural agent is always strictly embedded within a critique and a concrete action in the present. What I personally like about her the most is the way she is present in social and political debates by means of literature and history. Her commitment to the past always is a starting point for understanding the present. Moreover, in this way her critical approach stimulates debate because she does not limit herself to merely disagreeing with racist and xenophobic movements, but really tries to go further and to draw attention to Italian history, as is apparent by numerous titles of her texts. An example is an article on the *Internazionale*, in which she comments on the video of the song “N.E.G.R.A.,” presented at the national music festival Sanremo by the young black Italian Cecile Vanessa Ngo Nou. In this article Scego writes:

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<sup>256</sup> For further information on Regeni’s case: [http://www.repubblica.it/protagonisti/Giulio\\_Regeni](http://www.repubblica.it/protagonisti/Giulio_Regeni).

Cecile tra le lenzuola mi ha ricordato le cartoline con le donne nude che i militari italiani portavano con sé in Africa orientale tra la fine dell’ottocento e il 1941. Sì, quelle famigerate cartoline coloniali dove eritree, somale, etiopi e libiche erano carne da macello per gli sguardi concupiscenti dei bianchi conquistatori. Donne denudate, donne preda, donne sottomesse da un regime che le voleva solo come merce, come selvaggina da possedere.<sup>257</sup>

In this case, referring to a present event (the Sanremo festival), she recalls the propaganda carried on by Mussolini for the exploitation of African territories, together with that of its female inhabitants.

In so doing, the contents of her articles cover local issues, especially linked to her city, Rome. In *Adua* (2015), the protagonist starts the recollection of her memory by speaking with Bernini’s marble elephant in the Minerva Square in Rome. In the volume *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (2014), written by Scego and Rino Bianchi, Rome becomes the protagonist of the entire volume, as a medium of colonial memories through its toponymy and buildings. In an interview with *La Balena Bianca* regarding Bernini’s elephant, she said:

Adua attraverso di lui [*l’elefante*] vede se stessa e anche Roma, che è un po’ come Adua, rivede se stessa. Perché secondo me Roma è una città magnifica, che però non lo sa, ha bisogno di rivedere la sua bellezza, è la mia musa ispiratrice. *Roma negata* e *Adua* sono due libri legati tra loro dalla città. Se non avessi girato così tanto per Roma forse non avrei parlato dell’elefante del Bernini: ora per me è diventato un luogo simbolico, il simbolo di una società che potrebbe essere diversa

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<sup>257</sup> Scego, Igiaba. “Il corpo nero cantato da Cecile a Sanremo è una rivoluzione mancata.” *Internazionale* (12/02/2016) Accessed 28/07/2016. <http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2016/02/12/cecile-sanremo-negra-canzone> [Eng.: “Cecile between the sheets has reminded me of the postcards with naked women that Italian militaries took with them to Eastern Africa between the end of XIX century and 1941. Yes, those notorious colonial postcards where Eritrean, Somali, Ethiopian and Libyan women were cannon fodder for the concupiscent gazes of white conquerors. Bare women, quarry-women, women subjugated by a regime that wanted them as goods, as hunting games”]

da quella che abbiamo, come quel *Welcome refugees* che avviene quotidianamente da vent'anni a Lampedusa.<sup>258</sup>

From the local to the mainstream news, Scego is situated in the present, and not only in the Italian one. One of her best-known articles is the one about the attack on the offices of the magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris (2015). “Not in my name” is the slogan that circulates among Muslims in Europe in order to dissociate their religion from terrorism. Being a Muslim herself, Scego decided to be part of this campaign against the identification of whoever follows Islam with the terrorists who killed eleven people in that occasion and many others during the last ten years. She wrote:

This outrage is not just an attack on freedom of expression; it is also an attack on the democratic values that hold us together. Europe is made up of citizens who are Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, atheist and so on. There are a lot of us and we all live together. Yes, the continent's situation is shaky, the crisis is tough, but we are together and this is what matters. The professional, well-trained killers who struck Charlie Hebdo want chaos. They want a Europe gripped by fear, where citizens become enemies. And this is where they go hand in hand with the xenophobic far right. Nazis understand each other. They actually want to isolate Muslims from the other Europeans. They want us to be vulnerable and alone. They want to destroy the cohabitation we are laboriously building together.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Quarti, Matilde. “Conversazione con Igiaba Scego: da “Adua” alle nuove migrazioni” *La Balena Bianca* (18/09/2015). Accessed 09/05/2016. <http://www.labalenabianca.com/2015/09/18/igiabascego/> [Eng.: “Through the elephant Adua sees herself and Rome, which is a bit like Adua, it sees itself. Because, according to me, Rome is an amazing city but it does not know it, it needs to mirror itself and her beauty. Rome is my inspiring Muse. *Roma negata* and *Adua* are books connected between them by the city. If I did not visit Rome so much, I would not speak about Bernini's elephant: for me, it is a symbolic place, the symbol of a society that could be different from the one that we have, as that ‘Welcome Refugees’ that occurs since twenty years in Lampedusa.”]

<sup>259</sup> Scego, Igiaba. “Not in my name” *Internazionale* (09/01/2015). Accessed: 20/06/2016. <http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2015/01/09/not-in-my-name>

Travelling across geographical space as a physical person, for instance as a lecturer in New York, through her articles and interventions inside and outside Italian reality, and through her narratives about the relationship between Africa and Europe, through the exploration of issues (religion, gender) that are unanimously shared, Scego can be considered as a trans-national author. Her words travel through space, pointing out the dialectical exchange between places and identities. When analysing the trans-national turning point in Italian Studies, Emma Bond refers to *La mia casa è dove sono* (2010):

In *La mia casa è dove sono*, Scego maps out the twin cities of her belonging, Rome and Mogadishu, tracing superimposed cartographies of interactive belonging where places intersect through memory and imagination in order to form poles of meaning within a mixed and flexible trans-national identity.<sup>260</sup>

Her socio-cultural and political fight does not limit itself to newspapers. The very usefulness of employing different social media comes from the fact that it allows her to interact with readers. Thus, she establishes an analytic approach towards issues and a stable interaction between the author and the community. She often refers to other sources in her meetings and articles. During a conference in New York she frequently used YouTube videos. She uses different media, but also refers to real-life events, such as the flash mob in Rome.

Eventually, Igiaba Scego can be considered as an example of a postcolonial author who actively works to enlarge the literary canon. Looking at her work, the space occupied by narrative is not exclusive; the canonicity is continuously under construction and symbolized by the author herself. In *Nervous Conditions*, Susan Gallagher argues that “without the contingencies of both publication and networking, *Nervous Conditions*

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<sup>260</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies?” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 424

would never have achieved such success.”<sup>261</sup> I argue that the author herself by means of her trans-nationality creates these contingencies and cases.

The recognition of Scego as a postcolonial author seems to belong to what Ponzanesi described as commodified exoticism, in the sense that her role of a black female writer is subject to a strong objectification. She is always invited to speak about her Italian African origins, about Mogadishu, and about what it means to be a second-generation migrant. At the same time, Scego has acquired considerable visibility in the Italian cultural scene through this label. The attention she catches thanks to her being “exotic” is also the biggest tool she uses in order to produce knowledge on themes that go further than her condition of a postcolonial writer, for instance writing about international issues. The formation of the canon, and the possible admission of postcolonial literature in the contemporary literary canon, is still based on the dichotomy of oppressor-oppressed. Only if this dichotomy is overcome, the Italian national canon can be enlarged.

#### 4.4. Conclusion: Italian Postcolonialism and the Redefinition of Canonical Italian Boundaries

The two analyses can be compared and integrated in order to understand how Italian postcolonial studies are interacting with the literary national canon and, consequently, what narratives enrich it by slowly enlarging the canonized notion of Italianness. On the one hand, the collection of syllabi shows that the teaching of Italian postcolonialism is comparative, interdisciplinary, and trans-national; on the other hand, Igiaba Scego as a cultural agent is trans-national and approaches different topics by means of different platforms. The formation of the national canon seems in this way to depend on the

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<sup>261</sup> Gallagher, Susan. “Contingencies and Intersections,” 60.

combination of different elements: on one side the traditional authority, the university, and on the other the works of postcolonial authors, who acquire a privileged position in Italy, being outside and inside it. In this sense, the development of the literary canon, with its representations and narrations, is moving in a trans-national direction, allowing the subversiveness of postcolonialism to slowly enter the national space.

In the first chapter, I extensively went through the features of Italian postcolonialism, studying its contents and its forms. Firstly, postcolonialism in Italy is a way to recall the hidden history of colonialism. The urgency to go further in the colonial past is apparent both in academic teaching and in Scego's work as a cultural agent. As mentioned above, the courses feature a selection of both critiques on and narratives about colonialism. Some examples are Ennio Flaiano's novel *Tempo di uccidere* (1947), and the volumes by historian Nicola Labanca. Insights on "imperialism straccione" are given by Scego in a lot of her interventions, such as the volume *Roma negata. Percorsi postcoloniali nella città* (2014), written with the photojournalist Rino Bianchi. Scego investigates colonial history also with the help of the memories of her characters, who remember the toponymy of Mogadishu (in *La mia casa è dove sono*) or the stories from those who experienced colonialism, such as Zoppa, who was a translator in Somalia during the Fascist era (*Adua*).

As Ponzanesi argues, focusing on the Italian colonial past means both "tracing the contour of Italian colonial history," which has been forgotten for many years, and "establishing linkages between the colonial racial politics of 1930s and the contemporary multicultural reality of the new millennium."<sup>262</sup> Scego's connection between colonialism and postcolonialism as a continuum between historical issues and their present actualization, literary representation and real facts are very relevant. Italians still have a colonial mentality, a mentality whose components "have left a long

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<sup>262</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Paradoxes of postcolonial culture," 110.

trail in the popular imaginary, through songs, images, stereotypes, caricatures, slogans” that needs to be dismantled by reappropriating the memory of colonialism.<sup>263</sup>

It is then appropriate to recall the words of Triulzi which I cited in the first chapter: “in postcolonial Italy, African ‘alterity’ is dealt with, culturally and socially, through the ambiguous return of colonial clichés.”<sup>264</sup> In this sense, Scego contests clichéd representations of black Italians. Moreover, she often addresses the problem of stereotypization of migrant women as sexually available, of citizenship, of racism within the publishing industry, of the difficulty for migrants to integrate in society, and so on. Among these clichés, the stereotype of sexually available black women used in Fascist propaganda is still present in Italian representations of African female subjectivities (for instance in cinema). The advertisement of the candies “Morositas” shown during the conference in New York deals exactly with this topos of the sexy black woman who, among the other white girls, stands out because of her exuberant sensuality. The traditional binary division between white male colonizers and black subjugated women is criticized, as for instance in the article on the singer Cecile.

Academics as well try to overcome the stereotype of the savage woman by means of feminist and gender studies, as the titles reported above show. In particular, by looking at postcolonialism from a female perspective, which is recognizable from the number of female characters in primary texts, of female scholars, female professors, and female writers, Italianness is reshaped due to the active presence of women.

Italian blackness remains one of the most problematic aspects of acceptance in the shared vision of Italianness. As Jacqueline Andall’s survey shows, second-generation black Italians have denounced discrimination and stereotypization.<sup>265</sup> Despite the fact that her research covers just the area of Milan, the alternation of an excessive visual

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<sup>263</sup> Curti. “Female Literature of Migration in Italy,” 63.

<sup>264</sup> Triulzi, Alessandro. “Displacing the Colonial Event.” *Interventions*, 8.3 (2006): 433.

<sup>265</sup> Andall, Jacqueline. “Second-generation attitude? African-Italians in Milan.” *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 28.3 (2002): 401.

distinguishability and a bureaucratic and political invisibility regarding coloured people is a tendency that can be extended to the whole national territory.

In this direction, it is also important to recall the study of Sabelli on Makaping's *Traiettorie di sguardi* which I reported in the first chapter, which is also included in Romeo's syllabi. As presented in the article, Makaping succeeded in defining the notion of blackness by deconstructing the notion of the "Other" in the Italian context. In defining Italians as other she changes perspective, she presents herself as "eccentric subject" in the space reserved for black Italians, and from that position she looks at the centre by dismantling the same existence of the "Other" as something "different". In her accepting even the depreciative term "negra" by depriving it of its negative connotation, she refuses the "dichotomy mind/body," "the universal and neutral interpretation."<sup>266</sup> In fact, this appropriation of the word "negra" is a notion embodied in the subject, which is real and is identified in a living body of flesh and blood, with ethnic and sexual connotations.<sup>267</sup>

Emma Bond's study argues that the body is "the most productive way of analysing the link between the global and the particular within trans-national literature itself."<sup>268</sup> In her words, the body is precisely the hyphen between "trans" and "national" that bridges the gap between binary oppositions, in this case of centre/periphery. The body, black and sexualized, is a topos used by Scego in *Rhoda* where the dead black prostitute speaks about her life. In the interview to *La Balena Bianca* on *Adua*, the author declares:

La domanda a cui ho cercato di rispondere scrivendolo è: cosa succede ai corpi  
quando vengono attraversati da una storia, anche violenta, come può essere il

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<sup>266</sup> Sabelli, Sonia. "Quando la subalterna parla. Le traiettorie di sguardi di Geneviève Makaping." In Derobertis, Roberto (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 145.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>268</sup> Bond, Emma. "Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies." *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 422.



colonialismo, ma anche tutta la parte post-coloniale, e quindi tutti quegli stereotipi e quei razzismi che non sono stati disinnescati<sup>269</sup>

The inclusion of Scego's *Oltre Babilonia* in the courses taught by Margherita Ganeri is another way through which the raped body becomes a site of investigation of cross-generational femininity within the national boundaries, but without discriminatory connotations.

As Anna Proto-Pisani argues, “il dominio sui corpi e in particolare sui corpi delle donne è l'immagine più forte del rapporto di potere e di violazione insito nella relazione coloniale.”<sup>270</sup> It is perhaps useful for my results to point out that Scego herself and her female and black body represent a site of reflection as well. In other words, by means of her physical presence she manages to use her body, sexualized and racialized according to the colonial stereotype, to take control of it and to use it in order to deconstruct that stereotype, not only as a black woman, but also a writer and an activist. Like Makaping when she uses the term “negra” to describe herself, Scego critically regains her body and those of other black women (*pecore nere*) who are discriminated as sexual workers, as housekeepers and as foreigners. She does it by means of literature, where rape and abuses are often mentioned, and by means of travelling or participating in conferences, meetings, lectures, and even flash mobs. In this way, Scego herself, and not only her speaking about bodies, can metaphorically be considered as the hyphen of trans-nationality, a trans-nationality that is now urgent to investigate for all the reasons I exposed until now.

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<sup>269</sup> Quarti, Matilde. “Conversazione con Igiaba Scego: da “Adua” alle nuove migrazioni” *La Balena Bianca* (18/09/2015). Accessed 09/05/2016. <http://www.labalenabianca.com/2015/09/18/igiabascego/> [Eng.: “the question I have tried to answer is what happens to the bodies when they are crossed by a history, like the colonial one, violent, but also by the post-colonial one and thus all the stereotypes and racisms that have not been deactivated.”]

<sup>270</sup> Proto Pisani, Anna. “Igiaba Scego, scrittrice postcoloniale in Italia.” *Italies* 14 (2010). Accessed 15/06/2016. <http://italies.revues.org/4042#abstract> [Eng.: “the control over bodies and, especially, the female bodies is the strongest image of the innate power relationship of colonial relation.”]

Trans-nationality encompasses a variety of themes and uses, both in academia and in the work of Scego. The digressions on the Southern question of Lucia Re, the exhaustive bibliography on Italian emigration in the USA of Caterina Romeo, the geographical dislocations of Scego's conferences, the continuous relationship between Africa and Italy in the literature of migrant and postcolonial writers, the interaction between Rome and Mogadishu in *La mia casa è dove sono*, but also between Italy and Europe in the article on Charlie Hebdo, are only some of the numerous intersections that inform the postcolonial narrative and theories of present Italy and that contribute to reshape the peninsula through the external perspective of Italian departments abroad, Italian universities and postcolonial writers. Trans-nationality represents one of the most powerful sources of approaching Italy, which goes through an endogenous transformation in constant relation with the "Other," the "outside," the "periphery."

The relation between the formation of the national literary canon and postcolonialism relies on the change brought about by the university on the one hand, which lets postcolonial works entering in the pedagogical canon by interrelating foreign canonical texts and trans-national approaches, and postcolonial authors on the other, who use their stereotypization of "commodified exotica" to enlarge the boundaries of the Italian canon.

The analysis of the syllabi has shown how difficult it is to integrate migration and postcolonial texts in the university teaching, how they are still at the periphery of contemporary Italian literature and are still perceived as foreign literature. As extensively described in the second chapter, this scepticism has its roots in the 1990s, when Italian academia was reticent to absorb the charge of cultural studies in its structural texture. Failing to revisit the old canon is one of the reasons that caused the delay in the study of postcolonialism in Italy. Accordingly, I agree that the consequences of this failure are still present in Italian academia, as proven by my

concise but indicative research. Six years ago, Derobertis wrote that Italian academia was still a “depositaria museale delle presunte e antichissime tradizioni ‘italiane’ della letteratura ‘nazionale’.”<sup>271</sup> These words echo Marinetti’s *Manifesto* where academia, together with museums and libraries were considered “cemeteries of empty exertion, Calvaries of crucified dreams, registries of aborted beginnings.”<sup>272</sup>

However, this position of postcolonial literature on the threshold of Italian national literature seems to stimulate on one side the relation with foreign canons, and on the other opens up new perspectives. It can in fact look at Italy from the inside, by showing the nods of discrimination and racism, but also from the outside, by transferring Anglo-American postcolonial theories in the Italian context by means of literary comparison.

As pointed out in the discussion on *Traiettorie di sguardi*, the “eccentric position” enables the black subject to look at Italian society from the outside and to deconstruct the marginality of his/her position in Italian society. As Sabelli writes, “l’eccentricità è anche una strategia che consente di operare delle scelte consapevoli e di liberarsi dai pregiudizi razzisti e sessisti che l’autrice contribuisce a smontare e a decostruire.”<sup>273</sup> This observation recalls the formation of canon of Ponzanesi; it seems in fact that postcolonial literature, being both “inside” the literary canon and “outside” it, contributes to the enlargement of national canonical boundaries.

According to Sela-Sheffy, the “canonized reservoirs serve as means of *legitimizing revolutions*, operating as a shock-absorber, or a solid index, so to speak, vis-à-vis the ups and downs of the cultural stock-exchange.”<sup>274</sup> The dynamic interaction between the

<sup>271</sup> Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuoricentro*, 24. [Eng.: “museum/guardian of alleged and ancient ‘Italian’ traditions of ‘national’ literature”]

<sup>272</sup> Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. “Il Manifesto del futurismo” (1909), eds. Luciano de Maria, *Filippo Tommaso Marinetti e i manifesti futuristi* (Milano: Mondadori, 1973).

<sup>273</sup> Sabelli, Sonia. “Quando la subalterna parla. Le traiettorie di sguardi di Geneviève Makaping.” In Derobertis, Roberto. (ed.) *Fuori Centro: percorsi postcoloniali nella letteratura italiana*. (Roma: Aracne, 2010), 139. [Eng.: “The eccentric position is a strategy that enables to operate aware choices and to release from the racist and sexist prejudices that the author contributes to dismantle and deconstruct”]

<sup>274</sup> Sela-Sheffy, Rakefet. “Canon Formation Revisited,” 151.

old structure and newness is then used by Sandra Ponzanesi to describe how postcolonial writers, by means of literary awards, have managed to become familiar to the reader on the basis of the criterion: “an act of innovation can take place along with an act of sanctification of established criteria.”<sup>275</sup> Therefore, the “sanctification” of Italian postcolonial literature, which has not totally occurred, can generate attention for future generations of postcolonial and migration authors in Italy. Despite the fact that the innovation by second-generation writers is still perceived as subversive, the process of normalization is in construction through the voices and the bodies like those of Igiaba Scego, who is black, a woman and, first of all, Italian.

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<sup>275</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism,” 129.

## Conclusion

With globalization “the necessity to re-imagine and re-construct notions of political belonging along ethnic and religious identifications has become even more heightened.”<sup>276</sup> Consequently, “migration has ... come to signify all possible processes of identification and dis-identification relating to trespassing of borders and ‘off-limits’ territories—both material and symbolic.”<sup>277</sup> These statements by Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Merolla connect “globalization”, “identification” and “migration” to the modification of “material and symbolic” boundaries of a nation. Applying this model to the Italian context means to explore the linkage that encompasses the recent migration flows and the ways in which they modify the perception of Italian belonging; on the basis of cultural paradigms that have been rediscovered by the assimilation of recent migrant fluxes, Italy is witnessing the urgency to revisit colonial archetypes, the current unveiling of which is now a primary issue in the academic field of Italian postcolonial studies. In 2004, Simona Wright highlighted that beyond the economic and political changes caused by the arrival of thousands of migrants at the end of the 1980s, “the issues Italians and immigrants were facing emerged primarily on the social and cultural horizons.”<sup>278</sup> The main obstacle within the general disorder still seems to be the conception of the “other”, demonstrated by applying the label “*immigrato*” or “*extracomunitario*” (even when he/she comes from a European country) indifferently to residents and citizenships of second-generation migrants because of their foreign provenience or because of their coloured skin. Stereotypes and generalizations are the basis of diffused racism, which in the last years has become strongly connected to the

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<sup>276</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra & Merolla, Daniela (eds.). *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-Colonial Europe*. (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2005), 130.

<sup>277</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>278</sup> Wright, Simona. ‘Can the Subaltern Speak? The Politics of Identity and Difference in Italian Postcolonial Women's Writing’. *Italian Culture* 22:1 (2004), 94.

economic crisis, emblematically contained in the conviction that migrants steal jobs from Italians.<sup>279</sup>

A postcolonial perspective can then help to examine contemporary Italy to redefine the outline of the notion of Italianness, the conceptualization of which still has difficulty to take into account the changes of the “social and cultural horizons.” In this perspective, my research represents an attempt to engage the position of Italian postcolonial studies with respect to Italian literary canon and, in particular, to examine the ways in which it is assimilated within the academic teaching and the public sphere.

On the one hand, the syllabi collected from Italian departments have demonstrated the will to reframe colonial history and its representations through the lens of postcolonial theories. By including comparative approaches, the field is creating a constant correspondence between Anglo-American and French postcolonial texts and Italian ones. Moreover, the interdisciplinarity that characterises the structure of the courses allows for the intersection of different methodologies, especially on the basis of feminist and race studies that mutually gained a place into the Italian academic. In fact, as Romeo and Lombardi-Diop acknowledge, in Italy “race studies has no institutional existence or academic visibility.”<sup>280</sup> On the other hand, Igiaba Scego is able to relate postcolonial issues to Italian contemporary society by performing her role of cultural agent through the constant recalling of colonial propaganda, by means of different channels, and commodifying herself as a sexualised and coloured woman.

Consequently, trans-nationality assumes a role of extreme importance in the diffusion of postcolonialism. Actually, the postcolonial text in itself is trans-national,

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<sup>279</sup> To this regard, on *Internazionale* the journalist Jacopo Ottaviani wrote an article titled “Sei grafici ci dicono come smontare i luoghi comuni sull’immigrazione” [Six tables told us how to deconstruct commonplaces on immigration]. He highlights the fact that statistically immigration and unemployment move in opposite directions, refuting the commonplace of migrants as job thieves. For the reading: Ottaviani, Jacopo. “Sei grafici che ci dicono come smontare i luoghi comuni sull’immigrazione.” *Internazionale* (17-09-2015). Accessed 08/06/2016

<sup>280</sup> Lombardi-Diop, Cristina & Romeo, Caterina. *Postcolonial Italy: challenging national homogeneity*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 13.

“fashioning cartographies of home and abroad”, as shown in the example of *La mia casa è dove sono* discussed by Bond.<sup>281</sup> The enlargement of the notion of Italianness, as well of that of the Italian literary canon, is actively shaped by the familiarization with postcolonial contents, the subversiveness of which is gradually losing its being “outside Italy.” An overview of the research I have carried out shows that the erosion of canonical national boundaries is working through a constant process of opposite movements from outside to inside and *vice versa*, a movement that is produced by different levels.

Firstly, the previously mentioned tension present in the academic teaching, where foreign texts are inserted by professors to keep a trans-national perspective and allow for different migrant pathways to be explored, among those of the same Italians. Secondly, the production of Italian postcolonial literature by second-generation authors has enhanced the exchange between the nation and its external environment, refusing the unequal relation between “inside Italy” and “outside Italy” where the latter was considered a corollary of the former. As Manuela Coppola already acknowledged in 2011, the spaces “rented” by migrant writers gave them the “access to practices of self-representation through the appropriation of the Italian language from a speaking position which is simultaneously inside and outside Italian society.”<sup>282</sup> While first-generation migrants writing was “a pathetic testimony of hardship and pain, a lyrical expression of feelings, an exotic tinge of nostalgia,” and it accepted the unbalanced relationship with the canon of Italian literature, second-generation authors are regaining the denotative consideration of their roots, importing their parents’ cultural and linguistic belonging into the culture in which they grew up.<sup>283</sup> Thirdly, the space occupied by Italy itself as peninsula is “in-between”, as it is a more fertile terrain for

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<sup>281</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. “Boutique Postcolonialism: Literary Awards, Cultural Value and the Canon” in *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry*. (Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan 2014), 108.

<sup>282</sup> Coppola, Manuela. “‘Rented spaces’: Italian postcolonial literature.” *Social Identities* 17:1 (2011), 130.

<sup>283</sup> Portelli, Alessandro. “Fingertips Stained With Ink.” *Interventions* 8.3 (2007): 474.

exchange – “as a marginal case within the supranational context of Europe”.<sup>284</sup> This status of a geographical peripheral area gives Italy the position of being “potentially productive ... for the emergence of new forms of identity and belonging along the borders.”<sup>285</sup> Again *space* should not be confused with *place*, where the first is used with a symbolic meaning and the second with a strictly physical connotation.

Overall, Italian postcolonial literature finds its epistemological space in the peripheral territories where its protagonists were relegated. Hence, it can be considered based on a trans-national breath, being both committed with foreign canonical texts and an autonomous field of research in the national academic landscape. This involvement, shaped by a binary opposition (inside/outside), takes a variety of movements through temporal and geographical spaces into account, through which new intersections can be created. Working in this direction means to work in the direction of a dismantlement of the persistent hierarchical structure that undermines Italy and Italianness from its literary representations to its social texture.

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It has been said that the role of the university, and especially of the Humanities, is decreasing particularly because of this lack of adjustment to the changes of the last decade, from the technological to the economic and political ones. As David Theo Goldberg pointed out, the Humanities are acting as if the digital revolution did not happen, in the same way that painters kept painting without taking the arrival of photography into account.<sup>286</sup> Moreover, he continues, “academic humanities themselves

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<sup>284</sup> Bond, Emma. “Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies.” *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 427.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>286</sup> Goldberg, David Theo. “The Afterlife of the Humanities.” Irvine, CA: University of California Humanities Research Institute. (2014) Accessed 09/07/2016  
<http://humafterlife.uchri.org> / <http://issuu.com/uchri/docs/afterlife> (pdf)



became more introverted, more technical in language and modes of analysis, more specialized and self-concerned”.<sup>287</sup> These words relate to the American universities, but they are indicative of a worldwide emergence of an increasingly larger gap between academia and the public sphere. I believe Italian postcolonialism is one of the forces helping to close this gap between the university and the public in Italy, starting from the 1990s and continuing on in present day.

Analysing the ways in which postcolonial texts are connected to the national canon means to work for the abolition of a colonial mentality that has perpetuated its tropes in contemporary Italy, the concrete consequences of which impact both the social and political life of the country.<sup>288</sup> It is then of primary importance to include a variety of themes in this research, from the stereotypization of blackness to the inclusion of Italians themselves in the trans-national migration patterns. Accordingly, I believe that Italian postcolonialism should keep its focus on its assimilation both into the Italian literary canon and into the public sphere. On the one hand, Italian postcolonialism should be strengthened in terms of aesthetics to better blend into the national literary canon; the other should try to be more present in the mainstream flow of information. Hence, studying the influence of postcolonial writers in the public sphere means to consider the processes that connect the theoretical realm to the socio-political one. Working in these two directions also means to give a decisive impulse to the assimilation of the literariness of the second-generation texts in the university as well as to foster socio-political investigation based on the legacy of postcolonial studies.

Firstly, it should be enhanced to work towards an aesthetic re-evaluation of the primary texts of postcolonial studies. As demonstrated, Italian universities generally do not integrate Italian postcolonial literature in their courses on contemporary Italian

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<sup>287</sup> Ibi, 20.

literature. In a way, the difference between the first-generation testimonies and the second-generation novels has been recognised only on paper, whereas in reality the texts are all considered useful for their social value rather than considering them as artefacts or just as Italian texts *tout court*. I believe that a study in this direction would open the door to a better evaluation of the Italian postcolonial texts with respect to Italian contemporary literature and, thus, a major commitment towards their assimilation in the national literary canon.

Therefore, it seems important to suggest extending my research both chronologically and geographically, as it does not encompass all the courses in which Italian postcolonialism is taught. Especially, examining when and where (both internationally and nationally) migration and postcolonial texts started to be taught in universities and how the amount of covered works has increased, thus using a comparative diachronic perspective, would give a deeper understanding of the changes that have occurred. This type of study would help trace the extent to which Italian postcolonialism has entered university teaching and how the modalities of approaching Italian contemporary literature have evolved, perhaps towards a trans-national approach. As previously mentioned, the survey of Lindfors could offer a model to follow, as it represents a systematic and almost complete research on the African literature and its relation to the literary canon of Anglophone universities in Africa.

Moreover, other aspects that should be researched in respect to the courses are qualitative factors such as the reasons why professors decided to insert Italian postcolonial literature in their course. An empirical survey could lead to an understanding of the syllabus beyond its transcription on paper. For instance, a survey could be structured with a series of questions regarding the choices that motivated not only the addition of Italian postcolonial texts, but also the choice to study some titles instead of others and to include foreign theoretical and primary texts.

Secondly, Italian postcolonial studies should embrace the public sphere and the bridge the postcolonial author forms towards it. Through the hyphen of postcolonial authors, the theoretical basis created within academic debate can spread outside the boundaries of university and, thus, pull the discussion to the public sphere.

The necessity of an accurate study of the role covered by postcolonial authors within the Italian cultural market is that it could provide an overview of the extent of their influence towards the public debate, which has grown increasingly. In the wake of Sandra Ponzanesi's study on literary awards, it would be useful in to examine if and how Italian postcolonial literature is awarded in national literary prizes and how these awards impact the saleability of a book and the increase of its presence in university courses. For example, the inclusion of Scego's volume *La mia casa è dove sono*, winner of the Premio Mondello in 2011, in university syllabi or her short story "Salsicce," awarded with the Eks&Tra.

As Sandra Ponzanesi has pointed out, every empire has had its own specificity in the ways of operating on an economic, political, and cultural level.<sup>289</sup> Emma Bond argues that the Italian trans-national approach, as well as, I would argue, Italian postcolonialism, can introduce something new to the "global enquiry" based on Italy's marginal position as a peninsula.<sup>290</sup> Italian postcolonial studies can be considered internationally as a term of comparison in the postcolonial legacy. Especially the trans-national openness, which has been investigated in this thesis, demonstrates a will to work in the direction of a more inclusive perception of Italian canonical boundaries and the narrations that intersect it.

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<sup>289</sup> Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Il postcolonialismo italiano. Figlie dell'impero e letteratura meticcica." *Quaderni del '900* 4.4 (2004): 28.

<sup>290</sup> Bond, Emma. "Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies." *Italian Studies* 69.3 (2014): 415-16.

# Appendix

## Collection of syllabi

What follows are some examples of course descriptions I have collected, in which Italian postcolonialism is taught, highlighting professors, number of CFU, the name of the course (with the respective code), the faculty of belonging, the learning outcomes and the content (where possible) and the bibliography. I will list also the online links if the course is on the Internet.

### **I- Università della Calabria- Arcavacata (Cosenza)**

[http://filolmodescienzeant.unical.it/dmdocuments/GANERI\\_Critica%20letteraria.pdf](http://filolmodescienzeant.unical.it/dmdocuments/GANERI_Critica%20letteraria.pdf)

- Professor: Ganeri Margherita
- Name of the course: Literary Criticism (27001267)
- Faculty: Degree Course Modern Philology (Intercurricular course from “Contemporary Italian Literature I”)
- Year: 2015/2016
- CFU: 9

### Learning Outcomes:

Students are expected to acquire a general knowledge of the history of Italian Literature from the second half of the 19th century to the present, and to become familiar with several issues regarding literary reception, canon and hermeneutics. They will be able to recognize the most important phases of contemporary Italian literary history and to familiarize with the fundamental tools of interpretation. They will be able, as well, to transpose the methods acquired during the course to authors and texts others than those taught.

Students will acquire the capacity of reading and interpreting contemporary Italian literature; of conducting autonomous bibliographical researches; of reconstructing critical debates about different authors.

They will be able, also, to communicate their knowledge, both in content and in method, adopting, when needed, the scientific language of the field. Finally, students will acquire a method of study based on the specificity of literary criticism, aimed at interpreting and carefully commenting any text in contemporary Italian literature.

### Course Contents:

The course is divided in two parts: the first of 3 CFU, the second of 6 CFU. Students who have 6 CFU's course in their study plan will have to start classes during the first week of November 2014.

First part's title: «Writing and Reading today».

This part of the course is focused on presenting and commenting on the critical debate about the «new illiteracy», starting from the studies by Harvey J. Graff. There will be

two practice exercises to be written in class, one at the beginning and one at the end of the course's section. Information on these will be given in class.

Second part's title: «Violence against Women in the Italian Novel. Social shifts in the perception of rape through the narratives of Sibilla Aleramo, Elsa Morante, Igiaba Scego»

This part of the course is focused on presenting and commenting on the main social shifts overcome during more than one century of Italian society over the perception of rape, both on masculine and on feminine sides, and on the conflicting ways of representing rapes in novels written by women and by men. Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* will be compared with *Suo marito* by Luigi Pirandello; Elsa Morante's *La Storia* with Alberto Moravia's *La ciociara*; Igiaba Scego's *Oltre Babilonia* will be considered as a rethinking of Ennio Flaiano's *Tempo di uccidere*.

Recommended Reading:

General references:

Romano Luperini, Pietro Cataldi, Marianna Marrucci, *Storia della letteratura italiana contemporanea*, Palumbo (2012).

For the course of Literary Criticism: Alberto Casadei, *La critica letteraria del Novecento*, Il Mulino (2008).

Monographic course, part I: Harvey J. Graff, *Analphabetismo di massa: mito, storia, realtà*, Bonnard (2002).

Monographic course, part II: Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna*, Feltrinelli (2008).

Luigi Pirandello, *Suo marito*, BUR (2013); Elsa Morante, *La Storia*, Einaudi (2014);

Alberto Moravia, *La ciociara*, Bompiani (2001). Igiaba Scego, *Oltre Babilonia*, Donzelli (2008). Ennio Flaiano, *Tempo di uccidere*, BUR (2013)

## II- Università La Sapienza di Roma

- Professor: Caterina Romeo
- Name of the course: Genere, razza e sessualità nello spazio pubblico
- Faculty: Lettere e Filosofia (Lettere Moderne/Scienze geografiche per l'ambiente e la salute)
- Year: 2015/2016-2013/2014
- CFU: 12

Course Content (my translation):

-introduction of the concepts of gender, race and sexuality as categories of cultural analysis (and not as biological categories) and analysis of how these concepts are constructed within the space of contemporary societies. Through the methodology of intersectionality other topics will be introduced, such as those of globalization, migration, multiculturalism, postcolonial feminism, etc. the bibliography will include theories, literature and movies to analyse the spaces (physical and symbolic spaces) in their dealing with gender and race. A particular insight will deal with public spaces and the ways space reflects and reproduces power relationships.

Bibliography

\* **Ubx Cristina Ali Farah**, *Il comandante del fiume*, Roma, 66thand2nd, 2014.

\* **Igiaba Scego**, *Adua*, Firenze, Giunti, 2015.

- \* **Sabrina Marchetti et al.** (a cura di), *Femministe a parole*, Roma, Ediesse, 2012 (selezione).
- \* **Michele Cometa et al.** (a cura di), *Dizionario degli studi culturali*, Roma, Meltemi, 2004 (selezione).
- \* **Virginia Woolf**, *Una stanza tutta per sé*, Milano, SE, 1993, pp. 11-33 e pp. 51-67.
- \* **Sabrina Marchetti**, *Intersezionalità*, in *Le etiche della diversità culturale*, (a cura di Caterina Botti), Firenze, Le lettere, 2013, pp. 133-148.
- \* **Alice Walker**, *Alla ricerca dei giardini delle nostre madri*, in *Critiche femministe e teorie letterarie*, (a cura di Baccolini, Fabi, Fortunati e Monticelli), Roma: CLUEB 1996, pp. 309-319.
- \* **Chandra Talpade Mohanty**, *Sotto gli occhi dell'occidente*, in *Letteratura e Femminismi* (a cura di Maria Teresa Chialant e Eleonora Rao), Napoli: Liguori Editore, 2000, pp. 357-369.
- \* **Stefania De Petris**, *Tra «agency» e differenze. Percorsi del femminismo postcoloniale*, in «Studi Culturali» II,2 (Dicembre 2005), pp. 259-90.
- \* **Francesca Manieri e Olivia Fiorilli**, “*Queer*: uno sguardo attraverso”, in *Cinque giornate lesbiche in teoria*, (a cura di Liana Borghi, Francesca Manieri e Ambra Pirri), Roma: Ediesse, 2011, pp. 107-135.
- \* **Porpora Marcasciano**, “Trans, donne e femministe. Coscienze divergenti e/o sincroniche”, in *Altri femminismi. Corpi, Culture, Lavoro*, a cura di T. Bertilotti et al., Roma, manifestolibri, 2006, pp. 37-53.



- \* **Barbara Ehrenreich, Arlie Russell Hochschild**, “Introduction” a *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, New York, Henry Holt & Co., 2002, pp. 1-13 (testo in inglese di cui esiste una traduzione italiana, che qui però non viene fornita).
  
- \* **Francesca Decimo**, “Le migranti, le reti, la mobilità. Sguardi dislocati di ricerca sociale,” in *Altri femminismi. Corpi, Culture, Lavoro*, a cura di T. Bertilotti et al., Roma, manifestolibri, 2006, pp. 85-100.
  
- \* **Rachele Borghi**, *Introduzione: (ad una geografia [de]genere)*, in *Geografie di genere* (a cura di Rachele Borghi e Antonella Rondinone), Milano, Edizioni Unicopli, 2009, pp. 13-32.
  
- \* **David Bell e Jon Binnie**, “*Remapping Desire*. Riflessioni sulle geografie della sessualità,” in *Lo spazio della differenza*, (a cura di Rachele Borghi e Rachele Schmidt di Friedberg), numero monografico di «Bollettino della Società Geografica», Serie XII, Vol. IV, Fascicolo 1, Gen-Mar 2011, pp. 13-22.
  
- \* **Marianne Blidon**, “La città e gli effetti dell'eteronormatività. Emancipazione, normalizzazione e produzione di soggetti gay”, in *Lo spazio della differenza*, (a cura di Rachele Borghi e Rachele Schmidt di Friedberg), numero monografico di «Bollettino della Società Geografica», Serie XII, Vol. IV, Fascicolo 1, Gen-Mar 2011, pp. 31-40.
  
- \* **Rachele Borghi e Antonella Rondinone**, "Donne di città in città da uomini: un'analisi geografica di *Sex and the City*", in *Geotema* 33, 2009, pp. 34-43.
  
- \* **Caterina Romeo**, “Remapping Cityscapes: Postcolonial Diasporas and Representations of Urban Space in Contemporary Italian Literature”, «Semestrale di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia», 2, 2015.

\* **Igiaba Scego**, “Il disegno,” in *Roma d'Abissinia: Cronache dai resti dell'Impero: Asmara, Mogadiscio, Addis Abeba*, (a cura di Daniele Comberiati), Cuneo, Nerosubianco, 2010, pp. 23-39.

\* **Ingy Mubiayi**, “Concorso,” in *Pecore nere* (a cura di Flavia Capitani ed Emanuele Coen), Bari, Laterza, 2005, pp. 109-38.

### **Film:**

\* *Il corpo delle donne*, regia di Lorella Zanardo, 2009 (si trova in versione integrale su youtube).

\* *Little Soldier*, regia di Annette K. Olesen, 2008 (in danese con sottotitoli in inglese).

\* *Xxy*, regia di Lucia Puenzo, 2007.

### **III- UCLA**

Prof.ssa Lucia Re

IT152 *Italy Between Europe and Africa*

### **Course Description**

Analysis and critical discussion of works by Italian, Northern European, and African writers (including travelers and migrants) who from the 18th century to today have seen or experienced the Italian peninsula and islands as a “bridge” between Europe and Africa, or a mix of the two. Readings include works by northern European and African authors about Italy, and Italian authors about Africa and southern Italy. This course aims to foster historical understanding and critical discussion of: European ideas and literary representations of passion, primitivism and barbarism in connection with Italy and Africa; aesthetic and political notions of Orientalism; development vs. underdevelopment; racial, gender and ethnic difference across continents; colonialism and post- colonialism; the persistence of the North-South dichotomy; postmodern approaches to geographical, cultural and ethnic difference; migratory flows across the Mediterranean; citizenship and cultural integration in contemporary Europe and Italy. The central issue of global interest addressed in this course is: how does the identity of a nation and even a whole continent become defined through the eyes of travelers and migrants? Short stories, poems, excerpts from novels and travel narratives and short articles include selections from Italian and European writers such as Goethe, Mme de Staël, Stendhal, D.H. Lawrence, Grazia Deledda, F.T. Marinetti, Carlo Levi, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Alberto Moravia and Gianni Celati. Representative migrant and Afro-Italian writers, originally from different African cultures, will include Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, Kossi Komla-Ebri and Amara Lakhous. Critical essays by Nelson Moe, Graziella Parati, James Dickie and others.

### **Readings:**

Cristina Ali Farah, “Entirely”: “Punt Rap”; “Little Mother” (1990s) (original stories in Italian) Gianni Celati, *Adventures in Africa (Avventure in Africa)* (1998) Amor Dekhis “Salvation” (original short story in Italian) Grazia Deledda, *Reeds in the Wind [Canne al vento]* (novel, 1913)

Mme de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (novel, 1807) Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, *Far Away from Mogadishu* (novel 1994; original in Italian) Goethe, *Italian Journey* (1788)

Kossi Komla-Ebri “Home . . . Sickness”; “Crossroads Identity” (original stories in Italian) D. H. Lawrence, selections from *The Sea and Sardinia* (travel narrative, 1921) Carlo Levi, *Christ Stopped at Eboli* [*Cristo si è fermato ad Eboli*] (novel, 1945) F.T. Marinetti, *Mafarka the Futurist, an African Novel* (*Mafarka il futurista. Romanzo africano*, 1910)

Alberto Moravia, “The Negro and the Old Man with the Bill-Hook” (“Il negro e il vecchio con la roncola” (short story, 1948) Alberto Moravia, *Which Tribe Do You Belong To?* (*A quale tribù appartieni?* 1972) Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Savage Father* (*Il padre selvaggio*) (1963)

Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Notes for an African Orestes* (film, 1970) Stendhal, *Rome, Naples and Florence* (travel narrative, 1826) Stendhal, *The Shorter Novels*.

#### SAMPLE SYLLABUS

##### Week 1. **Introduction to the course: Italy and the European Grand Tour.**

Readings: Jeremy Black, “Italy and the Grand Tour” (critical essay, 2003) and selections from Goethe, *Italian Journey* Mme de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy* (*Corinne ou de l’Italie*) (novel, 1807) (Part One)

Week 2. **The Passion for Italy in the Romantic Era: South vs. North** *Corinne* (Part Two) Nelson Moe, “Italy as Europe’s South” (Chapter 1 of *The View from Vesuvius*, 2002)

Week 3. **Stendhal and the Love of Italy as Europe’s “Other”** 1 Stendhal, *Rome, Naples and Florence* (travel narrative, 1826) Nelson Moe, “L’Europe finit à Naples” [Europe ends at Naples] (Chapter 2 of *The View from Vesuvius*)

Week 4. **Stendhal and the Love of Italy as Europe's "Other"** 2 Stendhal, "The Duchess of Palliano" and "Vanina Vanini" (from: *The Shorter Novels of Stendhal* (*Croniques Italiennes*) (1829) Stendhal, *Life of Rossini* (1824) pp. 43-51.

Week 5. **The Myth of Primitive Italy in the early 20th century: Orientalism and the South** John Dickie, "Darkest Italy" (critical essay, 1993); Mary Gibson, "Biology or the Environment?" (critical-anthropological essay, 1998)

D. H. Lawrence, selections from *The Sea and Sardinia* (travel narrative, 1921) Grazia Deledda, selections from *Reeds in the Wind* [*Canne al vento*] (novel, 1913)

Week 6. **Visions of Italy and/as/in Africa in the Colonialist and Fascist Eras** F.T. Marinetti, selections from *Mafarka the Futurist, an African Novel* (*Mafarka il futurista*. *Romanzo africano*, 1910) Charles Burdett, "Signs of Roman Rule" (critical-historical essay, 2007) Carlo Levi, selections from *Christ Stopped at Eboli* [*Cristo si è fermato ad Eboli*] (novel, 1945)

Week 7. **Postcolonial Visions** Alberto Moravia, "The Negro and the Old Man with the Bill-Hook" ("Il negro e il vecchio con la roncola" (short story, 1948); Moravia, selections from his African travel writing

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Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Savage Father* (*Il padre selvaggio*) (screenplay, 1963) Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Notes for an African Orestes* (film, 1970)

Week 8. **A Postmodern Italian Vision of Africa** Gianni Celati, *Adventures in Africa* (*Avventure in Africa*) (1998) Charles Klopp, "Buster Keaton Goes to Africa: Gianni Celati's *Avventure in Africa*" (critical essay, 2001)

Week 9. **Italy seen from Africa: Migrant and Afro-Italian Writers** 1 Kristina Von Henneberg, "Monuments, Public Space, and the Memory of Empire in Modern Italy" (critical-historical essay, 2004); Alessandra di Maio, "Black Italia. Contemporary

Migrant Writers from Africa (historical-critical essay, 2009). Short stories by Ubax Cristina Ali Farah (“Entirely”: “Punt Rap”; “Little Mother” 1990s); Alessandra di Maio, “A Poetics of Passage: The Prose of Ubax Cristina Ali Farah” (essay, 2006) and Interview with UCAF; Excerpts from Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, *Far Away from Mogadishu* (1994)

Stories by Amor Dekhis (“Salvation”) and Kossi Komla-Ebri (“Home . . . Sickness”; “Crossroads Identity”). Interview with Kossi Komla-Ebri by Peter Pedroni (2001).

Week 10. **Migrant and Afro-Italian Writers 2** Amara Lakhous, *Divorce, Islamic Style* (novel, 2012; original in Italian)

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OPINIONI

## Non in mio nome

**Igiaba Scego**, *scrittrice*

Oggi mi hanno dichiarato guerra. Decimando militarmente la redazione del giornale satirico Charlie Hebdo mi hanno dichiarato guerra. Hanno usato il nome di dio e del profeta per giustificare l'ingiustificabile. Da afroeuropea e da musulmana io non ci sto.

“Not in my name”, dice un famoso slogan, e oggi questo slogan lo sento mio come non mai. Sono stufo di essere associata a gente che uccide, massacra, stupra, decapita e pisca sui valori democratici in cui credo e lo fa per di più usando il nome della mia religione. Basta! Non dobbiamo più permettere (lo dico a me stessa, ai musulmani e a tutti) che usino il nome dell'islam per i loro loschi e schifosi traffici.

Vorrei che ogni imam in ogni moschea d'Europa lo dicesse forte e chiaro. Sono stufo di veder così sporcato il nome di una religione. Non è giusto. Come non è giusto veder vilipesi quei valori di convivenza e pace su cui è fondata l'Unione europea di cui sono cittadina. Sono stufo di chi non rispetta il diritto di ridere del prossimo. Stufa di vedere ogni giorno, da Parigi a Peshawar, scorrere sangue innocente. E ho già il voltastomaco per i vari xenofobi che aspettano al varco. So già che ci sarà qualcuno che userà questo attentato contro migranti e figli di migranti per qualche

Figure 1. *L'Internazionale*. Web 15/06/2016.



Igiaba Scego @igiabas

01/06/16

#RomaNegata cosa resta del #colonialismo nella #Capitale  
(sul lavoro fatto da me e @rinobianchi) [youtube.com/watch?v=AGwfjL...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGwfjL...)



Igiaba Scego @igiabas

8h

#Etiopia ed #Eritrea sull'orlo di una guerra  
#crisicornodafrica [mobile.avvenire.it/Mondo/Pagine/S...](http://mobile.avvenire.it/Mondo/Pagine/S...)



Igiaba Scego @igiabas

6g

A proposito di #olimpiadi del 1960, ecco la serie di  
francobolli somali (stampati in Italia) dedicati a #Roma1960



Figure 2. Twitter @igiabas. Web 15/06/2016.



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