

*MEDITERRANEAN ROUTES:  
MIGRATION AND XENOPHOBIA IN ITALY  
AN ART HISTORIAN'S PERSPECTIVE*

*1861 – 2020*

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April 2021

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **ABSTRACT**

This project explores domains that are amply analysed by sociologists, political science scholars and economists. As an art historian, I perceived the void within this discipline concerning current themes of migration, xenophobia and borders specifically related to Italian history. This dissertation is an overview of representations of migration, and the “other” within an art historical perspective, in Italy. Numerous art historians have written about these issues in the UK, USA, Canada and France; however, Italy appears absent from this conversation. The first chapter is an overview of the construction of “Italianness” from Italian unification in 1861 until the end of World War II, in 1945. Following a fragile unification, Italy, despite economic and industrial backwardness, sought to equate itself with powerful European nations (i.e., France, UK and Germany) and create a sense of national pride. This intent continued throughout Italian colonial wars against African countries. Popular illustrations were an important tool to fabricate the idea of an ideal Italian – generally a white Catholic – and construct a sense of national unity. This archetype, despite evidence of its fallaciousness, persisted throughout the Fascist regime, promoted by satirical postcards, publicity posters and propaganda billboards.

The second chapter focuses on contemporary media representations in Italy of migrants and how they are presented to the public. The timeframe analysed comprises the past three decades, since immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon in Italy. This chapter highlights several related issues: current statistics regarding migrant influx to Italy, the recent history of immigration to this country, how mainstream media portrays migration and migrants, and whether this portrayal coincides with official statistics, how immigrant criminality is represented and finally, policies regulating admission to Italian citizenship. This part of the dissertation argues that mainstream media sensationalizes the migration process in Italy in order to garner views and increase profit, while failing to adequately represent reality. I furthermore contend that these depictions foster misinformation, thus creating hostility and fear.

The third chapter considers billboards by Italian political group la Lega, formerly known as la Lega Nord (the Northern League). This organisation emerged in the eighties in an attempt to preserve and glorify northern Italian identity through its language, culture and traditions and to claim separation of the North from the “gangrenous South”, which is economically poorer. La Lega, from being a separatist group disparaging southern Italy in the eighties and the nineties, shifted its target in the twenty-first century, to immigrants, specifically from “undesirable” countries, claiming they were the root cause of Italy’s problems. As an art historian, I examine their political posters, and suggest they are deeply xenophobic, communicating a malicious message to the public. Their cartoonish, seemingly humorous posters insinuate misleading messages aimed at denigrating specific migrant groups in the interest of gaining votes.

The fourth chapter moves on to contemporary art and focuses on three artworks by Albanian born and naturalized Italian artist Adrian Paci. In his work, he reflects on themes of migration, loss, abandonment, alienation, poverty, globalisation and hostility towards the “different”. The artist is largely inspired by his own experience as a migrant in Italy and the rejection he initially faced. I discuss three art pieces that powerfully denounce the unjust treatment migrants with specific backgrounds face in Italy, and reflect on migrant labour in an increasingly globalized world where fast production and delivery predominate.

The fifth and final chapter also focuses on a work of contemporary art that strikingly draws attention to three specific categories of migrants: economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. *The Mapping Journey Project* by French-Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili films eight economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, who trace their lengthy and often harrowing experiences in attempting to reach Europe illegally and the inhumane treatment they often faced. In one case, a Palestinian man attempted to travel within the West Bank to Israeli-controlled territories and recounts the perilousness

entailed in his journey. In this chapter, I argue that today's economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are placed in what Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben defines as "a state of exception", in which their lives are deemed unworthy, and their hardship is normalised. To conclude, I offer my reflections on how prejudice against migrants with specific backgrounds is endemic – in Italy and beyond – exacerbated by the global pandemic, thus worsening existing disparities. My ultimate aim is that more art historians join this conversation and recognize visual culture's significance within this issue.



## RÉSUMÉ

Ce projet explore des domaines largement analysés par des sociologues, des chercheurs en sciences politiques et des économistes. En tant qu'historienne l'art, j'ai perçu le vide dans cette discipline concernant les thèmes actuels de la migration, de la xénophobie et des frontières spécifiquement liées à l'histoire italienne. Cette thèse est un survol des représentations de la migration, et de «l'autre» dans une perspective historique de l'art, en Italie. De nombreux historiens de l'art ont écrit sur ces questions au Royaume-Uni, aux États-Unis, au Canada et en France ; cependant, l'Italie semble absente de cette conversation.

Le premier chapitre est un aperçu de la construction de l'«italianité» de l'unification italienne en 1861 jusqu'à la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, en 1945. Suite à une unification fragile, l'Italie, malgré le retard économique et industriel, a cherché à s'égaliser avec de puissantes nations européennes (c'est-à-dire avec la France, le Royaume-Uni et l'Allemagne) et créer un sentiment de fierté nationale. Cette intention s'est poursuivie tout au long des guerres coloniales italiennes contre les pays africains. Les illustrations populaires étaient un outil important pour fabriquer l'idée d'un Italien idéal - généralement un catholique blanc - et pour construire un sentiment d'unité nationale. Cet archétype, malgré les preuves de son caractère fallacieux, a persisté tout au long du régime fasciste, promu par des cartes postales satiriques, des affiches publicitaires et des panneaux d'affichage de propagande.

Le deuxième chapitre se concentre sur les représentations médiatiques contemporaines en Italie des migrants et sur la manière dont ils sont présentés au public. La période analysée comprend les trois dernières décennies, l'immigration étant un phénomène relativement récent en Italie. Ce chapitre met en évidence plusieurs questions connexes : les statistiques actuelles concernant l'afflux de migrants en Italie, l'histoire récente de l'immigration dans ce pays, la manière dont les médias traditionnels décrivent la migration et les migrants, et si cette

représentation coïncide avec les statistiques officielles, comment la criminalité des immigrés est représentée et enfin, les politiques réglementant l'admission à la citoyenneté italienne. Cette partie de la thèse soutient que les médias du grand public rendent sensationnel le processus de migration en Italie afin de recueillir des points de vue et d'augmenter les profits, tout en ne représentant pas correctement la réalité. De plus, je soutiens que ces représentations favorisent la désinformation, créant ainsi l'hostilité et la peur.

Le troisième chapitre examine les panneaux d'affichage du groupe politique italien La Lega, anciennement connu sous le nom de La Lega Nord (la Ligue du Nord). Cette organisation a vu le jour dans les années 1980 pour tenter de préserver et de glorifier l'identité du nord de l'Italie à travers sa langue, sa culture et ses traditions et de revendiquer la séparation du Nord du « Sud gangréneux », économiquement plus pauvre. La Lega, depuis son début pendant les années 1980-90, en tant que groupe séparatiste méprisant l'Italie du Sud, a déplacé sa cible dans le XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, envers les immigrés, particulièrement ceux qui avaient des provenances « indésirables », affirmant qu'ils étaient la cause profonde des problèmes de l'Italie. En tant qu'historienne de l'art, j'examine leurs affiches politiques et suggère qu'elles sont profondément xénophobes, communiquant un message malveillant au public. Leurs affiches caricaturales et apparemment humoristiques insinuent des messages trompeurs visant à dénigrer des groupes de migrants spécifiques dans l'intérêt de gagner des voix.

Le quatrième chapitre passe à l'art contemporain et se concentre sur trois œuvres d'art de l'artiste italien d'origine albanaise Adrian Paci. Dans son travail, il réfléchit sur les thèmes de la migration, de la perte, de l'abandon, de l'aliénation, de la pauvreté, de la mondialisation et de l'hostilité envers le « différent ». L'artiste s'inspire largement de sa propre expérience de migrant en Italie et du rejet auquel il a été confronté au départ. J'analyse trois œuvres d'art qui dénoncent avec force le traitement injuste auquel les migrants d'origines spécifiques sont

confrontés en Italie, et je réfléchis sur le travail migrant dans un monde de plus en plus globalisé où la production et les livraisons rapides prédominent.

Le cinquième et dernier chapitre se concentre également sur une œuvre d'art contemporain qui attire de manière frappante l'attention sur trois catégories spécifiques de migrants: les migrants économiques, les réfugiés et les demandeurs d'asile. *The Mapping Journey Projet* de l'artiste franco-marocaine Bouchra Khalili filme huit migrants économiques, réfugiés et demandeurs d'asile d'Afrique, du Moyen-Orient et d'Asie, qui retracent leurs expériences longues et souvent éprouvantes en tentant d'atteindre l'Europe illégalement et les traitements inhumains auxquels ils ont souvent été confrontés. Dans un cas, un Palestinien a tenté de se rendre en Cisjordanie vers des territoires contrôlés par Israël et raconte le péril de son voyage. Dans ce chapitre, je soutiens que les migrants économiques, les réfugiés et les demandeurs d'asile d'aujourd'hui sont placés dans ce que le philosophe italien Giorgio Agamben définit comme « un état d'exception », dans lequel leur vie est jugée indigne et leurs difficultés normalisées. Pour conclure, je propose mes réflexions sur la façon dont les préjugés contre les migrants issus de milieux spécifiques sont endémiques - en Italie et au-delà - exacerbés par la pandémie mondiale, aggravant ainsi les disparités existantes. Mon objectif ultime est que davantage d'historiens de l'art se joignent à cette conversation et reconnaissent l'importance de la culture visuelle à ce propos.

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
ABSTRACT / RÉSUMÉ	2
CONTENTS	8
PLATE LIST	11
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	16
INTRODUCTION	18
• SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION	22
• FIRST CHAPTER	25
• SECOND CHAPTER	27
• THIRD CHAPTER	29
• FOURTH CHAPTER	31
• FIFTH CHAPTER	32
• CURRENT IMMIGRATION STATISTICS IN ITALY	34
LITERATURE REVIEW	37
CHAPTER ONE - ITALY’S CONSTRUCTION OF “THE OTHER” AN (ART) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 1861 – 1945	51
• INTRODUCTION	52
• STATISTICS ON CONTEMPORARY RACISM IN ITALY	53
• SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER	58
• ITALY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN	67
• THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD “ITALY”	68
• ITALIAN UNIFICATION	69
• ITALIAN COLONIZATION	77
• TWENTIETH CENTURY	86
• TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY	107
CHAPTER TWO - MIGRANTS, POLICIES AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION IN ITALY 1989 – 2020	112
• INTRODUCTION	113

• SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER	118
• A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS	125
• MIGRATION TO ITALY: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW 1861 – 2019	128
• MEDIA AND MIGRATION: BETWEEN REALITY AND DISTORTION	147
• OPERAZIONE MARE NOSTRUM BY MASSIMO SESTINI	154
• BABY FAVOUR AND DOCTOR PIETRO BARTOLO	158
• MIGRANT CRIMINALITY IN ITALY	164
• THE CASE OF OUSSEYNOU SY AND THE ITALIAN MEDIA	165
• ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP: HOW DOES IT WORK?	171
• CONCLUSION: SINGER MAHMOOD AND THE SANREMO FESTIVAL 2019	176
 CHAPTER THREE – LA LEGA’S VISUAL CULTURE	 181
• INTRODUCTION	182
• SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER	183
• POPULISM IN THE WEST	186
• RIGHT WING POPULISM	194
• LA LEGA	197
• ALBERTO DA GIUSSANO	203
• SOLE DELLE ALPI	207
• THE POLITICAL POSTERS	209
• CON LEGA NORD CONTRO ROMA LADRONA	210
• SI ALLA POLENTA NO AL COUS COUS	218
• LORO HANNO SUBITO L’IMMIGRAZIONE	221
• INDOVINA CHI È L’ULTIMO	225
• CONCLUSION	231
 CHAPTER FOUR – ADRIAN PACI AND IMMIGRATION TO ITALY A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE	 234
• INTRODUCTION	235
• SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER	235
• ENVER HOXHA’S DICTATORSHIP AND ALBANIAN MIGRATION TO ITALY	240
• CENTRO DI PERMANENZA TEMPORANEA	250
• IT WAS NOT A PERFORMANCE	266
• THE COLUMN	276
• CONCLUSION	288
• INTERVIEW WITH ADRIAN PACI	292
 CHAPTER FIVE – BOUCHRA KHALILI THE MAPPING JOURNEY PROJECT 2008 – 2011. ECONOMIC MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN EUROPE	 296
• INTRODUCTION	297

• SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER	298
• HOW THE CHAPTER IS STRUCTURED	302
• CONTEMPORARY ART, ASYLUM SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND ECONOMIC MIGRANTS	305
• THE EUROPEAN UNION, ASYLUM-SEEKING POLICY AND ECONOMIC MIGRANTS	314
• ITALY’S ASYLUM-SEEKING POLICY AND TREATIES WITH LIBYA AND TUNISIA	321
• THE MAPPING JOURNEY PROJECT	327
• VIDEO NUMBER ONE	328
• VIDEO NUMBER TWO	329
• VIDEO NUMBER THREE	330
• VIDEO NUMBER FOUR	332
• VIDEO NUMBER FIVE	333
• VIDEO NUMBER SIX	334
• VIDEO NUMBER SEVEN	335
• VIDEO NUMBER EIGHT	337
• THEORETICAL ANALYSIS	337
• CONCLUSION	348
CONCLUSION	350
BIBLIOGRAPHY	366

## PLATE LIST

**FIGURE 1** Simone Fugazzotto, *Trittico*, 2019, Oil on Canvas, Held at the League Serie A Headquarters in Paris

**FIGURE 2**, Gino Boccasile, *Manifesto “Giornata delle Due Croci”*, April 15th 1934, Print

**FIGURE 3**, Gino Boccasile, *Manifesto Yomo*, 1952, Print

**FIGURE 4**, Baldassare Verazzi. *Scene of the Five Days in Milan*. 1848 – 1849. Oil on Canvas, 115 cm x 87 cm. Private Collection, Milan

**FIGURE 5**, Giovanni Fattori, *The Italian Field after the Battle of Magenta*. 1862. Oil on Canvas, 232 x 384 cm. Palazzo Pitti, Firenze

**FIGURE 6**, Eduardo Ximenes, *War of Africa - Mekelle – Scioan Spies Under the Trenches of Mengesha’s Palace*, 1896. Drawing for “*Illustrazione Italiana*”, 390 mm x 280 mm

**FIGURE 7**, Eduardo Ximenes, *Lieutenant Giacomo Sacconi’s Heroic Death*, 1896. Drawing for “*Illustrazione Italiana*”, 302 mm x 215 mm

**FIGURE 8**, Enrico De Seta, *Civilizzazione: Forza Taitù, che Cominciamo a Civilizzarci, Questo é Venuto Bianco!*, Roma, Edizioni d'arte V.E. Boeri 1935 – 1936, Post Card, Colours, 10.5 x 15 cm

**FIGURE 9**, Enrico De Seta, *Ufficio Postale: Vorrei Spedire ad un mio Amico Questo Ricordo dell’Africa Orientale...* Roma, Edizioni d'arte V.E. Boeri 1935 – 1936, Post Card, Colours, 10.5 x 15 cm

**FIGURE 10**, Gino Boccasile, *Amaro Felsina Ramazzotti Publicity*, 1936. Print, 69 cm x 98 cm. Page. Collezione Nando Salce, Treviso

**FIGURE 11**, *La Difesa della Razza*. August 5<sup>th</sup> 1938. First page explaining ten explanations in regards to race from the Fascist point of view

**FIGURE 12**, Gino Boccasile, *Difendila!*, 1944. Print, Private Collection

**FIGURE 13**, Valerio Marini, *La Vignetta*, 2012. Cartoon

**FIGURE 14**, Fabrizio Villa, *Nave Ubaldo Diciotti*, 2018, Photograph

**FIGURE 15**, Newspaper Il Giornale, *Migranti a Bordo della Diciotti? Toh, c’erano dietro i trafficanti*, 2018, Screenshot of Il Giornale

**FIGURE 16**, Newspaper l'Unità, *L'addio sulla piazza degli schiavi*, 1989, Frontpage of l'Unità

**FIGURE 17**, Riccardo Siano for newspaper La Repubblica, *I Funerali di Jerry Masslo*, 1989, Photograph

**FIGURE 18**, Il Corriere della Sera, *Diecimila profughi all'assalto*, 1991, Frontpage of Il Corriere della Sera

**FIGURE 19**, Quotidiano di Brindisi, *A Brindisi è l'inferno*, 1991, Frontpage of the Quotidiano di Brindisi

**FIGURE 20**, La Repubblica, *Forza Capitana*, 2019, Frontpage of La Repubblica

**FIGURE 21**, Il Giornale, *Sea Watch, Carola Rackete senza reggiseno in Procura: sfrontatezza senza limiti, il dettaglio sfuggito a molti*, 2019, Screenshot of Il Giornale

**FIGURE 22**, Il Giornale, *Migranti, il bluff del sindaco modello*, 2017, Screenshot of Il Giornale

**FIGURE 23**, Massimo Sestini, *Operazione Mare Nostrum*, 2014, Photograph

**FIGURE 24**, Unknown Photographer, *Infant Favour and Doctor Pietro Bartolo*, 2016, Photograph

**FIGURE 25**, Map of Lampedusa

**FIGURE 26**, Il Libero, *Intervengano gli infermieri. Per la sinistra stordita l'Erode Senegalese è vittima della Lega*, 2019, Frontpage of Il Libero

**FIGURE 27**, La Repubblica, *Ius Soli, la retromarcia del governo. Al Sud barricate contro i migranti*, 2017, Frontpage of La Repubblica

**FIGURE 28**, Il Giornale, *La sinistra usa anche I bambini per lo Ius Soli*, 2017, Screenshot of Il Giornale

**FIGURE 29**, Tweet by Mariagiovanna Maglie, *Un Vincitore molto annunciato Si chiama Maometto, la frasetta in arabo c'è, c'è anche il Ramadan e il narghilè, e il meticcio è assicurato. La canzone importa poco, Avete guardatole facce della giuria d'onore?#Sanremo2019*, 2019

**FIGURE 30**, Tweet by Matteo Salvini, *#Mahmood...mah... La canzone italiana più bella?!? Io avrei scelto #Ultimo, voi che dite??#Sanremo2019*, 2019

**FIGURE 31**, Alberto da Giussano, Logo

**FIGURE 32**, Il Sole delle Alpi, Logo

**FIGURE 33**, *Con Lega Nord Contro Roma Ladrona*, 2002, Billboard



**FIGURE 34**, *Si alla Polenta, No al Cous Cous*, Billboard

**FIGURE 35**, *Lore Hanno Subito l'Immigrazione, Ora Vivono nelle Riserve!* 2008, Billboard

**FIGURE 36**, *Indovina Chi Viene Ultimo?*, 2010, Billboard

**FIGURE 37**, Map of Southern – Eastern Europe

**FIGURE 38**, *Ship Vlora Containing Twenty Thousand Albanians Disembarks at Bari's Harbor*, August 8<sup>th</sup> 1991, Photograph

**FIGURE 39**, Corriere della Sera, *Diecimila Profughi all'Assalto*, March 8th 1991, Newspaper extract

**FIGURE 40**, L'Espresso, *Più Mafiosi che Fuggiaschi*, Newspaper extract

**FIGURE 41**, *Dopo L'Invasione dei Polacchi s'Annuncia quella degli Albanesi*, Newspaper Extract

**FIGURE 42**, Adrian Paci, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, 2007, 4'32'', video, color, sound (video still), Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 43**, Adrian Paci, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, 2007, 4'32'', video, color, sound (video still), Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 44**, Adrian Paci, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, 2007, 4'32'', video, color, sound (video still), Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 45**, Francis Alÿs, *The Loop*, 1997, Tijuana - San Diego, Performance

**FIGURE 46**, Francis Alÿs, *Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River*, 2008, Videos, Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture, Photographic Installation, Dimensions variable

**FIGURE 47**, Adrian Paci, *It was not a Performance (I)*, 2001, framed photograph, 150 x 125 cm / 59.1 x 49.2 in, Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 48**, *Immigrazione Stop! La Nostra Terra non è in Vendita. O Legge o Lotta Popolare*, 2001, Poster

**FIGURE 49**, *Stop! Immigrazione Clandestina*, 2001, Poster

**FIGURE 50**, Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still) Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich, Page

**FIGURE 51**, Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 52**, Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 53**, Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 54**, Steve McQueen, *Western Deep*, 2002, Super 8mm colour film, transferred to video, sound, 24 minutes 12 seconds

**FIGURE 55**, Adrian Paci, *Home to Go*, 2001, Plaster, Marble, Dust, Tiles, Rope, 165 x 90 x 120 cm / 65 x 35.4 x 47.2 in, Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

**FIGURE 56**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Seaman*, 2012, Digital Film, 10', Colour, sound, Edition of 5 + 2 AP

**FIGURE 57**, Bouchra Khalili, *Wet Feet Series*, 2012, Lost Boats, C-Prints, 100 x 125 cm, Edition of 5 + 2AP

**FIGURE 58**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Constellations*, Fig. 6, 2011, silkscreen print, printed on paper, mounted and framed, 60 x 40 cm

**FIGURE 59**, Mona Hatoum, *Measures of Distance*, 1988, Colour video, sound, 15 minutes.  
Courtesy Jay Jopling/White Cube (London)

**FIGURE 60**, *Notturmo*, Directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 2020, Italy, France Germany, Distributed by 01 Distribution (Italy) and Météore Films (France)

**FIGURE 61**, *Fuocoammare*, Directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 2016, Italy, Distributed by 01 Distribution (Italy)

**FIGURE 62**, Adrian Paci, *My Song in Your Kitchen*, 2017. Video, colour, sound. 13'44''.  
Courtesy of the artist, kaufmann repetto, Milan / New York and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

**FIGURE 63**, Adrian Paci, *Rasha*, 2017, Single channel video, colour, sound, 20.56 minutes, Ed. of 6 (+ 2 AP), Courtesy of the artist, kaufmann repetto, Milan / New York and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

**FIGURE 64**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #1*, 2008, Video, 4', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 65**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #2*, 2008, Video, 3', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 66**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #3*, 2009, Video, 4', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 67**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #4*, 2010, Video, 5', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 68**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #5*, 2010, Video, 12', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 69**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #6*, 2010, Video, 3'30, Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 70**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #7*, 2008, Video, 6', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 71**, Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey #8*, 2008, Video, 5', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

**FIGURE 72**, Anonymus, *Migrant Obituaries in Italy*,

**FIGURE 73**, Mauro Biani, *Legalità*, 2020, Cartoon

**FIGURE 74**, Mauro Biani, *Black Lives Matter*, 2020, Cartoon

**FIGURE 75**, Nikkolos Smith, *George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery*, 2020,  
Digital Painting

**FIGURE 76**, Ricardo Chucky, *Generational Oppression*, 2020, Digital Illustration

**FIGURE 77**, Forza Nuova, *Difendila! Dai Nuovi Invasori*, 2017, Billboard

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express sincere gratitude to the following people and institutions, without whom I would not have been able to complete this research and complete my PhD degree. The Art History and Communications department at McGill University, especially to my former supervisor Dr Charmaine A. Nelson whose insight, knowledge and precious suggestions guided me into the subject matter, steering me through this research. A special thanks to my current supervisor Dr Jenny Burman, whose support throughout the final leg of my doctoral dissertation is inestimable and I am truly thankful. A special thanks to the McGill financial support department for providing me with scholarships and travel grants in order to properly conduct my research and travel to the Archivi di Stato (state archives) in Rome in 2018 to gather material for the first part of my thesis. To this matter, I wish to give a sincere thank you to the staff at the archives for guiding me through the vast array of material and finding valuable sources for my first chapter. A major part of my gratitude goes to my parents, my mother Janice Giffin and my father Yves Galante, who, not only have supported me and put up with my stresses and moans for the past six years of study but have also offered precious corrections and suggestions for my dissertation. My mother Janice, furthermore, being a native English speaker, patiently suggested grammar and syntax modifications to my prose, thus avoiding redundancies and fallacies. I am truly grateful! Also, my biggest thanks to scholars and family friends Professors Donald Sassoon and Renato Mannheimer who, despite being overwhelmed with work and not being art historians, found the time and concentration to read parts of my dissertation and offer their expertise. Moreover, I wish to express sincere gratitude to the following galleries: Kaufmann Repetto in Milan, Mor Charpentier in Paris and ADN in Barcelona, for providing me with material and information concerning artists Adrian Paci and Bouchra Khalili, whom

they represent. In addition, a special thanks to Adrian Paci for accepting to talk to me and give me his direct insight into his work. Last but not least, a giant shout out to my dear high school friends Silvia Carboni and Valeria Ambrese, who throughout these years, have offered constant support, true friendship, honesty and a fine sense of humour. The past year has been challenging, especially due to the ongoing pandemic, but having true friends by your side sure makes a difference.

## INTRODUCTION

The idea for this thesis project came following an event in US politics in 2017. US President Donald J. Trump threatened to terminate the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).<sup>1</sup> This program, enacted by former President Barak Obama, protected the offspring of undocumented immigrants in the USA from being deported to their parents' countries of provenance.<sup>2</sup> DACA aimed to avoid punishing people who were growing up in the USA by forcing their deportation through no fault of their own.<sup>3</sup>

The Trump administration argued that DACA was unconstitutional because no person entering the country can do so unlawfully.<sup>4</sup> Obama responded to his successor's decision by writing a long post on social media: "Immigration can be a controversial topic.<sup>5</sup> We all want safe, secure borders and a dynamic economy, and people of goodwill can have legitimate disagreements about how to fix our immigration system so that everybody plays by the rules.<sup>6</sup> (...) Ultimately, this is about basic decency."<sup>7</sup> What struck me were the words "legitimate disagreements", meaning that despite political differences and immigration's complexity: a strong economy, safety and solid family units remain core values. Immigration is indeed a controversial topic as well as an intricate one. As a second-generation immigrant born in Italy, this subject has always interested me. What's more, I have lived in several countries and have undergone visa procedures, and adapted to a new language and a different culture.

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<sup>1</sup> *What is DACA and Who Are the DREAMers?*, ADL Fighting Hate for Good, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/what-is-daca-and-who-are-the-dreamers>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Nicole Gallucci, *'This is About Basic Decency': Obama Slams Trump's DACA Decision in Scathing Facebook Post*, Mashable, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://mashable.com/2017/09/05/obama-slams-daca-decision/?europa=true>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

As an art historian, my purpose is not to comment on the economics or politics of the migration process. Rather, my dissertation, through an analysis of images related to migrants, which are often degrading or stoking racial prejudices against them - seeks to understand the multiplicity of driving forces behind images. To do so, I focus on different genres of visual culture, including 'high' (i.e. genre paintings) and 'low' (i.e. postcards, billboards and newspaper front pages) art as well as contemporary media from different periods of Italian history that relate to issues of migration and discrimination. My analysis draws upon scholarship from diverse fields including sociology, economics and policy, which are overall more present in the conversation revolving around migrants and xenophobia.

The nucleus ultimately constituting the backbone of my thesis originated after viewing artist, Adrian Paci's exhibition, "Lives in Transit", at the Contemporary Art Museum in Montreal (MAC) in 2014.<sup>8</sup> At the time, I was living in Montreal thanks to a Canadian working holiday visa, but the idea of conducting doctoral research on such a complex yet fascinating subject was already stirring in my mind. Paci, whose work I discuss in the fourth chapter, is originally Albanian yet migrated to Italy with his family during the nineties.<sup>9</sup> They were eventually naturalized and have lived in Italy ever since.<sup>10</sup> His work often delves into his personal experience as a migrant, touching on loss, abandonment, excitement, nostalgia, and, in some instances, discrimination.<sup>11</sup> The pieces presented at the MAC resonated with me also because I believe, with the exception of film and media studies, few academics focus their research on visual culture related to contemporary migration in Italy. Scholars such as Emma Bond, who extensively writes about media and migration in Italy,<sup>12</sup> Grace Russo Bullaro, who

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<sup>8</sup> Adrian Paci, *Vies en Transit*, MAC Montréal, Last Accessed June 29th 2020,

<https://macm.org/en/exhibitions/adrian-paci/>

<sup>9</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Ed. Gili, *Adrian Paci: Transit*, (Milano, Mousse Publishing, 2013)

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver, and Federico Faloppa, eds. *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*. Italian Modernities, Vol. 21. (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2015)

focuses her research on films and migration in the past thirty years in the Italian context,<sup>13</sup> and Alberto Zambenedetti who closely examines issues of discrimination against immigrants and Southern Italians in Italy<sup>14</sup> are at the forefront of pondering the fertile ground of cinema media and migration in Italy. There are however sparse trained art historians analysing representations of alterity, “Italianness”, migration and colonialism within the Italian context.

I am frequently amazed at how art history is under-represented in mainstream media or dismissed as a discipline lacking political and social seriousness.<sup>15</sup> It is partially for this reason that I was inspired to write a thesis on the visual representation of different aspects of immigration in Europe, particularly Italy. Across these five chapters, I examine various categories of art and media. These include publicity posters and postcards during the Fascist regime (starting in 1922 and ending in 1945) stigmatizing “others” who did not match the constructed ideal. I then move on to mainstream media images concerning migration to Italy spanning the past three decades, and right-wing political posters that first scapegoated Southern Italians, then shifted their target to immigrants in the past two decades. Lastly, I turn my attention to contemporary artworks by migrants themselves in the past twenty years, which I argue, poetically illustrate this nuanced phenomenon. Throughout my dissertation I do not delve into cinema since an extensive, flourishing body of scholarship exists in this regard.

Numerous scholars discuss contemporary immigration from sociological, demographic, economic, political, literary, historical and environmental perspectives. However, art historians seem to be absent or on the margins of this conversation with few exceptions such as T.J. Demos

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<sup>13</sup> Grace Russo Bullaro, *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema: Shifting Demographics and Changing Images in a Multi-Cultural Globalized Society*. (Troubadour Italian Studies. Leicester: Troubadour Pub, 2010)

<sup>14</sup> Alberto Zambenedetti, *Acting Across Borders: Mobility and Identity in Italian Cinema*, (Edinburgh, UK, Edinburgh University Press, 2021)

<sup>15</sup> One high profile example of art history being dismissed comes from former USA President Barack Obama in 2014 stating the more profitable nature of manufacturing jobs versus an art history degree. Despite having a point on the too often low remunerative work in the art field, this comment shows how this discipline is frequently devalued. Natalie Villacorta, *Obama Apologizes to Art History Prof*, Politico, Last Accessed June 30th 2020, <https://www.politico.com/story/2014/02/president-obama-apologizes-to-art-history-professor-103626>



and Giuliana Tomasella who write extensively about art and political issues. Renowned scholar Edward Said in his masterpieces *Orientalism*<sup>16</sup> and *Culture and Empire*,<sup>17</sup> even though the focus is not on Italy, a considerable emphasis is placed upon the deliberate, malicious stereotyping Europe subjects the Middle-East to, often by weaponizing visual culture and literature. Post-colonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha, even though here again the emphasis is not on the Italian context, in works such as *The Location of Culture*<sup>18</sup> and *The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism*,<sup>19</sup> the issue of “othering” and its nefarious effects are scrutinised. My scope is probing the role visual culture plays in representing contemporary migration, migrants, the framing of “the different” and the social discourse around these issues. I do not concentrate on a particular genre but explore different types of visual media such as publicity posters produced during the thirties and forties, as well as twenty-first century mainstream media images and newspaper front pages, political illustrations and contemporary art pieces. In this manner, I wish to give readers an idea of how visual representations concerning migration and discrimination vary and how styles considered “low art” such as political posters created for mass consumption or publicity illustrations can be artistically, politically and socially relevant.

I have chosen paintings, popular illustrations such as posters, as well as art installations, all of which I contextualize within specific time frames of Italian history, including Unification in 1861, and the gradual construction of a white Italian identity - as conflated with Italian citizenship - or the place of immigration and migrants in Italy. It is pivotal to point out that this dissertation was researched and written between September 2017 and December 2020 even as

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<sup>16</sup> Edward W Said, *Orientalism*, 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition. (New York: Vintage Books, 1994)

<sup>17</sup> Said, Edward W. *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Knopf, 1993)

<sup>18</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (Routledge Classics. London: Routledge, 2004)

<sup>19</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The other question: difference, discrimination, and the discourse of colonialism” in *Literature Politics & Theory* by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen and Diana Loxley. (Routledge, London, 2013)

related, ongoing events took place at that time. Therefore, while I endeavoured to keep pace with global news stories and debates relevant to my topic, a degree of distance from the ever-evolving landscape of immigration news stories and contemporary news media was inevitable. For example, in the second chapter I examine statistics and polls concerning immigration in Italy. However, this data was published in 2018 and therefore in 2021, the scenario has evolved. Furthermore, in August 2019, the Italian government was replaced, its ministers changed, and new ones appointed.<sup>20</sup> Discussing ongoing events is always a challenge and when the thesis has been written, some of the information gathered is inevitably no longer accurate. I also want to point out that all the translations from Italian to English were my own. I translate the first time in parenthesis and, if further repeated, I use the original Italian name or phrase.

### SCOPE OF THE DISSERTATION

As previously stated, this thesis explores a seldom-analysed area in art history: visual art and contemporary migration in Italy (with some focus on other European countries). I seek to explore how the current immigration process in Italy is framed by images diffused by mainstream media (mainly newspapers and social media) and political posters. I argue that such images communicate racially antagonistic or even dangerous messages. One of my aims is to argue that current hostility against migrants, whether enacted or incited through policy, politics or mainstream media, is not a new phenomenon. As stated in the first chapter, Italy has a long history of denigrating ideologies against “outsiders”, often portrayed in visual representations<sup>21</sup> as exemplified by cartoonist Enrico De Seta during Fascism or illustrator caricaturist Valerio Marini in 2012 with soccer player Mario Balotelli.<sup>22</sup> That Balotelli, a soccer player of

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<sup>20</sup> Jason Horowitz, *Italy's Government Collapses, Turning Chaos Into Crisis*, The New York Times, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/20/world/europe/italy-pm-giuseppe-conte-resign.html>

<sup>21</sup> Igiaba Scego, *Il Silenzio dell'Italia sulle Schiavitù di Ieri e di Oggi*, Internazionale, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2016/06/05/italia-schiavitu-schiavi>

<sup>22</sup> *Balotelli come King Kong: E' Polemica sul Web*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/speciali/calcio/europei/polonia-ucraina2012/squadre/italia/2012/06/24/news/vignetta\\_su\\_balotelli-37884814/](https://www.repubblica.it/speciali/calcio/europei/polonia-ucraina2012/squadre/italia/2012/06/24/news/vignetta_su_balotelli-37884814/)

international fame, is actually an Italian citizen drives home the point that Italian-ness has been historically conceived within a very narrow idea of whiteness. I am interested in exploring how historical artists used their artworks - “high” art like history paintings in oil, and popular art like postcards - to disseminate the perception of the Italian state and its citizenry as white. Furthermore, I seek to explore the response of selected contemporary artists to these (art) histories at the nexus of race, Italian national identity and migration.

The sources I chiefly draw upon are not necessarily from the art historical field. I extensively use, especially in the second and third chapters, historical, political, economic and statistical material, given the political nature of the images analysed (e.g., anti-immigration political party La Lega’s billboards for example) – hence, the need to contextualize them. In February 2018, I spent one week in Rome researching at the National Archives seeking out images that would explain the nature of the mapping of Italian racial identity, between the beginning of Italy’s colonial ventures in 1885 and the end of World War II coinciding with the fall of the Fascist dictatorship.<sup>23</sup> I discovered racially-charged Italian illustrations dating from the end of the nineteenth century that promoted devastating imperialist projects as well as the infamous magazine *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defense of the Race), which disseminated racial laws promulgated by the Fascist Regime in 1938.<sup>24</sup> They clearly state the “innate” superiority of the “white” Italian race over any other and the journal sought to propagate these toxic ideologies, even though within Italy there are racial discriminations, thus Southerners not being considered “white enough” to be “true Italians” compared to Northerners.<sup>25</sup> A high point of my research was the privilege of directly interviewing artist Adrian Paci, who kindly offered his time to answer my questions on his work, aims, as well as his thoughts on migration and the current political climate in Italy and beyond.

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<sup>23</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell’Espansione Coloniale Italiana*, (Il Mulino, Roma, 2002)

<sup>24</sup> Aron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, (London; New York, Routledge, 2003), Accessed September 5th, 2018. <http://lib.mylibrary.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/Open.aspx?id=40169>

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

In addition, I was inspired to write about this subject following the rise of strongly protectionist and often xenophobic political groups including Donald J. Trump in the United States, Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil, Nigel Farage, leader of the Brexit party in the UK, Victor Orbán in Hungary, Matteo Salvini and La Lega in Italy, and the list goes on.<sup>26</sup> These political leaders all have in common a nativist, deeply exclusionary, “strong man” method of governance.<sup>27</sup> I am interested in exploring how visual representations play a role in expressing these ideas or counteracting them. As I argue throughout my dissertation, these are not modern inventions. However, recent years have seen a growing trend in these political movements. What is the role that images, visual culture and artistic works play in this complex puzzle? Why is it that so few art historians focus on the issue of racism in Italy regardless of the time or region of study, but especially with regard to incoming migration, whereas other European countries actively pursue a flourishing body of arts scholarship to explore their past? As Quilley and Kriz have argued, “...the writing of art history has avoided analysing the contribution of visual images to discourses that are ethically problematic and riddled with taboos”.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, as Charmaine A. Nelson has argued,

This absence is in part attributable both to the unsuitability of dominant methodologies and practices of Art History to accommodate questions of race, colonialism, and imperialism as well as the obvious racial exclusivity of the discipline itself which, compared to other fields in the Humanities, does not have a good track record in attracting, recruiting, and retaining blacks or people of colour as faculty and scholars. To the extent that it is people of colour who have been at the forefront of critiquing the racism of western academic practice and rethinking practice through the discourse of race, then the absence of postcolonial Art Histories is fundamentally connected to the absence of people of colour scholars in the discipline.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Kelsey Jo Starr and Jeff Diamant, *Western Europeans Vary in their Nationalist, Anti-Immigrant and Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes*. Pew Research Center. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/06/19/western-europeans-vary-in-their-nationalist-anti-immigrant-and-anti-religious-minority-attitudes/>

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Geoff Quilley and Kay Dian Kriz, *An Economy of Colour: Visual Culture and the Atlantic World, 1660-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London, UK: Routledge/Taylor & Francis, June 2016), p. 2.

During the redaction of this introduction, in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, massive protests have taken place throughout the world over the murder of Mr. George Floyd, a black man, by a white police officer, Derek Chauvin.<sup>30</sup> Although this incident took place in the United States, its brutality, violence and senselessness sparked outrage and a cry for racial justice all over the globe.<sup>31</sup> This assassination ties into a long history of racial injustices, generally carried out against black and indigenous people, and other non-whites.<sup>32</sup> Parallel demonstrations also flared in a number of Italian cities protesting the miserable living and working conditions of migrants in Italy, often of African descent.<sup>33</sup> It is a positive sign that the cruel assassination of Mr. George Floyd generated an international response. However, it is unacceptable that longstanding inequalities to the detriment of specific groups of people - generally migrants - are seen as normal.<sup>34</sup> Poverty, misery, degraded neighbourhoods, inadequate schools and low living wages are just a few of the challenges that must be urgently addressed.<sup>35</sup>

## FIRST CHAPTER

The first chapter is a historical overview of what defines “being Italian” and what it entails, racially. I focus on images produced between Italy’s unification in 1861 and the start of its colonial ventures in 1886,<sup>36</sup> up to Fascist posters and postcards that clearly defined who could be considered Italian and who could not. As my analysis reveals, the concept of the

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<sup>30</sup> Helier Cheung, *George Floyd Death: Why US Protests are so Powerful this Time*, BBC, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52969905>. A total of four police officers were indicted in the murder of George Floyd: Derek Chauvin, Thomas Lane, J. Kueng and Tou Thao. They were all fired from their jobs and currently face criminal charges. Rachael D'Amore, *George Floyd: What we know about the arrest, video and investigation*, Global News, Last Accessed January 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://globalnews.ca/news/7010572/george-floyd-arrest-explained/>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Simone Baducco, *George Floyd, a Milano il Presidio Contro il Razzismo: “Siamo Italiani Neri, Vogliamo Rispetto*, Il Fatto Quotidiano, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2020/06/07/george-floyd-a-milano-il-presidio-contro-il-razzismo-siamo-italiani-neri-vogliamo-rispetto/5827397/>

<sup>34</sup> Aboubakar Soumahoro, *Noi partigiani Schierati Contro l'Inciviltà*, L'Espresso, Last Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2018/06/22/news/noi-partigiani-schierati-contro-l-incivilita-1.324080>

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare*,

outsider as a non-white, non-Western European person was already widespread before the nineteenth and twentieth century in Italy, however I remain within the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the interest of clarity and concision.

The chapter begins by citing statistical data showing how racial harassment has risen in Italy over the past decades, predictably coinciding with higher numbers of African and Middle-Eastern migrants arriving at its borders. I then seek to provide historical context to this scenario by discussing Italy's difficult unification process during the era of European colonization and its desire to emerge on the international scene as a strong, wealthy nation.<sup>37</sup> This sentiment pushed the political class to venture into catastrophic colonial aggressions in Africa, not only inflicting death and destruction, but also ravaging state finances.<sup>38</sup> These undertakings were partially made "palatable" to the public through newspaper images depicting Africans as "savages" being "civilized" by Italians; a narrative deeply embedded within Transatlantic Slavery.<sup>39</sup> Already Italian art and popular media exploited the idea of African racial inferiority. I focus on images created during the Fascist era (1922 – 1945) in the 1930's and 1940's. I examine images produced by artists Enrico De Seta and Gino Boccasile, both fervent Fascists.<sup>40</sup> The illustrations they created are postcards (De Seta) as well as propaganda and publicity posters (Boccasile); therefore, not considered "high" art, but directed towards wide public consumption. I argue that these pieces clearly indicate Italy's hostility against non-whites, in this case, black people specifically.

Moving forward to 2012, I substantiate my argument that stereotypical illustrations of people of African ancestry persist in contemporary Italy. To this end, I examine a drawing published in the popular sports newspaper *La Gazzetta dello Sport* of black Italian football

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<sup>37</sup> Manlio Graziano, *The Failure of Italian Nationhood: The Geopolitics of a Troubled Identity*, (New York, USA, PELGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2010)

<sup>38</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare*,

<sup>39</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale. Interpretazioni dell'Alterità*. (Padova, Il Poligrafo Casa Editrice, 2017)

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

player, Mario Balotelli.<sup>41</sup> The caricature illustrates him as a primate with indisputably racist imagery. Although Balotelli is an Italian-born citizen and, at the time, played for an Italian soccer team, he frequently faces racist attacks such as bananas thrown at him during football matches, xenophobic chants directed at him and degrading images representing him.<sup>42</sup> Not only is he treated as an outsider by fellow white citizens, but he also faces being depicted with xenophobic imagery in the press.<sup>43</sup>

## SECOND CHAPTER

The second chapter instead analyses mainstream Italian media images (digital and paper newspapers and social media) of migrants. The aim of this chapter is to show how often the reporting on immigration and immigrants in Italy is problematic because of alarmist, spectacularizing tones and misleading information, thus inaccurate news that is not sustained by evidence. As an art historian, I am aware of the role that strong emotions, whether positive or negative, play within visual culture in viewers. This section commences with an overview of statistical data on immigration in Italy from 2016 until 2018, which significantly clashes with claims by certain political parties and most mainstream media outlets. The newspaper front pages and headlines I analyse, often deliver the message that there is a migrant “invasion” in Italy and that crimes by foreigners are overwhelming. The underlying message suggests that erecting barriers and excluding migrants will stop the “invasion”.<sup>44</sup> Official data proves these messages are not only false and misleading, but also dangerous.<sup>45</sup> Italy not only has relatively

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<sup>41</sup> *Balotelli come King Kong*, La Repubblica

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> This is similar to the treatment inflicted on the Obama family in certain newspapers, where they were represented as simians. Michelle Obama became the target of particularly ruthless and sexist verbal insults also due to her “muscular physique”. Samantha Cooney, *Doctor Who Called Michelle Obama 'Monkey Face' Has Been Suspended*, Time.com, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://time.com/4588752/michelle-obama-monkey-face-doctor/>

<sup>44</sup> Bobby Duffy, *People in Italy and the US are most wrong on key facts about their society*. Ipsos MORI. Last Accessed September 14<sup>th</sup> 2018. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/people-italy-and-us-are-most-wrong-key-facts-about-their-society>

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

low numbers of incoming migrants, especially if compared to Germany and France, but has also established a difficult procedure in obtaining of Italian permanent residency and citizenship.<sup>46</sup>

This pushes numerous immigrants to a condition of illegality and, in worse case scenarios, criminal activity. Unfortunately, most images I ponder only show one side of the whole picture: a quick Google search on migrants in Italy will almost exclusively give examples of huddled Africans and Middle Easterners with life vests waiting to be rescued on dilapidated boats in the Mediterranean Sea. Most foreigners living in Italy are there legally and lead regular lives, therefore have jobs, pay taxes and are integrated in their communities.<sup>47</sup> Yet most digital and paper newspapers, TV networks and news radios routinely select the most dangerous side of this story,<sup>48</sup> in order to gain greater viewership by sensationalizing the issues. It is clearly more “enticing” for viewers to watch desperate people being saved from drowning instead of ordinary individuals leading normal lives.

In the final part of my second chapter, I discuss the story of convicted criminal and naturalized Italian Ousseynou Sy, who attempted to abduct a group of children in Milan and set fire to the abducted vehicle.<sup>49</sup> He was stopped and arrested.<sup>50</sup> Most news outlets that covered this story, instead of focusing on his crime and his motives, persistently mentioned his Senegalese origins as if it had greater relevance. Although of African ancestry, he was born in France, but became an Italian citizen through marriage with an Italian woman.<sup>51</sup> I end this section by reiterating that images and types of language used have the power of effectively arousing emotions and enhancing opinions. For this reason, it is crucial for Italian media outlets

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Paola Parmiggiani and Pierluigi Musarò Ed., *Media e Migrazioni*, (Milano, Edizioni Franco Angeli, 2014)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Monica Serra, *Ousseynou Sy: What we Know About the School Bus he Set Ablaze*. La Stampa in English. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.lastampa.it/esteri/la-stampa-in-english/2019/03/23/news/ousseynou-sy-what-we-know-about-the-school-bus-he-set-ablaze-1.33690066>

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.



to have a more varied, accurate and rigorous outlook on immigration. I draw upon media and migration theorists such as Paola Parmiggiani, Pierluigi Musarò and Paolo Cuttitta who extensively argue the problematic manner of Italian media when reporting current migration in Italy. Instead of a clear rationale, an alarmist, “scandal baiting” vision is presented, thus exacerbating fear on behalf of viewers. Moreover, I use as a source the personal account of Senegalese-born but naturalized Italian writer, Pap Khouma, who describes his experience of living in Italy as a black migrant including the associated aggravations.

### THIRD CHAPTER

In the third chapter, I tackle the political posters and logos of the far-right wing Italian political party La Lega. This organization started gaining traction in the 1980’s in Northern Italy as a regionalist separatist group exalting the local culture, customs, language and economy.<sup>52</sup> The regions where it started, Veneto and Lombardia, are among Italy’s wealthiest; thus their idea of “separating” themselves from the rest of Italy and accruing capital is not so surprising.<sup>53</sup> I commence this section by examining an incident in which current Lombard governor Attilio Fontana, a member of La Lega, made troublesome statements on immigration, claiming the need to defend “the white race”.<sup>54</sup> This type of reasoning, as I discuss throughout the chapter, is not unusual for members of this party. I dedicate the next part of this chapter to an examination of right-wing populist groups and their rise in Europe during the past decade. I contend that La Lega is part of the movement professing to promote strong nationalism in part through a narrowed definition of citizenship as belonging and a hostile attitude towards migrants.<sup>55</sup> I then trace the origins and the development of La Lega from a regional organization

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<sup>52</sup> Francesco Jori, *Dalla Liga alla Lega. Storia, Movimenti, Protagonisti*. (Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 2009)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Oriana Liso, *Elezioni, bufera su Attilio Fontana per la "razza bianca". Salvini: "Siamo invasi". Gori: "E' un Borghese in giacca"*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 3 2019, [https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/01/15/news/elezioni\\_lombardia\\_attilio\\_fontana\\_centrodestra\\_razza\\_bianca\\_polemiche-186540209/](https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/01/15/news/elezioni_lombardia_attilio_fontana_centrodestra_razza_bianca_polemiche-186540209/)

<sup>55</sup> Kelsey Jo Starr and Jeff Diamant, *Western Europeans Vary in their Nationalist, Anti -Immigrant and Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes*

to one of the main coalitions in the Italian government. To show La Lega's use of visual culture, I focus on three of their propaganda posters and two logos, which I discuss in chronological order, starting in the beginning of the twentieth century when the main scapegoats for Italy's problems such as debt, unemployment etc., were, according to La Lega, Southern Italians.

Antagonism against Italy's South and its inhabitants has deep and longstanding roots in the nation. However, La Lega employs racial tropes to explain existing complex problems. It is true that the South is poorer than the North, but instead of engaging in thoughtful debates on why that is, this group simply escalates xenophobic tensions by labelling Southerners as "lazy" "too dark" and "inferior".<sup>56</sup> As I argue in this chapter, their message morphed over time and, from Southern Italians, their racial hatred shifted onto immigrants, particularly those with "undesirable" provenances such as Africans.<sup>57</sup> This shift is evident in their political billboards; from the first one I analyse (2002), where Southerners are ridiculed, to the final one (2010), where the focus of hate changes from Southerners to Blacks, Arabs, Muslims, Nomadic populations and Asians. I end this chapter by briefly examining La Lega's current leader and his "approachable" qualities.<sup>58</sup> Matteo Salvini is now a main political figure of La Lega, and recent polls show that he is immensely popular to the Italian public because of his "regular guy"

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<sup>56</sup> Aliza Wong S., *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911. Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora*. (New York, Pelgrave Macmillan, 2006)

<sup>57</sup> On January 11th 2018, President Trump, during a meeting discussing on topics such as immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador and African countries, reportedly uttered "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?", and later stated he would prefer having immigrants from Northern European countries such as Norway. The denigrating comment towards non-white countries, evinces a well-established mentality where "worthier", whiter nations are to be privileged in the immigration process, versus their darker counterparts. Ibram X. Kendi, *The Day Shithole Entered the Presidential Lexicon*, The Atlantic, Last Accessed January 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2019/01/shithole-countries/580054/>

<sup>58</sup> Journalist Susanna Turco, argues Salvini's unique qualities in pandering to the public and particularly to his fan base. Turco states he is a "2.0 communicator" since his use of direct, simple, colloquial and sometimes vulgar language, reaches a large audience, thus rendering him "one of us", instead of a highly articulate and educated person, which might appear as distant. He is very present on social media, TV, fairs and mundane events, therefore having an aura of being a friend or a family member that can be trusted. Susanna Turco, *Così Matteo Salvini parla alla pancia del Paese: viaggio alla scoperta del dizionario "salvinese"*, L'Espresso, Last Accessed January 7th 2021, <https://espresso.repubblica.it/palazzo/2015/04/09/news/matteo-salvini-e-l-arte-di-parlare-alla-pancia-viaggio-alla-scoperta-del-dizionario-salvinese-1.207659>

characteristics.<sup>59</sup> I argue that these traits, which make him more likeable to the general public are dangerous and allow him to gain trust while expressing xenophobic messages. In this chapter, I argue that political posters by La Lega, which are found everywhere, from the streets during electoral campaigns, on their official website, to social media, represent a venomous message and exacerbate already existing racial tensions.

#### FOURTH CHAPTER

The fourth chapter turns towards the perception of migrant experience in contemporary art seen through the eyes of an immigrant in Italy. More specifically, I discuss three pieces by Albanian-born, naturalized Italian artist Adrian Paci.<sup>60</sup> As previously mentioned, he arrived in Italy during the 1990's following political turmoil and poverty in his home country and established himself along with his young family in Milan where he still resides.<sup>61</sup> This segment starts with an overview on the Albanian dictatorship by Enver Hoxha, which led to Albania's decline in the 1980's and the political conflicts that ensued.<sup>62</sup> I proceed to briefly outline Albanian immigration to Italy, which, being one of the closer Western countries was unsurprisingly one of the main destinations for Albanian migrants, following the crumbling of Enver Hoxha's communist dictatorship, the fall of the USSR and the Yugoslav Wars.<sup>63</sup> This created tensions and on the Italian side, prejudices against them began to arise along with dehumanizing imagery, mainly diffused on mainstream media.<sup>64</sup>

I analyse three works by Paci in detail, the first one is a five-minute-long video titled *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea* (Centre for Temporary Detention) [2007] in which Central and Southern American immigrants are filmed on an airport tarmac as they walk up a staircase,

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<sup>59</sup> Matteo Pucciarelli, *Anatomia di un Populista. La Vera Storia di Matteo Salvini*. (Milano, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 2016)

<sup>60</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Ed. Gili, *Adrian Paci: Transit*, (Milano, Mousse Publishing, 2013)

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Antonello Biagini, *Storia dell'Albania Contemporanea*, (Milano, RCS Libri S.p.A., 2005)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

but no airplane awaits them for boarding. This work is a direct reference to detention centres in Italy, which have been denounced numerous times for human rights abuses. The second piece, *It Was Not a Performance* (2008), is a collage in which he compares a private image from his childhood to a photograph of himself found in *La Padania*, La Lega's main newspaper where he waits in line with numerous other migrants for a visa. The article is entitled *Invasione Pianificata!* (Planned Invasion!); the artist juxtaposes the different messages the two pictures convey.

The final artwork is entitled *The Column* (2013) and is a twenty-five-minute slow motion video in which Paci traces the voyage of a piece of marble, as it is being carved on board a ship, through the ocean. The raw piece was quarried from a mine in Beijing, placed on a ship, worked by Chinese manufacturers into a Corinthian column and arrives at Parisian art centre Jeu de Paume ready for Paci's solo exhibition there. The short film illustrates how globalization and cheap labour influence today's interconnected capitalist markets. I argue that the artist delivers personal, poetic accounts on political, sociological and economic issues. Paci offers viewers an intimate view of migration hence eluding "cold" statistical analysis and sensationalized imagery so prevalent in most representations of migrants' journeys and labour.

## FIFTH CHAPTER

The fifth and final chapter discusses artwork as a further expression of migrant experience through contemporary art. French Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili created *The Mapping Journey Project* (between 2008 and 2011) a series comprised of eight short videos varying from three to eleven minutes in length.<sup>65</sup> Each film focuses on a refugee or asylum seeker telling their story. What viewers see is each person's hand tracing their remembered path, fraught with peril, which the migrants followed to get to where they are now.

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<sup>65</sup> Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey Project. Video Installation. 2008 – 2011*, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bouchrakhalili.com/the-mapping-journey-project/>

Each individual has a sharpie and draws their journey on a colourful map. Seven out of eight videos illustrate their troubled voyages either from Africa or the Middle East to Europe and one narrates the perilous trip from the Palestinian city Ramallah to the West Bank in Israeli controlled territory. In this chapter, I specifically examine particular types of migrants: economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Europe. First, I provide a brief overview of what statistics in Europe reveal concerning this group of individuals, policies the European Union has to regulate economic migrants, asylum-seeking and refugees, as well as what Italian legislation establishes, and the Italian – Libyan agreement, which directly impacts refugees arriving to Italy. This chapter does not aim to challenge the EU's policy on these matters nor their effectiveness, but to provide a general overview to facilitate the interpretation of the complexity of Khalili's work *The Mapping Journey Project*. Next, I discuss this specific video series in greater detail. I argue that this piece eloquently reflects on the mistreatment inflicted on economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the past decades. I make use of theory by Italian intellectual Giorgio Agamben on *homo sacer* (the sacred or cursed man in Roman law). He contends that specific strata of the population are so worthless they are degraded to a quasi-beastly level; hence, their lives lose all human value.<sup>66</sup> In addition, to support my argument, I use Hannah Arendt's *We the Refugees* (1943), in which she makes valuable points about Jewish refugees being denied basic humanity because of pervasive anti-Semitism.<sup>67</sup>

The scope of this chapter brings a personal sphere to a subject often relegated to either sensationalist media images or impersonal statistical analysis. Viewers have a deeply personal perspective from the economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees represented in *The Mapping Journey Project*. The artist ably initiates a conversation on a delicate topic too often felt as distant by people not directly involved resulting in a deeply moving narration. I chose

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<sup>66</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: il Potere Sovrano e la Vita Nuda*, (Torino, Giulio Einaudi s.p.a., 1995 and 2005)

<sup>67</sup> Hannah Arendt, *We the Refugees*, *Pouvoirs* 144, no. 1 (2013): 5 – 16. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pouv.144.0005>

Khalili and Paci's works because they contribute a personal level of humanity to a political issue.

## CURRENT IMMIGRATION STATISTICS IN ITALY

As I write this introduction, the official statistics, published during fall 2019, state that in Italy there are currently 5,255,503 foreign residents in Italy, which corresponds to roughly 5,3% of the Italian population.<sup>68</sup> This is behind Germany, which has 9.7% and the UK with 6.3% of immigrant residents.<sup>69</sup> In Europe, the total number of resident migrants amounts to 39.9 million, which comprises approximately of 7.8% of the overall population.<sup>70</sup> The total number of immigrants in the world today is, according to the latest estimates, of 272 million, of which almost 71 million are “forced” migrants (meaning refugees, asylum seekers, displaced individuals etc).<sup>71</sup> I cite these numbers to give a general idea of the current migration situation in the world and more specifically, in Italy.

As I contend throughout the second chapter, it is crucial to have an objective understanding of this complex phenomenon to avoid falling into rhetorical “traps”, hence only believing mainstream media's narrative and political parties' distortions such as in the case of La Lega. Despite the good will attempts of pro-immigrant organizations, activists, concerned journalists and contemporary artists, it is only through a structural policy and general mentality change that the current situation might shift. I was deeply touched during the solo exhibition of Guatemalan artist Regina José Galindo at the Contemporary Art Pavilion in Milan in 2014,<sup>72</sup> one year before the beginning of my PhD. During an interview with Galindo, she claimed that unfortunately, artists alone do not bring about fundamental change in society; that it is up to

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<sup>68</sup> *Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2019*, (Roma, Centro Studi and Ricerche IDOS with Centro Studi Confronti, 2018), Last Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/scheda-dossier\\_colori-2019-def.pdf](https://www.dossierimmigrazione.it/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/scheda-dossier_colori-2019-def.pdf), p. 3

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> *Regina José Galindo: Estoy Viva*, PAC Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Last Accessed 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://www.pacmilano.it/en/exhibitions/reginajosegalindo/>

people in positions of power to instil shifts. Artists might give points of reflection to people willing to view their work, however long-lasting change often comes from a few powerful individuals in specific locations with the stroke of a pen.

To conclude, I give one example occurring in Italy in December 2019 to show how visual arts play a pivotal role in society and arouse strong sentiments in viewers. At the end of last year, Italy's main soccer governmental establishment, la Lega Serie A, decided to combat the numerous racist incidents happening in Italian football to the detriment of players of African descent.<sup>73</sup> It hired white Italian artist Simone Fugazzotto to represent the anti-racist campaign.<sup>74</sup>



**Figure 1** Simone Fugazzotto, *Trittico*, 2019, Oil on Canvas, Held at the League Serie A Headquarters in Paris

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<sup>73</sup> Laura Gozzi, *Serie A's Anti-Racism Campaign Backfires - how Italy's Media Reacted*, BBC Sports, Last Accessed July 17<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/50830453>

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



The result was far from satisfactory since the artist's work, titled "Trittico" (Tryptic) was comprised of three paintings, oil on canvas, each representing a simian (Figure 1).<sup>75</sup> It is worth observing that Fugazzotto, throughout his body of work, almost exclusively depicts primates. Therefore, it is unlikely he used this representation as an explicitly racist trope. Nevertheless, in a world where black Italian football players such as Mario Balotelli, whether migrants or "de facto" Italians, are often dehumanized by being compared to primates, have bananas thrown at them or are subjected to monkey chants in stadiums during matches, it was a grave miscalculation to say the least.<sup>76</sup>

The artist defended his choice by stating that all humans derive from primates,<sup>77</sup> which is accurate; however, the inability to understand the issue in depicting a common racial stereotype such as a primate, where the intent was to protest against racism, is revealing of Italy's obliviousness in recognizing its xenophobic problem. Despite the concern surrounding this art piece by numerous international news outlets including BBC,<sup>78</sup> in Italy Fugazzotto's representation did not receive overwhelming attention. I feel this is not only disturbing because it suggests ongoing casualness towards racial issues, a stance that suggests a belief that such problems have little relevance in this country, but also that artistic representations meant to contrast xenophobic issues, are not considered worthy of public attention. Throughout the course of my research, I have found evidence that Italy has had a "discrimination problem" since its inception, first defined through internal north/south ethnic, economic and cultural biases, and later directed outward against migrants, especially if from specific "undesirable" backgrounds. My dissertation aims at evincing the pivotal role visual culture has played and

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<sup>75</sup> The artist claimed each ape represented an ethnicity: the European one with blue eyes, the Asian one with slanted eyes and in the middle the African one where humanity originated. Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> BBC Sports, *Serie A Anti-Racism Campaign: Monkey Artwork Condemned by AC Milan and Roma*, Last Accessed July 17<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/50820915>

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.



still plays, not only in the formation of the idea of “Italianness”, but also in the perpetuation of discriminatory ideas and how the latter can be artistically contrasted.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

My interest in this dissertation’s research area stemmed from realization of a gap in existing scholarship. I am an art historian, trained in modern and contemporary art with a keen interest in art as a political and sociological medium. Whilst conducting research for the first chapter on racist representations in Italy throughout the colonial era and the Fascist regime, I saw a void in the art historical literature with the exception of film and media studies. I encountered abundant scholarship on the political, sociological, demographic, literary, historical, economic and statistical aspects of xenophobia and racism in Italy, however I noticed an eerie silence from art historians, at least in the Italian context. Few academic journals, books and conferences revolve around racist, colonial and Fascist imagery, whether referring to “high art” artworks (for example paintings and sculpture), or “low art” artworks such as political posters and newspaper images.

As I delved into issues of xenophobia in Italian representations, specifically during Italy’s colonial period (1885-1945), and throughout the Fascist regime (1922-1945), I discovered a meagre number of scholars focusing their research on the art historical aspect. In countries such as the UK, since the nineties, there has been a higher number of scholars focusing on xenophobia in art history. My assumption is that few art historians have focused their studies on such matters pertaining to Italy because of its supposed irrelevance as well as an assumption that such problems are not present in the Italian peninsula. In nations such as the UK, USA or France<sup>79</sup> there have been increasing efforts to confront problematic aspects of their histories.

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<sup>79</sup> I.e.: In Paris, France, the Palais de la Porte Dorée (Golden door palace) currently hosts the Immigration Museum, where exhibitions and cultural events surrounding immigrants in France are protagonists. What renders this space unique is the fact that it used to host the Paris Colonial Exhibition in 1931, which displayed on a grandiose scale France’s colonial power and “accomplishments”. This project is considered a step toward recognizing the grave harm France inflicted with its imperialist conquests. Palais de la Porte Dorée, Last Accessed March 16<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.palais-portedoree.fr/en>

In the UK context, in 1997, Richard Dyer produced the volume *White*, where he theorizes the predilection for whiteness in Western visual imagery, cinema, and religious representations. Dyer contends this phenomenon stemmed from early Christianity where moral virtue was attributed to Northern, whiter populations such as Germany or Switzerland, where colder weather was deemed to have an “uplifting” moral value. The Northern climate supposedly conferred higher industriousness, intelligence and diligence versus its Southern counterparts, where a warmer climate was believed to inculcate a more debauched, lascivious and idle temperament. The scholar furthermore posits on the role Christianity played in Europe in forging the notion of white “enlightened” purity versus the “sinful”, “darkness” of vice. Dyer, throughout his volume, suggests these notions have profoundly influenced Western representations and literature throughout the past centuries.

Literature scholar Alessandra Di Maio, in 2008, published *Wor(l)ds in Progress: a Study of Contemporary Migrant Writings* in which the theme of literary works by migrants in Italy is explored. Di Maio scrutinises narrations by individuals from non-Italian backgrounds living in Italy and the challenges entailed. The scholar furthermore ponders the issue of Italians leaving Italy to find a better life in other countries and encountering discrimination in unwelcoming spaces. In Italy in 2012, scholars Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo edited *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, in which they and other scholars suggest Italy is far from being the white homogenous country it claims to be. To advance their argument, the authors use historical and sociological sources as well as artistic productions. Romeo, for example, explores Blackness in African Italian postcolonial literature; Shelleen Greene discusses British artist’s Isaac Julien’s video *Western Union: Small Boats*, where the issue of black African refugees arriving to the Italian island of Lampedusa, is covered in a poetic, almost sensual manner. Even though the volume is not entirely dedicated to artistic

images, it does contain insightful content concerning depiction of the so-called other in the Italian peninsula.

The following year, Lombardi-Diop and Gaia Giuliani published *Bianco e Nero: Storia dell'Identità Razziale degli Italiani* ("White and Black: History of Italians' Racial Identity"). The scholars maintain that throughout the twentieth century, Italy abided by a profoundly white supremacist ideology, primarily expressed through racialised imagery depicting white as clean and dark as impure or dirty. The book considers Fascist images, particularly the artist Gino Boccasile's publicity posters, in which whiteness powerfully corresponded to impeccable hygiene whereas darkness was linked to disease and a lack of sanitation. Furthermore, in 2015 Giuliani published the volume *Il Colore della Nazione* ("The Color of the Nation") where Italian pop culture (for example television, newspaper, cartoons and movies) is carefully scrutinized to prove the predominance of an anti-black racist mentality, stemming predominantly from the colonial, Fascist period. Correspondingly, art historian Giuliana Tomasella, in 2017, published her volume *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale* ("Exploring Colonial Italy"), which carefully analyses Italian illustrations of the colonial wars it undertook in Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tomasella explores how newspaper depictions, photographs, sketches, paintings and statues created throughout this period of time aimed at providing their viewers with a specific idea of "the other" in order to justify colonial destruction. Most current research pertaining to Italian colonialism is done by historians, not art historians, such as Nicola Labanca in his volume *Oltremare: Storia dell'Espansione Coloniale Italiana* ("Overseas: History of the Italian Colonial Expansion", 2002), or Angelo del Boca, who produced an extensive body of work pertaining to Italy's colonial devastations as in *Italiani Brava Gente?* ("Are Italians Good People?"), published in 2005.

In 2018, young scholar Vanessa Righettoni produced her book on racist fascist imagery during Italy's imperial war against Ethiopia between 1935 – 36, *Bianco su Nero: Iconografia*

*della Razza e Guerra d'Etiopia* (White on Black: Iconography of Race and Ethiopia's War). Righettoni scrupulously examines racist representations of Africans done by Europeans, especially Italians, during the colonial aggression against Ethiopia. The scholar argues these images aimed at demonizing black Africans in order to show their "oriental inferiority", hence justifying forced submission by a white imperialist nation. All of these authors appear to concur that Italy has not yet adequately confronted problematic aspects of its past.

In the second chapter, I analyse media representations of migrants in Italy as well as statistical evidence, historical background and policies concerning immigrants in Italy. More scholarly research has been carried out in this area than in the previous one, although in the Italian context, there is scant attention paid to media visuals and the rhetoric concerning migrants. Susan Sontag, in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2003), points to the lack of spontaneity of photojournalism and argues that photos used by mainstream media are meticulously crafted with the aim of evoking the maximum emotion possible from viewers. A news image includes only certain information, overwhelmingly the most dramatic type, and excludes other information, generally deemed "boring", since the sought-after effect is that viewers transcend their everyday lives and see something "extra-ordinary".

In Paolo Cuttitta's 2012 volume *Lo Spettacolo del Confine. Lampedusa tra Produzione e Messa in Scena della Frontiera* ("The Border Show. Lampedusa between Production and Staging at the Border Crossing"), he suggests that the island of Lampedusa, which lies between Sicily and the African continent, is used by mainstream Italian media as a theatre to 'perform' the desperation of refugees arriving anguished at Italian state lines. Although most migrants reside legally in Italy and have regular lives, news outlets show almost exclusively the minority of people disembarking in dire conditions at Lampedusa, thus presenting migration in a distorted manner. Lampedusa has acquired, in the past years, a symbolic significance due to its unique position as a crossroads between Africa and Europe. Often ships in the Mediterranean

Sea with migrants in distress on board will disembark there. For this reason, Cuttitta argues, this island has become the theatre where the “border spectacle” is enacted. Such spectacles maximize profits for the news media.

The essay by Pierluigi Musarò, “La Solidarietà allo Specchio” (Solidarity in the Mirror) in Lilie Chouliaraki’s book, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post – Humanitarianism* (2013), explores the concept of showing the most dramatic side of migration. However, she places the spectator at a “safe distance”, thus evoking emotions of pity and solidarity without having to act in any way. Musarò reflects on media’s desire for profit, ensuring that viewers see some “excitement” and feel sympathy towards the desperation of the migrants; yet no detailed account of the nuance of the situation is offered, just anguished humans trying to enter at the border.

Furthermore, Musarò, in his essays “Mare Nostrum: l’Orizzonte Morale e lo Spettacolo del Confine” (Mare Nostrum: the Moral Horizon and the Border Show) [2016], and “Mare Nostrum: The Visual Politics of a Military-Humanitarian Operation in the Mediterranean” [2017], suggest viewers are induced by Italian media to observe the “border show” or the “display of sufferance”, thus “enjoying” images of the naval and air operation *Mare Nostrum*, created by the Italian government in 2013, with the aim of saving migrants at large in the Mediterranean Sea. Musarò contends this organization sought to rescue as well as repatriate refugees disembarking on Italian shores, therefore naming its mission a “military-humanitarian repression”. Moreover, the scholar uses the concept of “media charity”, arguing that “Third World” countries and populations are shown in Italy simply as poverty-stricken entities with no agency, thus delivering a one-sided and often distorted image of a complex scenario. Musarò, concludes that this manner of reporting, not only is inappropriate since it is misleading, but does nothing to resolve the problem.

In 2019, scholars Keith Greenwood and T.J. Thomson, in their essay “Framing the Migration: A Study of News Photographs Showing People Fleeing War and Persecution”, scrutinized 811 images submitted in 2015 to the Pictures of the Year International competition. The illustrations Greenwood and Thomson analysed portrayed refugees fleeing Turkey to reach Europe and overwhelmingly depict migrants in tragic situations --distressed, terrified, hungry, penniless and devoid of agency. These representations reinforce the distorted image the public has of refugees, thus misleading how migration, and specifically refugees, are shown in mainstream media. In this chapter, I also probe news titles from media outlets such as *Il Giornale* and *Il Libero*, which often opt for highly provocative front-page titles in order to gain the “shock effect”. Academics have produced meagre amounts of literature questioning this manner of reporting within an Italian context, thus a “scandalistic” style to the detriment of an unbiased, evidence-based, rational news delivery. Moreover, art historians appear entirely absent from the conversation regarding news images, photo reporting and the type of language used whilst talking about migrants in Italy. The scholars writing about these issues are sociologists, economists, media, communication and film studies academics.

The third chapter of my dissertation examines logos and political posters by right-wing Italian political group La Lega. I suggest the visual culture they produce is xenophobic, misleading and conveys dangerous messages to viewers to garner political power. As with the previous chapters, I encountered a dearth of material produced by scholars on La Lega’s images, even though abundant scholarship regarding the political, economic and sociological aspects of this organization has been published. I draw largely from the work of sociologist Renato Mannheimer, *La Lega Lombarda* (1991). His work closely observes the foundation and evolution of La Lega, from a northern Italian organization promoting local culture, language and traditions, to a separatist group, campaigning for the separation of the North of Italy from the South due to the latter’s poverty rates and supposed inferiority, up to its ultimate morphing

into an “Italy First” political conglomeration, demonizing all immigrants, particularly from “problematic” backgrounds. Moreover, the volume *La Lega. Geografia, Storia e Sociologia di un Soggetto Politico* (La Lega. Geography, history and sociology of a political subject) [1993] by journalist and political sociologist Ilvo Diamanti, offers a detailed account of La Lega, as well as its supporters and constituents. This group is currently one of the most prominent political conglomerations in the Italian government, also thanks to a strong base of supporters.

Despite a scarcity of research regarding La Lega’s visual culture, an abundance of analysis surrounding right-wing populism in Europe is available; work by Christina Schori Liang, *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right* (2007), discusses the “securitarian” aspect of right-wing populist groups, which often harps on the “imminent threat” of being invaded by immigrants, despite statistical evidence proving otherwise. These organisations are characterised by a strong nationalistic sense of self and a deeply embedded fear of anything “different --immigrants in this case-- that might “taint” local identity. Moreover, Liang suggests one of the aspects associating these political conglomerations is lobbying for policies that increase border protection and security, as well as the complaint that existing laws regulating frontiers are too lax.

I furthermore draw upon the work of political scientist Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (2015), in which the scholar reflects on the reasons behind these organisations’ appeal and how they formed. Wodak argues these groups often use an “ad hominem” argument, meaning that instead of attacking political opponents on policies and different opinions, they use personal insults and virtue signalling in order to gain consensus. Wodak, moreover, argues these political groups often weaponize the “us” (Europeans) versus “them” (non-Western immigrants) contention, thereby creating a “common enemy” against which it is “necessary” to fight in order to survive.

Concerning the art historical analysis of La Lega's visual culture I drew upon essay by academics Chiara Volpato, Silvia Mari, Alessandro Gabbiadini, Federica Durante and Luca Andrighetto, "Picturing the Other: Targets of Delegitimization Across Time" (2010) where they compare La Lega's poster to Fascist representations in the racist magazine *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defence of the Race). Even though I disagree with parts of the scholars' argument, I do find their essay insightful since it is true that La Lega uses highly discriminatory images and languages, as the Fascist magazine did between 1938 and 1943. However, *La Difesa della Razza*, contrary to La Lega's billboards, used racist slurs, and was created in a historical period when anti-miscegenation and racial laws were promulgated and operated within a context of state-fuelled xenophobia, during Benito Mussolini and Adolph Hitler's destruction of Europe. La Lega's political posters, despite being problematic, are not produced in a similar environment and are significantly more subtle in their discriminatory message. Cartoonish styles, jokes, local traditions and vivid colours are used, versus images in the Fascist magazine, which are black and white, use xenophobic epithets and have racist laws to reinforce their arguments.

Academics John E. Richardson and Monica Colombo's essay "Continuity and Change in Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord" (2013), also analyses specific billboards by La Lega, arguing their discriminatory nature and conveyance of dangerously distorted messages. Richardson and Colombo suggest La Lega's posters, in regards to immigration, purposefully illustrate a misleading idea to the public such as showing faceless "hordes" of immigrants on boats arriving to Italy's shores or comparing migrants' arrival to Italy to European colonization of America and Indigenous populations being forced into reserves. Even though the information presented is inaccurate, it nevertheless is a palatable, simplistic concept easily digested by viewers.



The fourth chapter is concerned with three artworks by Albanian-born and naturalized Italian artist Adrian Paci who, throughout his career, has passionately explored themes of migration, nostalgia, discrimination, loss, abandonment and hope. Paci largely draws upon his personal experience of being, to some extent, an unwanted migrant in Italy during the beginning of the nineties in Italy. In this timeframe, numerous Albanians were fleeing their home country because of poverty and political instability, and arriving at Italy's border hoping to find better lives. Although Paci is an internationally renowned artist and has exhibited worldwide, surprisingly few academics have discussed his work. Most sources I use for this chapter are from sociologists, historians and economists, since Paci's work has a strong political and sociological imprint. Concerning the first video I analyse, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea* (CPT; in English, Centre for Temporary Detention), I draw from the essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) by renowned scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who argues that people from colonized countries, generally non-whites, within a Western context, are considered "subaltern" and rendered voiceless. Western countries, having colonized and subjugated these populations, force them into silence, by using as a justification their supposed barbarity and uncivility. Spivak's argument addresses the context of the British colonization of India, it nevertheless resonates within South and Central American migrants attempting to traverse the Mexico-USA border, and the treatment often faced. Paci, by filming in San José near the USA-Mexican border, draws a parallel with the situation at the Italian frontiers where migrants also experience being placed in a "limbo" and being prevented from moving forward. When interviewed the artist states that it was not so much the location that interested inasmuch the oxymoron represented by the name "permanenza temporanea", meaning "temporary permanence". Paci disclosed that the dissonance between two opposing words being placed within these spaces' nomenclatures fascinated him.

I use the volume *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada* (2010) by art historian Charmaine A. Nelson, regarding living in Canada and refusing to recognize certain individuals' right to reside due to "different" backgrounds. For my argument regarding CPT, I draw upon essays by Jenny Burman, "Out of Northwhere: Nation, Politics and Belonging", and Ibrahim Awad, "The Question of the Question is the Foreigner: The Spectre of Blackness and the Economy of Hospitality in Canada", who question what is the "real Canadian", who is "bestowed" with belonging to the "great North". The authors argue that non-whites are often presumed as not belonging to Canadian society even though they are either born and raised Canadians, or legally residing in the country. Awad, specifically, recounts his experience as a black man, legally living in Canada who however often encounters incidents where he is automatically excluded from "Canadianness". Although the volume by Nelson concerns belonging and Blackness in Canada, I nevertheless encounter similarities with the migrants shown in CPT, all people non-whites, attempting to enter a predominantly white Western nation.

The second work of art I discuss is *It was not a performance*, produced in 2008 and is a collage of two photographs: one is a picture from Paci's private sphere where he is dressed up as a young soldier and is surrounded by his peers, and the other is a photograph taken from the right-wing news outlet *La Padania* in which the artist is shown in the midst of a "horde" of people attempting to obtain a residence permit. The image has the caption "Invasione Pianificata!" (Planned invasion!), thus setting the tone for a xenophobic article. To deconstruct this art piece, I use the book by scholar Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the Northern Question* (2002) in which the profoundly ethnocentric and nativist discourse pertaining to La Lega is scrutinized. Cachafeiro posits on La Lega's entrenched hostility against all types of "contamination", in northern Italy that would contaminate its purity. In the case of the news

image used by Paci, the “external entities” are represented by the “mass” of migrants, “invading” Italy and trying to overtake it. I furthermore use the volume by aforementioned authors Paola Parmiggiani and Pierluigi Musarò, *Media e Migrazioni* (2014), where they critique the manner in which Italian media presents to the public issues concerning migration. The types of images as well as the language employed is scrutinized, hence the authors argue a “securitarian” and alarmistic manner of reporting to the public is presented in order to increase profits. This way of broadcasting, has a detrimental effect on the vision the public receives concerning migration in Italy, which polls show is negative and distorted.

The final work by Paci in this chapter is *The Column*, made in 2013, where Chinese workers are employed by the artist himself to carve a piece of marble that was extracted from a quarry in Beijing. The laborers work on a ship, sailing from Beijing to Europe, and create a splendid Corinthian style column to be presented at Jeu de Paume, a prestigious Parisian art centre. The artist’s purpose was to reflect on migrant labour, the speed of production, China as a growing economic power, Western exploitation and Western art objects, symbolized by the Corinthian column, being “made in China”. Economist Joseph E. Stiglitz, in his work from 2011 *Globalization*, posits on the negative and positive aspects of globalization, suggesting it can lead to increased wealth around the globe, but it may also further economic inequalities amongst segments of the population. Globalization often implies exploitation of some, to the advantage of others, and generally richer countries are on the winning side. One of the few art historians I encountered discussing similar issues is T.J. Demos in *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis* (2013), in which the scholar ponders the work by British artist Steve McQueen *Western Deep* (2002), which reflects on similar problems of *The Column*. *Western Deep* illustrates in a crude manner the lives of poor black South African miners, penetrating into the depths of one of the world’s deepest mines, in unbearable conditions. The parallelism with Paci’s work is evident since the Chinese workers are also

shown working relentlessly on the ship, carving the marble block, despite inclement weather and rough sea. Demos argues that art and politics often intersect; thus, some artworks can be considered manifestations of socio-political issues. Whether it is black South African miners or Chinese marble workers, the issues they face are not often pondered upon by mainstream media, hence rendering their sufferance almost invisible.

To conclude this section, I cite work by economists Ijiri Naohiko, Inui Tomohiko and Matsuura Toshiyuki, “Outsourcing to China in China and the World Economy” (2010), who by presenting evidence from the *World Trade Organization*, suggest that China has become of the world’s leading economic powers since it hosts foreign firms and provides cheaper labour. Moreover, the loosening of borders, faster means of transportation, production and lax labour regulations in specific parts of the globe allow swifter production as well as delivery. As evinced from the description of the scholarship I used for this chapter, works of economists and political scientists are more present than art historians, due to the aforementioned dearth of art historical research in regards to Paci, but also towards economic issues such as globalisation, cheap labour and migrant workers within an art historical context. Numerous artists do focus their production on such issues such as Ai Weiwei, Mimmo Paladino, Tania Brughera and many others, however within an academic context there has yet to be abundant scholarship from art historians.

The fifth chapter delves into artwork by Bouchra Khalili *The Mapping Journey Project*, realized between 2008 and 2011, where eight economic migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are filmed while narrating their stressful journeys in search of a better life. All eight people come from Africa, the Middle East and Asia, seven of whom attempt to reach Europe; one individual is Palestinian and traverses Israeli controlled territory in the West Bank, therefore recounts the nerve-racking passage through Israeli checkpoints. This part of the dissertation specifically focuses on a specific category of migrants: economic migrants, asylum and

refugees. As in previous chapters, I encountered sparse material concerning these issues within the art historical discipline. For this reason, I draw from fields of political science and history. The sole art historian discussing such matters is the aforementioned T.J. Demos in *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (2013) in which he reflects on Lebanese artist Mona Hatoum and her art piece *Measures of a Distance* (1988). Hatoum offers viewers her personal take on being far away from her family, her mother specifically, due to political calamities in her home country. *Measures of a Distance* is a short video recording her mother bathing and the artists reading their epistolary exchange. I draw similarities between this piece and Khalili's work due to the strong political message and the theme of exile.

I use the volume *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities: The Case of Italy and Libya* (2011) by migration scholar Emanuela Paoletti, where the controversial agreements between Italy and Libya concerning migrant repatriations are explained. Numerous individuals featured in Khalili's work recount having been to Libya before sailing off to Europe; most of their experiences are horrifying, including incidents of severe abuse and neglect. The reason for which I include Paoletti's book is to help understand the political context surrounding refugees and asylum seekers arriving to European borders. In addition, I largely rely upon the work by Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben and his renowned volume *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995) as well as his essay *We Refugees* (1995). Agamben suggests certain strata of the population are reduced to "bare life" meaning not having any rights, being rejected from "proper" society, and whose sufferance is viewed with indifference. The philosopher furthers his argument by stating refugees and asylum seekers are often subjected to this treatment by more powerful nations in an attempt to exclude them as well as preventing them from leading normal lives. Agamben's argument builds on Jewish philosopher

Hannah Arendt's in *We the Refugees*, written in 1943, where she discusses persecution of Jews by the Nazis.

To conclude the literature review, I have shown the dearth of material I encountered concerning such matters amongst art historians, even though ample scholarship exists within the economic, political, literary, historical and sociological disciplines. There exists nevertheless a flourishing scholarship concerning cinematic studies and migration within the Italian context, which I do not examine in my dissertation. I focus more on billboards, post cards, news images, installations, video art and paintings. It appears that, within the Italian context, the link between visual culture, migration, xenophobia and politics is deemed uninteresting or unimportant or even transcending the boundaries of the art historical realm, which generally focuses on academically praised styles such as paintings, sculptures, architecture and monuments. Perhaps few art historians see the value of examining political billboards, postcards or installations concerning migrants. Yet, throughout my research, I have come across blogs, journalism, small media outlets, often run by migrants, who expand upon and invite discussion of such matters. They nevertheless remain outside of the “ivory tower”, thus rendering my investigation harder yet, at the same time, all the more fascinating.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **ITALY'S CONSTRUCTION OF "THE OTHER"**

#### **AN (ART) HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**1861 - 1945**

## INTRODUCTION

On a hot summer day in August 2017, Dora, a fifteen-year-old teenager from Negrar, a town in the province of Verona, applied to participate in the “Canta Verona Festival”, a local singing contest.<sup>80</sup> The rules to compete stated that it was necessary to possess Italian citizenship, be a legal adult, as well as a professional artist, meaning the author of authentic original music and having a degree from a conservatory.<sup>81</sup> The young girl, born in Italy and daughter of Ghanaian immigrants legally residing in Italy for the past thirty years, was not eligible because of her age. However, the organiser of the event gave an unexpected response.<sup>82</sup> He refused to allow Dora to participate because he did not accept foreigners.<sup>83</sup> When the teenager replied that she was indeed Italian and held Italian citizenship, he abruptly snapped that “we are born Italian and are born from Italian parents; we do not become Italians. The contest is exclusively for de facto Italians; there are Chinese born in Italy but that does not make them Italian”.<sup>84</sup> Undoubtedly, the reason for the organiser’s callous refusal was Dora’s race, a decision that conveyed a clear message: Italians are necessarily white; therefore, non-whites are not Italian.

Once this particular incident hit the news, it was met with outrage, attracting messages of solidarity for the young girl and condemning this episode as an individual act of xenophobia.<sup>85</sup> One high profile voice, the mayor of Verona, Federico Sboarina, expressed his

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<sup>80</sup> *Vuole Cantare a un Festival, ma non Può Perché "è Solo per Italiani di Fatto"*. Verona Sera. Last Accessed April 24<sup>th</sup> 2018. <http://www.veronasera.it/cronaca/dora-concorso-canto-verona-razzismo-esclusione-15-agosto-2017-.html>

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Valentina Santarpia. *Verona, Ragazzina Italiana Rifiutata al Concorso Perché Nera: «Sei Straniera»*. Il Corriere della Sera. Accessed April 24<sup>th</sup> 2018. [http://www.corriere.it/cronache/17\\_agosto\\_15/verona-ragazzina-colore-rifiutata-concorso-canoro-sei-straniera-4738b5c8-81c9-11e7-9831-672d22e52341.shtml?refresh\\_ce-cp](http://www.corriere.it/cronache/17_agosto_15/verona-ragazzina-colore-rifiutata-concorso-canoro-sei-straniera-4738b5c8-81c9-11e7-9831-672d22e52341.shtml?refresh_ce-cp)



indignation recognizing that Dora was the victim of racial prejudice.<sup>86</sup> However, his reaction suggested that this incident did not reflect the overall sentiment of Verona, a region where he claimed inclusiveness and integration as its hallmarks.<sup>87</sup> Despite the goodwill attempt of the mayor to disavow this act, it is erroneous to assume that this was merely an isolated case of individual racism. The organizer of the singing event simply expressed a common idea in Italy. He explicitly voiced a belief that only white people are Italian and non-whites, in no instance can “be” or become Italian. The aim of this chapter is to examine how this deeply rooted conflation between Italian-ness and whiteness has formed over time and is still, to some degree, present today. Far from being a modern sentiment or contemporary phenomenon, it has taken several centuries to forge this collective perception.

#### STATISTICS ON CONTEMPORARY RACISM IN ITALY

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published a report pertaining to Italy in June 2016, that indicates a sharp increase in violence and harassment, particularly online, against visible minorities and non-white immigrants.<sup>88</sup> The account reports that complaints regarding internet abuse motivated by racial hatred rose from 19.6% in 2012 to 34.2% in 2013. There is also a worrying growth of extremist right-wing groups such as Casa Pound, which claims to have over 4000 militant members and is a hub for white supremacist ideologies.<sup>89</sup> The commission further observes that Italy is not taking adequate steps to recognize racism as a significant social problem, thus relegating it to the sphere of “isolated incidents”, and denying the existence of a widespread issue.<sup>90</sup> One of the difficulties in gathering data in this report is the failure of Italian authorities to appropriately define racist

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<sup>86</sup> La Redazione. *Caso Dora e razzismo, Pd: "Abominevole". Sboarina: "Solidarietà alla ragazza"*. Verona Sera. Accessed September 14<sup>th</sup> 2018. <http://www.veronasera.it/politica/razzismo-dora-verona-canta-pd-sboarina-solidarieta-ragazza-16-agosto-2017-.html>

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> ECRI Secretariat, Directorat General. Rapporto dell'ECRI sull'Italia (Quinto Ciclo di Monitoraggio). (Strasbourg, Democracy Council of Europe, 2016)

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

episodes as such, thereby associating them at best with ordinary delinquency and at worst with harmless pranks.<sup>91</sup>

To corroborate the ECRI report of 2016, in July 2017 the “Jo Cox” Committee on hate, intolerance, xenophobia and racism published a document entitled *The Pyramid of Hate in Italy* in which alarming evidence demonstrated a nation in which 29,1% of foreigners experience discrimination and that high percentages of autochthonous Italians are prejudiced against immigrants.<sup>92</sup> Some of the misguided beliefs regarding non-Italians attempting to reside on Italian territory included the idea that they steal jobs, bring crime and degrade neighbourhoods.<sup>93</sup> In addition to this grim scenario, the Pew Research Centre established Italy as the most ignorant country in the West regarding immigration issues since there is a widespread belief that immigrants amount to 30% of the Italian population, as compared to the real figure, which is only 7%.<sup>94</sup>

Scholars Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh have extensively argued in their work that Italians, for historic reasons, perceive themselves as “purely” white; hence the ingrained belief that non-whites are not entitled to “Italianness”. Lombardi-Diop’s argument is based largely on how whiteness equalled purity during and after the Fascist regime,

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid. According to Italian news outlet *La Repubblica* between January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, therefore eighteen years, there have been 7.426 recorded episodes of racial violence. 5.340 comprise verbal abuse, 901 physical aggressions, 177 property damages and 1.008 discrimination cases. These numbers are obviously approximative since they only represent episodes that have been officially reported. The actual numbers are likely much higher. *La Repubblica*, *Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo*, Last Accessed October 24<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/07/15/news/cronache\\_di\\_ordinario\\_razzismo\\_in\\_18\\_anni\\_7\\_426\\_episodi-261983804/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/07/15/news/cronache_di_ordinario_razzismo_in_18_anni_7_426_episodi-261983804/). Despite this depressing scenario, Matteo Salvini leader of extreme right-wing party *La Lega* and former Minister of the Interior, touts that “racism is an invention by the left and that Italians are good people”. He continues by stating his job is to keep Italian cities safe and to “clean them up”. Numerous political opponents replied by arguing Salvini, by uttering such phrases, legitimizes racist behaviour despite evidence it is a problem present on Italian territory. Silvio Buzzanca, Salvini: “*L’Allarme Razzismo è un’Invenzione della Sinistra. E Tace sugli Spari e Violenze contro gli Immigrati*”. *La Repubblica*, Last Accessed October 24<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2018/07/28/news/salvini\\_allarme\\_razzismo\\_e\\_un\\_invenzione\\_della\\_sinistra\\_-202889571/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2018/07/28/news/salvini_allarme_razzismo_e_un_invenzione_della_sinistra_-202889571/)

<sup>92</sup> Jo Cox Committee. *The Pyramid of Hate in Italy. The “Jo Cox” Committee on Hate, Intolerance, Xenophobia and Racism*. (Rome, Camera dei Deputati, 2016)

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Bobby Duffy, *People in Italy and the US are most wrong on key facts about their society*. Ipsos MORI. Last Accessed September 14<sup>th</sup> 2018. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/people-italy-and-us-are-most-wrong-key-facts-about-their-society>

symbolizing cleanliness and “high” moral values in contrast with blackness, associated with depravity, immorality, and uncleanness.<sup>95</sup> Lombardi-Diop discusses billboards by Fascist artist Gino Boccasile, whose work I expound upon later on in this chapter, where he presents whiteness as the ultimate value of cleanliness against the “depravity” of “dark filth”.<sup>96</sup> On April 15<sup>th</sup> 1934 for example, Boccasile realises the work (Figure 2) *Giornata delle Due Croci* (Day of the Two Crosses) where he celebrates the work done by the Red Cross to ward off tuberculosis.



**Figure 2**, Gino Boccasile, *Manifesto “Giornata delle Due Croci”*, April 15th 1934, Print.

<sup>95</sup> Gaia Giuliani and Cristina Lombardi Diop, *Bianco e Nero. Storia dell'Identità Razziale degli Italiani* (Milano: Mondadori Education S.p.A, 2013), p. 78

<sup>96</sup> Ibid. p. 76

On the poster the following phrase is placed: “Proteggiamo in Ogni Nido le Gemme della Nuova Stirpe” (We protect the Buds of the New Bloodline Descendants in Every Nest) and positioned just below an image of white, nude, pinkish, innocent, playful infants in a bird’s nest surrounded by roses, which supposedly reminds viewers of the children’s skin colour and flawlessness. The babies’ beauty and spotlessness are synonymous with purity of the race, which must be protected at all costs from the “sullied other”. Lombardi-Diop correctly asserts that the year in which this poster was published Italy had already invaded Eritrea and was about to attack Ethiopia.<sup>97</sup>

In 1952, therefore once the Second World War was over, Boccasile created a billboard for Yomo, a yogurt brand, where a beautiful, white, blonde, semi-nude, sensual woman is sipping the delicious white product from a straw in a bottle (Figure 3).



**Figure 3,** Gino Boccasile, *Manifesto Yomo*, 1952, Print.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 80

On the upper right corner of the poster, the phrase “Purezza della Carnagione” (Purity of the complexion) is placed, thus suggesting the idea of cleanliness, flawlessness and unadulterated race still present in the Italian collective imagination. The whiteness of the yogurt is used as a marketing strategy to entice potential consumers; it appears to suggest that drinking this product will render one’s complexion purely white, thus as desirable as the model flaunting her radiant (white) complexion and faultless teeth. The fact that these types of representations proliferated even following the Second World War, indicates a predominant white supremacist mentality. Curiously, most “white” Italians do not resemble the woman in the publicity poster since being blonde and having very fair skin is uncommon in Italy.

Njegosh supports her contention further through the example of Italian anti-miscegenation laws instituted in 1933, which declared that mixed raced children could have Italian citizenship only if blackness was not a visible phenotype.<sup>98</sup> In addition, she cites racial laws instituted in 1938 by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, who asserted the superiority of the white “Aryan” race above all others, specifically Jews and blacks.<sup>99</sup> According to the scholar, these fundamental historic pieces of legislation shaped how whiteness is perceived today in Italian society as well as explaining the deep-seated notion that non-whites are not “true” Italians.<sup>100</sup> To substantiate her argument, she refers to recent incidents involving Italian-Ghanaian soccer player Mario Balotelli who was the frequent target of racist slurs at stadiums<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh, *Parlare di Razza. La Lingua del Colore tra Italia e Stati Uniti* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2012), p. 24

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. p. 16

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. pp. 13 – 14

<sup>101</sup> In November 2019 during a soccer match between cities Brescia and Verona, player Mario Balotelli angrily kicked the ball towards the stadium’s public following racist chants including monkey sounds. In the midst of the game, the African-Italian player, visibly exasperated by racially offensive slurs, not only violently threw the ball towards the public, but also threatened to leave in the middle of the match. This is not the first time it happens; in 2005, in the same stadium, a black mannequin was shown hanged from the bastions along with racist epithets written on banners held by the public to protest against the acquisition of a black player. In some instances, as punishments, there have been moratoriums on soccer matches in order to send out a clear message that racism in stadiums is not tolerated. Lorenzo Vendemiale, *Balotelli e il Razzismo nelle Curve: Perché il Calcio Italiano ha Bisogno di SuperMario*, Il Fatto Quotidiano, Last Accessed October 26th 2020, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/11/04/balotelli-e-il-razzismo-nelle-curve-perche-il-calcio-italiano-ha-bisogno-di-supermario/5546541/>

and was even characterised as the world's most famous fictional gorilla, King Kong, in Italy's popular sports newspaper *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. In addition, the Miss Italy coronation in 1996 of Denny Méndez, an African-Latina from the Dominican Republic and a naturalized Italian, provoked significant opposition from the Italian public and jury who felt that she "did not represent Italian women".<sup>102</sup>

## SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

The first chapter of my dissertation examines specific artworks produced starting from Italian unification in 1861, known as the "Risorgimento" (Resurgence),<sup>103</sup> to Italian colonisation of Eastern Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. I then analyse images made throughout the Fascist Dictatorship during the first half of the twentieth century where I contend that white supremacy reached its most blatant and aggressive form. To conclude, I examine a satirical illustration of black Italian football player Mario Balotelli, where he is caricatured as the famous gorilla King Kong climbing on Big Ben in London, in Italy's most popular sports magazine *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. My aim is to show how racially disparaging images are still present and somewhat accepted in the Italian peninsula. Artworks play their part in the construction of societies, social norms and categories – they are generative – and represent the context in which they are produced.

In this chapter, I discuss artworks belonging to "high art" such as history paintings, portraiture and landscape, as well as "low art", for example billboards, newspaper sketches and satirical cartoons. Scholar John A. Fisher, in his essay regarding the differences between so-

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid. pp. 13 – 30, Denny Mendez, herself, states she faced opposition when elected Miss Italy back in 1996. She recounts that famous television personality Alba Parietti, who was part of the Miss Italia jury, launched a verbal attack against her saying "she did not represent Italian beauty" and that she would have left her role as part of the jury had Mendez been elected. Furthermore, when Mendez was crowned, renowned journalist Indro Montanelli, wrote that Italy had "touched rock bottom". Mendez, despite stating she feels 100% Italian, says she did indeed face prejudices in her career. *Libero Quotidiano*, *Denny Mendez, Ricordate la Prima Miss Italia Nera? "Quella Proposta un po' Strana", ecco che Fine ha Fatto*, Last Accessed October 26th 2020, <https://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/personaggi/24053303/denny-mendez-miss-italia-nera-proposta-lavoro-strana-ecco-che-fine-ha-fatto.html>

<sup>103</sup> Filippo Sabetti, "The Creation of the Italian State", in *Search for the Good Government: Understanding the Paradox of Italian Democracy* (Montreal, CA, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000) p. 25



called high art and low art, suggests the former as consumed primarily by elites, destined to niche spaces such as art fairs and museums, evoking profound intellectual meaning, created by a central figure, generally an academically trained artist.<sup>104</sup> Conversely, “low art” indicates works consumed by the “masses”, evoking sensual, pleasurable feelings and not needing an intellectual engagement.<sup>105</sup> In this chapter, it is crucial to understand that most of the images I examine were exposed to the general public, people who did not seek them out in a museum for love of art. The spread of toxic ideologies was ubiquitous in Italy and as given the recent cartoon depicting Mario Balotelli as a simian, I show how xenophobic representations still lurk in images for mass consumption.

Art historian Charmaine A. Nelson in her book on the Black female subject argues that Western art history has a univocal methodology for probing artworks, based on a white Eurocentric model.<sup>106</sup> Nelson, throughout her training and career as an art historian, pointed out a troubling exclusion of non-white subjects from theory and methodology in Western art. Furthermore, scholars in this discipline were not trained, nor appeared to have an interest in understanding art pieces from a different angle.<sup>107</sup> Nelson contends that Western art, specifically from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is imbued in racial subjugation of Blacks by white Europeans directly caused by the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.<sup>108</sup> For approximately four centuries, black Africans were forcibly removed from their native territory by imperialist European nations and shipped to Europe, the Americas or the Caribbean, destined for a life of exploitation and oppression, purely on the basis of their supposed racial inferiority.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> John A. Fisher, “High Art Versus Low Art”, in *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics* edited by Gaut Berys and Lopes Dominic, (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2013), Accessed November 1, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central, pp. 476 - 477

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 477

<sup>106</sup> Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, Routledge Studies on African and Black Diaspora, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010)  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=324369&scope=sit>  
 e , pp. 1 – 2

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

Race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant in their volume *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, published in 1993, argue the concept of race is a social construction standing by itself, separate from biological sex, ethnicity, nationality and class.<sup>110</sup> The scholars suggest eugenics theories expounded throughout the nineteenth century construed the idea of race as a biological factor determining a “superior race” aimed at subjugating “inferior ones”, the former justifying doctrines on the latter’s supposed lack of civility and intelligence.<sup>111</sup> Omi and Winant further their argument by maintaining that race by itself can define an individual’s life. Therefore, since Western societies, throughout centuries have come to privilege whiteness, non-whites are deemed as inferior, thus being subject to prejudices partially defining their lives’ outcomes.<sup>112</sup> To quote the academics’ words: “(...) a global comparison of hegemonic social/political orders based on race becomes possible”.<sup>113</sup> To summarize Omi and Winant’s concept, whiteness has been and is still adopted as a political tool to subjugate non-whites, and, what is more, rendering the latter’s denigration acceptable.<sup>114</sup>

Professor George Sefa Dei in his book *Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Race* (1996), affirms that “race matters” because it increases “unequal power, privilege and social prestige”.<sup>115</sup> It has become an effective tool for determining the distribution of rewards, penalties and punishments”. Dei continues his contention by stating: “self-righteous ideology was developed to legitimize the ruthless exploitation and subjugation of non-Western people”.<sup>116</sup> In this chapter, it is not my aim to discuss current racial relations in Western societies; however, I believe the images I contemplate, are telling of a deeply white supremacist mentality, detrimental to non-whites. I focus on works produced for mass consumption such as

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<sup>110</sup> Omi Michael and Winant Howard, “On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race” in *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education* edited by Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, (New York, Routledge, 1993) p. 3

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 5 - 6

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. p. 5

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> George Jerry Sefa Dei, *Antiracism Education in Theory and Practice*, (Halifax, Fernwood, 1996), p. 41

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.



publicity and political billboards or cartoons with a humoristic intent, where white superiority is idealised or simply, taken for granted. In 1981, renowned scholar Stuart Hall published the essay *The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies in the Media*, where he states that in modern societies, media is a pivotal space for production, reproduction and transformation of ideologies.<sup>117</sup> Hall shows that racism is ingrained in Western cultures due to its roots in slavery, colonialism, economic exploitation and subjugation of the “other.”<sup>118</sup> To further his argument, Hall states that popular media perpetrates the image of Blacks uniquely as either slaves, clowns or entertainers.<sup>119</sup> Although the scholar uses the British context as a background for his contention, I found close parallels with this chapter’s illustrations, suggesting this portrayal is also the case in Italy’s colonialist and Fascist period.

My dissertation is ultimately concerned with migrants coming to Italy’s borders during the past decades and the widespread social abuse, denigration, and prejudice they face. Nevertheless, in this section, I provide a historical as well as art historical background which explores how Italy became a nation wedded to an idea of white citizenship and how the normalization of ideas of whiteness have led to the entrenchment of racial intolerance and violence. Below I will articulate certain historical and political events that contributed to Italian perceptions of race.

I commence this chapter with an overview of the significance of the Mediterranean Sea and the nation’s name: Italy. Centuries ago, this peninsula was traversed by countless

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<sup>117</sup> Stuart Hall, “The Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media”, in *Strategies for the Eighties* edited by George Bridges and Rosalind Brunt, (London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1981), p. 11

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. pp. 16 – 17. Spike Lee in his movie *Bamboozled*, produced in 2000, offers a scathing critique of the movie industry in the USA, where he contends Blacks are shown as either buffoons or as docile slaves. He re-enacts the Minstrel Shows where Whites would use black face to resemble Blacks and mock them throughout the nineteenth century. In *Bamboozled*, two black men living in poverty accept to be blackmailed into wearing blackface in order to make a proper living. Their show is a hit amongst the public, thus showing how these stereotypes still persist in mainstream media.

populations that colonised, crossed and settled in it.<sup>120</sup> It is no wonder whilst touring Palermo, Sicily, that mosques are overwhelmingly present or in Alghero, Sardinia, street names are written in Catalan, the main spoken language of the Spanish region Catalonia.<sup>121</sup> I then proceed to analyse the period of Italian unification in 1861 and the ways that the image of “Italianness” was deliberately exploited to idealize the notion of the white citizen as fundamental to a unified Italy. Historically, Italy was formed by disaggregated states, where its inhabitants spoke widely different languages and had diverse customs and for this reason, unification was a great challenge.<sup>122</sup>

Conveying fervent nationalistic sentiment was important in order to galvanise future Italians by making them feel pride in the newly formed country.<sup>123</sup> Consequently, official art produced during the *Risorgimento* downplayed numerous fractures and exalted patriotic feelings amongst its people.<sup>124</sup> Ruthless wars undertaken in the South of Italy to conquer land and the massacres it produced such as “la Guerra al Brigantaggio” (the War on Brigandage) were conveniently excluded from mainstream art.<sup>125</sup> As my analysis will demonstrate, art was employed during this time to “market” Italy on the national and international stages by covering

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<sup>120</sup> Natalia Mateos-Ribas, “Revisiting Migratory Contexts: the Mediterranean Caravansera”, in *The Mediterranean Passage: Migration and New Cultural Encounters in Southern Europe*, eds. by Russell King, (Liverpool, UK, Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. 22 - 23

<sup>121</sup> This account is based on my personal travels, first to Sardinia in 2016 to Alghero, where I observed street names in Catalan and thence to Palermo in 2017 where, along with Catholic churches, I visited mosques constructed during Islamic domination of Sicily throughout the Middle Ages.

<sup>122</sup> Filippo Sabetti, “The Creation of the Italian State”, p. 25

<sup>123</sup> Albert Boime, “(Re)-Constructing Italian Nationalism”, in *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 19 – 20

<sup>124</sup> Albert Boime, “The First Italian National Exposition of 1861”, in *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 165 - 166

<sup>125</sup> In his book *Italiani Brava Gente? (Are Italians Good People?)*, historian Angelo Del Boca describes the war on Brigandage in the South of Italy, a massacre too often forgotten in Italian history. Following Italian unification in 1861, the South of Italy, which was considerably poorer than the rest of the country, rebelled against this annexation because of heavy taxation, compulsory conscription and submission to the newly formed Italian government, seen by many as oppressive. People fighting were generally peasants and soldiers that once fought under the Bourbon rule, which before unification, controlled the South. The newly formed government, then in Turin, sent troops south to brutally repress these uprisings. Del Boca states that official statistics reveal that the victims of this conflict were 13,853, however this number only pertains to a restricted time frame, which does not comprise of the entirety of the Brigandage war. Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani Brava Gente?*, (Vicenza, Neri pozza Editore, 2005) pp. 63 - 64

up internal divisions such as xenophobic sentiments towards the South, a region far less developed than the North.<sup>126</sup>

I suggest that these patriotic representations were utilised to stir up nationalistic feelings that would later justify Italian aggression against countries considered inferior -- for example in Africa. As I develop my argument, it becomes clear that artistic productions of that time adopted an increasingly racialized tone, implicitly juxtaposing “superior” white Italians to “inferior” non-whites. It is no surprise that artworks created during the *Risorgimento* overwhelmingly portray white folks despite substantial representations of non-whites in previous artistic production.<sup>127</sup> Scholar Aliza S. Wong, in her volume concerning the racialization of the South of Italy and of Italian colonies, points out that during the nineteenth century, a hefty propaganda campaign was undertaken by scientists and anthropologists as well as politicians, to denigrate colonized populations (mainly Africans) and Southerners.<sup>128</sup> Wong contends that people with darker complexions, mainly through eugenics theories, were deemed inferior savages in need of Northern redemption.<sup>129</sup> Italy’s South was thought of a “gangrenous” entity in need of medication, an embarrassment to the development of the nation, thus justifying the aforementioned war on Brigandage.<sup>130</sup> Colonial devastation was also excused through the ruse of the supposed degeneracy of the local black population: laziness, uncivility, stupidity and dirtiness were just a few of the excuses used to invade African countries to “civilize” it.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911, Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora*, (New York, PELGRAVE MACMILLIAN, 2006), p. 2

<sup>127</sup> A series with 11 volumes were published during the twentieth century describing how blacks are represented in Western art in various timeframes. Several chapters are dedicated to Italy and representations of people of African descent were already present during Ancient Rome. One particular section describes blacks during Renaissance and Baroque eras in Italy: Paul H. D. Kaplan, “Italy, 1490 – 1700”, in *The Image of the Black in Western Art: from the “Age of Discovery” to the Age of Abolition*, eds by David Bindman, Karen C.C. Dalton and Henry Louis Jr. Gates, (London, UK, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) pp. 93 – 190

<sup>128</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy*, pp. 19 - 20

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. pp. 20 - 21

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. pp. 21 - 22

The second part of this chapter takes into account two newspaper images produced at the end of the nineteenth century during Italy's colonialist ventures. In 1885, the brand new Italian state sought equal footing with its powerful European counterparts, such as the UK and France, who had profusely colonised other continents.<sup>132</sup> Italy had neither the means nor the military structure to endure similar undertakings; however, desperate to emerge on the international scene, it launched aggressive attacks against African countries.<sup>133</sup> The illustrations I examine are from *Illustrazione Italiana*, a popular newspaper at the time read by a large portion of the educated Italian population.<sup>134</sup> Here, non-whites, contrary to the paintings I previously discuss, reappear and are shown in unambiguously denigrating images. I argue that these illustrations embody a white supremacist ideal, meant to make the imperial project appetising to Italians.

In the third part, I focus on the Fascist regime period from 1922, with the rise of Mussolini, until its collapse in 1945, which also corresponded to the end of the Second World War.<sup>135</sup> Mussolini or “Il Duce”, meaning leader in Italian, as he is commonly referred to, undertook colonial enterprises such as the invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, regardless of previous catastrophes as part of his ideal to bring Italy back to the Roman Empire's past glory.<sup>136</sup> During this period, he furthermore instituted racist and anti-miscegenation laws thereby enforcing a white supremacist ideal.<sup>137</sup> I look closely at satirical post cards by cartoonist Enrico de Seta and billboards and leaflets by graphic designer Gino Boccasile who, through an intense propaganda campaign, carried out during the Fascist regime, tirelessly worked to exalt a white supremacist ideal. To conclude this chapter, I discuss a drawing created in 2012 by Italian cartoonist Valerio

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<sup>132</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'Espansione Coloniale Italiana*, (Il Mulino, Roma, 2002), pp. 16 - 17

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale. Interpretazioni dell'Alterità*. (Padova, Il Poligrafo Casa Editrice, 2017), p. 35

<sup>135</sup> Federico Chabod, *A History of Italian Fascism*, translated by Muriel Grindrod (New York, USA, Howard Fertig, 1975), pp. 55 - 56

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. pp. 76 - 77

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. p. 81

Marini depicting Balotelli, one of the few professional black Italian football players, as King Kong.<sup>138</sup> Despite some public outrage, there was no significant pushback. I suggest this indicates that Italy's racist past is also its present.

What is the overall objective of this chapter? My general dissertation project discusses current hostility against migrants, particularly those from “unwanted” countries such as Africa, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America.<sup>139</sup> Exclusivist “Italy First” rhetoric pervades the current Italian political climate<sup>140</sup>, which I ponder in the third chapter, and, as I explore in the second chapter, media images of migrants to Italy's shores, are far from reflecting the overall complexity of the immigration process. In this chapter, I seek to deconstruct specific representations from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that suggest carefully constructed notions of “Italianness” and “otherness”. By examining specific depictions, realized between 1861 and 1945, I aim at illustrating how current ideals of “Italianness” were diligently constructed through visual culture, often opting for racial tropes. Today's intolerant climate directed against migrants and, towards visible minorities is the result of carefully assembled ideals, furthered through artworks. I offer readers an art historical interpretation of a particular political climate, proving that visual culture played a pivotal role in shaping what Italy is today.

I have chosen to focus on the period from 1861 to 1945 in the interest of cohesiveness and clarity. Representations of non-whites in Italian territory were already present in Ancient Rome. However, the timeframe I select for this chapter comprises Italian Unification, World Wars I and II, and a brutal Fascist regime that instilled racial and anti-miscegenation laws. In that period, communication media, such as newspapers and billboards, in the nineteenth century became increasingly accessible to a wider public, thus rendering visual culture more pervasive

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<sup>138</sup> La Repubblica, *Balotelli come King Kong: E' polemica sul web*, Last Accessed June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/speciali/calcio/europei/polonia-ucraina2012/squadre/italia/2012/06/24/news/vignetta\\_su\\_balotelli-37884814/](https://www.repubblica.it/speciali/calcio/europei/polonia-ucraina2012/squadre/italia/2012/06/24/news/vignetta_su_balotelli-37884814/)

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Bobby Duffy, *People in Italy and the US are most wrong on key facts about their society*

in Italian territory. In the other four chapters of my dissertation, I focus on contemporary images and artworks; therefore, this chapter paves the way for my later arguments. Most of the illustrations I chose in this essay were accessible to a broad public thus reaching a higher number of people. Apart from the first two paintings I examine, which were mainly viewed by the Italian upper class; all other illustrations appeared in newspapers, satirical post cards, propaganda and political posters placed in the streets and contemporary comic strips.

It is a misconception and a failure of national collective memory to believe that Italy has only recently become a crossroads of different ethnicities due to recent migration patterns. Italy, located in Southern Europe, extends over a surface of 301.340 Km<sup>2</sup> and is bordered by France, Switzerland, Austria and Slovenia.<sup>141</sup> Its most southern point is the Sicilian Island of Lampedusa only 113 Km from Africa.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, the Sicilian Strait lies 150 Km from Marsala, Sicily, and Capo Bon, Tunisia.<sup>143</sup> Given its unique geographic position, it comes as no surprise that Italy has long been a junction point for people from diverse backgrounds. Numerous populations traversed Italy, either as colonisers or visitors and often settled on its territory.<sup>144</sup> Its key position between the African continent and Europe made it a focal point for economic, social and cultural exchange.

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<sup>141</sup> *Repubblica Italiana*, Global Geografia, Last Accessed June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <https://www.globalgeografia.com/europa/italia.htm>

<sup>142</sup> Canale di Sicilia, Treccani, Last Accessed June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/canale-di-sicilia/>

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> In a study published in 2014, anthropologist Giovanni Destro Bisol in conjunction with University La Sapienza in Rome, discovered vast genetic differences amongst the Italian population, from seven to thirty times wider than Hungarians and Portuguese populations. The study concludes that Italians have the most diverse genetic pool within Europe. Two reasons explain these results; the first is the difference in ecosystems within the country, making it rich in flora and fauna. The second reason is its unique geographic position within Europe, rendering it easily accessible to nearby populations. A true melting pot. Bisol furthermore states that in Italy there are 12 linguistic minorities, some coming from what is now Albania and Croatia. Agnese Fioretti, *Gli Italiani sono il Popolo con la Varietà Genetica più Ricca d'Europa*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed November 30<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/scienze/2014/01/09/news/italiani\\_popolo\\_pi\\_ricco\\_di\\_diversit\\_genetica\\_in\\_europa-75495329/](https://www.repubblica.it/scienze/2014/01/09/news/italiani_popolo_pi_ricco_di_diversit_genetica_in_europa-75495329/)

Immigration scholar Natalia Ribas-Mateos suggests the Mediterranean is a metaphor for a *caravanserai* — in other words, a “common space” for travellers and migrants.<sup>145</sup> This word traced before the sixteenth century derives from Persian words *karawan saray* indicating a quadrangular building functioning as a hotel with a court in the middle.<sup>146</sup> Here migrants and voyagers were received and entertained before they continued their journey.<sup>147</sup> Author Salvatore Bono furthermore in his book *Schiavi* (Slaves) discusses how Italy actively partook in the African Mediterranean slave trade during the Renaissance, buying and selling Africans in cities such as Livorno, Palermo and Naples.<sup>148</sup> It is only through a thorough analysis of the past that it is possible to understand the present and modify the future for the better.

#### ITALY AND THE MEDITERRANEAN

Throughout their work, David Abulafia and Iain Chambers have extensively argued the impossibility of a homogenous Mediterranean region.<sup>149</sup> Abulafia, in his lengthy volume on human history around this body of water has carefully described, to use his own words, the inhabitants’ vertical history, their mixtures, migrations, wars, truces, displacements, diaspora, conglomerations and continuous movements.<sup>150</sup> This remarkable work proves that starting from 22000 B.C up to the present, Europe is far from being a fortress free from “contamination”. On the contrary, it is a complex mixture of different ethnicities, provenances, religions and customs that are now wrongly claimed as strictly pertaining to specific nations.<sup>151</sup>

Chambers, on the other hand, uses a personal approach to his writing by recalling the city where he currently resides – Naples, a chaotic southern Italian urban centre where

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<sup>145</sup> Natalia Mateos-Ribas, “Rivisiting Migratory Contexts: the Mediterranean Caravanserai”, p. 24

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Salvatore Bono, *Schiavi. Una Storia Mediterranea (XVI – XIX Secolo)*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016), pp. 15 - 16

<sup>149</sup> David Abulafia, *The Great Sea. A Human History of the Mediterranean*, (London, Penguin Group, 2011), Introduction. Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*, (London, Duke University Press, 2008)

<sup>150</sup> David Abulafia, *The Great Sea*, Introduction

<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 3

influences from “other” lands are plentiful.<sup>152</sup> He draws on the example of his neighbourhood, the Spanish Quarters, where mint tea and curry abound, foods typically associated with Asia that are standard fare in Naples.<sup>153</sup> Chambers claims that nothing is invented or remains fixed but all is variable, intertwined and consistently changing perspective without being lost.<sup>154</sup> It is misleading to perceive Europe as a homogenous entity with impenetrable borders; the existence of the Mediterranean Sea proves that concept wrong.<sup>155</sup>

### THE ORIGIN OF THE WORD “ITALY”

Sociology and literature professor, Franco Pastore, in his short volume *La Parola Italia* (The Word Italy) [2017], has given a meaningful explanation regarding the provenance of the word “Italy”.<sup>156</sup> According to his research, the etymology comes from the Greek term “Italoi”, literally signifying in Greek the population of the Vituli in the southern part of the peninsula, now known as Calabria.<sup>157</sup> Nowadays fervent nationalists and xenophobic “Italy First” groups may be surprised to learn that the name “Italy” was coined by Greek immigrants, not autochthonous Italians, during their colonisation of the South, between the Eighth and Sixth century B.C.<sup>158</sup> They defined the local population as Vituli, meaning “veal” due to their adoration of a simulacrum of a calf, literally meaning “inhabitants of the land of veal”.<sup>159</sup> Pastore estimates that until the fifth century B.C, the term Italy solely referred to Calabria and it was not until the year 27 A.D that Roman Emperor Augustus, with his administrative reform, defined Italy as the whole peninsula, from Sicily up to the river Varo near Nice, crossing east to the estuary Arsa, close to modern day Croatia, even though Italy only formally unified in 1861.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings*, pp. 71 – 75

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. pp. 8 – 15

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. pp. 2 - 4

<sup>156</sup> Franco Pastore, *La Parola “Italia”*, Salerno: A.I.T.W. Edizioni, 2001. Introduction. Google Commerce Ltd

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 6

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. p. 7



## ITALIAN UNIFICATION

The nineteenth century was a period of significant turmoil for the Italian peninsula. With the rise of nationalist sentiments and romantic ideals across Europe and the United States, Italy aspired to equal powerful empires such as the UK, France and the Netherlands.<sup>161</sup> According to historian Manlio Graziani, Italy had one of the weakest economies, being largely agricultural with high levels of illiteracy.<sup>162</sup> Its finances, industries and transportation systems were inadequate in comparison to its powerful European peers.<sup>163</sup>

Furthermore, the Italian peninsula was a collection of nine different states, many of them controlled by foreign powers.<sup>164</sup> Austria, Spain, France and the Pope held firm control over Italy thus making the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont the sole “autochthonous” power.<sup>165</sup> Filippo Sabetti argues that it is erroneous to conceive of Italian unification as a popular movement; in fact it was the product of an intellectual and political elite who, not only fostered romantic nationalistic ideas in vogue at the time also expressed through visual culture, but also sought to expel foreign power, bring national sovereignty, and boost Italy’s authority.<sup>166</sup> Through a revolutionary movement known as the “Carbonari” (literally, “charcoal burners”) led by patriot Giuseppe Mazzini, the political strategies of Piedmontese Count Cavour who became Italy’s first Prime Minister, and the leadership of General Giuseppe Garibaldi, Italy became a unified nation on March 17<sup>th</sup> 1861.<sup>167</sup> Sabetti, however, contends that the popular majority did not acclaim this process: as already stated, it was the project of a privileged few, who overlooked deep social fractures in the Italian peninsula.<sup>168</sup> The different states constituting Italy were profoundly diverse in language, culture, history, tradition and economy,

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<sup>161</sup> Alberto Mario Banti, *Il Risorgimento Italiano*, (Bari, Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2004), Introduction

<sup>162</sup> Manlio Graziani, *The Failure of Italian Nationhood: The Geopolitics of a Troubled Identity*, (New York, USA, PELGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2010), Introduction

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Filippo Sabetti, “The Creation of the Italian State”, pp. 25 – 27

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. pp. 25 – 30

<sup>167</sup> Alberto Mario Banti, *Il Risorgimento Italiano*, (Bari, Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2004), Introduction

<sup>168</sup> Filippo Sabetti, “The Creation of the Italian State”, pp. 29 - 30

hence making their forced “patchwork” a troubled process as well as creating a country fraught with disparities, which still persist nowadays.<sup>169</sup>

In order to push forward the nationalist political agenda, enhance “Italianness” sentiment among a divided population, instil a sense of belonging to the newly formed Italy as well as diminish their inferiority complex with regard to fellow European countries, an intense propaganda machine was activated.<sup>170</sup> Newspapers, public posters, artwork, literature, theatre, speeches, pamphlets and all mediums of communication available at the time worked relentlessly to exalt a sense of “Italianness”.<sup>171</sup> In this context, I analyse two nineteenth-century official Italian artworks focusing on: the unification process, wars, newly formed Italian citizens, Italian landscapes, and an overall sentiment of “Italianness”. On the 15th of September 1861, a few months following unification, the first national Italian exposition was held in Florence to illustrate various examples of Italian excellence regarding the newly formed state.<sup>172</sup> Museum anthropologist Burton Benedict, in his essay on nation building and international and national exhibitions (1991), posits that it is mainly imperialist countries organizing these events during the nineteenth century.<sup>173</sup> He uses the examples of Britain, France and the United States to suggest that these fairs often displayed either “exotic” elements such as objects or inhabitants of subjugated countries, or memorabilia contributing in their nation building.<sup>174</sup> These projects aimed at reinforcing the notion of powerful countries and augmenting their glory on a global scale.<sup>175</sup> The artwork exhibited largely focused on the “Risorgimento”, depicting battles for the patriotic cause and portraits of crucial people in Italian

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale. Interpretazioni dell'Alterità*. (Padova, Il Poligrafo Casa Editrice, 2017), pp. 9 - 13

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Albert Boime, “The First Italian National Exposition of 1861”, in *The Art of the Macchia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp.165 - 168

<sup>173</sup> Benedict Burton, *International Exhibitions and National Identity*, *Anthropology Today* 7, no. 3 (1991), p. 5

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p. 7

history, but also scenes of ordinary farmers and labourers, Italian landscapes, the bourgeoisie at leisure – specifically, wealthy women knitting, playing the piano or chatting.<sup>176</sup> According to art historian, Albert Boime, the first Italian National Exposition’s aim was to galvanize the Italian public and promote national unity and establish partnerships with European countries, in order to enhance Italy’s productivity and improve its faulty reputation.<sup>177</sup> Two paintings clearly exemplify these aims: *Scene of the Five Days of Milan*, 1848-49 by Baldassare Verazzi, currently part of a private collection in Milan, and Giovanni Fattori’s *The Italian Field after the Battle of Magenta*, 1862 and currently on view at Palazzo Pitti in Florence.<sup>178</sup>

The first painting illustrates a family of three: a man, woman and a young boy during the revolts in Milan, which marked the first independence war in Italy as well as a clear uprising against Austrian domination (Figure 4). Prior to 1861, the Austrian Empire ruled over northeast Italy imposing a despotic regime, causing the exasperated population to rebel in an attempt to establish national sovereignty.<sup>179</sup> Between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1848 the Milanese population temporarily gained control of the city, pivotal for the Austrians, by building barricades and fighting foreign soldiers.<sup>180</sup> This event is remembered as the Five Days of Milan when the local population temporarily fought for control over its territory against Austrian tyranny and were victorious. The Austrians eventually regained control over Milan, nevertheless, these five days spurred what later became a national rebellion against foreign power as well as the embodiment of Risorgimento ideals.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Carlo Sisi and Fernando Mazzocca, 1861, *I Pittori del Risorgimento*, (Milano, Skira Editore, 2010), pp. 21 - 37

<sup>179</sup> Luigi Salvatorelli, *The Risorgimento: Thought and Action*, (New York, USA, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 18- 19

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 4,** Baldassare Verazzi. *Scene of the Five Days in Milan*. 1848 – 1849. Oil on Canvas, 115 cm x 87 cm. Private Collection, Milan.

In the foreground, a white man with a robust dark beard indicating manliness, bearing an Italian flag on his left shoulder, wears a red scarf, symbolizing the blood of sacrifice, tied around his neck. His right hand holds an unsheathed sword signifying preparation for battle. On his left, a decidedly pale white young woman attempts to hold him back from fighting and

a distressed white child clutches her dress crying. The painting suggests they are the man's family trying to stop him from risking his life for the patriotic cause. Although his proximity to the woman and child would indicate his affection for and care of his family, his open masculine stance and unsheathed sword would indicate that he has decided to dedicate himself to his country's fight for freedom even though his life is at stake. In the background, two different scenarios are visible: on the viewer's right, Milan's principal cathedral appears along with soldiers on horseback lining up and, on the left, scuffles among peasants and the Austro-Hungarian army are taking place. Observing the man's gaze, it remains unclear if he is staring at the woman or at the cathedral, Milan's most significant landmark.

The artist chose the valiant aura of this dramatic moment: was it a personal recollection or the deliberate creation of a public memory? As part of nineteenth-century Risorgimento style painting, this work emphasizes values such as patriotism, courage, zeal, and willingness to fight for freedom and Italian unification and, importantly, cohesion among the local population.<sup>182</sup> By observing the painting, one striking aspect is the pale glow of the figures represented. They are placed in the foreground and are inundated with light rendering their pallid complexion prominent. Particularly pale is the woman, thus conveying extraordinary purity, a sense of devotion, stoicism and sacrifice. Art historian Angela Rosenthal, in her essay *Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture* (2004), suggests that the "ivory female body" represented the ethereal ideal of the "superiority" of whiteness.<sup>183</sup> This myth flourished in Western societies throughout the African Slave Trade in the eighteenth century, in order to set a threshold between whiteness's "innate purity" and blackness's "lasciviousness", and also to distinguish the wealthy, leisured classes from working people.<sup>184</sup> Women with pale complexions were considered virtuous since they belonged to

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<sup>182</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale*, pp. 20 - 31

<sup>183</sup> Angela Rosenthal, "Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture," *Art History*, vol. 27, issue 4 (2004), p. 566

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. p. 567

wealthier societies: the fair skin suggested restraint from earthly pleasures and true devotion to higher ideals, such as family and nation.<sup>185</sup> In the case of the painting *Scene of the Five Days of Milan*, the woman's noble feelings are directed towards her companion as well as the Italian country.

Film critic Richard Dyer in his book *White* (1997) reflects on what the colour white, throughout centuries, came to signify.<sup>186</sup> In the West, it is commonly conflated with order, cleanliness, and entrepreneurial or elevated spirit, the sublime, a sense of duty and discipline.<sup>187</sup> The white body is emblematic of righteousness and in particular, white women represented a pure, unsullied being, entirely devoted to a (white) male counterpart.<sup>188</sup> Dyer suggests the myth surrounding white skin can be partially traced to the nineteenth century's Romantic notion of vigorous, virtuous communities located in remote cold areas such as Switzerland, North Germany and Scotland.<sup>189</sup> The weather's harshness contributed to the forging of the notion of an elevated spirit, therefore rejecting "dark" passions.<sup>190</sup> It is unsurprising the painter chose such a pale glow to represent the three main characters of the artwork as if the white skin transcended earthly preoccupations and uniquely focused on higher ideals, in this case family as the foundation of a strong nation. Within historical western art traditions, official art often represented non-whites, across a spectrum of genres in both uplifting and denigrating ways.

However, during the 1800s, non-whites overwhelmingly disappear from official Italian representations, leaving only "pure" white Italians as subjects. I argue the reasons for this reside in the aforementioned characteristics symbolized by white skin. In an era where celebration of

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. p. 580

<sup>186</sup> Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness" in *White*, (London: NY, Routledge, 1997), pp. 1 - 2

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p. 21

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 29

<sup>189</sup> Italy, still up to this day is regarded as somewhat less industrious and "inferior" when compared to its northern counterparts such as the UK and Germany. The common stereotype Italians face in Europe is being more "lazy" and "unintelligent"; this is also for racial reasons since Italy's population, due to its proximity to Africa, is indeed darker than Northern European populations. Ibid. p. 21

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.



“Italianness” was a hallmark, whiteness represented a set of virtues thus making it necessary to represent Italians as purely white skinned people in official nationalistic depictions.

The second painting, which was displayed at the Italian national exposition of 1861, illustrates the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Magenta (Figure 5), which took place in 1859 in the town of Magenta, near Milan, between Franco – Piedmont troops and Austrian soldiers ending with the formers’ victory.<sup>191</sup>



**Figure 5,** Giovanni Fattori, *The Italian Field after the Battle of Magenta*. 1862. Oil on Canvas, 232 x 384 cm. Palazzo Pitti, Firenze.

Artist Giovanni Fattori chooses to represent a relatively calm moment following the battle, in which the French – Piedmont army gathers up the wounded for nurses to attend. In the background, the devastated landscape indicates the recent massacre whereas, in the foreground, the soldiers, nurses and even the horses express a sense of tranquillity. The Franco

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<sup>191</sup> Raffaele De Grada, *I Macchiaioli*, (Milano, Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1967), pp. 9 - 23

– Piedmont troops fought to defeat the already weakened Austrian army and gain control over Italy’s Northeastern region.<sup>192</sup> This victory marked a milestone for unification and significantly debilitated Austrian despotism in the north. Fattori, however, does not represent the enemy or the glory of victory, but a moment of unity and care as symbolized by the nurses tending to injured soldiers.

Dyer contends one aspect of the “white collective imagination” is entrepreneurial spirit: the will to advance, organisation, adventurous spirit, particularly in battles for the greater good, ambition, energy, building of nations and self-control amid chaos.<sup>193</sup> One pivotal matter in this painting is the apparent steadfastness and calm reigning in a moment that should be devastating. All of the figures appear to be harmoniously helping each other despite the horror of war. As I will discuss in the chapter, by the end of the nineteenth century amidst illustrations depicting battles in Africa during colonial ventures, there is a stark difference between the manner in which the Africans and the Italians are depicted. In this specific painting, there are no black figures, but the white figures all show an elevation and organisation of spirit in helping the people around them. Fattori’s work covers up internal rifts, such as the devastation brought by unification, and the oppression and subsequent submission Southern Italian populations were forced to endure.

Scholar Aliza Wong points out the contradictions in the construction of “Italianness” given the north/south divide.<sup>194</sup> Southern Italy, subject to a strict feudal system under Bourbon control, specifically in the Reign of the Two Sicilies, was significantly more rural and impoverished than the industrialised north.<sup>195</sup> Once unification occurred, the newly formed central government heavily taxed southern lands, which hindered development for southern

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Richard Dyer, “The Matter of Whiteness”, p. 31

<sup>194</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911, Meridionalism, Empire and Diaspora*, (New York, PELGRAVE MACMILLIAN, 2006), Introduction

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.



populations and worsened the economic divide. This discord was exacerbated by prejudice towards southerners which included their presumed backwardness, disease, stupidity, sloth, ugliness, and, tellingly, “proximity to Africa”.<sup>196</sup> Furthermore, Southerners faced racial prejudice due to their geographic proximity to Africa, moreover emphasised by a darker skin complexion whilst compared to their Northern counterparts.

These stereotypes, still present to some extent today, were never shown in Risorgimento style nineteenth-century art in an attempt to ignore internal problems and “market” Italy as a unified nation on an international scale.<sup>197</sup> The racialized south, during the nineteenth century, was often compared to Africa’s “savage” and “uncivilized” populations, thus making credible the argument that a specific concept of “Italianness” had already formed – this being purely white as well as closer to its northern more “noble” neighbours.<sup>198</sup> Because of Arab and Spanish domination in the southern part of the peninsula, a larger part of the population had darker skin resulting from cross-racial mixing, in contrast with the north where Austrian and French rule during different periods had created a higher percentage of lighter-skinned people.<sup>199</sup>

## ITALIAN COLONIZATION

Despite internal fractures and a weak economy, the newly formed Italian state, imbued with patriotic feelings and nationalist fervour in vogue in Europe during the nineteenth century, decided to join European colonial entrepreneurship in “far away uncivilized lands” such as Africa and Asia.<sup>200</sup> Historian and Italian colonialism expert Nicola Labanca argues that the

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale*, pp. 20 - 31

<sup>198</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911*, pp. 3 – 4. In April 2020, journalist and director of the newspaper *Il Libero*, Vittorio Feltri, publicly admitted he thought the South of Italy was “inferior” in regards to the North. He argued that Northern Italy had better wealth as well as higher quality hospitals inasmuch numerous Southerners come to Milan to look for work and to seek medical assistance. Even though economists and academics have extensively proved there is indeed greater poverty in the South of Italy, Feltri racializes this issue by positing on Southerners’ “inferiority”. These prejudices, as I argue in this chapter, have deep-seated roots. Concetto Vecchio, *Coronavirus, Vittorio Feltri contro I Meridionali: “Inferiori”. L’Ordine Valuta il Danno d’Immagine*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed December 4th 2020, <https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/04/22/news/feltri-254716587/>

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell’Espansione Coloniale Italiana*, (Il Mulino, Roma, 2002), pp. 15 – 28

decision to enter colonial “adventures” was not only to discover new resources for Italy’s fragile economy, but also assuage an “inferiority complex” with regard to powerful, successful European countries such as France and the UK.<sup>201</sup> The Italian government wished to boost Italy’s reputation on an international scale and improve commerce and diplomatic relations. Therefore, venturing in the “savage” black continent appeared to be in line with the idea of the time to bring supposed enlightenment to countries where darkness and ignorance “prevailed”.<sup>202</sup> Left wing Prime Minister Agostino Depretis was the first politician to launch attacks on Eritrea in 1885 followed by aggressive invasions of Ethiopia, Somalia, parts of Sudan and China, Libya and the Dodecanese Islands - attacks which continued until the mid-twentieth century with the fall of the Fascist dictatorship.<sup>203</sup> These decisions were among the most catastrophic taken in Italian history resulting in tragic human losses, from the Africans and from Italians, and in significant economic loss on both sides.<sup>204</sup> Labanca contends that Italy has yet to come to terms with this troubling history since Italian colonialism is seldom discussed in Italy and little to nothing has been done to repair the immense damage wrought.<sup>205</sup>

During the end of the nineteenth century, an intense propaganda campaign took place to convince the sceptical Italian public on the “necessity” of these choices. In the zeitgeist of the time, patriotism and love for one’s country, the Italian government exploited all art and communication media to illustrate the advantages of colonialism: posters, newspapers, books, music, artwork, magazines and public speeches.<sup>206</sup> Unsurprisingly, in the images generated during these times, Africans are often depicted in stereotypical ways. To persuade Italians that invading Africa was positive meant that Africans were portrayed in denigrating manners. The “good”, valiant, white Italian fighting for his country versus the “savage” and “unruly” African

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid. pp. 57 - 73

<sup>204</sup> Ibid. pp. 433 - 440

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid. pp. 217 - 234

attempting to disrupt Italy's "rightful" expansionist narratives. Two prints published in 1896 by the Italian newspaper *Illustrazione Italiana* in which the Italian invasion of Ethiopia is represented, are ripe for critical analysis on this point. This weekly magazine was founded in 1873 in Milan and was one of the most widely read publications at the end of the nineteenth century with numerous artists' prints and sketches reproduced.<sup>207</sup>

The first illustration (Figure 6) dates January 19th 1896; its title reads *War of Africa - Mekelle – Scioan Spies Under the Trenches of Mengesha's Palace*, by lithographer Eduardo Ximenes, who took the representation directly from a sketch made by artist Adolfo Rossi.<sup>208</sup> The print shows a vast field with a palace in the background that is, the domicile of Ras Mengesha Yohannes, then governor of Tigray, Ethiopia's northern region.<sup>209</sup> In the midst of the landscape, apart from few houses and hay bales, the viewer observes various armed black men crouched down, slowly moving forward. Only their backs are visible, however, their preparation for battle or imminent attack is evident from the spears and shields that they carry. This particular episode refers to Mekelle's Siege in Ethiopia between December 15<sup>th</sup> and January 22<sup>nd</sup> 1896 when Ethiopian troops besieged Italian soldiers in this small city in northern Ethiopia ending with an agreement on both sides to cease-fire and free the Italian army.<sup>210</sup>

This event is a prelude to the disastrous battle of Adwa fought in March 1896, one of the most humiliating defeats suffered by Italians and the consequent resignation of then Prime Minister and colonising ideologue Francesco Crispi.<sup>211</sup> Labanca estimates that this battle was not only a major "white loss", but also cost the lives of thousands of indigenous people in this useless massacre.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>207</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale*, pp. 31 - 46

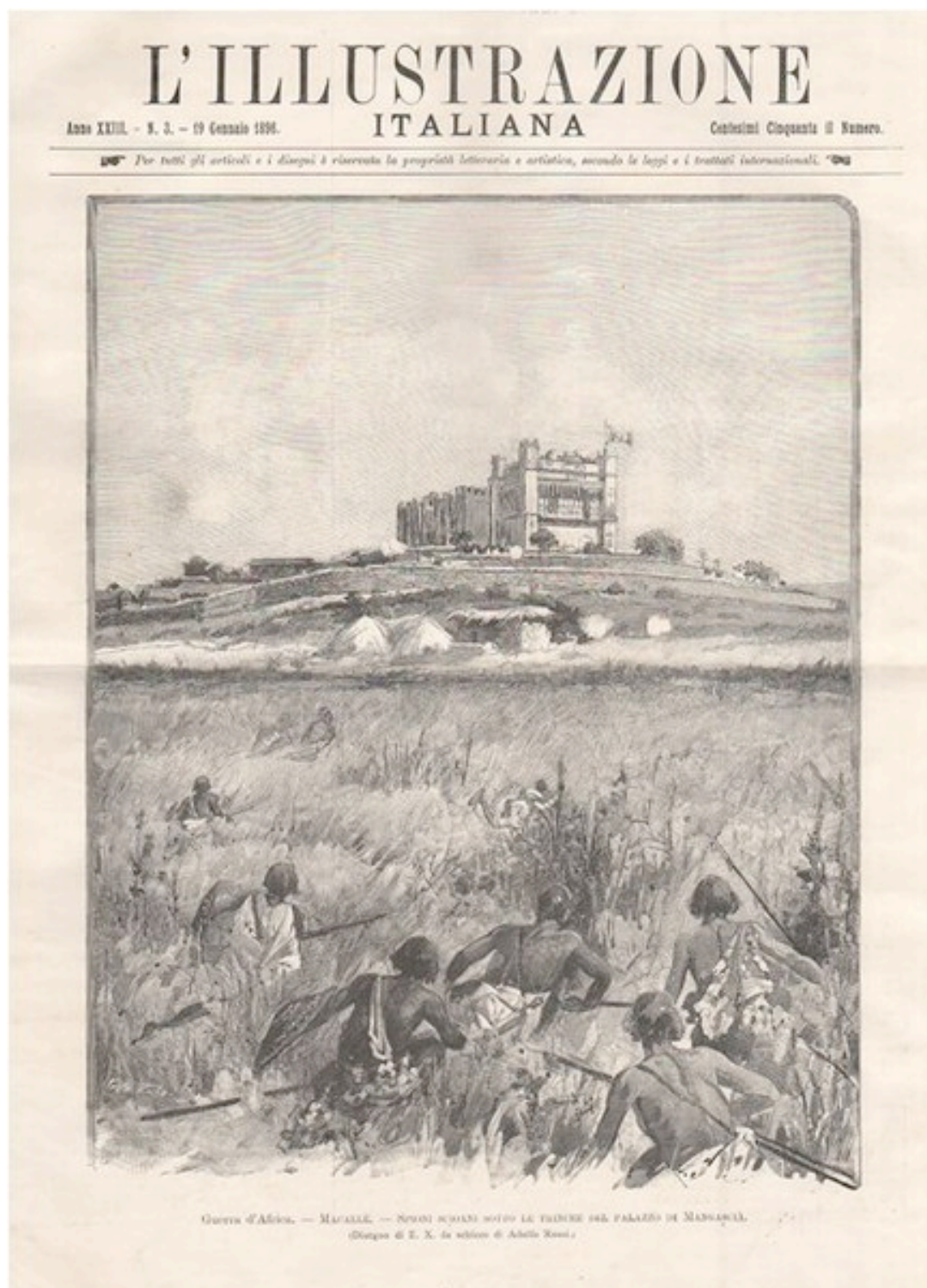
<sup>208</sup> "Guerra D'Africa - Macallè - Spioni Scioani Sotto le Trincee del Palazzo di Mangascià", Mare Magnum Libri antichi, moderni, introvabili e novità, Last Accessed September 21st 2018, <https://www.maremagnum.com/stampe/guerra-d-africa-macalle-spioni-scioani-sotto-le-trincee-del/130133642>

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare*, pp. 80 - 81

<sup>211</sup> Ibid. pp. 75 - 77

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 6**, Eduardo Ximenes, *War of Africa - Mekelle – Scioan Spies Under the Trenches of Mengesha's Palace*, 1896. Drawing for “*Illustrazione Italiana*”, 390 mm x 280 mm.

It was not the mission of *Illustrazione Italiana* to show Italian vulnerability. Therefore, depicting the black men as an encroaching enemy, sneaking up on Italian defences, armed with spears, shields and most of them half-naked, alluded to their “savageness” in comparison to

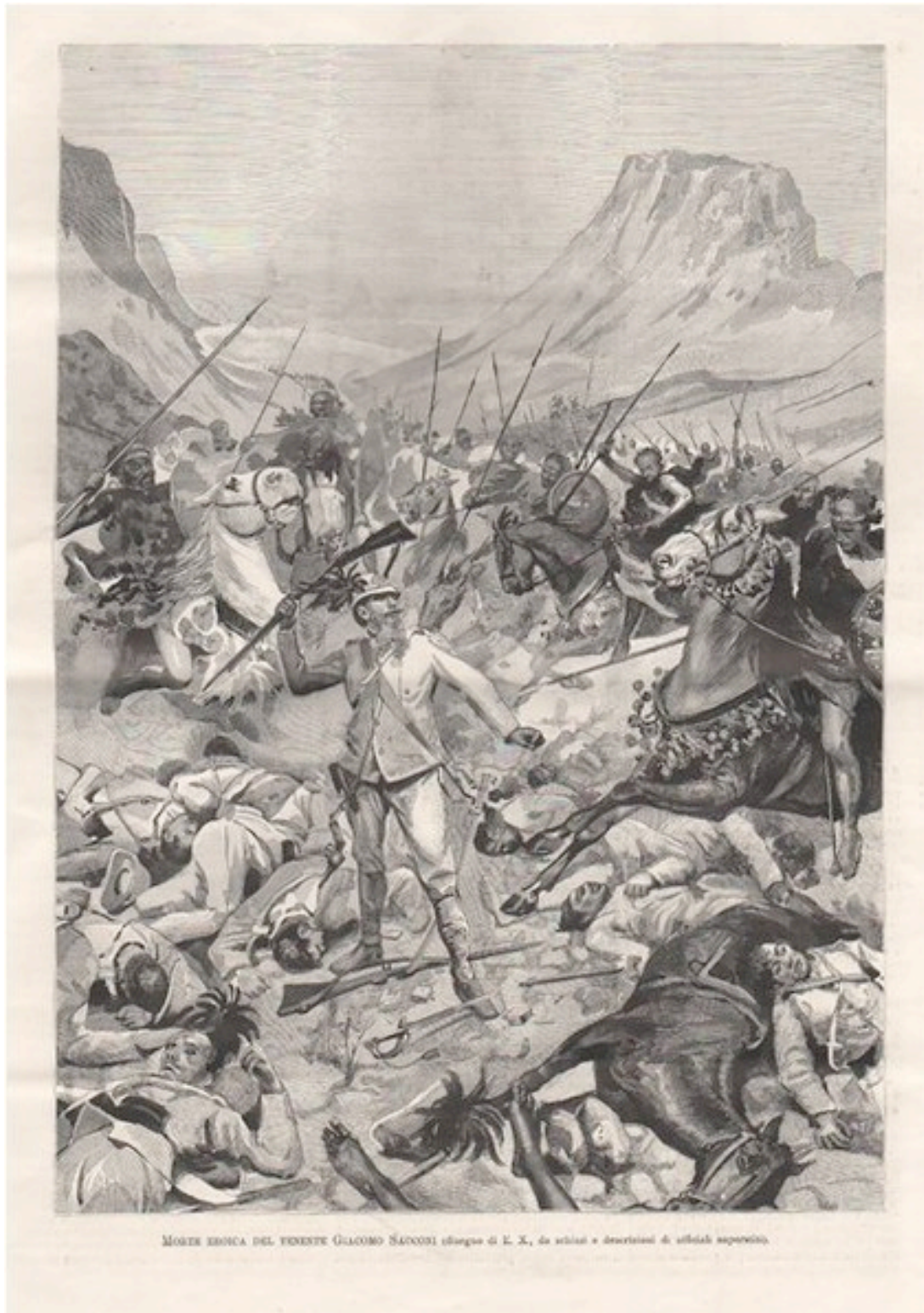
fully clothed white Italian men present in other representations. The print is clearly antagonistic to Africanness, depicting them not only as Italy's foes, but also as the sinister "other" planning to ambush and kill Italian soldiers. Ethiopians are presented to readers as mischievous "primitives", utterly ignoring the fact that Italy invaded Ethiopia with imperialist aims and subjected the local population to their domination. Even though Africans are not presented with grotesque features as they subsequently were during the Fascist dictatorship, they are nevertheless demonised within the logic of "us versus them". This print represents a politically motivated vilification of the black population of Ethiopia as "other" or to a large audience of Italians. It worked to depict the act of colonization, not as Italy's violence imposed on foreign soil, but as a positive action against an "inferior" population because of their inherently crude and backward nature.

The second print (Figure 7), also by artist Eduardo Ximenes, entitled *Lieutenant Giacomo Sacconi's Heroic Death* (1896), although the exact month of its publication is not indicated, likely represents the culmination of the Adwa Battle, which ended with the Italians' bitter defeat.<sup>213</sup> This image depicts the midst of a battle with Ethiopians on horses charging the white Lieutenant Sacconi, who stands in the central foreground a rifle aloft in his right hand, and preparing to die "honourably" while around him lie the lifeless bodies of Italians and Ethiopians. The scenario is claustrophobic with cliffs in the background looming over the fighting men, giving the perception that there was no chance for escape. I wish to especially point out the dress of the black warriors that would have been largely misperceived by white Italian viewers as evidence of their supposed savagery versus the "dignified" fully clothed white man who, knowing he will soon lose his life, stands defenceless awaiting his fate.

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<sup>213</sup> "Morte Eroica del Tenente Giacomo Sacconi", Mare Magnum Libri antichi, moderni, introvabili e novità, Last Accessed September 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, <https://en.maremagnum.com/prints/morte-eroica-del-tenente-giacomo-sacconi/130133190>





**Figure 7**, Eduardo Ximenes, *Lieutenant Giacomo Sacconi's Heroic Death*, 1896. Drawing for "Illustrazione Italiana", 302 mm x 215 mm.

The Ethiopians are shown as the army in charge, ruthlessly intent on slaughtering an "innocent" white man that simply stands for his country. Even the horses about to charge

Lieutenant Sacconi seem to stare aggressively, also suggesting an unfair fight given the Ethiopians outnumbering the pitiful handful of Italians. There is no hint of Italian wrongdoing in invading a country causing death and devastation. I argue that these two prints unambiguously created a dichotomous representation of black and white men. As previously suggested, these prints clearly promoted this bias for political propaganda. Being published in a mainstream magazine and widely distributed around the Italian peninsula, literate and non-literate people alike were able to absorb the propagandistic visual representations as normal and truthful portrayals.<sup>214</sup>

Art historian Kay Dian Kriz in her essay “Making a Black Folk: Belisario’s Sketches of Character” (2009) explores how the white Jewish artist Isaac Belisario, in nineteenth-century colonial Jamaica, parodied black subjects in prints by racializing them and assuring their denigration in comparison to white settlers.<sup>215</sup> The scholar’s argument aims at showing how blacks in Jamaica, newly liberated from slavery in this case, were persistently mocked by white society in the mid-nineteenth century, shortly after Great Britain had abolished slavery.<sup>216</sup> A quick look at Belisario’s illustrations, *Sketches of Character* (1837 – 1838) might suggest black bodies are shown in a dignified manner since some figures are drawn with aristocratic garb and not in rags, which is what spectators might expect from individuals recently freed from shackles.<sup>217</sup> However, the figures with this particular dress were participants in the annual carnival called Junkanoo through which the enslaved parodied and mocked their white oppressors. Furthermore, a close observation suggests a mocking tone because of their grotesque features, awkward poses and ill-fitted manners.<sup>218</sup> Kriz argues that the artist is not attempting to realistically reproduce the black Jamaican population but showing their

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<sup>214</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l’Italia Coloniale*, pp. 31 - 46

<sup>215</sup> Kay Dian Kriz, “Making a Black Folk: Belisario’s Sketches of Character”, in *Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement*, (New Haven: CT, Yale and University Press, 2008), p. 118

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 118 - 119

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 120 - 121

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

inadequacy in regards to the white upper-class society and their ill-preparedness to become citizens.<sup>219</sup>

I suggest there are similarities in the way Ximenes sketches the black soldiers as enemies. These pictures are in fact showing atrocious wars initiated by Italians. However, they conveniently hide the monstrous truth in favour of a “sweet pill” for viewers. Italy invaded African countries bringing chaos and destruction yet, in the newspaper drawings, blacks are shown as hordes attempting to annihilate the supposedly brave Italian soldiers. Even though there is no parody or mockery, black men are depicted either as crouched foes hiding in the bushes preparing to ambush, as in the first image, or as cruel warriors ready to strike and kill brave Lieutenant Sacconi, as in the second sketch. The white soldiers are idealised as heroic versus black warriors shown either as butchers or cowardly individuals hiding in the bush.

Scholar and museologist Giuliana Tomasella argues in her ground-breaking book *Exhibiting Colonial Italy* (2017) that the Italian government promulgated an intense propaganda campaign through visual arts during the colonial period, although this is seldom mentioned or taken into consideration by academics.<sup>220</sup> Tomasella contends that politics and art were crucially linked at the end of the nineteenth century when Italy invaded Eritrea.<sup>221</sup> For this reason, both are vital in understanding how alterity was perceived. She uses Edward Said’s well-known theory of “orientalism” in which he explains the constructed perception of the so-called Orient by the West in the attempt to subjugate it.<sup>222</sup> Not only was this process undertaken by physically invading Middle Eastern and Asian countries, but it was also carried out culturally and intellectually by stereotyping them.<sup>223</sup> Said argues culture plays a key factor in the denigration of the “Orient”, creating the spoiled image of cruel, savage, lustful, deprived and

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid. pp. 9 - 22

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Said W. Edward, *Orientalism*, (Vintage Books, New York, 1978), Introduction

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.



inept people needing the help of superior western countries.<sup>224</sup> Even though the prints I previously mentioned do not involve Arab nations, I suggest they are cogent to Said's theory of a white western power racializing and subjugating people of colour considered "primitive". Viewers, ignorant about these populations, blindly believed these underlying messages through these constructed images.

Furthermore, the nineteenth century was the period in which eugenics philosophies became popular; that is, the belief that humanity is divided into "good" and "bad" genes, that specific populations are superior to others because of hereditary traits.<sup>225</sup> It was an attempt to study humans and a social order, which fuelled the construction of alterity in Italy since it was largely based on pseudo-scientists expanding on pre-existing prejudices.<sup>226</sup> For the purpose of this chapter, I briefly mention Cesare Lombroso, a nineteenth century scholar and "scientist" based in Turin very active in the areas of craniometry and atavistic studies.<sup>227</sup> He thoroughly analysed human skulls attempting to decipher why certain individuals are more prone to crime, as well as to explain the reasons behind mental illness.<sup>228</sup>

Lombroso collected skulls from southern Italian delinquents as well as those of people considered "insane".<sup>229</sup> His theories argued the "innate" degeneration of Jews, blacks, certain "types" of women (prostitutes and criminals) and southern Italians. He believed that specific traits were hereditary.<sup>230</sup> In his opinion, some races were more subject to deviant behaviour.<sup>231</sup> Unsurprisingly, Lombroso found Northern white Italians to be the most enlightened. Even though his theories have been debunked by modern science, the prejudices upon which they are constructed still persist and, as I shall discuss throughout the following paragraphs, were used

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Wong S. Aliza, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911*, pp. 47 - 77

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Renzo Villa, *Il Deviante e I Suoi Sogni. Lombroso e la Nascita dell'Antropologia Criminale*, (Milano, Franco Angeli Libri s.r.l., 1985), pp. 59 - 86

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

by Fascist politicians, “scientists” and intellectuals to push forward a white supremacist political agenda.<sup>232</sup>

## TWENTIETH CENTURY

The twentieth century brought about one of the darkest eras in Italian history: the Fascist dictatorship led by Benito Mussolini, better known as the “Duce”.<sup>233</sup> In the subsequent section, I analyse two post cards by satirical cartoonist Italian Enrico De Seta and two posters by talented Italian graphic designer and Fascist fanatic Gino Boccasile that effectively convey how the concept of the “other” was exacerbated and spread during fascism. The first two illustrations are “humorous” post cards depicted between 1935 and 1936, years of Italian colonial aggression against Ethiopia, by Sicilian illustrator Enrico De Seta.<sup>234</sup> The third and fourth posters are respectively an advertisement for popular vermouth, Amaro Ramazzotti, and a political propaganda representation aimed against black Allied soldiers invading Italy and supposedly raping white Italian women. Historian Federico Chabod, in his detailed account on Fascism’s rise, contends that this doctrine found fertile ground following First World War, which devastated Italy, significantly impoverishing it, raising inflation and prices for basic goods, resulting in growing resentment by the Italian population towards the established political class.<sup>235</sup> Consequently, a fervent surge in Italian nationalism brought the desire for a “strong man” figure to resolve Italy’s problems following its great disillusionment at the Versailles

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<sup>232</sup> Still today there is a museum in Turin dedicated to Cesare Lombroso, which is essentially his studio. Despite numerous controversies this space showcases Lombroso’s ideas and theories as well as exhibits actual human skulls used by the scientist to study cranes and prove his theories. Many human remains belong to southern “criminals” who were murdered by the Piedmont army following unification, hence creating a debate on whether they should be returned to their native land. There have been petitions to shut down this museum; however, all have been unsuccessful. The museum contextualizes Lombroso’s opinions and theories, thus making this space an excellent medium for the public to learn and adequately evaluate his problematic beliefs. I think shutting down this space not only would be a disservice to general knowledge, but is also an inadequate manner of confronting difficult aspects of Italy’s history. <http://museolombroso.unito.it/index.php/it/> Last Accessed September 21<sup>st</sup> 2018

<sup>233</sup> Luigi Salvatorelli, *The Risorgimento: Thought and Action*, Conclusion

<sup>234</sup> Alberto Alpozzi, *La Satira di Enrico De Seta Durante la Guerra d’Etiopia*, Italia Coloniale, Last Accessed June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <https://italiacoloniale.com/2017/11/24/enrico-de-seta-e-la-satira-durante-la-guerra-detiopia/>

<sup>235</sup> Federico Chabod, *A History of Italian Fascism*, translated by Muriel Grindrod (New York, USA, Howard Fertig, 1975), pp. 21 – 43

Treaty (the so-called Mutilated Victory), which did not grant Italy control over parts of Dalmatia, Albania and the Saseno Island.<sup>236</sup> Benito Mussolini appeared to be the right person at the right moment.

Following the March on Rome on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1922 by the Fascist Party, led by Mussolini (who went by train) to pressure the Liberal Government, Fascists held complete control over Italy for 20 years until the dictator's fall in 1943.<sup>237</sup> Once the Fascist party had come to power, it slowly removed all opposition, and eliminated dissidents, either murdering them, imprisoning them or forcing them into exile. The party gained control of all official forms of communication including newspapers and pushed aside then king of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III.<sup>238</sup> Few voices dared defy the newly installed regime thereby giving Fascism unlimited power. Mussolini believed himself a fervent patriot who wanted to return Italy to the prestige of Ancient Roman times and glorify it on an international scale, which led to decisions with catastrophic results.<sup>239</sup> In 1935, Il Duce decided to invade Abyssinia (Ethiopia) to divert public attention from Italy's grave economic situation and to reinvigorate nationalist sentiments, which he thought were waning.<sup>240</sup> His fervent dream of a strong Italian country whose people were superior led him to engage in destructive colonial wars.<sup>241</sup> On November 11<sup>th</sup> 1923, the Colonial Museum was opened to show Italy's "conquering force" as well as display over 12,000 objects taken or offered from occupied territories.<sup>242</sup> It is unclear if the artworks were looted, given as gifts by locals or bought. Nevertheless, this institution was part of the propagandistic

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. pp. 55 – 61

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. pp. 62 - 76

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. pp. 76 – 84

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Silvana Palma, "La Fototeca dell'Istituto Italo-Africano: Appunti di un Lavoro di Riordino" in *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, Anno 44, No. 4 (DICEMBRE 1989), pp. 595-596

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40760433>

display.<sup>243</sup> Although it was eventually shut down, it remains a mystery where the collections have gone.

Historian Aaron Gillette argues that Mussolini had conflicting ideas concerning the racial question, believing Italians were indeed an “elevated pure white race” detached from “Negro and “Semitic races”. However, he also expounded on Italians being part of the “Mediterranean race”.<sup>244</sup> The latter notion collides with the idea that Italians, like Germans, were part of the “Aryan race” consisting of whiteness, blonde hair, blue eyes, superior physical strength as well as intellect.<sup>245</sup> A thorough analysis of the Fascist dictatorship shows an exacerbation in racial denigration through policy, which culminated in 1938 with the Racial Laws stating whites’ absolute superiority above anyone else.<sup>246</sup> Scholar Giulia Barrera thoroughly lists Fascist policies in regards to African Colonies, effectively arguing that Mussolini, to follow Nazi Germany’s lead, experienced an increasing hostility towards non-whites, Jews and minorities and extolled Italians as a “pure” white race.<sup>247</sup> In 1937 anti-miscegenation laws were promulgated prohibiting any sexual encounter between white men and black women (the reverse considered unthinkable due to white women’s supposed passiveness). This provision stemmed from the fear of racial mixing with Mussolini himself stating he had to counteract the “miscegenation plague”.<sup>248</sup> In 1940, an even harsher law was approved in regards to Italian colonies: Italian men fathering mixed raced children were prevented from recognising them and giving them Italian citizenship. Barrera correctly

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Aron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy*, (London; New York, Routledge, 2003), Accessed September 5th, 2018. pp. 50 – 55 <http://lib.myilibrary.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/Open.aspx?id=40169>

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Giulia, Barrera “Mussolini’s colonial race laws and state-settler relations in Africa Orientale Italiana (1935–41)” in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8(3) 2003, pp. 425–426 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585170320000113770>

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

underlines how oblivious colonisers were about these rules since numerous accounts exist of mixed raced children becoming Italian citizens, eventually living as well as working in Italy.<sup>249</sup>

The first postcard (Figure 8), as previously mentioned, was created in occasion of the Italian invasion against Ethiopia in 1935.<sup>250</sup> Artist De Seta created this series for the publishing house Edizioni D'Arte Boeri where he satirically illustrated interactions between white Italian soldiers and the black civilian population.<sup>251</sup> These post cards are a series of eight destined for Italian soldiers invading Eastern Africa, probably for their amusement.<sup>252</sup>



**Figure 8**, Enrico De Seta, *Civilizzazione: Forza Taitù, che Cominciamo a Civilizzarci, Questo é Venuto Bianco!*, Roma, Edizioni d'arte V.E. Boeri 1935 – 1936, Post Card, Colours, 10.5 x 15 cm

<sup>249</sup> Ibid. Worth mentioning is Giorgio Vale who was an Italian terrorist born from a white Italian mother and a black Eritrean father who was part of the neofascist organization « Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari » (Revolutionary Armed Nucleus). He was born in Rome and, from a very young age, enlisted in extreme right wing xenophobic groups and was eventually killed by the police while he was in hiding. Despite receiving hostility from fellow extreme right-wing terrorists because of his race, he was an active militant that participated in numerous subversive actions. Vale was and still is sometimes referred to as “il Mulatto”. His mere existence still creates a significant amount of perplexity and embarrassment amongst scholars and politicians.

<sup>250</sup> Alberto Alpozzi, *La Satira di Enrico De Seta Durante la Guerra d’Etiopia*

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

As I shall argue throughout this chapter these drawings were produced to denigrate Ethiopians and blacks in general. The post card's setting appears to be in the midst of a barren landscape under scorching sun. The background shows various huts suggesting locals' domiciles. In the foreground, a white Italian soldier observes over his shoulder an interaction between a dark-skinned black male and female, supposedly a family unit. The mother with large frame and a donut-shaped red mouth holds a white new-born aloft for the inspection of the black partner/father.

Next to them, a manual mortar and pestle is placed suggesting a rudimentary lifestyle, not yet modernised. The writing on the post card reads: *Civilizzazione: Forza Taitù, che Cominciamo a Civilizzarci, Questo é Venuto Bianco!* (Civilization: Come on Taitù, We're Starting to Civilize, this one Came out White!). Clearly, the racial hierarchy is expressed in the most trenchant form. The helmet-wearing baby looks nothing like its black father and is clearly the product of an illicit sexual relationship between the black mother/partner and the departing helmet-wearing white Italian soldier. However, the paleness of the white-presenting mixed-race child clearly has not alarmed the black father who, with clasped hands, stares down at the child with admiration, even pride. Contrary to previous images examined in *Illustrazione Italiana*, here the colonised population is no longer represented as a "dignified savage" with agency engaging in acts of war but as subjugated individuals eager to be equal to the supposedly superior white conquerors.

The two black individuals are dressed in modest attire in contrast with the more elaborate military uniform worn by the soldier. This suggests poverty as well as a "primitive" lifestyle conveyed by the huts, sparse vegetation and scattered rocks. The Africans are furthermore depicted with grotesque features such as overtly prominent lips; the woman is wearing an apron to convey her status as a housewife and her large shape reminds the viewer

of the “mammy”, a North American Anti-Black trope.<sup>253</sup> She holds the white infant who ironically has an Italian military helmet and goggles on its small head. Furthermore, the female is somewhat “offering” a gift to her black male counterpart who observes this “miracle” in awe. The facial expression suggests both are ecstatic in having had the “fortune” of a white descendent since it “elevates” them to a higher rank, in this case that of whiteness. The depiction suggests the infant’s father is the white soldier, not only due to phenotype and complexion, but also because of the hat and goggles. The black male is certainly not the father of the white “miracle” baby, hence his metaphorical removal from the family unit; this, not only is it a form of humiliation, but also a sinister suggestion that the “good genes” of the smirking white soldier are dominant in the white offspring. This post card’s function is to trivialise Fascist white supremacy ideology and destructive invasions perpetrated by Italians in Africa.

Postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha in his ground-breaking essay on mimicry in a colonial setting contends that methods of imperial violence and subjugation of the West against colonized populations included allowing the latter to resemble – but not fully become – like the oppressors.<sup>254</sup> This was a manner to exert control and assure dominance over subjugated populations.<sup>255</sup> Bhabha uses the assertion “Almost the same, but not white” therefore contending colonized, non-white individuals, strive and fail to “better themselves” by attempting to “become white”.<sup>256</sup> The post card illustrating two blacks belonging to a subjugated population being ecstatic by the birth of a white heir, even wearing an Italian

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<sup>253</sup> The figure of the “mammy” is a common North American Anti-Black trope. It is a stereotype emerging from slavery in the US when black enslaved women worked as caregivers and cleaners in slaveholders’ houses. The figure of the “mammy” consisted of an unattractive, rotund, loyal, diligent and subservient black middle-aged woman generally smiling with a scarf over her head and a long dress. This stereotype attempted at showing the “benefice” of slavery, thus how “prone” black women were to fulfil that role. It also attempted to prove the lack of physical attractiveness as well as absence of agency and eagerness to serve white families on behalf of black women. One of the most famous “mammies” is Aunt Jemima’s pancake brand, which has now been changed. National Museum of African American History and Culture, *Popular and Pervasive Stereotypes of African Americans*, The Smithsonian Museum, Last Accessed December 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/popular-and-pervasive-stereotypes-african-americans>

<sup>254</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse.” October 28 (1984), p. 126

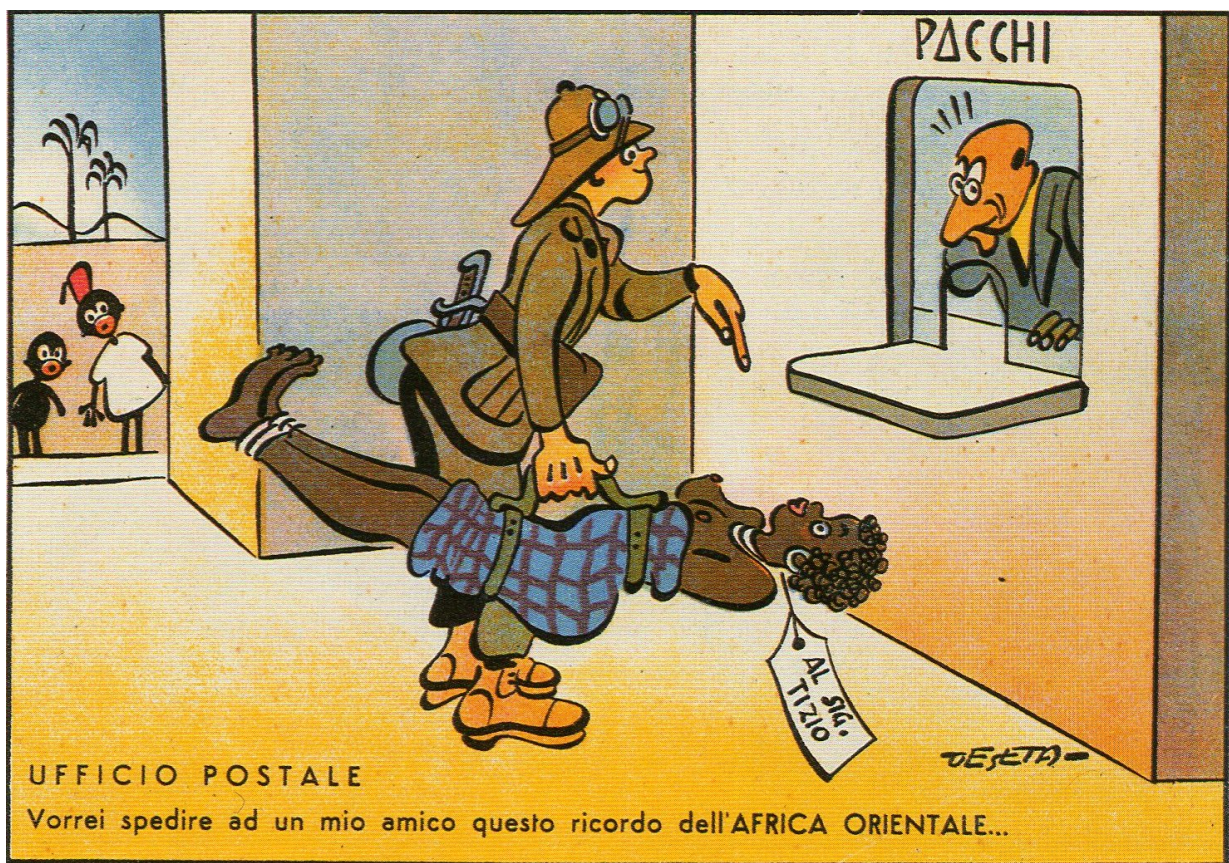
<sup>255</sup> Ibid. p. 129

<sup>256</sup> Ibid. p. 132



soldier's hat, suggests their deep-seated inferiority complex. Their sole manner to becoming "civilized" was to whiten their descendants. Despite having black parents, the baby is almost saved because of "superior" racial identification since its father is the white Italian soldier. This image furthermore emphasises the stupidity and lack of manliness of the black father who has willingly been cuckolded by a supposedly worthier (white) man.

The second postcard (Figure 9) is also part of the series by Edizioni D'Arte Boeri and was likely sketched during the years 1935 – 1936. The setting is in a Post Office, probably in Italy's African colonies, where an Italian soldier converses with the postal clerk. The soldier is holding in his right hand a black woman depicted as a package. She has handles strapped to her torso and thighs, her feet are tied and she even has a tag around her neck indicating who shall receive this "shipment".



**Figure 9**, Enrico De Seta, *Ufficio Postale: Vorrei Spedire ad un mio Amico Questo Ricordo dell'Africa Orientale...* Roma, Edizioni d'arte V.E. Boeri 1935 – 1936, Post Card, Colours, 10.5 x 15 cm



Her breasts are uncovered, alluding to black womens' supposed sexual availability for white men. The bottom of the postcard reads *Ufficio Postale: Vorrei Spedire ad un mio Amico Questo Ricordo dell'Africa Orientale...* (Post Office: I Would like to Ship this to a Friend as a Keepsake of East Africa). In the background, viewers see a glimpse of what appears to be a mostly barren landscape as well as two dark-skinned black infants (one completely naked) with grotesque features curiously peeking inside the Post Office. The salesclerk is either jokingly or alarmingly observing the "package" as if she were a part of a cabinet of curiosities available for (white) enjoyment.

Nelson, in her volume on the black female subject in Western art contends that white artists often depicted black women in overtly sexual manners.<sup>257</sup> This tradition emerged within the context of Transatlantic Slavery to justify the matrilineal organization, which allowed white slave owners to sexually exploit enslaved females to produce new units of labour; the mixed-race offspring who like all children of enslaved females, assumed the status of the enslaved mother. The black female, in a Western colonial context, was perceived as inherently sexually promiscuous, depicted for a white male heterosexual gaze, while the sitters/subjects were often devoid of agency.<sup>258</sup> To quote Nelson's words, the black female body was perceived as a "transgressive site" where imperial subjugation exerted its utter control by objectifying and sexualising it, which was considered inadmissible for the white female body.<sup>259</sup>

Despite the fact that Nelson's argument revolves around enslaved blacks in colonial Canada during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there are stark similarities with Italy's imperial context in twentieth century African colonies. The black woman, here represented as a package, is not only reduced to an object to be shipped for white sexual enjoyment, but her bare breasts are a sinister cue of sexual assault inflicted upon black colonised women, a

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<sup>257</sup> Charmaine Nelson, *Representing the Black Female Subject in Western Art*, p. 19

<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

treatment considered abhorrent for white Italian females. De Seta represents Italian colonisation in Eastern Africa as a humorous, light-hearted issue to be laughed at by Italian soldiers and white Italian viewers. The fact that a black woman is shown as a nude parcel, an object lacking any humanity to be sent off to Italy to be raped is an indication of the pervasiveness of white supremacist ideals.

In this context, I next consider Gino Boccasile's publicity poster for Amaro Ramazzotti dating 1936 (Figure 10), when Italy had invaded and colonized portions of the eastern part of Africa.<sup>260</sup> The picture illustrates the bottle of liquor in the foreground as well as the brand name in yellow capital letters with a bottle of Seltz water behind it and on the side of a glass containing a straw to sip the refreshing drink. On the top left of the poster the capital words "Disseta e Tonifica" are written, meaning "quenching and tonifying". In the background stand two women: in the forefront a white woman, fully clothed, smiling with one hand on her hip in a confident pose. She wears a hat that resembles a pith helmet, "a symbol of colonial rule across Africa"<sup>261</sup> to protect her from the sun, has lipstick that suggests grooming, and apart from the shade cast by the brim of her hat over the upper portion of her face, her facial features are distinguishable. Behind her, a black woman, scantily dressed, and bare-breasted, holds a tray with the liquor a glass, ready to prepare the beverage and serve the white woman. Apart from her white smile, her lineaments are not distinguishable, only her tar-coloured black body, her

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<sup>260</sup> Karen Pinkus, « Shades of Black in Advertising and Popular Culture » in *Revisioning Italy: National Identity and Global Culture*, edited by Mary J. Russo and Beverly Allen, (Minneapolis, Minnesota University Press, 1997) pp. 144 – 146

<sup>261</sup> Journalist Maiysha Kai in an article concerning Melania Trump wearing the pith helmet to a humanitarian trip to Africa, ironically comments how this choice was a "faux pas" to say the least. Kai humorously calls it "safari chic" or, even better, "colonial couture". The journalist explains how this specific helmet was a typical headwear amongst English explorers in Africa and India throughout the nineteenth century, thus nowadays becoming a symbol of European colonial rule. In today's world it is an uncommon accessory, making Melania Trump's style choice questionable. Despite properly protecting from the sun and offering ventilation, it has acquired the notion of imperial domination, thus unsurprising that the white woman in Boccasile's billboard wears that specific hat. Maiysha Kai, *Send Help: Can Somebody Get Melania Trump and Her Pith Helmet Out of Africa?*, The Root, Last Accessed November 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://theglowup.theroot.com/send-help-can-somebody-get-melania-trump-and-her-pith-1829564091>

kinky but neatly arranged hair, the red garment covering her hips (which echo the red of her parted lips) and hand ready to serve are highlighted.



**Figure 10**, Gino Boccasile, *Amaro Felsina Ramazzotti Pubblicity*, 1936. Print, 69 cm x 98 cm. Page. Collezione Nando Salce, Treviso

Boccasile not only naturalizes the black woman in her subordination to the white one, but also suggests her indistinguishability from other black people. The colours of the bottle are the same as the skin colour and garment of the black woman therefore hinting at the

objectification of the latter's body whose sole purpose is serving her white female counterpart. Both subjects are smiling; however, the white woman is significantly larger, stands higher, her head facing up and eyes staring at something above her head, whilst the black woman is placed significantly lower, face looking directly at the viewer ready to follow orders. The black female subject is objectified in comparison to the white one; her figure stands stiff as if she were a statue or a piece of décor (a fact emphasized by the unnatural nature of her complexion) while her white counterpart is represented with curves exuding sensuality and self-assurance.

Scholar Caterina Lombardi contends that commodifying black people during Fascism was a normal aspect of the maintenance of white supremacy, particularly in the colonies.<sup>262</sup> Whites, specifically women, were portrayed in an "appropriate" manner: that is, "proper", "polite" and "civilized", versus their immodest, uninhibited, "exotic", "promiscuous" black peers.<sup>263</sup> Literature Professor Karen Pinkus suggests that, during Fascism, blackness served as a selling point to reinforce the idea of "Italianness" being equal to whiteness.<sup>264</sup> Scholar Jane Fair Bestor, in her essay *Titian's portrait of Laura Eustochia: the decorum of female beauty and the motif of the black page* (2003), posits on the purposeful contrast Titian illustrates in his portrait of Italian noblewoman Laura Eustochi between her pale skin tone and that of her young black page.<sup>265</sup> Bestor, moreover, contends that the black figure in Titian's painting almost disappears in the background, thus conferring over the white woman an even grandeur aura.<sup>266</sup> Even though this portrait dates back to 1529, it is nevertheless remarkable the similarities with Boccasile's publicity poster inasmuch the black woman in the background is illustrated as a piece of décor, thus conferring an even more reverent feeling for the white female.

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<sup>262</sup> Cristina Lombardi Diop and Gaia Giuliani, *Bianco e Nero*. Pp. 21 - 33

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> Karen Pinkus, « Shades of Black in Advertising and Popular Culture », pp. 144 – 146

<sup>265</sup> Bestor, Jane Fair. "Titian's Portrait of Laura Eustochia: The Decorum of Female Beauty and the Motif of the Black Page." *Renaissance Studies* 17, no. 4 (2003): p. 653

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

Black people were often compared to consumer goods: coffee, motorbikes, bananas and, in the case of Ramazzotti, a liquor.<sup>267</sup> Blacks were routinely objectified and dehumanized in product advertising, thus excluding them from the “privilege” of being Italian, and emphasizing the “exotic” aura around colonised people as well as portraying them as inherently servile. Pinkus further underlines the crucial aspect of Boccasile’s print: Italy’s victory in Ethiopia represented by the conquest of the capital Addis Ababa in 1936 by Fascist troops.<sup>268</sup> The Ramazzotti poster was published in that same year thus suggesting a glorification of the Italian colonial mission and Italy’s overseas power. This image was not sponsored by the regime, but by a private company aiming to sell its product. It is important to underline that this poster is not deliberately propagandistic, but commercial. However, its underlying message subtly but effectively conveys an entrenched racist mentality which correlated Italian expansionist aims and exploited it for economic profit.

In September 1938, the Fascist regime instituted the Racial Laws along with the “Race Manifesto” (Manifesto della Razza) in which Fascist politicians, “intellectuals”, “scientists” and, even artist Gino Boccasile, endorsed a strongly discriminatory agenda to the detriment of non-whites, Jews, the disabled, homosexuals, nomadic populations and non-Catholics.<sup>269</sup> Even though the harsh laws were especially aimed at Jews excluding them from society and marginalizing them, they represented an outright aggression towards anyone not fitting the “ideal Italian standard” of a white Catholic.<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, in 1938, the magazine *The Defence of the Race* (La Difesa della Razza) was founded; director and Fascist adherent Telesio Interlandi dedicated this fortnightly review to “proving” Italians were exclusively white and consequently superior to other races.<sup>271</sup> The first issue was published on August 5<sup>th</sup> 1938

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<sup>267</sup> Karen Pinkus, « Shades of Black in Advertising and Popular Culture », pp. 144 – 146

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Federico Chabod, *A History of Italian Fascism*, pp. 81 - 84

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Aron Gillette, Racial Theories in Fascist Italy, Accessed September 5th, 2018.  
<http://lib.myilibrary.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/Open.aspx?id=40169> pp. 104 - 106

(Figure 11) and listed ten reasons for which Italians were a “pure white race” entitled “Italian Racism” (Razzismo Italiano).<sup>272</sup> *The Defence of the Race* claimed to be a scientific review even though it was a clearly propagandistic tool of the Fascist Regime. This publication ceased to exist in 1943 once anti-Fascist movements emerged and disenchanted Italians had witnessed the crude reality of Italy’s involvement in the Second World War.<sup>273</sup> Gillette elaborates on how pervasive the promulgation was of racist and anti-Semitic ideologies diffused through the so-called Racial Office whose mission was to instil racist teachings in schools: from elementary to university.<sup>274</sup> From a very young age, Italians during the Fascist era were exposed to xenophobic indoctrination, which came through cartoons, schoolbooks, university courses, conferences and mainstream literature.<sup>275</sup> Labanca correctly argues that Italy, even now, has yet to confront this grim past, thus passively “dragging” these beliefs and not actively debunking them.<sup>276</sup> Following the “Pact of Steel” signed on May 22<sup>nd</sup> 1939 between Germany and Italy stating close collaboration between the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships, Italy was pulled unprepared into the Second World War.<sup>277</sup> On September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, Germany invaded Poland, triggering an international conflict involving the Soviet Union, United States, Canada, France and the UK amongst numerous other countries. Mussolini, initially furious with Hitler’s belligerent strategy, decided to join the war in June 1940 although the Italian military force was inadequate to face such an intense conflict.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> On this specific issue, the Jewish Museum in Bologna inaugurated an exhibition in 2015 on how the Fascist regime indoctrinated students, from a young age, to racist dogmas. It went from oral teachings to written exercises to illustrated books. The aim of the show is to prove how pervasive this ideology was and to some extent still is.

[http://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2015/01/25/news/cos\\_i\\_fascisti\\_insegnarono\\_il\\_razzismo\\_a\\_scuola-105744475/](http://www.repubblica.it/scuola/2015/01/25/news/cos_i_fascisti_insegnarono_il_razzismo_a_scuola-105744475/)  
Last Accessed September 21st 2018

<sup>276</sup> Labanca, *Oltremare*, pp. 428 – 433

<sup>277</sup> Marco Patricelli, *L'Italia Sotto le Bombe. Guerra Aerea e Vita Civile 1940 – 1945*, (Bari, Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2009) pp. 19 - 40

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.



# LA DIFESA DELLA

ANNO I - NUMERO 1  
5 AGOSTO 1938 - XVI

ESCE IL 5 E IL 20 DI OGNI MESE  
UN NUMERO SEPARATO LIRE 1  
ABBONAMENTO ANNUO LIRE 20

Direttore: TELESIO INTERLANDI

Comitato di redazione: prof. dott. GUIDO LANDRA  
prof. dott. JUDIO CIPRIANI - dott. LEONE FRANZI  
MARCELLO RICCI - dott. LINO BUSINCO

# RAZZA

SCIENZA DOCUMENTAZIONE POLEMICA

## RAZZISMO ITALIANO

Un gruppo di studiosi fascisti docenti nelle Università italiane sotto l'egida del Ministero della Cultura Popolare ha fissato nei seguenti termini quella che è la posizione del Fascismo nei confronti dei problemi della razza:

**1** LE RAZZE UMANE ESISTONO. — La esistenza delle razze umane non è già una estrazione del nostro spirito, ma corrisponde a una realtà fenomenica, materiale, percepibile con i nostri sensi. Questa realtà è rappresentata da masse, quasi sempre imponenti, di milioni di uomini, simili per caratteri fisici e psicologici che furono ereditati e che continuano ad ereditarsi. Dire che esistono le razze umane non vuol dire a priori che esistono razze umane superiori o inferiori, ma soltanto che esistono razze umane differenti.

**2** ESISTONO GRANDI RAZZE E PICCOLE RAZZE. — Non bisogna soltanto ammettere che esistono i gruppi sistematici maggiori, che comunemente sono chiamati razze e che sono individualizzati solo da alcuni caratteri, ma bisogna anche ammettere che esistono gruppi sistematici minori (come per es. i nordici, i mediterranei, i danici, ecc.) individualizzati da un maggior numero di caratteri comuni. Questi gruppi costituiscono dal punto di vista biologico le vere razze, la esistenza delle quali è una verità evidente.

**3** IL CONCETTO DI RAZZA E' CONCETTO PURAMENTE BIOLOGICO. Esso è quindi basato su altre considerazioni che non i concetti di popolo e di nazione, fondati essenzialmente su considerazioni etiche, linguistiche, religiose. Però alla base delle differenze di popolo e di nazione stanno delle differenze di razza. Se gli Italiani sono differenti dai Francesi, dai Tedeschi, dai Turchi, dai Greci, ecc., non è solo perchè essi hanno una lingua diversa e una storia diversa, ma perchè la costituzione razziale di questi popoli è diversa. Sono state proporzioni diverse di razze differenti che da tempo molto antico costituiscono i diversi popoli, sia che una razza abbia il dominio assoluto sulle altre, sia che tutte risultino fuse armonicamente, sia, infine, che persistano ancora inasimilate una alle altre le diverse razze.

**4** LA POPOLAZIONE DELL'ITALIA ATTUALE E' DI ORIGINE ARIANA E LA SUA CIVILTÀ E' ARIANA. — Questa popolazione e civiltà ariana obita da diversi millenni la nostra penisola; ben poco è rimato della civiltà delle genti preariane. L'origine degli Italiani attuali parte essenzialmente da elementi di quelle stesse razze che costituiscono e costituiscono il tessuto permanentemente vivo dell'Europa.

**5** E' UNA LEGGENDA L'APPORTO DI MASSE INGENTI DI UOMINI IN TEMPI STORICI. — Dopo l'invasione dei Longobardi non ci sono stati in Italia altri notevoli movimenti di popoli capaci di influenzare la fisionomia razziale della nazione. Da ciò deriva che, mentre per altre nazioni europee la composizione razziale è variata notevolmente in tempi anche moderni per l'Italia, nella sua grande linea, la composizione razziale di oggi è la stessa di quella che era mille anni fa; i quarantasei milioni d'Italiani di oggi risentono quindi nell'assoluta maggioranza e famiglia che chiamano l'Italia da un millennio.

ESISTE ORMAI UNA PURA "RAZZA ITALIANA". — Questo enunciato non è basato sulla confusione del concetto biologico di razza con il concetto storico-linguistico di popolo e di nazione, ma sulla purissima portatore di sangue che unisce gli Italiani di oggi alle generazioni che da millenni popolano l'Italia. Questa antica purezza di sangue è il più grande titolo di nobiltà della Nazione Italiana.

E' TEMPO CHE GLI ITALIANI SI PROCLAMINO FRANCAMENTE RAZZISTI. — Tutta l'opera che finora ha fatto il Regime in Italia è in fondo del razzismo. Frequentissimo è stato sempre nei discorsi del Capo il richiamo ai concetti di razza.

La questione del razzismo in Italia deve essere trattata da un punto di vista puramente biologico, senza intenzioni filosofiche o religiose.

La concezione del razzismo in Italia deve essere essenzialmente italiana e l'indirizzo ariano-nordico. Questo non vuole dire però introdurre in Italia la teoria del razzismo tedesco come sono o affermare che gli Italiani e gli Scandinavi sono la stessa cosa. Ma vuole soltanto additare agli Italiani un modello fisico e soprattutto psicologico di razza umana che per i suoi caratteri puramente europei si stacca completamente da tutte le razze extra-europee, questo vuol dire elevare l'Italiano ad un ideale di superiore coscienza di se stesso e di maggiore responsabilità.

E' NECESSARIO FARE UNA NETTA DISTINZIONE TRA I MEDITERRANEI D'EUROPA (OCCIDENTALI) DA UNA PARTE GLI ORIENTALI E GLI AFRICANI DALL'ALTRA. — Sono perciò da considerarsi pericolose le teorie che sostengono l'origine africana di alcuni popoli europei e comprendono in una comune razza mediterranea anche le popolazioni semitiche e camitiche stabilendo relazioni e simpatie ideologiche assolutamente inammissibili.

GLI EBREI NON APPARTENGONO ALLA RAZZA ITALIANA. — Dai semiti che nel corso dei secoli sono approdati sul sacro suolo della nostra Patria nulla in generale è rimasto. Anche l'occupazione craba della Sicilia nulla ha lasciato all'infuori del ricordo di qualche nome e del resto il processo di assimilazione fu sempre rapidissimo in Italia.

Gli ebrei rappresentano l'unica popolazione che non si è mai assimilata in Italia perchè essa è costituita da elementi razziali non europei, diversi, in modo assoluto dagli elementi che hanno dato origine agli Italiani.

I CARATTERI FISICI E PSICOLOGICI PURAMENTE EUROPEI DEGLI ITALIANI NON DEVONO ESSERE ALTERATI IN NESSUN MODO. — L'unione è ammissibile solo nell'ambito delle razze europee, nel quale caso non si deve parlare di vero e proprio ibridismo, dato che queste razze appartengono ad un corpo comune e differiscono solo per alcuni caratteri, mentre sono uguali per moltissimi altri. Il carattere puramente europeo degli Italiani viene alterato dall'incrocio con qualsiasi razza extra-europea e portatrice di una civiltà diversa dalla millenaria civiltà degli ariani.

Figure 11, *La Difesa della Razza*. August 5<sup>th</sup> 1938. First page expounding ten explanations in regards to race from the Fascist point of view.

The gravity of the consequences brought upon by his catastrophic decision forged the Fascist dictator's downfall. Amidst Italy's many defeats following its alliance with Nazi Germany, Operation Barbarossa stands out: German-Italian aggression against the Soviet Union in 1941, which resulted in significant losses on both sides as well as the German - Italian

defeat in the ultimate battle of Stalingrad in 1943.<sup>279</sup> Mussolini also unsuccessfully attacked Greece and Albania, and was losing ground in Italian African colonies.<sup>280</sup>

These numerous failures contributed to his defeat in July 1943, followed by his subsequent retreat in a small northern town named Salò where he formed the Italian Social Republic, a puppet government supported by the then dying Nazi regime.<sup>281</sup> Following the Fascist dictator's destitution, General and former Minister of Colonies Pietro Badoglio took the lead and worked towards the end of the conflict, which had brought Italy to its knees.<sup>282</sup> In addition to a difficult situation, the Allied forces, United States, UK, France and Canada amongst others, had invaded as well as heavily bombed Italy, forcing it to surrender and abandon its alliance with Germany.<sup>283</sup> Faced with a grim scenario and having no choice, Prime Minister Badoglio, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1943, signed the Cassibile Armistice in Sicily.<sup>284</sup> It stipulated Italy's surrender to Allied forces, withdrawal from its collaboration with Germany, commitment to combat against Nazi-Fascism, and a ceasefire of Allied forces on Italian territory.<sup>285</sup> Unsurprisingly, as soon as news of the armistice was rendered public, Nazi German troops retaliated in Italy by massacring Italian civilians as in the slaughter of Sant' Anna di Stazzema and Marzabotto in 1944.<sup>286</sup> The Second World War ceased in April 1945 once Germany surrendered and Mussolini was captured, shot, his corpse hung in the centre of Milan and vandalised for several days.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani Brava Gente?*, (Vicenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 2005), preface

<sup>281</sup> Marco Patricelli, *L'Italia Sotto le Bombe*. pp. 19 - 40

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Federico Chabod, *A History of Italian Fascism*, pp. 94 - 101



The second poster (Figure 12) is a political propaganda billboard by Boccasile dating 1944 made in the context of Allied forces' invasion in Italy.<sup>288</sup> The artist, a devoted Fascist, saw the armistice as a grave treason and, in his art, expressed his feelings of contempt towards the enemy and his support for Fascism.<sup>289</sup> The image illustrates a visibly aroused and sexually predatory black soldier dressed in a military uniform representing the allied troops. The black man is attempting to rape a frightened white woman who helplessly struggles to protect herself from his aggressive embrace, demonstrated in his claw-like hand that disappears into her light-coloured flesh. The soldier is stripping her virginal white dress from her shoulders, strongly suggesting a prelude to sexual violence in a harrowing scene. On the poster, the imperative verb states, "Difendila!" (Defend her!) with subheadings declaring, "Potrebbe essere tua madre, tua moglie, tua sorella, tua figlia" (She could be your mother, your wife, your sister, your daughter).

The depiction is an explicit reference to the common racist trope of black men supposedly being hyper-sexualised rapists who attacked "passive", "delicate" and "vulnerable" white women, thus expressing the need for white Italian men to protect them from the (black) enemy.<sup>290</sup> This stereotype emerged during the European slave trade in Africa as a way to justify the sexual exploitation of black men as breeders and to dislodge them from the role of fathers of their black enslaved children who were the property of white slave owners.<sup>291</sup> This stereotype also worked to create the fiction of white female peril within a world where, instead it was black enslaved females who were routinely the target of sexual violence for profit.<sup>292</sup> It also provided

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<sup>288</sup> Marco Patricelli, *L'Italia Sotto le Bombe*. pp. 290 – 291 This specific poster was used by extreme right wing xenophobic organisation "Forza Nuova" to protest against new immigrants, young black Africans, assuming they all rape white Italian women. Last Accessed September 21<sup>st</sup> 2018

[https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/09/02/news/il\\_manifesto\\_anti-immigrati\\_come\\_ai\\_tempi\\_del\\_fascismo\\_intervenga\\_la\\_magistratura\\_-174415695/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/09/02/news/il_manifesto_anti-immigrati_come_ai_tempi_del_fascismo_intervenga_la_magistratura_-174415695/)

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Cristina Lombardi Diop and Gaia Giuliani, *Bianco e Nero*. Pp. 57 – 59

<sup>291</sup> Thomas A. Foster, "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2011), pp. 445-64.

<sup>292</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, *Slavery, Geography, and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Marine Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (London: Routledge/Taylor Francis, 2016), pp. 17, 51, 84, 116, 146, 239, 250, 252, 272, 291, 341.

a rationale for white men and women to exact “vigilante justice” in the form of lynching against black males by accusing them of sexual impropriety against white females.



**Figure 12,** Gino Boccasile, *Difendila!*, 1944. Print, Private Collection.

The man is probably a soldier belonging to Allied forces even though his exact nationality is unclear.<sup>293</sup> Of course his specific nationality was never the point, his race was the focus. Boccasile created this poster following the 8<sup>th</sup> of September armistice as well as Allied forces invasion to defeat Nazi-fascist troops. It constitutes his attempt to galvanize Italians to resist the foreign invaders.<sup>294</sup> However, the invasion is racialized and the foreignness was expressed through the blackness of the soldier's body. Also, worth noticing is the red background, which adds an aggressive tone – through symbolic connections to blood and fire - to the already violent scene while also alluding to the on-going war in Italy and Europe.

Historian Marco Patricelli in his detailed volume on Allied powers occupying Italy during World War II, suggests that this poster is a direct reference to well-documented mass rapes occurring in central Italy, which were perpetrated by Allied troops during the occupation.<sup>295</sup> French troops, notably the so-called “gourmiers”, sexually assaulted an estimated sixty thousand Italian women, but also men, in that region in 1944; therefore, the poster communicated a warning to locals of potential dangers.<sup>296</sup> Significant evidence proves that mass rapes and murders committed by Allies against Italian civilians during the Second World War did take place. However, this specific poster exploits racial images to conjure the idea of the violent invaders as black men who actually comprised a mere fraction of the Allied troops from any nation and who were, due to systemic racism, often not assigned to combat roles.<sup>297</sup> Boccasile depicts a rapist as a black Allied soldier because the white supremacist

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<sup>293</sup> Marco Patricelli, *L'Italia Sotto le Bombe*. pp. 290 - 291

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Andrea Cionci, *La verità nascosta delle “marocchine”, saccheggi e stupri delle truppe francesi in mezza Italia*, La Stampa, Last Accessed September 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, <https://www.lastampa.it/2017/03/16/cultura/la-verita-nascosta-delle-marocchine-saccheggi-e-stupri-delle-truppe-coloniali-francesi-in-ciociaria-stDjcmY65lqhNIHtQjfyLL/pagina.html>

<sup>297</sup> Author and activist Calvin Ruck, in his book *Black Battalion*, describes the almost unknown and little researched story of black Canadian soldiers fighting and dying on European soil. Ruck argues that despite these men giving their lives for their country in the name of freedom, they were often the targets of racial injustice. Calvin Ruck, *Black Battalion*, (Halifax, Nimbus Publishing, 1987) Also film director Spike Lee, in his movie *Miracle of Sant Anna* dating 2008, despite being a fictitious story, accurately describes the hardships black

ideology already anchored in Italy functioned through the lie of white peril at the hands of black “savagery” and white valour in defence of white (female) honour. Historical accounts mainly describe that horrid mass rapes happened at the hands of North African French troops led by General Alphonse Juin. However, numerous sources prove sexual violence was, indeed, disgracefully perpetrated by all troops including Germans, Italians, British, Canadians and Americans.<sup>298</sup>

Psychiatrist and political activist Frantz Fanon, in his incendiary book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) elucidates the psychological aspects of being part of a racially oppressed group, black in this case, in a white European society.<sup>299</sup> In one particular chapter, Fanon explores the complex sexual relationship between a white woman and a black man.<sup>300</sup> He argues black males, because of pervasive racism, often desire white women that might “elevate them” to a “white status”.<sup>301</sup> There is no greater “honour” than touching a white unclothed female body and thereby gaining access to white “privileged” flesh.<sup>302</sup> Fanon of course writes from a knowledge that this desire for whiteness was not at all natural, but imposed upon black people who, within the context of slavery, suffered constant psychological and physical violence designed to convince them of their inherent racial inferiority and inhumanity. Given this context, it follows that Boccasile chose a white woman as the object of desire for the aroused black soldier.

White women have historically been off limits for black men, in particular within the context of European colonization and slavery.<sup>303</sup> This is due to a white female’s perceived

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American soldiers fighting in Europe, endured because of racism. Lee’s movie narrates the vicissitudes of soldiers combating in a segregated infantry division in Italy and nevertheless attempting to save an Italian boy’s life. Spike Lee, *Miracle of Sant Anna*, (2008, Toronto, Walt Disney Studio Motion Pictures) DVD

<sup>298</sup> Ibid. Concerning mass rapes perpetuated by Allied Forces during the Second World War, the renowned movie *La Ciociara* starring Sophia Loren has dealt with this painful subject.

<sup>299</sup> Franz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, (New York, Grove Press, 2008), p. 45

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid. pp. 61 – 63; Thomas A. Foster, “The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 20, no. 3 (September 2011), pp. 445-64.

purity and high status, and hence her distance from the “wretched”, “degraded” and “aggressive” black man. As mentioned in her essay on representations of white females in Europe during the eighteenth century, Angela Rosenthal, contends the “ivory womanly body” acquired a symbolic notion of virtuousness and purity.<sup>304</sup> Rosenthal suggests this was developed throughout the African Slave Trade in Europe to distinguish the moral “high grounds” of Europeans, particularly of women, whose fair complexion indicated chasteness unlike her enslaved black counterpart, unable to resist “degrading” earthly pleasures.<sup>305</sup> The artist’s choice of this specific interracial sexual assault is far from casual; in the minds of contemporaneous white Italians for whom blackness was equivalent to foreignness and menace, it served to exacerbate the violence represented by rape.

Black feminist scholar bell hooks in discussing anti-black stereotypes, suggests that due to degrading iconography produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and North America, black males were and still are largely perceived as unruly beasts, inherently violent, and sexual predators.<sup>306</sup> This chiefly is the result of prejudices instilled throughout Transatlantic Slavery when black enslaved males were “kept in place” by portraying them as demonic aggressive creatures, thereby justifying the brutality to which they were subjected.<sup>307</sup> During slavery, and even in its aftermath, a black man could in no way approach a white woman because of the entrenched belief of his predatory nature, consequently the need to protect white females.<sup>308</sup> Rape of a light-skinned woman by a black male, in hook’s vision, in a Western context, represents the ultimate crime, the apex of perversion.<sup>309</sup> Whereas De Seta’s postcard illustrating a bare-breasted black woman as a package to be shipped for white sexual pleasure

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<sup>304</sup> Angela Rosenthal, “Visceral Culture: Blushing and the Legibility of Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century British Portraiture,” p. 564

<sup>305</sup> Ibid. p. 569

<sup>306</sup> bell hooks, *We Real Cool*. (New York: Routledge, 2004) <https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9780203642207>, p. 44

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid. pp. 58 - 59

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

is represented humorously, Boccasile's poster was meant to evoke menace and fear in white Italian viewers. Indeed, Boccasile's billboard of a white woman about to be violated for black enjoyment is taken as a travesty requiring white Italian male intervention.

While comparing this poster to nineteenth-century pro-colonial prints previously analysed, it is evident that portraying of "the other" has radically changed. Whilst the images from *Illustrazione Italiana* show black people with regular facial features, the Fascist billboards as well as Enrico De Seta's post cards, depict the black man with grotesque almost animal like features. By now, non-whites and non-Christians, especially Jews, were depicted through deprecating caricatures. Although Fascism brought white supremacy and exclusionary policies to its peak, this bigoted mentality was already deeply embedded in Italy and is still ongoing. Scholar Angelo Del Boca has extensively published regarding Italy's crimes against humanity. He correctly argues that Italy has never paid for the damage it caused and has yet to confront its past.<sup>310</sup> Labanca and Del Boca denounce Italy's silence and absence of a "decolonisation" period, which means taking a hard look at horrendous ideologies still present, debunking them as well as adequately confronting catastrophes created in colonised countries.<sup>311</sup> Once World War II had ended, a democratic Republic was established in 1946. However, problems previously created and ongoing were simply "swept under the carpet", their effects still being tangible today.<sup>312</sup>

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate, through selected works of art, how Italy's hostility towards black Africans has developed in the past century and a half and has become deeply embedded in mainstream culture. Unfortunately, art history is often dismissed, but I argue artworks are crucial in understanding our past, present and potential future. This

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<sup>310</sup> Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani Brava Gente?*, pp. 303 – 316

<sup>311</sup> Ibid

<sup>312</sup> Ibid



first chapter has provided an overview of how art has played a central role in the creation of the myth of the white Italian citizen and the foreign “other” as black, dark or otherwise non-white.

## TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

To conclude, I wish to illustrate a particular incident involving black Italian soccer player Mario Balotelli that sums up the persistence of denigrating racist stereotypes and “othering” in twenty-first century Italy. Foremost, I believe it is significant to highlight that even though the Fascist party was abolished with the end of the war in 1945, its more diluted version was kept under the name of “Movimento Sociale Italiano” (Italian Social Movement), which promulgated an exasperated nationalism and xenophobic right wing ideologies.<sup>313</sup> This political party was renamed in 1995 “Alleanza Nazionale” (National Alliance),<sup>314</sup> however, it came to an end in 2009 and was later reformatted under the name “Fratelli D’Italia” (Brothers of Italy), which still exists today and is considered an extreme right-wing populist party with an “Italians first” type of philosophy.<sup>315</sup> Mussolini’s granddaughter, Alessandra Mussolini, is an Italian politician currently working in the European parliament and a fervent right wing conservative.<sup>316</sup> She has repeatedly defended her grandfather’s actions and, on more than one occasion, expressed pride in being a Fascist.<sup>317</sup> Even though there have been weak protests against her comments, she currently is an Italian political figure as well as public persona.

The final image I discuss in this chapter dates to 2012 and is a cartoon depicting Mario Balotelli, perhaps one of the most notable Italian football players. Balotelli was born in Palermo to Ghanaian parents, but was adopted by an Italian family and has lived the majority of his life

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<sup>313</sup> Enciclopedia Treccani. “Movimento Sociale Italiano”. Last Accessed September 10<sup>th</sup> 2018.

<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/movimento-sociale-italiano/>

<sup>314</sup> Enciclopedia Treccani. “Alleanza Nazionale”. Last Accessed September 10<sup>th</sup> 2018.

<http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alleanza-nazionale/>

<sup>315</sup> Fratelli d’Italia. “Fratelli d’Italia Home Page”. Last Accessed September 10<sup>th</sup> 2018. <http://www.fratelli-italia.it/>

<sup>316</sup> Guido Quaranta, Che Paura, c’è in Studio Alessandra Mussolini, L’Espresso, Last Accessed September 21<sup>st</sup> 2018, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2018/09/17/news/che-paura-c-e-in-studio-alessandra-mussolini-1.326998>

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

in Italy.<sup>318</sup> In 2012 Balotelli played in the European championship semi-finals with the Italian national team and in one particular occasion Italy won against England.<sup>319</sup> For this event, popular Italian sport newspaper *La Gazzetta dello Sport* depicted him as a gorilla climbing Big Ben, fending off with his hands soccer balls thrown at him, which in Italian football is not allowed (Figure 13).<sup>320</sup> Italian Cartoonist Valerio Marini produced the satirical drawing.<sup>321</sup> The reference is clearly to the fictional character of King Kong mounting the Empire State Building while he fights off airplanes attacking him.<sup>322</sup> Pornography scholar Gail Dines, in her work on Black masculinity, argues King Kong is commonly associated with the “Black menace”, thus indicating black men as potential threats, subversive to white dominated spaces,<sup>323</sup> in this case Italian soccer. Dines suggests King Kong is the epitome of the “Black savage” requesting white male intervention to restore the “natural” order.<sup>324</sup> The image of Blacks as savages, beasts and idle slaves is, the academic contends, ubiquitous within mass media because of its appeal to a wide audience.<sup>325</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Matt Lawton, *Balotelli Fury at King Kong Cartoon Slur in Italian Newspaper*, Daily Mail Online, Last Accessed June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/euro2012/article-2165160/Euro-2012-Mario-Balotelli-race-storm-newspaper-cartoon.html>

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> La Repubblica, *Balotelli come King Kong*

<sup>322</sup> In 2008 Vogue stirred up considerable controversy with its cover depicting black basketball player James LeBron and Brazilian model Gisele Bündchen. LeBron stands grinning in a sort of menacing pose with his right hand dribbling the basketball and his left hand embracing Bündchen’s waist. He seems aggressive; however, she seems perfectly at ease. This photo reminded numerous viewers of when King Kong kidnapped Ann Darrow and was holding her in his giant hands. Reactions from the public were mixed, some complained about excessive racial sensitivity, but others decried the aggressive black man and fragile white woman tropes. Whatever the opinion was, when comparing the image of King Kong and Ann Darrow and LeBron and Bündchen, the similarities are undeniable. The Associated Press, *Vogue Cover with LeBron Stirs up Controversy*, Today, Last Accessed December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <https://www.today.com/news/vogue-cover-lebron-stirs-controversy-wbna23797883>

<sup>323</sup> Gail Dines, “King Kong and the White Woman: Hustler Magazine and the Demonization of Black Masculinity.” *Violence against Women* 4, no. 3 (1998): p. 294, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801298004003003>.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid. p. 296





**Figure 13,** Valerio Marini, *La Vignetta*, 2012, Cartoon.

Predictably, the reactions polemicized the racist trope, also because Balotelli had already been the subject of racial abuse such as bananas being thrown at him or hooligans making ape sounds during games.<sup>326</sup> The newspaper issued a lukewarm statement claiming it had certainly not been Marini's best piece, but that people insinuating the cartoon was racist were "going too far".<sup>327</sup> Furthermore, *La Gazzetta* condemned any form of xenophobic attack. People defending the illustration claimed there were no racial references but that the satire was

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<sup>326</sup> *La Repubblica*, *Balotelli come King Kong*

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid.*

directed against Balotelli's often-heated temperament.<sup>328</sup> It is true that the Italian soccer player on numerous occasions displayed confrontational behaviours resulting in expulsions and fines. But the comparison with the world's most famous fictional gorilla was clearly connected to a long stream of racist literature, art and visual media comparing people of African descent to primates.<sup>329</sup> Balotelli is far from being the only athlete displaying aggressive behaviours; however, this specific association was attributed exclusively to him.<sup>330</sup>

In considering anti-Obama racist imagery, Professor Philip S.S. Howard suggests that illustrating blacks as primates is a common racist trope.<sup>331</sup> This degrading comparison is the result of nineteenth-century racial hierarchy seeking to assert a classification by race to show white superiority and black inferiority.<sup>332</sup> Illustrating people of African descent as animals, especially primates, has been and to some extent is still utilized to justify their oppressed status, first as enslaved people and then as second class citizens.<sup>333</sup> Moreover, downplaying the racist intent as "it was just a joke" or "it is not racist" adheres, in Howard's view, to a post-racialist era where race is no longer considered relevant and is dismissed as obsolete.<sup>334</sup> The newspaper's claim that the cartoon does not represent racial degradation lacks credibility and takes its place in a long stream of anti-black racist literature and visual culture. Marini's illustration is a sad continuation of "othering" blacks, but even worse, representing them as inhuman.

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Charmaine A. Nelson, "Male or Man?: The Politics of Emancipation in the Neoclassical Imaginary," *Companion to American Art*, eds. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill and Jason D. LaFountain (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>330</sup> Numerous white Italian soccer players such as Christian Vieri and Marco Materazzi have displayed problematic behaviours such as drug use, dissipated lifestyles, threats and aggressions towards adversaries or referees. It is only Balotelli, however, that was depicted as an enormous gorilla fending off balls thrown at him. Carlo Garganese, *Top 10 Italian Bad Boys of all Times*, Goal, Last Accessed December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020, <https://www.goal.com/en/news/2377/top-10/2010/08/13/2044216/top-10-italian-badboys-of-all-time>

<sup>331</sup> Philip S. S. Howard, 2014, "Drawing Dissent: Postracialist Pedagogy, Racist Literacy, and Racial Plagiarism in Anti-Obama Political Cartoons." *Review of Education, Pedagogy & Cultural Studies* 36 (5): p. 392

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid. p. 395

This incident made headlines, not so much as proof of Italy's longstanding toxic problem with race, but more as an isolated incident – similar to the media treatment of Dora's exclusion from the singing contest, cited at the beginning of this chapter. What does this reveal about the Italian population? How are future generations going to be educated about their past? Recent events to the detriment of non-whites, such as neo Fascist Luca Traini shooting black people in the streets of Macerata in 2018,<sup>335</sup> or former Minister and the first black woman to hold this role in Italian politics, Cécile Kyenge, who had bananas thrown at her in 2013 as well as continuous racist insults, indicate the current climate in Italy.<sup>336</sup> These incidents are simply the most harrowing manifestation of a deeper problem that has not been adequately confronted apart from few outspoken writers, politicians and intellectuals. My hope is that more art historians will join this conversation and further investigate the role that art, visual culture and the media plays in these issues that I have brought forward, but also that Italian institutions (press, government, schools, universities etc..) and the Italian population will properly address these problems.

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<sup>335</sup> Lorenzo Tondo, *Attacks on immigrants highlight rise of fascist groups in Italy*, The Guardian, Last Accessed September 21st 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/06/attacks-on-immigrants-highlight-rise-of-fascist-groups-in-italy>

<sup>336</sup> Tom Kington, *Italy's first black minister: I had bananas thrown at me but I'm here to stay*, The Guardian, Last Accessed September 21st 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/08/cecile-kyenge-quest-for-tolerance>

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **MIGRANTS, POLICIES AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION IN ITALY**

**1989 – 2020**

## INTRODUCTION

On August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018, a ship carrying 190 migrants from African and Middle Eastern countries was rescued near Malta's coast by the Italian Coast Guard vessel *Ubaldo Diciotti*.<sup>337</sup> The ship, in distress, was taking on water and the people on board were in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Thirteen of the 190 migrants were promptly transported to the nearby Italian island of Lampedusa for medical treatment while 177 remained on the ship.<sup>338</sup> Italy expected Malta to accommodate the migrants because of its proximity, however, the latter declined, not having agreed to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue.<sup>339</sup> Former Italian Minister for Infrastructure and Transportation, Danilo Toninelli, therefore allowed the ship to dock at the neighbouring port of Catania, in Sicily.<sup>340</sup> On August 20<sup>th</sup>, as the captain approached the pier, he was denied access to dock.<sup>341</sup> The orders issued directly from Matteo Salvini, then Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and current La Lega secretary, a right wing, anti-immigrant, political party in Government.<sup>342</sup> He hoped to force other European countries to accept the migrants, claiming on Twitter that "Italy had done enough" and it was his duty to protect Italy's borders and population from migrants arriving to Italian frontiers.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Arianna Ciccone and Roberta Aiello, *Caso Diciotti: da 7 giorni 177 Persone Bloccate sulla Nave della Guardia Costiera e Private della loro Libertà*, Valigia Blu. Last Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

<https://www.valigiablu.it/diciotti-ca\ania-malta-salvini-migranti/>

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Senato della Repubblica IX Legislatura, *Adesione alla Convenzione Internazionale sulla Ricerca ed il Salvataggio Marittimo, con Annesso, Adottata ad Amburgo il 27 Aprile 1979, e sua Esecuzione*, Disegno di Legge, Last Accessed September 30<sup>th</sup> 2019,

<https://www.camera.it/dati/leg10/lavori/stampati/pdf/19080001.pdf>

<sup>340</sup> Arianna Ciccone and Roberta Aiello, *Caso Diciotti*.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

The political party Lega used to be called Lega Nord. Despite the fact that their official website is still called Lega Nord, their main logo simply reads Lega or Lega Salvini Premier. Last Accessed October 5<sup>th</sup> 2019,

<https://www.leganord.org/>

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

The migrants' ordeal lasted until August 26<sup>th</sup> when the Vatican, Albania and Ireland declared that they would each host a portion of the migrants and offer assistance.<sup>344</sup> Reporters, doctors and politicians claimed that not only was it inhumane to hold these people hostage for ten days on a Navy ship in inadequate conditions, but also illegal.<sup>345</sup> On August 25<sup>th</sup>, Agrigento's District Attorney Office indicted Salvini for abduction of the 177 migrants, especially since no evidence had been offered to demonstrate that the migrants were a public threat or terrorists as he had asserted.<sup>346</sup> Salvini defended himself by claiming that he had acted in the public interest and requested that the charges be dismissed.<sup>347</sup> Despite protests in the government pointing out the gravity of the crime, the indictment was blocked by a vote of Parliament.<sup>348</sup> Salvini, did not face any consequences for his actions nor did he show any remorse, using the excuse that he was "protecting borders".<sup>349</sup> He stated he acted in the best interest for Italians and was elected for that reason.<sup>350</sup> A survey conducted by EMG Acqua Group revealed that 62% of Italians interviewed think the then Vice Prime Minister should not be punished for blocking 177 human beings in precarious conditions on a ship.<sup>351</sup> Only 31% of interviewees believe Salvini committed a crime and should be sentenced. It is no wonder his

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<sup>344</sup> *Il Riassunto di Cos'è Successo nel Caso Diciotti*, Lettera 43. Last Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

<https://www.lettera43.it/it/articoli/politica/2019/02/07/caso-diciotti-riassunto/228949/>

<sup>345</sup> Paolo Decrestina, *Caso Diciotti, Perché Salvini è Indagato e Perché il Governo Rischia Davvero di Spezzarsi?*, Il Corriere della Sera. Last Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

<https://www.corriere.it/politica/19-febbraio-18/caso-diciotti-perche-salvini-indagato-perche-governo-rischia-davvero-spezzarsi-f85a43e2-3368-11e9-8ba2-1cae66b0283a.shtml>

<sup>346</sup> *Il Riassunto di Cos'è Successo nel Caso Diciotti*, Lettera 43

<sup>347</sup> Decrestina, *Caso Diciotti*.

<sup>348</sup> Annalisa Camilli, *Tutto quello che c'è da Sapere sul Caso Diciotti*, Internazionale. Last Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019. <https://www.internazionale.it/bloc-notes/annalisa-camilli/2019/02/18/diciotti-matteo-salvini>

<sup>349</sup> As of today, 41 of the migrants restrained on that ship are asking for compensations for the ordeal they were subjected to. Alessandra Ziniti, *Nave Diciotti, 41 Migranti Chiedono il Risarcimento Danni a Conte e Salvini. Il Ministro: "Mi Faccio una Grassa Risata"*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019 [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/02/21/news/nave\\_diciotti\\_41\\_migranti\\_chiedono\\_il\\_risarcimento\\_danni\\_a\\_cont\\_e\\_salvini-219702343/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2019/02/21/news/nave_diciotti_41_migranti_chiedono_il_risarcimento_danni_a_cont_e_salvini-219702343/)

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

<sup>351</sup> Futura D'Aprile, *Ultimi Sondaggi: Cosa Pensano gli Italiani di M5S Dopo il Voto sul Caso Diciotti*, TPI NEWS. Last Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019. <https://www.tpi.it/2019/02/23/ultimi-sondaggi-politici-oggi-23-febbraio/>



party formed the main coalition partner in the then government in addition to obtaining 17,4% consensus in the last national elections on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2018.<sup>352</sup>

Mainstream news media outlets diligently reported this incident by concentrating on either the dramatic aspect, such as “migrants and/or refugees restrained on a Navy ship and unable to disembark” or on the security issue such as having “individuals devoid of proper documentation allowed on Italian territory”, instead of offering the public a clear, professional idea of refugees in Italy and potential, humane, solutions to this complex issue. The first image (Figure 14) is by photojournalist Fabrizio Villa and was shown by numerous digital news outlets: it was taken on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2018 at the harbour of the Sicilian town of Catania.



**Figure 14,** Fabrizio Villa, *Nave Ubaldo Diciotti*, 2018, Photograph

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<sup>352</sup> *Risultati Elezioni 4 Marzo 2018*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019, <https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2018/cameradeideputati>

It shows the docked white ship with written in beige capital letters “U. DICIOTTI” and a health care worker, presumably Italian, at the dock staring at the passengers. The latter appear to be black Africans awaiting to descend on Italian territory. No information is given about these individuals apart from the fact they are refugees escaping Africa and coming to search for a better life in Europe. The picture conveys a sense of collectiveness and uniformity, thus a throng of people stranded on a vessel attempting to unlawfully enter on an unknown territory. No background information is provided, just a group of foreigners, without proper Italian documentation, is shown waiting to disembark on Italian shores.

The second image (Figure 15) is a screenshot of the first part of a digital news article published by Italian right-wing newspaper *Il Giornale*, which reads “Migranti a Bordo della Diciotti? Toh, Dietro c’erano I Trafficanti” (Migrants on board the Diciotti? There you go! There were traffickers behind it). The title dismisses the gravity of stranding individuals in dire conditions on a vessel or the context that forced people to become refugees, in favour of proving it is the result of organised crime. It is well documented that human traffickers’ profit from an underground network of smuggling migrants into Europe;<sup>353</sup> however, this article’s title and content claim the problem relies solely on greedy human exploiters. *Il Giornale* is a right-leaning Italian newspaper and overwhelmingly frames immigration in an alarmistic way, but this headline is striking because of the colloquial exclamation “toh” meaning “there you go”, hence “who would have guessed” in a sarcastic tone. The message it conveys to readers, suggests that refugees in Italy are uniquely a ruse for unscrupulous individuals.

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<sup>353</sup> Ministero dell’Interno, *Traffico di Migranti, Operazione della Polizia di Stato a Palermo*, Last Accessed December 13th 2020, <https://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/traffico-migranti-operazione-polizia-stato-palermo>





Condividi:  
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Commenti:  
107

## Migranti a bordo della Diciotti? Toh, c'erano dietro i trafficanti

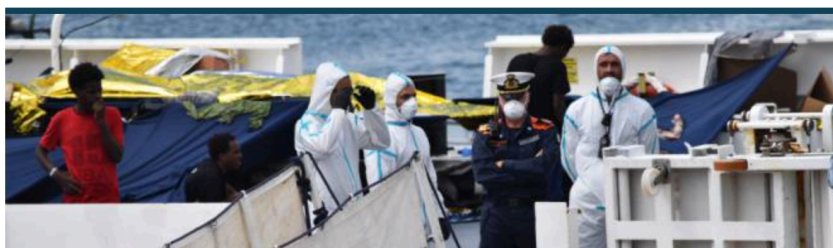
Scoperta banda di trafficanti di esseri umani: organizzavano gli sbarchi in Italia. Tra questi anche quello che fece poi scoppiare il caso Diciotti. Salvini: "Orgoglioso di andare a processo"

Andrea Indini - Mar, 08/09/2020 - 11:25

commenta

Mi piace 912

Il tempo, a volte, sa essere galantuomo. E così, come era poi venuto fuori che tre dei migranti soccorsi dalla capitana della Sea Watch 3, Carola Rackete, erano in realtà dei torturatori (e per questo infame reato sono stati condannati a vent'anni di carcere), adesso si scopre che la banda di trafficanti di esseri umani, fatta arrestare questa mattina all'alba dalla procura di Palermo, avrebbe organizzato anche la traversata dei 190 clandestini poi caricati sulla nave Diciotti della Guardia costiera il 16 agosto del 2018.



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Le fake news al tempo del...

Cristiano Puglisi



Le Cinque Stalle

Alessandro Bertinotti

**Figure 15**, Newspaper Il Giornale, *Migranti a Bordo della Diciotti? Toh, c'erano dietro i trafficanti*, 2018, Screenshot of Il Giornale

Migration scholar Nicholas P. De Genova, in his essay *Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life* (2002), contends there is a remarkable visibility of "illegal migration" and little focus on the genesis of the "illegal condition".<sup>354</sup> De Genova suggests scarce attention exists to how the law rendering these people "illegal" is structured, furthermore highlighted by mainstream media's obsession towards the "border spectacle".<sup>355</sup> People arriving to frontiers without legal documentation constitutes a statistic minority of people

<sup>354</sup> Nicholas P. De Genova, "Migrant 'Illegality' and Deportability in Everyday Life." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31, no. 1 (2002): <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.040402.085432>, p. 432.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid. p. 436

migrating to a country and residing in it without adequate papers.<sup>356</sup> However, the “theatre” of deportations, arrests, apprehensions and escapes appears to be the most visible.<sup>357</sup> The photograph by Fabrizio Villa and the frontpage of *Il Giornale* follow this pattern of “theatricality”, thus presenting to the public a “mass” of people, emphasizing their “illegality”, and underlining their complaisance with human trafficking.

In 2017 the Council of Europe published the *Media Coverage of the “Refugee Crisis”: Across-European Perspective*.<sup>358</sup> Scholars Myria Georgiou and Rafal Zaborowski wrote this short report on their findings in regards to media coverage of refugees arriving to Europe.<sup>359</sup> Georgiou and Zaborowski argue that an overtly emotional and/or securitarian manner is mostly used, thus inducing high levels of hostility against refugees.<sup>360</sup> The researchers contend that in Eastern European countries such as Hungary and in right-leaning Western countries such as France, depending on the news company, the type of language used in media outlets regarding refugees tends to be overwhelmingly in terms of security and protection, thereby increasing hostility against them.<sup>361</sup> Furthermore, refugees are always discussed in a collective manner, instead of an individual one.<sup>362</sup> The scholars observe that not only is the refugee’s point of view seldom considered, the reporting mainly refers to a “mass” of people, despite having different provenances, different languages and different reasons for arriving to Europe.<sup>363</sup>

#### SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

Misrepresentation of migrants, specifically those who come from “undesirable” countries such as Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe, is nowadays common in

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid. De Genova states that most people illegally residing in a country is due to “overstaying” beyond what their Visa allows them. Most migrants in a condition of illegality have, in fact, arrived with proper documentation, however have not left the country once it expired.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> Georgiou Myria, and Rafal Zaborowski, *Media Coverage of the “Refugee Crisis”: A Cross-European Perspective*, Council of Europe, 2017, p. 3

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid. pp. 6 - 8

<sup>361</sup> Ibid. pp. 11 - 12

<sup>362</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

Europe.<sup>364</sup> Researchers Martin Eiermann, Yascha Mounk and Limor Gultchin, in a report on populist trends in Europe dating from December 2017, state that right wing populist groups such as Lega are increasing in Europe.<sup>365</sup> They claim populist groups have doubled in Europe since the year 2000: from 33 to 63 in 2017. Moreover, they demonstrate that right wing populism is more pervasive than its left-wing counterpart.<sup>366</sup> A clear-cut division typifies right-wing views distinguishing between “us” – white Christian native born – and “the others”, generally non-white, non-Christian people who are perceived as foreign. Policies tending toward strict border control are adopted by most right-wing populist groups.<sup>367</sup> Salvini, in his treatment of people stranded on the Navy Coast Guard ship in distress in August 2018, is demonstrative of right-wing populism, and far from being an isolated case.

A report conducted by the Pew Research Centre dating May 29<sup>th</sup> 2018, indicates that Italians have the highest rate of anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe.<sup>368</sup> A troubling 38% of Italian interviewees expressed antagonism towards Muslims, Jews and immigrants. In Sweden, 8% voiced analogous feelings.<sup>369</sup> In addition, Italians hold a distorted view of immigration; the Istituto Cattaneo on August 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 published a report stating that, when asked about the percentage of immigrants present on Italian soil, they estimated 25% of the Italian population was comprised of immigrants.<sup>370</sup> The real number, at the time of this report, amounted to 8%.<sup>371</sup> The “Jo Cox” Commission on hate, racism and intolerance published a report in July 2017 on

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<sup>364</sup> Kelsey Jo Starr and Jeff Diamant, *Western Europeans Vary in their Nationalist, Anti -Immigrant and Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes*. Pew Research Center. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/06/19/western-europeans-vary-in-their-nationalist-anti-immigrant-and-anti-religious-minority-attitudes/>

<sup>365</sup> Yascha Mounk, Limor Gultchin and Martin Eiermann, *European Populism: Trends, Threats and Future Prospects*, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<https://institute.global/insight/renewing-centre/european-populism-trends-threats-and-future-prospects>

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Kelsey Jo Starr and Jeff Diamant, *Western Europeans Vary in their Nationalist, Anti -Immigrant and Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes*

<sup>369</sup> Marco Valbruzzi, *Immigrazione in Italia: tra Realtà e Percezione*, Fondazione di ricerca Istituto Carlo Cattaneo. Last Accessed March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019. <http://www.cattaneo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Analisi-Istituto-Cattaneo-Immigrazione-realt%C3%A0-e-percezione-27-agosto-2018-1.pdf>

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

the hate pyramid in Italy.<sup>372</sup> By analysing 187 documents, the commission, presided by Italian politician Laura Boldrini (former Head of the Lower Chamber), issued a document reporting the rise of racism and intolerance in Italy.<sup>373</sup> The findings are far from positive: 56.4% of interviewees considered neighbourhoods undesirable when numerous immigrants reside there.<sup>374</sup> Around 65% believed refugees are a burden on welfare and 48.7% stated that migrants steal jobs from locals.<sup>375</sup> In contrast, 29.1% of foreigners interviewed reported having experienced harassment in the public sphere whether at work, with neighbours or while searching for housing.<sup>376</sup>

In the previous chapter, I analysed images dating from the nineteenth and twentieth century that identified the “common enemy”, generally a non-white, non-Christian individual “threatening” to “taint Italian purity”. I suggested that the concept of “Italianness” is an artificial one, also enforced through “high” and “low” art. Moreover, given the recent statistics illustrating xenophobic trends in Italy and declaredly intolerant Italian political parties, the idea of a “true Italian” is ubiquitous. As an art historian I am acutely aware of the power visual culture beholds, thus being an effective medium of communication as well as a witness of the context in which it was created. This chapter, however, aims at proving how previous constructions of “Italianness” still play a pivotal role in Italy, exuded, in this case, through mainstream media images and language. The remnants of past toxic ideologies still somewhat exist in current information mediums such as paper and digital newspapers. Therefore, this essay’s role is to suggest how the construction of who is a “legitimate” Italian, and who is not (migrants in this case), persists in mass media production.

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<sup>372</sup> Jo Cox Committee. *The Pyramid of Hate in Italy. The “Jo Cox” Committee on Hate, Intolerance, Xenophobia and Racism*. (Rome, Camera dei Deputati, 2016)  
[http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/uploadfile\\_commissione\\_intolleranza/files/000/000/006/INFOGRAFICA\\_EN.pdf](http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/uploadfile_commissione_intolleranza/files/000/000/006/INFOGRAFICA_EN.pdf)

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

This chapter will closely analyse Italian media representations concerning recent migration to Italy throughout the past few decades until today, and attempt to understand the current political and social climate in regards to this issue. It additionally focuses on discrimination against migrants with specific backgrounds by examining media images and the type of language used whilst reporting. I ponder some of the reasons why autochthonous Italians demonstrate increasingly hostile behaviours and opinions towards migrants, particularly non-white, non-Christian, and why the integration process is difficult for many. Do news and photo reporting play a significant role in shaping the current situation? The way this chapter is organized is by themes: the first part explores the most recent statistics on the migrant population in Italy, the numbers, their provenances, and their distribution on Italian territory. Then, the second part explores how immigration evolved in Italy: overwhelming evidence suggests it is a relatively recent phenomenon in this country if compared to the UK, USA or Canada, which have always been on the receiving end of the immigration process.<sup>377</sup> I then trace actual policies regulating immigration to Italy, when they were first promulgated and how they evolved: particularly from the Foschi law in 1986 up to the Salvini legislative decrees in 2018 and 2019, which have had a significant impact on migrants in Italy.<sup>378</sup> I moreover, probe the reporting concerning the promulgation of these laws as well as specific news stories such as the murder of black South African refugee Jerry Masslo. I also reflect on broadcasting regarding the cases of former Italian Mayor Domenico Lucano, who broke the law in order to offer a dignified life to migrants coming to the town he was overseeing, and German captain Carola Rackete, who infringed the recently promulgated Salvini decrees to save the lives of refugees in distress at sea. In both cases, numerous Italian news outlets, conducted an intense denigration campaign against migrants and the people attempting to offer help.

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<sup>377</sup> Giuseppe Sciortino and Asher Colombo, *Gli Immigrati in Italia*, (Bologna, Mulino, 2004) p. 12

<sup>378</sup> Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche di Immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a Oggi*, Treccani, Last Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/le-politiche-di-immigrazione-in-italia-dall-unita-a-oggi\\_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/le-politiche-di-immigrazione-in-italia-dall-unita-a-oggi_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/)

I explore how some of the immigration laws discriminate against immigrants by holding them in limbo, thus making them more susceptible to fall into the trap of illegal work or, in worst-case scenarios, organised crime, and how specific news outlets use fear-mongering tactics to taint all migrants as criminals. Thenceforth, the final part of this chapter, will review two particular images published by numerous respected Italian digital news outlets (which also have paper versions) and argue the emotional appeal as well as sensationalism are used to attract viewers and revenue. The first image is a photograph by Italian photojournalist Massimo Sestini showing a vessel near the Sicilian Island of Lampedusa packed with refugees, and the second was shot by an anonymous photographer in which Lampedusa doctor Pietro Bartolo holds a young orphan named Favour who survived the Mediterranean crossing. With these photos, which were widely circulated, I wish to examine the contrasting emotional reaction they provoked in viewers.

Moreover, I consider migrant criminality and incarceration rates and examples of how they are reported on in Italian news and how they are dangerously weaponized. I also discuss the case of Italian terrorist Ousseynou Sy, and how most Italian newspapers, instead of focusing on his heinous crime, focused on his Senegalese origins, thus racializing his criminal acts. I then dedicate one part of this chapter to Italian citizenship, what it entails, who has access to it and how some political groups wish to change certain aspects regulating it. I analyse the concepts of the *ius sanguinis* (right by blood) and the *ius soli* (right by soil), and how these issues are reported on in some media outlets such as *Il Giornale* and *Il Libero*.

I conclude this chapter by citing the incident revolving around the 2019 winner of the Sanremo Festival, a popular annual Italian music contest: young artist Alessandro Mahmoud, known as Mahmood, born in Milan to an Italian mother and Egyptian father.<sup>379</sup> When selected to win the prestigious award, he faced racial harassment as well as doubts about his

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<sup>379</sup> The Local, *Singer Mahmood Won Sanremo 2019 and Salvini is not Happy*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.thelocal.it/20190211/singer-mahmood-won-sanremo-2019-and-salvini-not-impressed>

“Italianness” because of his Egyptian father.<sup>380</sup> Politician Matteo Salvini and journalist Giovanna Maria Maglie argued that not only Mahmood’s win was a left-wing conspiracy to instil “forced diversity” in a music contest, thus rendering it a political issue, but also argued this prize should go to a “more Italian” artist. I deconstruct tweets by Salvini and Maglie that radiate blatant intolerance disguised as mere music preference. This episode is emblematic of a country struggling to come to terms with changes in national demographics.

Most images and news articles I consider are taken from mainstream Italian digital and paper news outlets such as left-leaning *La Repubblica*, the centrist *Corriere della Sera*, or right-leaning *Il Giornale* and *Il Libero*. Furthermore, one of the photos I analyse, by photojournalist Massimo Sestini, was not only used by information sources, but also exhibited in art institutions within projects concerning migration. I moreover, probe language used in tweets by public figures and titles in digital and paper news articles, concerning current events revolving around “Italianness” and migration. In contrast, I exclude images and texts from broadcasting companies, films, short videos, blogs and paper magazines for reasons of clarity, conciseness and length. This chapter analyses images and news articles in a thematic order, beginning with migration statistics, then moving to the history of Italian laws concerning migration, the spectacularizing of mass media images in regards to migrants and the spectre of migrant criminality. I conclude with a discussion of Italian citizenship, and the political hostility toward the non-Italian “other” demonstrated in social media. My theoretical framework is drawn from migration and media scholars such as Pietro Cuttitta, Pierluigi Musarò, Paola Parmiggiani and Alexander A. Caviedes, who extensively expound upon the “spectacle of sufferance” or the “border spectacle”. In addition, I rely on writer Susan Sontag’s reflections on photojournalism and the emotions it evokes, thus the dramatic aspect of the photographs analysed.

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<sup>380</sup> The artist himself admits the first time he ever received racist insults was following his Sanremo victory and the disclosure of his origins. Ibid.

I argue that images and language adopted by Italian mainstream media, with regard to these issues, partially contribute to the anti-immigration climate in Italy. Instead of a factual, informed discussion of this complex issue, inappropriate reporting – often sensationalist and alarmist – instigates purely emotional responses from the public. Existing data regarding migrants in Italy not only contradicts media coverage, but also shows no evidence of an “invasion” nor that “our jobs are stolen by foreigners”.<sup>381</sup> In 2018, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) crafted its annual *World Migration Report* where factual information regarding migration around the world is gathered, analysed and presented to the public. The eighth chapter is entitled “Media Reporting of Migrants and Migration”, and is a thorough examination on manners in which migration is covered by media across the globe. The findings assert that overall coverage is negative, emotion-centred and focusing on negative matters revolving around migration, thus fomenting hostility against migrants, particularly refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>382</sup> The argument is furthered by suggesting that language and topics covered by mainstream media often reflect aims enforced by government officials and powerful individuals.<sup>383</sup> The reason is that reporters often depend on the latter for information to publish.<sup>384</sup>

Scholar Judith Butler in her volume *Frames of War* (2016) argues that specific lives are rendered more precarious than others. Butler contends that precariousness ought to be recognized as a fundamental aspect of life, thus rendering it more inclusive and egalitarian, therefore securing policies that ensure equal access to food, shelter and health services.<sup>385</sup> In the politics of immigration, specific lives are considered as grievable, versus others, often

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<sup>381</sup> Alessandro Lanni, *L' "Invasione" dei Rifugiati in Italia, Ecco I Numeri*, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees UNHCR. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.unhcr.it/risorse/carta-di-roma/fact-checking/linvasione-dei-rifugiati-italia-numeri>

<sup>382</sup> International Organization for Migration, “Media Reporting of Migrants and Migration” in *IOM World Migration Report 2018*, (New York, United Nations Publications, 2018), p. 194

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Judith Butler, *Frames of War When Is Life Grievable?*, From the Radical Thinkers Series, (London: Verso, 2016.) p. 35



racialized populations, whose loss is not perceived as a loss.<sup>386</sup> A differential distribution of grievability and precarity affects viewers' ranges of emotions such as sadness, sadism, happiness and indifference. Often, ungrievable lives are those who bear the brunt of suffering, famine, war, poverty, unemployment, violence and premature death.<sup>387</sup> Butler furthermore suggests that this condition forces those whose lives are rendered more precarious and less grievable, to seek help from the very entities that perpetuate this situation.<sup>388</sup> As I shall argue in this chapter, the portrayal of migrants in Italy tends to be overwhelmingly in terms of tragedies, thus people chiefly devoid of agency and even dehumanized.

Unsurprisingly, whilst typing on Google the words “migrants in Italy,” what appears are groups of Africans and Middle Easterners on zodiac boats in the Mediterranean Sea. Why is there not a more nuanced, complex, factual and varied analysis of migration to Italy? Why is there so little research that ponders how Italian mainstream media treats the topic of migration? Why is there almost a non-existent reporting from migrants themselves? This chapter's aim is to answer these questions, as well as offering factual research on an intricate phenomenon. I also suggest that the current manner in which migration is largely covered by mass media in Italy fosters a distorted image of migrants to the public, resulting in anti-immigration sentiments.

#### A LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

According to the latest statistics on immigration in Italy, published in October 2018, the legal resident foreign population in Italy amounted to 5,144,440 at the end of 2017, hence 8.5% of the entire Italian population of 60,483,973 individuals.<sup>389</sup> Italy, in terms of foreign residents, does not have the highest numbers: as of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017, Germany's overall migrant

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid. p. 42

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid. p. 43

<sup>389</sup> Claudio Paravati and Luca Di Sciullo, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazioni 2018*, (Roma, Centro Studi and Ricerche IDOS with Centro Studi Confronti, 2018), p. 13

population reached 11.2%, the UK 9.2%, Austria 15.2%, Belgium 11.9%, Cyprus 16.4%, Luxemburg 47.6% and Ireland 11.8%.<sup>390</sup> The statistical institution Eurostat also states that migrant arrivals to European shores diminished by 8% between 2015 and 2016 as well as a 43.5% decrease in asylum requests.<sup>391</sup> The Ministry of the Interior stated that arrivals towards Italian shores decreased by 80% from January 2017 to September 2018.<sup>392</sup> The tightening of European borders has also resulted in a drastic drop of foreign minors arriving to Italy following maritime rescues: from 25,846 in 2016, to 15,779 in 2017 and down to 2,896 during the first seven months of 2018.<sup>393</sup> This obviously means a strong reduction of people hosted: 26% less between 2018 and 2017. Moreover, the International Organisation for Migration has estimated that between the years 2000 and 2018, around 40,000 persons perished while crossing the Mediterranean Sea with 22,400 dying in the Libyan – Italian passage.<sup>394</sup>

The provenance of immigrants residing in Italy is estimated to include 200 different countries: the majority from Romania with 23.1% of total foreign residents followed by Albanians 8.6%, Moroccans 8.1%, Chinese 5.7% and Ukrainians 4.6%. Filipinos, Indians, Bengalis, Maldivians and Egyptians follow.<sup>395</sup> The belief that “immigrants steal locals’ jobs” is not corroborated by current data; of the 2,423,000 employed foreigners, about 10.5% of the working population in Italy, two thirds are employed as unskilled workers, generally “blue collar” jobs such as janitors, farmworkers and domestic workers, which are largely shunned by the local population.<sup>396</sup> Often this type of labour is precarious, illegal, exploitative, poorly paid and sometimes dangerous. In addition, unemployment among foreigners’ amounts to 14.3% in comparison to the 10.8% regarding autochthonous Italians.<sup>397</sup> About 19.2 billion € of migrants’

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid. pp. 56 - 57

<sup>391</sup> Ibid. p. 54

<sup>392</sup> Ibid. p. 111

<sup>393</sup> Ibid. p.154

<sup>394</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>395</sup> Ibid. p. 102

<sup>396</sup> Ibid. p. 10

<sup>397</sup> Ibid. p. 14. Moreover, an Italian employee earns 25.5% more than a foreigner: 1,381€ gross per month for the former against 1,029 € for the latter.

earnings go to the state through taxes, which compared to the 17.5 billion the state spends on them makes immigration useful in many respects, even profitable.<sup>398</sup>

According to the ISMU Foundation, which specializes in initiatives as well as studies on multi-ethnicity, at the beginning of 2017 migrants residing irregularly in Italy amounted to 490,000.<sup>399</sup> This number has been stable since 2003 even though assessing this type of data is challenging due to their lack of registration in any Italian civil registry. According to the Ministry of the Interior in 2017, 41,158 foreigners were intercepted living illegally in Italy, however of this number 44.6% -- 18,349 people -- have actually been expelled.<sup>400</sup> This means that only 8.4% of illegal migrants were identified and 3.7% were deported.<sup>401</sup> The latter data is reported to go against the tide of current right wing populist movements stating that most migrants come as illegals: not only is it a false claim, but dangerously misleading.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2017 the number of humans forced to flee their home countries because of extreme circumstances (i.e. war, famine, political reasons, climate change etc.) amounted to 68.5 million asylum seekers, refugees and other stateless people.<sup>402</sup> The country in the world hosting the most migrants is Turkey, with an astonishing 3.5 million, and Germany with 1 million people hosted in 2017 has the highest number of forced migrants in Europe.<sup>403</sup> According to data elaborated by the Ministry of Interior concerning arrivals via sea between January and May during 2017, 2018 and 2019, a significant decrease has been recorded.<sup>404</sup> The main nationalities registered

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<sup>398</sup> Ibid. p. 14

<sup>399</sup> Ibid. p. 159. The International Organization for Migration, defines “irregular migrants” as those who reside in a country without a valid permit or are staying although their residency documents have expired.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid. p. 162

<sup>401</sup> Ibid. The majority of expelled migrants were from Tunisia, Albania and Morocco.

Ibid. p. 49. This staggering number is also due to devastating conflicts affecting certain countries such as Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Congo and Myanmar just to cite a few.<sup>402</sup> One third of the world’s refugees by the end of 2017 came from Sub – Saharan Africa, that is, 6.1 million people.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid. pp. 36 - 37

Ibid. pp. 123 – 124. In 2017 the registered number of people was 45,124; in 2018, it dropped to 10,307 and to 1,077 in 2019.<sup>404</sup> This means that between 2017 and 2019 there has been a 97.61% decrease in migrants crossing the sea to reach Italy.

are Tunisian, Iraqi and Algerian followed by Bengali, Pakistani, Sudanese, Guianese, Senegalese and Iranian.<sup>405</sup>

## MIGRATION TO ITALY: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW 1861 - 2019

Iniziativa e Studi sulla Multiethnicità (ISMU), a foundation concerned with studies on a multi-ethnic society as well as analyses of current migration trends, has shown how the legal resident foreign population of Italy grew rapidly between 1996 and 2017.<sup>406</sup> From 737,793 in 1996, up to 5,047,028 in 2017; this data proves immigration in Italy has grown significantly in the past few decades and is likely to grow in the years to come.<sup>407</sup> Moreover, Italy's geographic position has made it a fertile ground for populations in the Mediterranean basin to reach it, cross it and live there. Scholars and migration experts Asher Colombo and Giuseppe Sciortino, in their short explanatory book on immigrants in Italy, argue that Italy has historically been a country of emigration starting with unification in 1861.<sup>408</sup> In 1865, the Italian civil code stated that foreigners could enter the country without a visa and had the same rights as autochthonous Italians.<sup>409</sup> Furthermore, in the late nineteenth century, new immigrants were expelled only if they posed a threat to public security.

The first policies were introduced during the First World War to protect borders and local workers.<sup>410</sup> In 1926, however, the Fascist Regime instituted restrictive measures: that is, setting up regional offices supervising migrants, which ultimately reported to the central authority.<sup>411</sup> In 1929, a central archive for residency permits was created and in 1930, the Regime requested that migrants report their presence on Italian territory within three days of

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid. p. 124. The decrease does not necessarily mean fewer people are fleeing from their country of origin; instead, more are rejected at entry points in arrival countries. Otherwise, they are held in detainment centres in Libya, which witnesses have described as modern-day concentration camps.

<sup>406</sup> Fondazione ISMU, *Dati Sulle Migrazioni: Popolazione Straniera Residente – 1996 - 2017*, Last Accessed October 5<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.ismu.org/ricerca/dati-sulle-migrazioni/>

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> Giuseppe Sciortino and Asher Colombo, *Gli Immigrati in Italia*, pp. 12 - 13

<sup>409</sup> Ibid. p. 49

<sup>410</sup> Ibid. pp. 49 – 50. Colucci contends that a large percentage of these migrants escaped from difficult situations in their home countries such as dictatorship, war and famine.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid. p. 50

their arrival. In addition, compulsory visas for numerous nationalities coming to Italy were introduced that same year.<sup>412</sup> The official birth of the Italian Republic on June 2nd 1948 marked a further attempt to regulate the processing of migrants; article 10, comma 2 of the Constitution declares immigrants' status is regulated by the law and Italy gives protection to those whose freedom is threatened in their home countries.<sup>413</sup> Moreover, in 1951 Italy adhered to the Geneva Convention, which promulgated laws giving international protection to asylum seekers, refugees and stateless individuals.<sup>414</sup> In contrast, restrictive laws were introduced in 1949 and in 1961, making entry into Italy for work-related reasons more difficult.<sup>415</sup> Colombo and Sciortino explain that Italy was one of few European countries not providing work permits for most foreigners seeking to establish themselves on Italian territory, which resulted in significant numbers of people working illegally and residing without proper documentation.<sup>416</sup>

In *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, (2018), researcher and migration expert Michele Colucci, states that initial interest towards people entering the country was shown in 1971, with the official census indicating that in the previous decade the number of migrants in Italy had doubled.<sup>417</sup> Colucci argues that this phenomenon partially commenced during those years because of foreign students coming to Italy to settle.<sup>418</sup> A second category of foreign immigrants came from countries previously colonised by Italy such as Eritrea, Somalia and Libya. These migrations occurred as the Italian government relaxed its policies concerning settling on Italian territory although the “open border strategy” became more restrictive between 1948 and 1949.<sup>419</sup> Furthermore, numerous migrants moved to the Italian peninsula to

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<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid. p. 52

<sup>414</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, Last Accessed October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

<sup>415</sup> Giuseppe Sciortino and Asher Colombo, *Gli Immigrati in Italia*, p. 51. These regulations sought to protect Italian workers from competition.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid. p. 52

<sup>417</sup> Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, (Roma, Carocci Editore, 2018), pp. 29 – 30

<sup>418</sup> Ibid. pp. 30 - 31

<sup>419</sup> Ibid. pp. 22 - 23

join family members or because of job opportunities.<sup>420</sup> Despite common assumptions asserting most migrants came from Africa and the Middle East, a majority of provenances were from Southern Europe such as Portugal but also Germans, English and Americans.<sup>421</sup>

Moreover, following the oil crisis in 1973, in which the members of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries imposed an embargo on oil barrel prices for specific countries, the international community was shaken.<sup>422</sup> The nations affected were the world's most powerful economies such as Canada, UK, USA and the Netherlands accused of supporting Israel during the Yom Kippur War.<sup>423</sup> These countries were also primary destinations for migrants. Their now wobbling economies meant numerous immigrants opted to settle in countries untouched by this embargo, such as Italy. Colucci further states that conflicts during the seventies and eighties, such as the Vietnam War, the Cambodian War, the Iranian revolution of 1979 and Iranian – Iraqi warfare resulted in significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers going to Europe, especially Italy, to find protection.<sup>424</sup> At this point, the lack of adequate regulation in Italian legislation became evident as well as detrimental.<sup>425</sup> Italy's first reaction to this sudden surge in immigration was set up immediate assistance such as help centres, language classes, dorms and soup kitchens.<sup>426</sup> However, little or no effort was made to pass legislation to regulate it.<sup>427</sup>

A turning point arrived during the eighties with Italy ratifying the Organizzazione Internazionale del Lavoro, or commonly known as OIL (International Labour Organization), in

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<sup>420</sup> Ibid. p. 31

<sup>421</sup> Ibid. p. 32

<sup>422</sup> Natalia Mateos-Ribas, "Revisiting Migratory Contexts: the Mediterranean Caravanserai", in *The Mediterranean Passage: Migration and New Cultural Encounters in Southern Europe*, eds. by Russell King. (Liverpool, UK, Liverpool University Press, 2001), pp. 25 – 30

<sup>423</sup> Ibid. On October 6th 1973, Syria and Egypt launched attacks against Israel in order to regain control of territories lost during the third Arab-Israeli war in 1967 or better known as the Six Day War. Israel won the conflict at considerable human and financial cost. History.com Editors, *Yom Kippur War*, History Channel, Last Accessed March 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/yom-kippur-war>

<sup>424</sup> Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, pp. 63 - 64

<sup>425</sup> Ibid. p. 65

<sup>426</sup> Ibid. p. 70

<sup>427</sup> Ibid. p. 73

1981, which aimed at impeding illegal work and imposing equity amongst migrant and native-born workers.<sup>428</sup> This committee inspired the Foschi law in 1986, named after the politician and once Minister of Labour Franco Foschi, who sought comprehensive change in regulating immigration.<sup>429</sup> It allowed family reunifications for migrants including spouses, offspring and parents, guaranteed parity of treatment between foreign and Italian workers and contained complex rules regarding migrants entering Italian territory for work related purposes with entry quotas as well as verification of the unavailability of Italian labour. A council addressing foreign workers' problems was instituted with the ambition of creating a small-scale Ministry of Immigration. This project was nevertheless unsuccessful due to the meagre resources allocated to it and the failure to tackle legalisation for migrants working as street sellers or autonomous workers.<sup>430</sup> Colucci argues that even though this law was a first attempt to face the surge of migrants, it failed to address the problem due to its numerous gaps and insufficient funding.<sup>431</sup> During the eighties, however, national attention started to focus on this phenomenon because of the Schengen Agreement in 1985,<sup>432</sup> the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the brutal racially-motivated murder of Jerry Masslo, a black South African migrant working near Caserta, also in 1989.<sup>433</sup>

In 1988, during apartheid, Masslo escaped to Italy from South Africa as a refugee, and worked in the fields in Campania until his murder on August 24<sup>th</sup> 1989.<sup>434</sup> His murderers attempted to rob him and killed him when he tried to defend himself. This episode galvanised

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<sup>428</sup> Ibid. p. 74

<sup>429</sup> Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche di Immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a Oggi*, Treccani, Last Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/le-politiche-di-immigrazione-in-italia-dall-unita-a-oggi\\_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/le-politiche-di-immigrazione-in-italia-dall-unita-a-oggi_%28Dizionario-di-Storia%29/)

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, pp. 75 - 76

<sup>432</sup> The Schengen Agreement stated the abolishment of borders between European countries. Currently, there are twenty-six Schengen countries of which twenty-two EU members and four non-EU. Those four are Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Schengen Visa Info, *What is the Schengen Agreement?*, Last Accessed January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021, <https://www.schengenvisa.info/schengen-agreement/>

<sup>433</sup> Ibid. pp. 76 - 77

<sup>434</sup> Ibid. pp. 82 - 83

national attention and provoked an intense emotional wave concerning migrants coming to Italy with no protection, living in precarious conditions and often facing prejudice.<sup>435</sup> This tragic event obtained media coverage due to the harrowing circumstances of Masslo's life and death. News reports started denouncing the inhumane conditions in which migrant workers were living in, furthermore vulnerable to violent attacks. The day following his funeral, left-leaning newspaper *L'Unità* published a headline (Figure 16) stating "L'Addio sulla Piazza degli Schiavi" (Farewell in the "slaves' square"), with the subheading "Rabbia e Commozione fra la Gente del Paese" (Rage and emotion amongst people from the town). *L'Unità* was highlighting the terrible circumstances of migrant workers, often Africans, working in almost slave-like conditions, for that reason the "slave square" is not the actual name of the location but a metaphor. Furthermore, these individuals were defined as an "invisible army" since their existence seemed to be ignored by Italian government and autochthonous Italians.

Moreover, on the bottom of the news page, an exclusive interview with Masslo himself was published. He had been interviewed by Italian broadcasting company TG2 in the context of a report called "Nero e non Solo" (Black and not just that) just a few days before his assassination.<sup>436</sup> Masslo claimed that Italy has an unsustainable climate of hatred and racism, thus for this reason, he sought to leave the country to live peacefully.<sup>437</sup> In the image I analyse, the headline in the newspaper for this interview is "Quelli Come Me in Italia non hanno Speranza" ("Those like me in Italy have no hope"). Decidedly, the reporters attempt to draw public attention to these urgent matters; firstly, migrants working in fields with no protection and secondly the issue of racism.

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<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Rai Play, *La guerra di Masslo*, Last Accessed January 3rd 2021, <https://www.raipplay.it/video/2019/07/La-guerra-di-Masslo---TG2-del-28081989-lintervista-riposta-da-Nonsolonerob8ee522a-b7cd-434d-8d68-fd9ca1e60e80.html>

<sup>437</sup> Ibid.



**Ai funerali la presenza  
di molte autorità dello Stato  
Sofferta partecipazione della  
popolazione accusata di razzismo**

## L'addio sulla «piazza degli schiavi»

## Commozione e rabbia fra la gente del paese.

Prima la cerimonia cattolica, sotto i riflettori tv, quella musulmana, proprio nella piazza dove ogni mattina ha luogo il mercato delle braccia. È l'estremo saluto al giovane Jerry, assassinato nelle campagne di Villa Literno. Eza uno dei tremila africani venuti qui per la raccolta dei pomodori. Sono stati quasi funerali di Stato. Tra le autorità: Martelli, Chiaramonte, Ruffino, Del Turco, Fassino.

e cioccolato, commentano Dell'Urco, «il film sugli italiani emigrati in Svizzera». Eppure i padri di coloro che discutevano e commentavano, ricordava qualcun altro, erano gli stessi che applaudivano gli uomini dalla pelle nera, quelli che servivano a Napoli, tanti anni fa a capo delle forze armate americane per liberare l'Italia.

tere, capire? La verità è che questa è una specie di terra di nessuno, spiegano, dove regna l'illegalità. Ma chi è responsabile di tutto ciò? Dove sono le proposte del governo per tentare una via d'uscita? La discussione continua, mentre in chitarra la cerimonia giunge quasi al termine. C'è anche un momento di traballamento per l'arrivo, singolare, dell'attore protagonista de *La*

Yocet, Michele Piacido. Ora la chiesa è davvero strapiena. All'«Agnus Dei» e all'invito dell'officiante a stringersi le mani, il cronista si mescola fra le scorse e vede qualche ragazza bianca farsi avanti e stringere a destin dell'uomo dalla pelle nera. E poi tutti fuori. C'è un palco approntato per le ordinazioni civili, parla il rappresentante Cgil dei nordestiniani, poi il sindaco di Villa Libero

...una cerimonia di purifica-  
zione, dunque, ma non sarà  
mai ricompensare davvero la  
statura di questi giorni. C'è un  
piccolo episodio della serata

dice di un clima di tensione spento. Quando la bagliata al cimitero gli altri, sostenuti dalla deputata Pci Dacia Valent, chiedono di scoperciare subito il bo. È costitudine, si dilata così prima del calo a bara nella fossa comune. Ne è nata una discussione, autorità locali si sono opposte l'operazione è stata rinviata ad oggi.

L'unica po  
del govern  
il «numero

«... è chiuso?»

[illegible]

Pirelli e così difficile dis-



**«Quelli  
non han-**

**■** Questa è la breve inter-  
va trasciata alla rubrica del  
«Un documento accor-  
sua facilità.

**Da dove viene?**  
Dal Sudafrika.

**Da quanto tempo è in Ita-  
lia?**  
Otto mesi.

**Quali sono i suoi proble-  
mi in questo paese?**  
Il mio problema, il mio ve-  
r problema è che quella che  
ho sperimentato in Sudafri-  
ca non voglio vederla qui in  
Italia. E Smerio qualcosa

...il più efficace protagonista de La

**come me  
no spera**

...che Jerry Evans. Maio ave-  
... «Non solo» re-  
... gente, quasi profeta della

Italia. Nessun rimpro, nessun  
alcuno dimentica che co-  
è il nazismo. E lo ho po-  
sperimentato qui, è una cosa  
inaccettabile. Se non in Afri-  
ca può pensare che gli ita-  
liani siano molto bravi, ma  
se vieni qui in Italia... lo ho  
visto proprio con i miei oc-  
chi così che non dovrebbe-  
raccorciare qui, in Italia.

**Lei è un rifugiato politico,**  
...anni fa non aveva

# in Italia anza»



Un momento del funerali, in alto, l'attimo della caparra di Villa Libero e, in basso, Jerry Evans. Massimo

[illegible][illegible]

**Figure 16**, Newspaper l'Unità, *L'addio sulla piazza degli schiavi*, 1989, Frontpage of l'Unità

The second image (Figure 17), in black and white, illustrates Masslo's funeral with people from different ethnic backgrounds carrying his coffin. The atmosphere is sombre and dismal, however all people portrayed in the photograph express human dignity. Despite the high number of individuals present, all bodies as well as facial features are distinguishable without being a "mass". The photograph conveys the seriousness of the moment, the need to address this pressing issue and the tragedy of Masslo's life brutally interrupted. Two individuals, a black male and female, at the front of the procession hold Masslo's picture as if to show how anti-black racism affects them unanimously, adding an emotional tone to the image. The photograph carries a powerful message conveying a sense of solidarity and denunciation against racism.



**Figure 17,** Riccardo Siano for newspaper La Repubblica, *I Funerali di Jerry Masslo*, 1989, Photograph

Senegalese-born and naturalized Italian writer Pap Khouma, in his books *Io Venditore di Elefanti* (I, the elephant seller) [1990]<sup>438</sup>, and *Noi Italiani Neri: Storie di Ordinario Razzismo* (We black Italians: stories of ordinary racism) [2010],<sup>439</sup> offers his personal account of his often-difficult experience living in Italy as a black man, first without legal documentation, and then, as an Italian citizen. In his first volume he recounts migrating from Senegal to Italy in the eighties to search for a better life, however in the absence of an Italian work permit, Khouma illegally sold objects in the streets, thus frequently becoming the target of the police and hostile civilians.<sup>440</sup> The writer gives a bitter account of how his skin colour affected his day-to-day life, even once he became a legal Italian resident. In his second book on ordinary racism in Italy, Khouma elucidates the reader on harassments he was subjected to in Italy, including being

<sup>438</sup> Pap Khouma, Oreste Pivetta, and Rebecca Crockett-Hopkins. *I Was an Elephant Salesman: Adventures between Dakar, Paris, and Milan*. (Global African Voices, E. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010)

<sup>439</sup> Pap Khouma, *Noi Italiani Neri: Storie di Ordinario Razzismo*, (Milano, Baldini Castoldi Dalai editore, 2010)

<sup>440</sup> Pap Khouma, Oreste Pivetta, and Rebecca Crockett-Hopkins. *I Was an Elephant Salesman*, pp. 4 - 5

assaulted by public officials for no reason, being verbally abused by strangers in the street, and even being taken into court because he was suspected of abducting his own son.<sup>441</sup> Khouma disarmingly offers a troubling, yet hopeful account, of a country only recently opening up to “the different”, Blacks in this case, and the often-excruciating process of integration. Moreover, Khouma narrates the pain of not being considered a “true Italian” because of his race. Furthermore, the writer argues that a black person in Italy, even as an Italian citizen or as a legal resident, will encounter hostility and doubts concerning their “Italianness”. In addition, Khouma expounds on the cases of black Italian soccer players being verbally abused in Italian stadiums because of their race, thus furthering his contention that Italy has an entrenched racist issue.<sup>442</sup> The manner in which Masslo’s life was conditioned and cruelly ripped from him is a symptom of a deep racist problem in Italy, one which has yet to be adequately confronted. Masslo’s murder conveyed a clear message to the Italian public, urging to confront the xenophobic, and in this case anti-Black sentiment.

This incident was the catalyst for the Martelli law in 1990, an effective effort to regulate illegal immigrants’ status as well as offer them protection.<sup>443</sup> One of the main innovations brought by this new law was that anyone, regardless of provenance, could ask for asylum in Italy. It also introduced annual quotas for migrant workers, regulated entries and expulsions, introduced mandatory visas for specific countries and instituted the Fund for Immigration Policies and hospitality centres.<sup>444</sup> Colucci argues that this was the first “real” attempt to confront the immigration phenomenon with the legalisation of 225,000 immigrants.<sup>445</sup> With the passing of the Martelli law, a wave of Albanian migrants arrived in 1991, the Dublin

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<sup>441</sup> Pap Khouma, *Noi Italiani Neri*, pp. 18, 19, 42, 47.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid. pp. 26 - 27

<sup>443</sup> Ibid. pp. 86 - 87

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid. p. 86

Regulation<sup>446</sup> was promulgated as well as the Schengen Agreement and a significant rise in xenophobic attacks directed against migrants.<sup>447</sup>

On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1991, centrist newspaper *Il Corriere della Sera*, published a harrowing headline (Figure 18): “Diecimila Profughi all’Assalto” (Ten Thousand Refugees on the Attack) and below the subheading “Altre Navi dell’Albania Sfondano il Blocco, Brindisi Invasa da una Marea di Disperati. Il Governo: non Possiamo Accoglierli Tutti, Molti di Loro Dovranno Ritornare in Patria” (More ships from Albania break through the blockade; Brindisi is invaded by a mass of destitutes. The government: we cannot host them all; many will have to return to their home country). The words “assaulting”, “force”, “invaded”, “mass” and “destitutes” confer an alarmist, threatening tone regarding Albanian refugees arriving on Italy’s shores.



Figure 18, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Diecimila profughi all'assalto*, 1991, Front page of *Il Corriere della Sera*

<sup>446</sup> The Dublin Regulation was established in 1990 and determines examinations of asylum applications amongst EU members. European Commission, *Country responsible for asylum application (Dublin)*, Last Accessed January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en)

<sup>447</sup> Ibid. p. 93. This latter occurrence inspired the passing of the Mancino law on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1993 in which xenophobic acts, organisations, movements as well as hate crimes would be condemned to incarceration from six months to four years. It is the first bill passed in Italian legislation specifically identifying discrimination based on provenance, religion and race. Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche di Immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a Oggi*,



Also, on March 8<sup>th</sup> 1991, daily newspaper *Quotidiano di Brindisi*, published an equally frightening headline (Figure 19) “A Brindisi è l’Inferno” (Hell in Brindisi), preceded by “La Situazione è Precipitata con lo Sbarco di Altri 5,000 Albanesi. Scene Strazianti e Violenza” (The situation degenerated with another 5,000 Albanians disembarking. Excruciating and violent scenes). The title continues “Sul Molo già Migliaia di Profughi Affamati” (On the dock thousands of hungry refugees). This article’s wording is also specific: “hell”, “degenerated”, “excruciating”, “violence”, “thousands” and “hungry”. It poignantly conveys the idea of imminent danger, an unmanageable situation, thus a direct threat for autochthonous Italians. Moreover, both articles, below the titles, present photographs depicting “hordes” of people crowding Italian ports, thus exuding the idea of an invasion of unknown, harmful entities. Individuality is eliminated in favour of an ominous collective looming on Italy, bringing potential destruction.



**Figure 19**, *Quotidiano di Brindisi*, *A Brindisi è l’inferno*, 1991, Frontage of the *Quotidiano di Brindisi*

Scholars Pierluigi Musarò and Paola Parmiggiani develop the concept of the “border spectacle”, this being the tendency of Italian media to show only the extreme version of asylum seekers and refugees coming to Italian shores.<sup>448</sup> Seldom is this group of people portrayed as educated, skilled, having family and a personal history, rather the vulnerable dimension is emphasized. Musarò and Parmiggiani contend that international migration is one of the subjects that faces the most media distortion, therefore negatively influencing public opinion, and consequently political discourse. Furthermore, the scholars suggest we are living in a “post-truth” context where objective facts are pushed on the side in favour of emotion fuelled storytelling.<sup>449</sup> Italian borders and the Mediterranean Sea are perpetually illustrated in humanitarian and securitarian manners, despite existing data does not corroborate the argument of an invasion.<sup>450</sup> Refugees and asylum seekers represent a small percentage of the migratory flows.

Moreover, Musarò and Parmiggiani contend the problematic aspect of a lack of migrants’ self-representation meaning that it is never them recounting their experience but always the spectators narrating.<sup>451</sup> I suggest that Italian media consciously chooses to present to the public the most exasperated side of migration in order to attract views, therefore to increase profit. Dramatic information appears to boost sales or “clicks”, versus a more ordinary account of everyday normal activities such as working or sleeping. It is undeniable that the situation of Albanians disembarking on Southern Italian shores was a difficult moment, however it was presented in inappropriate, harrowing manners, devoid of contextualization and simply emphasizing the migrants’ helplessness as well as the supposed security threat.

At the beginning of 1998, the then centre-left coalition passed the Turco – Napolitano law, named after its proponents, former Minister of Interior Giorgio Napolitano and Minister

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<sup>448</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, and Paola Parmiggiani. “Beyond Black and White: The Role of Media in Portraying and Policing Migration and Asylum in Italy.” *International Review of Sociology* 27, no. 2 (2017): p. 242. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2017.1329034>

<sup>449</sup> Ibid.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid. p. 243

<sup>451</sup> Ibid. p. 252

of Social Solidarity Livia Turco, in which significant innovations were introduced concerning immigration.<sup>452</sup> Residency permits were instituted for seasonal work as well as job hunting and entrance quotas were established based on Italian job market requirements.<sup>453</sup> Residence cards were also issued following a five-year stay on Italian territory, benefits were offered to whom reported exploiters, expulsions were rendered easier, refusal entry at Italian borders became simpler, centres of detainment for migrants without proper documentation were established and sanitary assistance was offered regardless of status.<sup>454</sup> Furthermore, following this law's approval, 217,000 foreign residents were naturalized.<sup>455</sup> Despite the benefits this new bill brought, there were and still are two main flaws: the detainment centres for migrants (in Italian: Centri di Permanenza Temporanea), which I will discuss in the fourth chapter, and the annulment of active as well as passive voting for foreigners meaning they could neither vote nor be elected representatives.<sup>456</sup> The Turco – Napolitano law furthermore brought the approval on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1998 of the *Testo Unico sull'Immigrazione (Consolidated Immigration Act)*, a Legislative Decree stating all laws regulating immigration.<sup>457</sup>

In July 2002, the new centre-right coalition led by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, passed the Bossi – Fini law, which modified the Turco – Napolitano bill by restricting migrants' rights.<sup>458</sup> The primary modification was the requirement to already possess a job offer when entering the country. The number of years to reside in Italy in order to obtain a residence card went to six years instead of five, even though it was later modified back to five. Further modification introduced by this law included fingerprinting immigrants once their residence

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<sup>452</sup> Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, pp. 119 - 220

<sup>453</sup> Luca Einaudi, *Le politiche di Immigrazione in Italia dall'Unità a Oggi*

<sup>454</sup> Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, p. 119

<sup>455</sup> Ibid. p. 120

<sup>456</sup> Ibid. p. 123

<sup>457</sup> Luigi Di Muro and Antonio Di Muro, *Il Diritto dell'Immigrazione: Guida Aggiornata alla Legge n. 132/2018 Decreto "Salvini"*, (Torino, G. Giappichelli Editore, 2019), p. 9. It covers rights, regulations concerning entry, housing, schooling, employment, health, criminality and expulsion amongst numerous other issues. This decree is regularly updated because of the issuing of new laws and is currently the guideline for policies regarding migrants on Italian territory.

<sup>458</sup> Michele Colucci, *Storia dell'Immigrazione Straniera in Italia*, p. 141

permit was released or renovated along with extending the period of confinement in a detainment centre from thirty to sixty days.<sup>459</sup> In addition, this law allows rejection in extraterritorial waters and punishment for whoever helps migrants enter illegally.<sup>460</sup> Additional harsh regulations were added in 2009 including the extension of detainment for migrants without proper identification from sixty days to six months and the introduction of the “clandestine” felony; that is, any individual caught on Italian territory without a valid residency permit could be fined up to 15,000 €.<sup>461</sup> This latter regulation is considered controversial and despite attempts for its abolition, it remains in effect to this day.

At the beginning of 2017, the Minniti Orlando law came into effect under the centre – left government led by Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni. Former Minister of Justice Andrea Orlando and former Minister of the Interior Marco Minniti promulgated a regulation intended to counteract illegal immigration and accelerate the expulsion process of migrants considered to be public threats.<sup>462</sup> There are four main points in this law. First, the abolition of a second hearing following rejection for asylum in Italy. Second, the elimination of face-to-face consultation between the judge and the migrant (hence the former’s inability to question the latter). Third, an increase from four to twenty centres of internment and expulsion, one per Italian region and finally, the possibility for immigrants to engage in volunteer social work in Italy.<sup>463</sup> Numerous critics of this law have described it as inhumane specifically concerning the first two aspects of negating an appeal for a rejected migrant as well as having the judge solely

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<sup>459</sup> Ibid.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid. p. 142

<sup>461</sup> Roberto Bonfanti, *Favoreggiamento dell’Immigrazione: Compenso Minimo al Trasportatore non è un’Attenuante*, Altalex, Last Accessed October 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.altalex.com/documents/news/2017/03/03/favoreggiamento-dell-immigrazione-compenso-minimo-al-trasportatore-non-e-un-attenuante>

<sup>462</sup> Ministero dell’Interno, *È Legge il Decreto Minniti sul Contrasto all’Immigrazione Illegale*, Last Accessed October 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, <http://www.interno.gov.it/it/notizie/e-legge-decreto-minniti-sul-contrasto-allimmigrazione-illegale>

<sup>463</sup> Ibid.



viewing the first hearing via video.<sup>464</sup> Opponents argue that such provisions make it possible to reject as many “problematic” migrants as possible.<sup>465</sup>

With national elections in Italy held on March 4th 2018, a new centre-right coalition formed between Lega and Movimento Cinque Stelle.<sup>466</sup> The former party in particular, as I previously mentioned, focuses on a traditional view of Italian identity, involving efforts to protect borders and make entrance into Italian territory as restrictive as possible.<sup>467</sup> Its commander in chief, Matteo Salvini, swiftly passed the “Security Decree” (in Italian Decreto Sicurezza) also commonly known as “Salvini Decree” by the end of 2018.<sup>468</sup> This new law, unsurprisingly, contains several restrictive policies as well as reasonable attempts to increase levels of safety in Italy. As far as the immigration section is concerned, two points are currently in effect: the abolition of international protection for asylum seekers in the event they commit specific crimes and consequently, their immediate expulsion, and the reduction from two years to one year of the residency permit for humanitarian reasons, now only for special circumstances.<sup>469</sup>

Some questionable problems with this law include: the cutting of funds to manage the immigration process, increasing the amount of time in which migrants can be held in detainment centres from ninety days to one hundred and eighty, more resources for repatriation, and revocation of Italian citizenship for naturalized individuals who have committed a crime while

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<sup>464</sup> Camilli Annalisa, *Il Decreto Minniti Orlando sull’Immigrazione é Legge*, L’Internazionale, Last Accessed October 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2017/04/12/decreto-minniti-orlando-legge>

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> *Risultati Elezioni 4 Marzo 2018*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019, <https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2018/cameradeideputati>

<sup>467</sup> Official Lega Website, Last Accessed October 5<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.leganord.org/>. A brief look at their website and the message “Italians First” emerges as well as “Italian Pride”, hence an exclusionary idea of “Italianness”.

<sup>468</sup> The Italian Times, *Decreto Sicurezza: Cos’è, Riassunto Testo, Immigrazione, Cosa prevede*, Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, [https://www.theitaliantimes.it/economia/decreto-sicurezza-testo-cos-e-cosa-prevede-cambia-salvini-immigrazione\\_011019/](https://www.theitaliantimes.it/economia/decreto-sicurezza-testo-cos-e-cosa-prevede-cambia-salvini-immigrazione_011019/)

Ibid. The first part of the decree focuses on illegal dwellers occupying unauthorized edifices: more severe punishments, increasingly effective ways to evict them and higher penalties for whoever enables this criminal behaviour.<sup>469</sup> More resources are destined to state police, firefighters and volunteer staff as well as allowing the use of tasers (electric stun guns) by Municipal Police.

in Italy.<sup>470</sup> Lastly, decreasing the Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Italian acronym SPRAR )<sup>471</sup> has made these small local centres dedicated to migrant protection and integration only accessible to unaccompanied minors and people who have already benefitted from humanitarian protection.<sup>472</sup> “Regular” asylum seekers would be relocated to ordinary hosting centres without any classes or activities – where individuals simply wait for their fate to be decided.<sup>473</sup>

Even more contested is the decree passed June 14<sup>th</sup> 2019 called “Decreto Sicurezza Bis” (Second Security Decree).<sup>474</sup> This law contains eighteen points; however, those salient to immigration are the following: the Government has the power to block or limit access to ships on territorial water with the exception of military or non-commercial governmental vessels for security reasons.<sup>475</sup> Captains who infringe this new regulation, will receive sanctions including a fine ranging from €10,000 to €50,000 and in case of recurrence, Italian authorities may seize the ship. Furthermore, € 3million were allotted to combat illegal immigration between the years 2019 and 2020.<sup>476</sup>

Conjointly, during the promulgation of the “Decreto Sicurezza Bis”, on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2019, German ship captain Carola Rackete, while sailing the Sea Watch 3 vessel, saved fifty-three migrants off Libya’s coast and refused to disembark them in Tripoli, Libya, considered dangerous.<sup>477</sup> The nearest safe port was at the Italian island of Lampedusa, therefore Sea Watch 3 proceeded in that direction, however then Minister of Interior and staunch anti-immigration

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<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> SPRAR, *Activities and Services*, Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.sprar.it/english/activities-and-services-2>

<sup>472</sup> The Italian Times, *Decreto Sicurezza*

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> The Italian Times, *Decreto Sicurezza Bis 2019: Cos’è e Cosa Prevede Testo della Legge*, Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [https://www.theitaliantimes.it/politica/decreto-sicurezza-bis-cos-e-cosa-prevede-novita\\_160919/](https://www.theitaliantimes.it/politica/decreto-sicurezza-bis-cos-e-cosa-prevede-novita_160919/)

<sup>475</sup> Laura Biarella, *Decreto Sicurezza Bis: in Vigore le Nuove Norme*, Altalex, Last Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, <https://www.altalex.com/documents/leggi/2019/06/12/decreto-sicurezza-bis>

<sup>476</sup> Ibid.

<sup>477</sup> Il Sole 24 Ore, *Sea Watch a Lampedusa, Salvini: «Se lasciano l’Italia sbarcano in 5 minuti»*, Last Accessed January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021, <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/sea-watch-forza-blocco-ed-entra-acque-italiane-ACJDcmU>

politician Matteo Salvini strictly forbade it. Regardless, captain Rackete, forcibly disembarked in Lampedusa given the migrants' critical conditions.<sup>478</sup> According to the “Decreto Sicurezza Bis”, Rackete had infringed the law, thus upon entry in Italy she was arrested. Charges were later dropped.<sup>479</sup> Italian media gave mixed reactions regarding this incident: *La Repubblica* (Figure 20) on June 27<sup>th</sup> 2019, published the headline “Forza Capitana” (Go Captain) and enthusiastically applauded the courageous act of humanity displayed by Rackete.



**Figure 20,** *La Repubblica, Forza Capitana*, 2019, Front page of *La Repubblica*

In contrast, *Il Libero*, on July 21<sup>st</sup> 2019, in regards to the same story, published the following headline (Figure 21): “Sea Watch, Carola Rackete senza Reggisenone in Procura:

<sup>478</sup> Ibid.

<sup>479</sup> Valentina Santarpia, *Carola Rackete, la Cassazione: la comandante ha rispettato il dovere di soccorso*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, Last Accessed January 3rd 2019, [https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20\\_febbraio\\_20/sea-watch-cassazione-comandante-rackete-ha-rispettato-dovere-soccorso-e9010aba-53e8-11ea-a963-13c45ec676cd.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/cronache/20_febbraio_20/sea-watch-cassazione-comandante-rackete-ha-rispettato-dovere-soccorso-e9010aba-53e8-11ea-a963-13c45ec676cd.shtml)

Sfrontatezza senza Limiti, il Dettaglio Sfuggito a Molti” (Sea Watch, Carola Rackete without a bra at the District Attorney’s office: limitless insolence, a detail unnoticed by many). The title overlooked the incident itself and opted for a “tastier” focus, thus Rackete’s “audacity” in not wearing a bra. This resulted in a sexist, vulgar, yet catchy headline diverting the attention from the issue of saving migrants drowning in the Mediterranean to a woman’s choice of underwear. *Il Libero* avoids the political discussion, and opts for a gossip news format, thus hoping to appeal to a wider stratum of the population.

**Figure 21**, *Il Libero*, *Sea Watch*, *Carola Rackete* senza reggiseno in Procura: sfrontatezza senza limiti, il dettaglio sfuggito a molti, 2019, Screenshot of *Il Libero*

<sup>480</sup> Manou Novellino, *Riace: un Modello di Città dell'Accoglienza*, SDT Società dei Territorialisti/e ONLUS, May 2018, Last Accessed September 30<sup>th</sup> 2019, <http://www.societadeiterritorialisti.it/wpcontent/uploads/2018/05/schedaNovellino.pdf>

either to resettle in Northern Italy or emigrate to foreign countries.<sup>481</sup> With the increase in migrant arrivals, Lucano saw an opportunity to revive this small village.<sup>482</sup> In 1999, he established a revolutionary system in which undocumented immigrants were placed in homes abandoned by emigrants. The municipality, furthermore, used public funds to provide them with an education as well as a profession.<sup>483</sup> Despite this project's success, Lucano, encountered vitriolic opposition, was ultimately removed from his position as mayor and is currently indicted for abuse of power, fraud and official misconduct.<sup>484</sup>

Following the European Elections on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2019, Riace voted overwhelmingly for La Lega, the main Italian anti-immigration party, thus demonstrating that integration, regardless of its potential for inclusion and growth, is not on Riace's current political agenda.<sup>485</sup> Furthermore Lucano, who is still being investigated, was prevented from returning to Riace for eleven months, but was admitted back to see his elderly, dying father who shortly passed away after reuniting with his son.<sup>486</sup> In an article published on January 7<sup>th</sup> 2019 written by journalist Luigi Mastrodonato, Riace is now a ghost town.<sup>487</sup> From a model of hospitality, bustling with life, it is now almost empty since many of the migrants, due to restrictions brought by the Salvini Decrees, have been transferred to other Italian towns. Lucano, who in the meantime has written the book *Il Fuorilegge* (The Outlaw) on this episode, continues to be a passionate advocate for human rights.

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid.

<sup>484</sup> Alessia Candito, *Migranti, Sindaco Riace Indagato per Concussione e Truffa. Lucano: "Attacco a Nostro Sistema di Integrazione"*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

[https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/10/06/news/migranti\\_sindaco\\_riace\\_indagato\\_per\\_concussione\\_e\\_truffa\\_lucano\\_attacco\\_a\\_sistema\\_bonus\\_-177511389/?ref=search](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/10/06/news/migranti_sindaco_riace_indagato_per_concussione_e_truffa_lucano_attacco_a_sistema_bonus_-177511389/?ref=search)

<sup>485</sup> L'Eco del Sud, *Riace, Simbolo dell'Accoglienza Migranti, Vota Salvini. E Lega sia anche a Lampedusa, con il Sindaco 'Pro-Porti Aperti'*, Last Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> October 2019, <https://www.lecodelsud.it/riace-simbolo-dellaccoglienza-migranti-vota-salvini-e-lega-sia-anche-a-lampedusa-con-il-sindaco-pro-porti-aperti>

<sup>486</sup> Alessia Candito, *Riace, è Morto il Padre di Mimmo Lucano. Ha Sempre Sostenuto le Battaglie del Figlio*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed February 15<sup>th</sup> 2021, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/01/31/news/riace\\_e\\_morto\\_il\\_padre\\_di\\_mimmo\\_lucano\\_ha\\_sempre\\_sostenuto\\_il\\_figlio-247285261/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/01/31/news/riace_e_morto_il_padre_di_mimmo_lucano_ha_sempre_sostenuto_il_figlio-247285261/)

<sup>487</sup> Luigi Mastrodonato, *Riace era un Miracolo. Ora è un Paese Fantasma*, The Vision, Last Accessed February 15<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://thevision.com/attualita/riace-fantasma/>



On March 9<sup>th</sup> 2017, newspaper *Il Giornale*, published a caustic article (Figure 22) titled “Migranti, il Bluff del Sindaco Modello” (Migrants, the bluff of the model mayor), followed by the under title “Un’Inchiesta Sbugiarda Lucano, Esaltato da Papa e Media: Sprechi e Appalti Irregolari” (An investigation disproves Lucano, exalted by the Pope and the media: squandering funds and under-the-table contracts).



**Figure 22,** *Il Giornale*, *Migranti, il bluff del sindaco modello*, 2017, Screenshot of *Il Giornale*

This particular press highlights the methods by which former mayor Lucano attempted to integrate migrants in Riace. The journalist Michel Dessi focuses on the illegality of Lucano’s

activities, such as false documentation for migrants trying to reside in Italy.<sup>488</sup> Lucano breached the law in order to offer a dignified life to vulnerable migrants arriving to Italy. However, this article uses the wording “bluff”, “disprove”, “squander, and “under-the-table contracts”, to discredit the entirety of Lucano’s actions and judge him as a delinquent. The reporter purposefully avoids contextualizing the former mayor’s actions and refuses to focus on fallacies in the Italian immigration policies, which brought Lucano to break the law in order to bestow humanity on people arriving in desperate conditions. Furthermore, the language employed such as “bluff” is a direct personal attack on Lucano’s “audacity” in “daring” to integrate individuals generally excluded by autochthonous Italian society.

#### MEDIA AND MIGRATION: BETWEEN REALITY AND DISTORTION

I previously mentioned the study released by the Cattaneo Institute on August 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 concerning the gap between Italians’ perception of current immigration and the actual numbers.<sup>489</sup> This unbiased study was conducted in all countries of the European Union and Italians showed the highest levels of ignorance concerning percentages of immigrants – in this case people non-originally from the EU – living in their country.<sup>490</sup> Interviewees estimated 25% of newcomers had settled on Italian territory; however, the real number at the time was 7%.<sup>491</sup> The study furthermore revealed that 27% of Italians were unable to give any estimation on this matter, indicating a lack of knowledge on a pivotal issue so prominent in today’s news.<sup>492</sup> This inquiry proved higher levels of ignorance on the part of people with lower levels of education, and employed in lower skilled occupations.<sup>493</sup> Conversely, the strata of the population with

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<sup>488</sup> Michel Dessi, *Migranti, il bluff del sindaco modello*, Il Giornale, Last Accessed January 3rd 2021, <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/migranti-bluff-sindaco-modello-1373026.html>

<sup>489</sup> Marco Valbruzzi, *Immigrazione in Italia*

<sup>490</sup> Ibid.

<sup>491</sup> Ibid.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Jessica Phelan, *Italians Overestimate Immigrant Population More than any Other Europeans: Study*. The Local It. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.thelocal.it/20180829/italians-overestimate-number-of-immigrants-in-italy-more-than-any-other-europeans-study>

tertiary degrees and working in highly skilled and better paid jobs appear to feel lower levels of anxiety and hold more objective outlooks on immigrants.<sup>494</sup> To conclude, this study found that Italians interviewed who identified as right-wing voters estimated that 32.4% of immigrants resided in Italy versus their left-wing counterparts who assessed that number at 18.5%.<sup>495</sup> While this one study cannot account for all Italians, it nevertheless reveals a significant level of generalized ignorance. The question to be asked at this point is ‘why?’ Why such a distorted view on a documented issue, whose statistics are available to the general public? What are the consequences?

As previously argued, mainstream media reporting of the immigration phenomenon is partially to blame. In this section, I analyse two images frequently broadcast and the language used by mainstream media regarding one crime story, in which the perpetrator was a naturalised Italian. I contend these examples illustrate how Italian news outlets often misleadingly report the complex migration phenomenon. Clearly, two pictures and one reportage are not an estimation for the entirety of Italian broadcasting on immigration, yet they do evince the media’s tendency to garner a wide audience with sensationalist stories versus a more serious and accurate, but perhaps less “entertaining” type of coverage. Appealing to emotions, whether positive or negative, seems to attract a larger reader or viewership than presenting factual elements such as statistics, policies, regulations and the actual results of the latter. It comes as no surprise that Europe and the United States are currently swamped by a wave of nativist and isolationist political parties, which, while addressing the public’s anxieties, do not tend to encourage critical thinking of a multifaceted issue.<sup>496</sup> I argue that a change in the way of reporting or diminishing the drastic impact of specific news stories might help lower levels of

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<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Ibid.

<sup>496</sup> Bobby Duffy, *People in Italy and the US are most wrong on key facts about their society*. Ipsos MORI. Last Accessed September 14<sup>th</sup> 2018. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/people-italy-and-us-are-most-wrong-key-facts-about-their-society>



hostility of the autochthonous population against newcomers and increase knowledge on this complex issue.

The two images I discuss are photographs taken in recent years picturing refugees seeking asylum in Italy. The first one (Figure 23) illustrates a group of people on a boat sailing to Italy in dire conditions;<sup>497</sup> the second photo (Figure 24) is of a Nigerian infant, Favour, who miraculously survived a shipwreck that claimed her mother's life.<sup>498</sup>



**Figure 23**, Massimo Sestini, *Operazione Mare Nostrum*, 2014, Photograph

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<sup>497</sup> Massimo Sestini News Pictures, Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, <http://www.massimosestini.it/>

<sup>498</sup> BBC News. *Migrant Crisis: Orphan Baby who Touched Italy Starts New Life*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36391060>



**Figure 24,** Unknown Photographer, *Infant Favour and Doctor Pietro Bartolo*, 2016, Photograph

She is held in the arms of Italian doctor from Lampedusa, Pietro Bartolo, who has often appeared in the news.<sup>499</sup> The images are emotionally charged, expressing both negative and positive feelings. However, neither help to explicate the context of current migration. They illustrate a small element of this phenomenon, and although two news photos do not appropriately convey the entirety of media immigrant depictions, scholars agree that an overwhelming proportion of broadcasting on this subject carries alarmist tones.<sup>500</sup> While these images are a partial testimony of the current immigration process, I suggest that journalists and news media should also include more nuanced depictions of refugees of integrated migrants

<sup>499</sup> Ibid.

<sup>500</sup> Nora Theorin, Jesper Strömbäck, Christian Schemer, Christine E. Meltzer, Fabienne Lind, Beatrice Herrero, Tobias Heidenreich, Jakob-Moritz Eberl, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Rosa Berganza, *The European Media Discourse on Immigration and its Effects: a Literature Review*, Annals of the International Communication Association, 42:3 (2018), p. 207, DOI:10.1080/23808985.2018.1497452

living “normal” lives – working, going to school, socializing etc. I selected these specific pictures because of their aesthetic appeal as well as their high visibility amongst the Italian public. As previously mentioned, Sestini’s photograph was not only shown in news outlets, but also exhibited in art centres and won a photography contest. Concurrently, the image showing the Nigerian infant was a high-profile story in Italian news and created a heated debate on the humanity concerning current Italian immigration policies.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in June 2016 published a report stating that refugees in Italy currently numbered about 131,000.<sup>501</sup> This number equals one refugee to every 2,000 individuals thereby contradicting the “refugee crisis” in Italian broadcasting mediums.<sup>502</sup> This data does not diminish the seriousness of the amount of people forcibly displaced to Italy because of natural or human induced calamities; however, presenting this issue as preponderant is erroneous. Sociologist and migration scholar Maurizio Ambrosini, in his short yet poignant book on immigration, points out the fact that the majority of refugees are not hosted in Europe: 86% reside in “Third World” countries.<sup>503</sup> Less than 10% reaches Europe: 3 million are hosted in Turkey, 1.5 million in Pakistan, 1.1 million in Lebanon, 980,000 in Iran, 736,000 in Ethiopia and 664,000 in Jordan.<sup>504</sup> Of the 86% of refugees not arriving to Europe, around 40% are sheltered in more secured regions of the countries they are trying to flee.<sup>505</sup> Only showing the public images of refugees coming in distress to Italy’s borders is not representative of the totality and complexity of the migrating phenomenon.

At the time of this chapter’s redaction, there were over five million naturalised Italians in Italy, yet their stories are rarely reported unless someone is charged with crimes or

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<sup>501</sup> Alessandro Lanni, *L’“Invasione” dei Rifugiati in Italia*

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

<sup>503</sup> Maurizio Ambrosini, *Migrazioni*, (Milano, EGEA S.p.A., 2017), pp. 18 - 19

<sup>504</sup> Ibid. p. 19

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

victimised.<sup>506</sup> In addition, the type of language used by most mainstream media when reporting crimes perpetrated by immigrants, whether naturalised, holding a legal permit or without proper documentation is, to say the least, questionable. In July 2018, a group of media and communication scholars published an essay titled *The European Media Discourse on Immigration and its Effects: a Literature Review* in which they analyse the impact media coverage on immigration creates in European countries.<sup>507</sup> The article begins by quoting a Eurobarometer poll from March 2018 in which 65% of Europeans show positive views regarding intra-European migration; however that number drops to 41% when concerning non-European migrants.<sup>508</sup> Although attitudes towards migrant influx in Europe can vary greatly from country to country, with Sweden evincing positive responses versus the UK, which manifested negative ones, the scholars agree the media play a preponderant role in shaping opinions concerning immigration.<sup>509</sup> The analysis of a range of English-language academic journals from 2000 to 2018 proved that the amount of literature on news and migrants considerably augmented in the period between 2017 and 2018, focusing significantly on the “refugee crisis”.<sup>510</sup> They furthermore concluded that increasing the media emphasis on specific topics – immigration in this case – influences its perceived importance to a broad audience. Moreover, simply citing immigrant groups’ ethnicity can augment hostility from natives thus prompting anti-immigrant stances.<sup>511</sup>

Unsurprisingly the news reports largely negative information on migrants: economic welfare, security, criminality, cultural clashes and labour.<sup>512</sup> Studies have shown that humans

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<sup>506</sup> Alexander Caviedes, *An Emerging ‘European’ News Portrayal of Immigration?* in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41:6 (2015), pp. 903 - 904, DOI:10.1080/1369183X.2014.1002199

<sup>507</sup> Nora Theorin, Jesper Strömbäck, Christian Schemer, Christine E. Meltzer, Fabienne Lind, Beatrice Herrero, Tobias Heidenreich, Jakob-Moritz Eberl, Hajo G. Boomgaarden, Rosa Berganza, *The European Media Discourse on Immigration and its Effects*, p. 207

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid. p. 208

<sup>511</sup> Ibid. p. 210

<sup>512</sup> Ibid. p. 211

are more responsive to negativity instead of positivity, thus journalists, to attract readers, tend to focus on negative information.<sup>513</sup> It is also demonstrated that negativity regarding immigration will increase viewers' apprehension; therefore, depicting migrants as victims or as perpetrators leads to positive and negative concerns. In short, the more viewers read and hear about this set of problems, the more tension appears to be generated. Political science and international affairs' scholar Alexander Caviedes in his essay *An Emerging European Portrayal of Immigration* offers his analysis of Italian news between the years 2009 and 2012 by examining Italy's main news outlets such as *Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*.<sup>514</sup> His conclusions are that 42% of these articles focus on issues of threat and security versus 35%, which ponder economic issues such as spending for migrants, their weight on the welfare system and costs of hospitality specifically for refugees. Only 14% of articles include both matters.<sup>515</sup> Moreover, migrants' potential physical threat towards others is emphasised by the overwhelming reporting of refugees arriving on Italian shores and borders.<sup>516</sup> He also quotes sociologist Alessandro Dal Lago's work during the nineties, which argued the direct link between crime and immigration was overwhelmingly present in the press.<sup>517</sup>

These findings add to the suggestion that mainstream media, while covering immigration issues, focus significantly on its negative aspects thereby "feeding" its audience the impression of a "crisis". To cite Caviedes: "the media, and particularly newspapers, are central in determining the terms of public discourse".<sup>518</sup> To conclude this section before proceeding to analysing media images and language, I would cite communication scholar Maxwell McCombs's work on agenda-setting and having the power to decide what are important matters in the eyes of the public. McCombs states: "The news media have a major

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<sup>513</sup> Ibid. p. 213

<sup>514</sup> Alexander Caviedes, *An Emerging 'European' News Portrayal of Immigration?*, pp. 903 - 904

<sup>515</sup> Ibid. p. 907

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid. p. 908

<sup>518</sup> Ibid. p. 912

influence on the focus of public attention, the specific issues that members of the public regard as most priority at any moment. Beyond this influence, the news media also direct our attention to specific aspects of these issues. This combined influence of the news media on the public's attention to and learning the key details of the major issues of the day is referred to as the agenda-setting role of the news media.”<sup>519</sup>

Immigration is on the agenda being set by media in Italy, and the images I analyse create, as communication academics D. Evatt and S.I. Ghanem assert in their “relevance scale”, an emotional “arousal” – that is, the audience judges the images on the basis of how much interest and excitement they generate.<sup>520</sup>

#### OPERAZIONE MARE NOSTRUM BY MASSIMO SESTINI

The first image was realised on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2014 by Italian photojournalist Massimo Sestini from a helicopter flown by the Italian Navy, at roughly twenty-five miles from the Libyan coast.<sup>521</sup> The boat had recently sailed off from Libya and was headed towards Italian shores, probably the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, which, as I will examine later on, has become the symbol of refugees coming to Europe.<sup>522</sup> This picture is entitled *Operazione Mare Nostrum* following the Italian naval and air organisation created by former Prime Minister Enrico Letta in 2013.<sup>523</sup> The primary aim is to save refugees making perilous journeys from North African coasts to Italian shores, often in battered, hardly floating vessels at great risk for the migrants themselves.<sup>524</sup> Tragically, several accidents have occurred in which boats either tip over or sink

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<sup>519</sup> Maxwell McCombs, *A Look at Agenda-Setting: Past, Present and Future* in *Journalism Studies*, 6 (4) (2005), p. 544. Doi: 10.1080/14616700500250438.

<sup>520</sup> D.Evatt & S. Ghanem, *Building a Scale to Measure Salience. Paper Presented at the Annual Convention of the World Association for Public Opinion Research*, Rome, Italy, (2001)

<sup>521</sup> Il Fotografo, *Massimo Sestini e la sua Foto Storica*, Last Accessed October 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://ilfotografo.it/primopiano/massimo-sestini-e-la-sua-foto-storica/>

<sup>522</sup> Ibid.

<sup>523</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, *Mare Nostrum: The Visual Politics of a Military-Humanitarian Operation in the Mediterranean Sea* in *Media, Culture & Society* 39 (1) (2017), p. 1. Doi: 10.1177/0163443716672296

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.



with incalculable human losses.<sup>525</sup> This particular photo was taken at the so-called *zenith point*, meaning directly from above.<sup>526</sup> What the viewer sees is a boat with people waving or looking upwards, probably towards the helicopter, which arrived to rescue them. Official sources estimate that on that specific boat, around five hundred humans were attempting to cross the Mediterranean; either on deck, as the picture shows, or in stow.<sup>527</sup> This image's main feature is the contrast between the individuals, their clothes, their gestures, the unsafe boat and the blue sea. Although this moment was captured while the photographer and the subject were respectively in motion, viewers have the impression of a 'still' instant due to the photo's clear definition and lack of blurriness.

From the viewers' perspective, one of the salient traits are migrants' gazes looking at the helicopter arriving to save them, creating the impression they are staring directly towards the public. Despite their exhaustion, some are visibly relieved and happily wave or extend their arms to "reach" rescuers and finally end their ordeal. Spectators have the sensation that refugees are unequivocally asking for help, therefore arousing uneasy feelings, but also a sense of relief for the end of their suffering. The sea generally evokes pleasurable emotions of leisure and carefree moments; however, this image shows it as a deadly entity ready to "swallow" the migrants. This photograph offers viewers the illusion they are on the helicopter and, in some way, participating in the rescue operation. This picture quickly gained remarkable fame due to its strong emotional charge in showing a vast public the seriousness of the refugee crisis.<sup>528</sup> Sestini, despite photographing the people on the boat from a distance, shows spectators a clear

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<sup>525</sup> Ibid. p. 2

<sup>526</sup> Il Fotografo, *Massimo Sestini e la sua Foto Storica*

<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> In one instance the photographer Sestini had to sue Trieste's deputy mayor Paolo Polidori because he unlawfully used his migrants' photo as an anti – immigration political tool. Polidori pertains to the Lega political party and had published on social media Sestini's renowned picture accompanied by negative comments concerning refugees. Finestre sull'Arte. *Il Fotografo Massimo Sestini: "Quella Foto l'ho Regalata al Mondo, un Politico non può Usarla Contro i Migranti"*, Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

[https://www.finestresullarte.info/flash-news/3093n\\_massimo-sestini-un-politico-non-puo-usare-quella-foto-contro-i-migranti.php](https://www.finestresullarte.info/flash-news/3093n_massimo-sestini-un-politico-non-puo-usare-quella-foto-contro-i-migranti.php)

vision of the subjects' facial features, bodies, expressions, gestures, clothes and various personal items such as a blanket. A few hold infants in their arms. They are not just "hoards" of migrants flocking to Italian shores but real human beings with affect and objectives.

*Operazione Mare Nostrum* ignited such a strong reaction that the photographer in 2016 initiated the online project *Where Are You?* aimed at finding the people on board and learning what had become of them, where they lived and what their present life was like.<sup>529</sup> Most of them did not respond; however, some did indeed recognise themselves and accepted to be interviewed.<sup>530</sup> Most were leading ordinary lives across Europe, finally free from war.<sup>531</sup> Unsurprisingly, many arrived from countries ravaged by conflicts such as Syria, Congo or Yemen.<sup>532</sup> This project inspired a documentary by National Geographic entitled *Where Are You? (Italian: Dimmi Dove Sei)* directed by Jesùs Garcès Lambert for the World Refugee Day on June 20<sup>th</sup> 2019, established to commemorate the Geneva Convention of 1951.<sup>533</sup> This project, as well as the famous photograph, with its happy ending and "feel good" emotions, draw attention to the current tragedy of people forced to flee in despair from their homes, undertake an expensive perilous journey in harrowing conditions and arrive in countries that are not always welcoming.

Sociology and political scholar, Pierluigi Musarò posits the contradiction of this type of illustration produced by border patrol organizations, such as Mare Nostrum, aimed at defending Italian borders yet at the same time saving migrants crossing.<sup>534</sup> Mare Nostrum indeed provides assistance for people arriving to Italy's shores under perilous conditions; however, it also aims to bar entry and deny people asylum in order to protect national borders.<sup>535</sup> In his essay

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<sup>529</sup> TV Zoom, *Where Are You? Dimmi Dove Sei: su National Geographic il Documentario sulle Migrazioni*, Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.tvzoom.it/2019/06/19/76758/where-are-you-dimmi-dove-sei-su-national-geographic-il-documentario-sulle-migrazioni/>

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, *Mare Nostrum*, p. 1

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.



concerning the “spectacle of sufferance” Musarò contends this sort of imagery is not intended to raise solidarity or understanding, but for publications such as newspapers to make money by evoking emotions of pity at a “safe distance”.<sup>536</sup> Viewers might sympathise with people in vulnerable conditions; however they will likely view refugees as entities lacking agency left to border patrol’s mercy towards their desperate condition.<sup>537</sup> The scholar argues numerous refugees, once rescued by Italian Coast Guard, often end up in detention centres where conditions are far from ideal. Many will be sent back to their countries and those who manage to stay often encounter difficulties in adequately integrating in Italian (or any other European country) society, thereby possibly ending up in illegal employment or even organised crime.<sup>538</sup>

Massimo Sestini’s photograph automatically places an “unexplored space” between the audience and the depicted subjects. While arousing feelings of sorrow, amazement, pity or relief, it is unlikely to lead readers or viewers to understand the complexity of the situation. Although Mare Nostrum and the Italian Coast Guard are on the front line of saving lives, Musarò reflects on the European border’s strange concept of “military-humanitarian repression”.<sup>539</sup> Despite some degree of help driven by compassion, at the same time, Italian laws regulating immigration are increasingly repressive thus creating a contradictory message. Sestini’s image does not show refugees as humans without any resilience or agency and only worthy of pity; however, it places viewers in a passive yet “superior” advantage in regards to the people depicted. The audience is able to enjoy a carefully crafted photograph on current events from a comfortable position without having to engage in any way. I insist on arguing Sestini’s image is not problematic or disturbing; on the contrary, it captures an angle of the

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<sup>536</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, *La Solidarietà allo Specchio* in *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post – Humanitarianism* by Chouliaraki Lilie (Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), p. 9 - 10

<sup>537</sup> Ibid. pp. 12 - 13

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, *Mare Nostrum*, p. 3

contemporary migration phenomenon by “embellishing” it and differs from the majority of media’s depictions of immigrants as groups of anguished, poor people.

To conclude this point, Musarò quotes sociologist Gilles Lipovetsky in stating that such imagery pertains to the concept of “media charity”, thus representing “Third World” countries solely as war-torn, poverty-stricken places whose populations are in dire need of Western assistance and benevolence and where no local political action can be possible.<sup>540</sup> In other words, these depictions evince a sense of the West’s “moral superiority”.

#### BABY FAVOUR AND DOCTOR PIETRO BARTOLO

On May 25<sup>th</sup> 2016, following a macabre pattern, around 150 asylum seekers arrived at the Sicilian island of Lampedusa in conditions of extreme hardship.<sup>541</sup> Tragedies often unfold during the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean due to unseaworthy vessels, harsh weather and, sometimes, ruthless smugglers handling the boats.<sup>542</sup> In this particular instance, among the 150 individuals, a nine-month Nigerian infant called Favour by the Italian medical staff, meaning “fortunate”, came relatively unharmed. Her story is tragic: she was on the vessel with her pregnant mother, who died from fuel burns on her body. The child was given to a woman on the same ship who managed to bring her safely to Italian shores. The exact dynamics of the accident are unclear; however, the survivors spoke of technical issues with the boat resulting in the tragic loss of Favour’s parent.<sup>543</sup>

Once the baby arrived in Lampedusa, a local doctor and front liner in assisting asylum seekers, Pietro Bartolo, took her in charge. When interviewed, Bartolo asserted that she was in good condition although slightly dehydrated. Favour was later assisted by local police and

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<sup>540</sup> Pierluigi Musarò, *Mare Nostrum: l’Orizzonte Morale e lo Spettacolo del Confine*, Socialnews, February 26th 2016, Last Accessed September 30th 2019, <http://www.socialnews.it/blog/2016/02/29/orizzonte-morale-e-lo-spettacolo-del-confine-2/>

<sup>541</sup> Claudio Reale, *La Storia di Favour Commuove l’Italia, Pioggia di Richieste per Adottarla*. La Repubblica. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/05/26/news/la\\_storia\\_di\\_favoor\\_commuove\\_l\\_italia\\_pioggia\\_di\\_richi\\_este\\_per\\_adottarla-140642002/](https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/05/26/news/la_storia_di_favoor_commuove_l_italia_pioggia_di_richi_este_per_adottarla-140642002/)

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

transferred to Palermo where, if attempts to contact her living family members failed, she would be put up for adoption.<sup>544</sup> The latest update is that she has been placed in a family in Palermo. The picture I discuss shows the Nigerian child held in the arms of Bartolo, and even though the author of the image is unknown, it was likely snapped in the moments after Favour's arrival in Lampedusa and following Dr. Bartolo's medical exam. The striking feature of this image is the contrast between the facial expressions of Bartolo and baby Favour. She stares at the camera with wonder, amazement and curiosity, seemingly unaware of any calamity. In contrast, Bartolo, a sixty-year-old man with a tired, sad, visibly upset expression, appears to be familiar with the suffering inherent to this complex recurring situation.

Bartolo holds Favour in his arms leaning slightly forward as if to present her, while his expression seems to say "This is the reality in Lampedusa". According to numerous news sources, the centre in Lampedusa was flooded with requests to adopt the baby following the publication of that image in Italian newspapers.<sup>545</sup> Even Dr. Bartolo expressed the desire to keep Favour, but later retracted due to his age and difficulty in bringing up such a young infant. It is curious that so many people were touched by the image of a defenceless infant coming to Italy in dire conditions when official census noted the rise of xenophobic acts against migrants along with evidence of a distorted perception regarding them.<sup>546</sup> This image does not illustrate a group of anonymous people but a clearly defined subject staring directly at the viewer. Furthermore, showing a child who is yet unaware of her situation, in need of protection and stability is likely to have increased the emotional impact of the image. An infant in a stressful situation will generally invoke a more potent sentimental response than that of an adult.

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<sup>544</sup> Nicoletta Cottone, *Migranti: Gara di Solidarietà per Accogliere Favour*. Il Sole 24 Ore. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://st.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2016-05-26/migranti-gara-solidarieta-accogliere-favour-111007.shtml?uuid=AD2tS4P>

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> Council of Europe, *European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Quinto Rapporto dell'Ecrid sull'Italia*. Accessed October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019. <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-italy/16808b5837>

Undoubtedly, this image ignites strong feelings of pity, sadness, guilt, tenderness and, to some extent, empathy.

Visual art scholar Terence Wright, in his essay concerning the media representation of refugees, draws a striking analogy between images of refugees and asylum seekers and biblical images from the Old and the New Testaments.<sup>547</sup> Wright argues that emotionally charged images from the Bible such as the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, or the Flight from Egypt, or the Madonna and Child have strong similarities with media portrayals of asylum seekers and refugees in distressful situations.<sup>548</sup> In the case of Dr Bartolo and Favour, the resemblance with the image of Mary and baby Jesus is remarkable: the doctor holding with a protective embrace the young, defenceless child in the wake of a terrible situation has almost apocalyptic tones. This picture was presented to the public to ignite a strong emotional reaction, directly conveyed by the infant's vulnerability.



**Figure 25,** Map of Lampedusa

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<sup>547</sup> Terence Wright, "Moving Images: The Media Representation of Refugees." *Visual Studies* 17, no. 1 (2002): p. 57

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

Sociologist and immigration scholar Paolo Cuttitta elaborates on Lampedusa (Figure 25) and how it became a popular symbol of the current refugee crisis.<sup>549</sup> By providing data up to 2014, from the Ministry of Interior as well as Frontex (The European Border and Coast Guard Agency), Cuttitta illustrates how arrivals in Lampedusa skyrocketed between the years 1999 and 2013, increasing from 356 arrivals in 1999 to 14,753 in 2013.<sup>550</sup> About 34.37% of migrants arrived in Lampedusa, making it a preferred destination (as well as case study), being the closest to the North African coast. Cuttitta argues that this increase occurred as a result of political agreements between Italy, Tunisia and Libya to curb arrivals.<sup>551</sup> In 1998 then Tunisian President Ben Ali committed to reducing the number of fellow citizens and other Africans migrating to Italy through Tunisia by initiating a period of intense patrolling and blockage.<sup>552</sup> For this reason, people heading for Europe started choosing Libya as a departing ground, thus creating the first Italian–Libyan pact in 1998 between then Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Lamberto Dini and his Libyan counterpart, El-Muntasser.<sup>553</sup> The Italian politician expressed regret for past horrors of Italian colonisation against Libya (although monetary compensation was denied) and stated the two countries would now collaborate to reduce illegal migration towards Italy.<sup>554</sup> The first bilateral pact was signed in 2000, overseen by then Libyan dictator, Gaddafi.<sup>555</sup> From then on, migrants attempting to leave for Europe from Libya faced persecution and were often expelled from Italy and returned to their starting point.<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>549</sup> Paolo Cuttitta, *Lo Spettacolo del Confine. Lampedusa tra Produzione e Messa in Scena della Frontiera*, (Sesto San Giovanni, Mimesis, 2012), p. 11

<sup>550</sup> Ibid. pp. 25 - 27

<sup>551</sup> Ibid. 62 - 63

<sup>552</sup> Ibid. 84 – 85

<sup>553</sup> Adnkronos. *Italia-Libia: Dini e El-Muntasser a Commissione Mista*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [http://www1.adnkronos.com/Archivio/AdnAgenzia/1998/07/04/Esteri/ITALIA-LIBIA-DINI-E-EL-MUNTASSER-A-COMMISSIONE-MISTA\\_173000.php](http://www1.adnkronos.com/Archivio/AdnAgenzia/1998/07/04/Esteri/ITALIA-LIBIA-DINI-E-EL-MUNTASSER-A-COMMISSIONE-MISTA_173000.php)

<sup>554</sup> Ibid.

<sup>555</sup> Vincenzo Nigro and Alberto Flores D'Arcais, *Dini: "Di Gheddafi ora Possiamo Fidarci"*. La Repubblica. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.repubblica.it/online/fatti/italib/dini/dini.html>

<sup>556</sup> Paolo Cuttitta, *Lo Spettacolo del Confine*, pp. 48 - 49

Cuttitta portrays Lampedusa as a crossroads between Italy and Libya, which throughout the twenty-first century has become equipped with robust medical personnel and infrastructure including detainment centres for migrants, where they are often kept in harsh conditions.<sup>557</sup> What makes this island so unique is that it is the only one to have government-funded structures for migrants. Cuttitta also suggests that one of the reasons Lampedusa is in the spotlight is that the expulsion of asylum seekers often happens there.<sup>558</sup> The Navy heavily patrols the waters surrounding this island hence making the interception of migrant ships easier to detect and block. In no other Italian space does this occur. This partially explains, according to Cuttitta, why Lampedusa has become the media centre of the current refugee crisis.<sup>559</sup> News outlets, journalists and photojournalists are facilitated in reporting the most extreme aspect of this phenomenon solely by being in Lampedusa, or in Massimo Sesini's case, in waters nearby. It comes as no surprise that the image portraying Favour and Doctor Bartolo was taken in Lampedusa thereby increasing the emotional impact on the viewer, who is confronted daily with similar images from the Sicilian Island.

Renowned writer and critic Susan Sontag, in her acclaimed book *Regarding the Pain of Others*, argues that a photographic image is never the transparent account of an event but rather a heavily edited version of it.<sup>560</sup> The photographer carefully chooses the subject, frames it and takes the photo at a specific moment thereby purposely excluding other factors. A picture, Sontag suggests, is easily impressed in our minds because of its realism and, in the case of photojournalism, its "shock effect".<sup>561</sup> Photography is more effective than any other medium in reaching viewers because of its supposed authenticity and assumption that the photographer witnessed the event first hand. These types of images have to sell, and so they tend to strike

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid. p. 50

<sup>558</sup> Ibid. pp. 88 - 89

<sup>559</sup> Ibid. pp. 19 - 20

<sup>560</sup> Susan Sontag, *Davanti al Dolore degli Altri*, (Milano, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., 2003), p. 40

<sup>561</sup> Ibid. p. 18

emotional chords. Sontag furthermore states that photographers are highly aware of the exploitation of feelings that images create because they represent the spectacular, something that transcends the ordinary.<sup>562</sup> Otherwise, there would be no viewers. I am not suggesting the photo depicting the Nigerian child and the Italian doctor is inappropriate, but I do suggest it is carefully crafted in order to gain a wide audience and high profits. The public is informed about one side of the story, the most dramatic and distressing one, therefore contributing to a distorted idea of the migrating phenomenon's entirety.

To conclude this section, I cite a study published in March 2019 by journalism scholars Keith Greenwood and Tj Thomson, in which they analyse 811 images submitted in 2015 to the Pictures of the Year International competition.<sup>563</sup> The illustrations specifically depicted migrants' exodus from Turkey to arrive to Europe in search of a better life. The academics' aim was to understand the overarching theme concerning refugees in these pictures; in other words, how the media and "non-official" representations portray them. Predictably, 34.5% of the images illustrated a state of transfer in which refugees were involved in some type of movement whether by foot, water or public transportation.<sup>564</sup> 22.2% of these pictures showed interactions between migrants and, either, family members, the authorities or medical staff. Around 15.1% of the depictions represented the "action" of waiting and 15% showed symbols such as barriers, heat blankets, life vests and, in more extreme cases, death. Overall, the scholars conclude that in most of these photos, as in the majority of news media outlets, refugees coming to Europe are largely depicted as vulnerable human beings, deprived of agency, dependent on foreign aid, in constant desperate situations or as violent threats.<sup>565</sup> The authors of the study explain, "Photographs do require less cognitive processing power than words to understand, and the

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<sup>562</sup> Ibid. p. 103

<sup>563</sup> K Greenwood, and T.J. Thomson, *Framing the Migration: A Study of News Photographs Showing People Fleeing War and Persecution* in International Communication Gazette (2019). Doi: 10.1177/1748048519833515, pp. 7 - 8

<sup>564</sup> Ibid. p. 9

<sup>565</sup> Ibid. p. 19

content of photographs is more readily familiar to viewers than the content of text”.<sup>566</sup> Therefore, it is unsurprising that in a poll by the Cattaneo Institute; the interviewees showed an extremely distorted vision of the migration phenomenon considering the fact these types of pictures are accessible to a large public on a daily basis.<sup>567</sup>

### MIGRANT CRIMINALITY IN ITALY

In this context, a sensitive topic arises: migrant criminality. Is a rise in immigration directly proportional to a rise in crime? A 2018 survey by sociology professor Luigi Solivetti suggests the equation “delinquency and migration” is common, due not only to prejudice and hostility towards newcomers, but also to financial hardships that many migrants experience.<sup>568</sup> The majority are unskilled workers who struggle to find employment in the host countries. Therefore, to survive, they often end up taking on illegal work, or suffer unemployment or, in worst-case scenarios, turn to organised crime. However, Solivetti, by analysing the Italian case, argues foreigners are over-represented in stereotypes of criminality despite the fact that over the past three years there has been a steady decline in violent crimes in Italy. Solivetti, by examining specific offenses occurring between 1988 and 2015 in Italy, shows that accusations against migrants have risen along with the increase of the immigrant population.<sup>569</sup> He further concludes that people residing in Italy without Italian citizenship are 3.3 times more likely to be represented in most types of felonies with a rise to 4 times if the crimes involved are sexual violence, murder or armed robbery.<sup>570</sup> He points to a pivotal issue: statistically the numbers of crimes in Italy are declining along with a steady increase in migrants’ presence. In contrast,

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<sup>566</sup> Ibid. p. 4

<sup>567</sup> Daniele Pirozzi, *Che Cosa ci Raccontano le Foto sui Migranti*, Il Foglio. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.ilfoglio.it/societa/2019/06/16/news/che-cosa-ci-raccontano-le-foto-sui-migranti-260421/>

<sup>568</sup> Luigi M. Solivetti, *Crimine e Immigrazione in Italia*, Hume Page, Last Accessed September 30<sup>th</sup> 2019, <http://www.fondazionehume.it/societa/crimine-e-immigrazione-in-italia/>

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Ibid. Solivetti also states the challenge in assessing criminality since numerous offenses are not reported and when they are, the perpetrator is often unknown. Frequently the prosecutors rely on the victims’ description of the delinquent, which can be inaccurate or faulty.



there is a significant increase in accusations against them specifically when violent crimes, such as rape, are involved.

The reality is that numbers of foreigners legally residing in Italy has almost tripled and yet there has been a significant reduction in their detainment.<sup>571</sup> In 2003, 1.16 of every 100 migrant residents went to jail but in 2018, that number was down to 0.39.<sup>572</sup> Furthermore, due to racial prejudice, it is often claimed that black Africans have a greater tendency to delinquency; yet, the reality is the percentage of people from Sub-Saharan Africa detained in Italian prisons is low and the crimes they are charged with overwhelmingly comprise unlawful selling of commodities, not violent offenses.<sup>573</sup> Similarities can be drawn for imprisoned Romanians whose percentage of incarceration in 2009 amounted to 0.33% and in 2018 diminished to 0.22%.<sup>574</sup> The suspicion of racial profiling is unfortunately poignant since, following a survey by organisation *Fundamental Rights Agency* (FRA), 28% of Sub-Saharan Africans and 32% of North Africans claimed their phenotypes rather than their behaviour played an important role in being policed.<sup>575</sup>

#### THE CASE OF OUSSEYNOU SY AND THE ITALIAN MEDIA

On the morning of March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019, a group of fifty-one junior high school students plus three adults were leaving the Serio di Crema gym to return to Vailati Middle School in Northern Italy.<sup>576</sup> The bus driver, Ousseynou Sy, a middle-aged man, a naturalised Italian with Senegalese and French origins, was in charge. During the trip he suddenly changed route, forced the adults to tie the children to their seats while threatening them with a knife, threw gasoline

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<sup>571</sup> Claudio Paravati and Luca Di Sciullo, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazioni 2018*, p. 191

<sup>572</sup> Ibid.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid. p. 193

<sup>574</sup> Ibid. p. 192

<sup>575</sup> Ibid. p. 191. Although there is no solid research in Italy concerning this matter, it would not surprise that incarceration rates for certain groups of the population in Italy decreased if racial profiling did not exist. Even though reporters do write articles regarding racial profiling in the EU, in Italy there seems to be a lack of investigation on this issue.

<sup>576</sup> Il Post. *Cosa Sappiamo di Ousseynou Sy, l'Autista dell'Autobus Incendiato a Milano*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.ilpost.it/2019/03/21/ousseynou-sy-storia/>

on the floor and started shouting he wanted revenge for migrant children dying in the Mediterranean Sea. He claimed his purpose was to provoke a high-profile act in order to draw attention to people victimized while they attempted to reach Italian shores in search of a better life. The episode has a happy ending because, at the back of the hijacked bus, two students, Ramy Shehata and Adam El Hamami, managed to get a hold of a telephone and alert their parents as well as the authorities. Although the driver had set the bus on fire, everybody survived and there were no physical injuries.<sup>577</sup> Ousseynou Sy was immediately arrested and currently has to answer for the following crimes: kidnapping, attempted mass murder with terroristic intent, arson and resisting arrest.<sup>578</sup> He risks up to twenty years in jail and, currently, is detained in San Vittore prison in Milan.<sup>579</sup>

This event is particularly exceptional because the two students who made the life-saving call, Ramy Shehata and Adam El Hamami, are second-generation immigrants from Egypt without Italian citizenship because of how current laws are structured.<sup>580</sup> While the debate surrounding the bus driver's access to citizenship (through marriage) enraged public opinion, attention was also focused on the two teenagers' status. Politician Matteo Salvini, granted them Italian citizenship in a public ceremony, stating they had served their country well.<sup>581</sup> Naturalisation, in this case, was a prize for a noble act, something the Italian government publicly ceded in a particular circumstance. As for Ousseynou Sy, intense scrutiny of his origins

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> Cesare Giuzzi and Andrea Galli, *I Verballi di Sy, l'Attentatore dell'Autobus: «Le Voci dei Piccoli Migranti, la Pistola, Salvini e Di Maio»*. Il Corriere della Sera. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [https://milano.corriere.it/19\\_marzo\\_24/voci-piccoli-migranti-pistola-maio-salvini-parole-sy-l-attentatore-san-giuliano-656e70ca-4d9a-11e9-8911-13a101900170.shtml](https://milano.corriere.it/19_marzo_24/voci-piccoli-migranti-pistola-maio-salvini-parole-sy-l-attentatore-san-giuliano-656e70ca-4d9a-11e9-8911-13a101900170.shtml)

<sup>579</sup> Ibid. Ousseynou Sy on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 was found guilty of attempted murder and condemned to twenty-four years in jail. Ansa, *Driver Ousseynou Sy, 47, found guilty of attempted murder*, Last Accessed January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021, [https://www.ansa.it/english/news/general\\_news/2020/07/15/driver-ousseynou-sy-47-found-guilty-of-attempted-murder\\_b1e8a4e8-4bcc-4479-b657-5798d382e3fb.html](https://www.ansa.it/english/news/general_news/2020/07/15/driver-ousseynou-sy-47-found-guilty-of-attempted-murder_b1e8a4e8-4bcc-4479-b657-5798d382e3fb.html)

<sup>580</sup> Il Post, *Adam El Hamami e Ramy Shehata, i due Ragazzi che Contribuirono a Sventare il Dirottamento dell'Autobus a San Donato Milanese, sono Diventati Cittadini Italiani*, Last Accessed October 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.ilpost.it/2019/07/27/adam-ramy-cittadinanza-italiana/>. As explained earlier, in Italy, “right by soil” or commonly known as *ius soli* does not exist. Italian law requires *ius sanguinis* or “right by blood”; that is, it is necessary to have at least one parent with Italian citizenship to become naturalised.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid.

and how he became Italian took place; he did not come to Italy as a refugee or an illegal alien, but in 2004, having married an Italian woman, which is a right granted in Italian immigration law.<sup>582</sup> Right wing politicians and news outlets called for annulment of his naturalisation.<sup>583</sup>

This event re-opened the debate on who has the right to citizenship and who does not and, whether citizenship can be revoked. The issue of legalising *ius soli* (right by soil), currently stalled in the parliament, returned to the spotlight. Italian news, while talking about this episode, particularly focused on the suspect's origins, thus suggesting he was an outsider, not belonging to Italian society despite the fact he was been a legal citizen for fifteen years.<sup>584</sup> Further aggravating Sy's situation was his criminal record: his driver's license suspension because of driving while intoxicated and a sexual harassment accusation against a minor of which he was later acquitted.<sup>585</sup> Most news outlets, such as *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, *Il Tempo*, *Il Giornale* and many more, when reporting this episode never failed to mention his Senegalese origins or simply mentioned "the Senegalese man". Such approach was perhaps to emphasise the fact this man does not "belong" to Italian society and his ethnic background has to be scrutinized instead of the crime he perpetrated.

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019, *Il Libero* published the following headline (Figure 26): "Intervengano gli Infermieri. Per la Sinistra Stordita l'Erode Senegalese è Vittima della Lega" (Nurses must Intervene. For the Unhinged Left, the Senegalese Herod is a Victim of La Lega).

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<sup>582</sup> Poletti Fabio, *Nella Periferia dov'è Nata la Rabbia di Ousseynou*. La Stampa. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.lastampa.it/cronaca/2019/03/21/news/nella-periferia-dov-e-nata-la-rabbia-di-ousseynou-1.33689631>

<sup>583</sup> Dagospia. *L'ATTENTATORE? "VA COMPRESO"*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.dagospia.com/rubrica-3/politica/rsquo-attentatore-ldquo-va-compreso-rdquo-ndash-gad-lerner-198987.htm>

<sup>584</sup> Cristina Gauri, *Gad Lerner da Ricovero: "Ingiusto togliere cittadinanza a Ousseynou Sy"*. Il Primato Nazionale. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://ilprimatonazionale.it/politica/gad-lerner-ingiusto-togliere-cittadinanza-ousseynou-sy-110506/>

<sup>585</sup> Il Post. *Cosa Sappiamo di Ousseynou Sy, l'Autista dell'Autobus Incendiato a Milano*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.ilpost.it/2019/03/21/ousseynou-sy-storia/>



**Figure 26,** Il Libero, *Intervengano gli infermieri. Per la sinistra stordita l'Erode Senegalese è vittima della Lega*, 2019, Frontpage of Il Libero

The title continues its rant by stating “Per I Progressisti: il Sequestro è Figlio dell’Odio dei Governi contro i Neri, un Gesto in Risposta a Salvini” (For progressives: kidnapping is the result of government’s hatred against Blacks, a gesture, in reply to Salvini). This title sarcastically compares Ousseynou Sy’s gesture to historical figure Herod, who notoriously

ordered the Massacre of the Innocents in the Bible,<sup>586</sup> and furthermore posits on Sy's Senegalese origins, despite their irrelevance to the crime he committed. *Il Libero* continues by disparaging left-wing factions who protested against racism directed against the suspect. This headline, expounds on the driver's African origins as an undeniable link with his delinquent acts. The newspaper aims at augmenting its sales with an inflammatory race-baiting title, disguising it as an ironic commentary against the "unhinged left" that opposed xenophobic remarks against the suspect and urged to focus on his crimes.

Journalist Gad Lerner publicly opposed the idea of removing the accused's citizenship because the Italian constitution guarantees it as a fundamental right, which could not be eliminated, even during Fascism.<sup>587</sup> He was later attacked by numerous political figures as well as by the public who accused him of defending Sy. Lerner never publicly defended the suspect, but argued the uselessness of removing Italian nationality from someone who had acquired it legally. Nevertheless, he was severely criticized with one news source defining him as a "radical troll".<sup>588</sup> Overall, the discussion focused on the "Senegalese" aspect as if it were relevant to the crime he committed.

Aforementioned writer Pap Khouma, originally Senegalese but naturalized Italian, describes in his account of everyday racism in Italy, numerous episodes where his "Italianness" is doubted purely on a racial basis.<sup>589</sup> In one particular episode, Khouma recounts being harassed in the street by a random man because he did not consider him worthy of residing in Italy due to his blackness. Despite stating he was a naturalized Italian but of Senegalese origin, the response often was "so you are not a true Italian" or "you are only Senegalese", thus placing a racial barrier between his blackness and "Italianness". Khouma recounts the ubiquity of the

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<sup>586</sup> Treccani, *Erode il Grande Re di Giudea*, Last Accessed January 3rd 2020, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/erode-il-grande-re-di-giudea/>

<sup>587</sup> Cristina Gauri, *Gad Lerner da Ricovero*

<sup>588</sup> Dagospia. *L'ATTENTATORE? "VA COMPRESO"*.

<sup>589</sup> Pap Khouma, *Noi Italiani Neri*, pp. 41 - 42

utterance “if you are Black you are not Italian”,<sup>590</sup> therefore the manner in which Italian media portrayed Sy’s actions by racializing them is unsurprising. News outlets opted to focus on Sy’s African migrant origins in order to posit his being “out of place” in Italy and to criticize the fact that a black man accessed Italian citizenship.

At this point, it is useful to mention once again Alexander Caviedes’s essay on media representation of migrants in Italy; he states Italy tends to focus on the issue of criminality in contrast to the UK and France who focus on economic issues.<sup>591</sup> Caviedes cited research conducted by Italian sociologists during the nineties concerning media broadcasting of immigration, and noted that a large majority focused on delinquency. He mentions the work of political scientist Anna Triandafyllidou, who examined Italian media in the nineties and points out that the main discourse centred on “us” versus “them”.<sup>592</sup> Moreover, ethnicity appears to be the main dividing factor. Scholars Paul M. Sniderman, Thomas Piazza, Pierangelo Peri and Rui J.P Figueiredo Jr produced a study on prejudices and negative stereotypes by Italians against immigrants in 2000. They gauged that 39.9% of Italians interviewed thought immigrants were complainers, 34.1% intruders and 26.5% violent.<sup>593</sup> Although the authors clearly specify their evaluations do not include all Italians and assessed that numerous people interviewed claimed not having any negative reaction to immigrants, it is nevertheless important to point out that negative images against newcomers are present.<sup>594</sup> It appears that when the perpetrator of a crime is not autochthonous, this will tap into existing prejudices and “confirm” them. The bus driver, who appears to have serious mental health issues, is still cited often in extreme right-wing rhetoric in Italy, as an example that immigrants are often delinquents and cause havoc

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<sup>590</sup> Ibid.

<sup>591</sup> Alexander Caviedes, *An Emerging ‘European’ News Portrayal of Immigration?*, pp. 903 - 904

<sup>592</sup> Triandafyllidou Anna, *Nation and Immigration: A Study of the Italian Press Discourse*, *Social Identities*, 5:1 (1999), 65-88, DOI: 10.1080/13504639951626, p. 79

<sup>593</sup> Paul M. Sniderman, Thomas Piazza, Pierangelo Peri and Rui J.P Figueiredo Jr, *The Nature of Prejudice: Race and Nationality as Bases of Conflict*, in *The Outsider: Prejudice and Politics in Italy*, (Princeton, USA, Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 28

<sup>594</sup> Ibid. p. 29

once arriving to Italian borders.<sup>595</sup> His case, instead of being treated as a criminal act by an apparently mentally disturbed individual, became a political issue.

### ITALIAN CITIZENSHIP: HOW DOES IT WORK?

My following section analyses specific points of Italian citizenship legislation, which has been subjected to several changes since its initial creation in 1912.<sup>596</sup> Numerous parts detail different conditions for allowing or denying citizenship; however, I will focus only on those parts most relevant to my argument. I aim to examine the press coverage resulting from attempts at slightly modifying the law on Italian citizenship. The first law to be passed concerning citizenship in Italy was on June 13<sup>th</sup> 1912 while the country was still a kingdom.<sup>597</sup> Its main principle – which remains in force today – is *ius sanguinis* meaning the “right by blood”. Anyone with an Italian parent could automatically become Italian or, if born on Italian soil from unknown parents, the individual could be accorded Italian citizenship. It was easier in 1912 than now to acquire Italian citizenship for foreigners; the condition stipulated that they had to live on Italian territory without committing any crime for at least five consecutive years, versus the ten years required today.<sup>598</sup> Immigration scholar Ferruccio Pastore contends this is due to Italy’s historic emigration issue and low rates of immigration.<sup>599</sup> This particular legislation was introduced to protect Italians abroad and guarantee their access to Italian territory if they decided to return.<sup>600</sup> Marriage to an Italian citizen was another criterion under which Italian citizenship was rendered available.<sup>601</sup> The 1912 legislation did not state any particular amount of time for the process to take place; however, on February 5<sup>th</sup> 1992, when the second law

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<sup>595</sup> Dagospia. *L’ATTENTATORE? “VA COMPRESO”*.

<sup>596</sup> Ambasciata d’Italia – Lima, *Legge 13 Giugno 1912, n.555 sulla Cittadinanza Italiana*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

[https://amblima.esteri.it/resource/2007/03/12736\\_f\\_amb61Legge13giugno1912n\\_555sullacittadinanzaitaliana.htm](https://amblima.esteri.it/resource/2007/03/12736_f_amb61Legge13giugno1912n_555sullacittadinanzaitaliana.htm)

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> Guido Tintori, *Nuovi Italiani e Italiani nel Mondo. Il Nodo della Cittadinanza* in *Storia d'Italia – Annali*: 24. Migrazioni, edited by Paola Corti and Matteo Sanfilippo, (Torino, Einaudi, 2009), pp. 745-746

<sup>600</sup> Ibid.

<sup>601</sup> Ambasciata d’Italia – Lima, *Legge 13 Giugno 1912*



regarding citizenship was promulgated, the timeline for obtaining citizenship through wedlock ranged from twelve months in the case of offspring and twenty-four without offspring.<sup>602</sup> This nevertheless has changed due to the previously mentioned Security Decree of 2018, which extended the time from twenty-four months to forty-eight months as well as the revocation of citizenship for naturalized individuals who have committed crimes.<sup>603</sup>

Although this piece of legislation is eighteen pages long and contains numerous points, I focus on one particular section. The second part of the fourth article regarding children born in Italy of non-European parents who have not been naturalized states that individuals born under these circumstances can become Italian citizens within one year of turning eighteen and uninterrupted residence in Italy.<sup>604</sup> The principle, by which individuals born in a specific country automatically acquire that country's citizenship, is defined as *ius soli*, otherwise said "the right by birth in the territory" and is in effect in Canada and the United States.<sup>605</sup> In 2015 the Chamber of Deputies approved two modifications to this particular point: the first one named "*ius soli temperato*" (*ius soli* with restrictions) positing that children born on Italian territory had access to citizenship if one of their parents had legally resided in Italy for the previous five years.<sup>606</sup> The second change, *ius culturae*, proposed the right to citizenship of migrants coming to Italy by age twelve and successfully completing at least five years of school, as well as individuals arriving between the ages of twelve and eighteen, living on Italian soil for a minimum of six years and successfully completing no less than one cycle of secondary education.<sup>607</sup> However, in the summer of 2017, this proposed bill was blocked from final

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<sup>602</sup> Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana, *Legge 5 Febbraio 1992, n. 91 - Nuove Norme sulla Cittadinanza*, Last Accessed October 6<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.gazzettaufficiale.it/eli/id/1992/02/15/092G0162/sg>

<sup>603</sup> Cittadinanza - Camera dei Deputati Servizio Studi XVIII Legislatura, *Le modifiche introdotte dal Decreto Legislativo 113 del 2018*, October 30<sup>th</sup> 2018, Last Accessed September 30<sup>th</sup> 2019, [https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1104541.pdf?\\_1565255889404](https://www.camera.it/temiap/documentazione/temi/pdf/1104541.pdf?_1565255889404)

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> La Repubblica. *Cittadinanza, 'Ius Soli' o 'Ius Sanguinis'? Ecco Come Funziona in Europa e nel Mondo*. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/05/10/news/ius\\_soli\\_europa-58478439/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/05/10/news/ius_soli_europa-58478439/)

<sup>606</sup> Sky. *Tg24, Ius soli, Cosa Prevede la Legge in Discussione sulla Cittadinanza*, Last Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019, <https://tg24.sky.it/politica/2017/06/15/ius-soli-italia.html>

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.



approval in the Senate due to La Lega's vigorous opposition, which ended in a fist fight in Parliament.<sup>608</sup> This law would have given the right to citizenship to an estimated eight hundred thousand minors according to the Leone Moressa Foundation, an institution whose mission is to investigate migration issues.<sup>609</sup> At present, this bill has yet to be approved.<sup>610</sup>



**Figure 27, La Repubblica, *Ius Soli*, la retromarcia del governo. Al Sud barricate contro i migranti, 2017, Front page of La Repubblica**

<sup>608</sup> Sky.Tg24, *Ius Soli*, *Caos al Senato*

<sup>609</sup> Sky. Tg24, *Ius soli*, *Cosa Prevede la Legge in Discussione sulla Cittadinanza*

<sup>610</sup> Roberta Ricucci, *Cittadini Senza Cittadinanza*, (Torino, Edizioni SEB27, 2018), pp. 78 – 79

On July 17<sup>th</sup> 2017, the national newspaper *La Repubblica* published the following headline (Figure 27) “*Ius Soli*, la Retromarcia del Governo” (*Ius Soli*, The Government Backs Up), followed by “Al Sud Barricate contro I Migranti” (In the South, Barricades Against Migrants). Moreover, the abovementioned titles are positioned near a large photograph of two black refugees holding an infant, disembarking from a vessel. These two individuals were presumably rescued at sea and arrived to Italian shores in dire conditions. As explained, “*Ius Soli*” uniquely applies to the offspring of first-generation migrants legally residing in Italy for a specific amount of time. The proximity of the words “*Ius Soli*” to a photograph of a refugee disembarking is misleading and creates confusion. Furthermore, the follow up to the title regarding the *Ius Soli* stating “barricades against migrants” increases the level of misinterpretation, and in this instance, hostility.

In addition, on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2017, *Il Giornale* published the following headline (Figure 28): “Lobby dell’Invasione. La Sinistra Usa anche I Bambini per lo *Ius Soli*” (The invasion lobby. the left also uses children for the *Ius Soli*). It continues by stating below: “La Repubblica Schiera I Minorenni. Centrodestra Unito: Fermiamo la Legge” (La Repubblica deploys minors. center-right united: let us stop the law). This newspaper takes a defensive stance against the “*Ius Soli*”, furthermore claiming children are a ruse to approve an unlawful regulation. Moreover, the title “The Invasion Lobby” sets the tone for a conspiracy theory, thus directly linking migration to an “invasion” and a “lobby”, alluding to migration’s lucrative potential. The final sentence claims the centre-right is united and ready to stop the law, as if a political faction were preparing for battle against the “evil doers” (in this case the left) attempting to alter Italian society. Furthermore, on the right of the headline, a photograph depicts military aircraft during an air show performance, illustrating the Italian flag colours, in a display of patriotism. This is to symbolize Italian pride, which according to *Il Giornale* is off-limits for migrants and even for their offspring born on Italian soil.

CONTROCULTURA

Dai graffiti alle «faccine»: storia e futuro della scrittura

LOBBY DELL'INVASIONE

## La sinistra usa anche i bambini per lo ius soli

*«La Repubblica» schiera i minorenni  
Centrodestra unito: fermiamo la legge*

Paolo Bracalini

UN'ESTATE A CACCIA DI ESIBIZIONI



**Figure 28**, Il Giornale, *La sinistra usa anche i bambini per lo Ius Soli*, 2017, Screenshot of Il Giornale

Migration scholar Chiara Marchetti suggests the current manner of dealing with the so-called other in Italy is through a scale of “deservingness” and recognition, thus ensuring migrants demonstrate they are worthy of “Italianess”.<sup>611</sup> To be an Italian, Marchetti suggests, it is compulsory to demonstrate to be a part of a “community of values”, generally identified as a hard-working, law-abiding, legal and honourable individual.<sup>612</sup> New-comers, in this context, seem to be implicitly excluded from this scale, therefore suggesting they are “unworthy”, and even their born in Italy offspring, of being or becoming Italian.<sup>613</sup> Going to the extent of

<sup>611</sup> Chiara Marchetti, “(Un)Deserving refugees Contested access to the ‘community of value’ in Italy” in *Europe and the Refugee Response a Crisis of Values?* eds. by Goździak Elżbieta M, Izabella Main, and Brigitte Suter, Routledge Studies in Development, Displacement and Resettlement. (New York: Routledge, 2020) <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9780429279317>, p. 237

<sup>612</sup> Ibid. p. 238

<sup>613</sup> Ibid.

excluding children of legal first-generation migrants, who were born on Italian soil, is a sinister suggestion of a purposeful exclusion of a group of people deemed “suspicious”. Furthermore, the dotish manner in which *Il Giornale* frames this issue as a “invasion lobby” underlines the deep-seethed hostility against the “other”.

#### CONCLUSION: SINGER MAHMOOD AND THE SANREMO FESTIVAL 2019

To conclude this chapter, I turn to singer Mahmood’s victory at the Sanremo Festival 2019 and the reaction it provoked.<sup>614</sup> The Sanremo Festival is an Italian annual music contest for Italian pop singers, which goes back to the fifties. Winners are propelled into the public eye and reach great acclaim. It is the most popular music award event in Italy and is followed by numerous viewers.<sup>615</sup> The 2019 edition saw the triumph of 27-year-old Alessandro Mahmoud, professionally known as Mahmood, with his song *Soldi* (Money) in which he talks about his difficult relations with his father.<sup>616</sup> Despite initial surprise, which saw artist Ultimo as the public’s favourite, Mahmood’s song won the jury’s preference.<sup>617</sup> His victory was met with some resentment; Mahmood, born and raised in Milan’s outskirts is the son of a Sardinian woman and Egyptian man.<sup>618</sup> Moreover, his song contains one verse in Arabic, which apparently added too much “ethnicity” for Italian journalist Maria Giovanna Maglie who severely criticized the outcome and tagged it as a political move since the popular vote did not favour Mahmood.<sup>619</sup>

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<sup>614</sup> The Local, *Singer Mahmood Won Sanremo 2019 and Salvini is not Happy*

<sup>615</sup> Ibid.

<sup>616</sup> Candida Morvillo, *Mahmood: «Mio Papà è Andato via Quando Avevo 5 Anni. Ora non ho più Rabbia»*. Il Corriere della Sera. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [https://www.corriere.it/cronache/19\\_febbraio\\_17/mahmood-mio-papa-andato-via-quando-avevo-5-anni-ora-non-ho-piu-rabbia-77eb665c-32f3-11e9-ab13-b1bad8396d5f.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/cronache/19_febbraio_17/mahmood-mio-papa-andato-via-quando-avevo-5-anni-ora-non-ho-piu-rabbia-77eb665c-32f3-11e9-ab13-b1bad8396d5f.shtml)

<sup>617</sup> Andrea Laffranchi, *Sanremo, Gare Separate: mai più un Caso Mahmood*. Il Corriere della Sera. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. [https://www.corriere.it/spettacoli/19\\_settembre\\_16/sanremo-gare-separate-giovane-non-vincera-festival-6359cd0a-d8b6-11e9-a64f-042100a6f996.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/spettacoli/19_settembre_16/sanremo-gare-separate-giovane-non-vincera-festival-6359cd0a-d8b6-11e9-a64f-042100a6f996.shtml)

<sup>618</sup> Mattia Pirola, *Vincitore Sanremo 2019, Polemiche (Ignoranti) sulle Origini di Mahmood*. Ci Siamo, Notizie d’Italia. Last Accessed October 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. <https://www.cisiamo.info/cultura/spettacolo/2019/02/10/vincitore-sanremo-2019-polemiche-ignoranti-origini-di-mahmood/>

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

On February 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, Maglie tweeted (Figure 29): “Un vincitore molto annunciato si chiama Maometto, la frasetta in Arabo c’è, c’è anche il Ramadan e il narghilè, e il meticcio è assicurato. La canzone importa poco, avete guardato le facce della giuria d’onore?” (A widely acclaimed winner is called Maometto, the little phrase in Arab is there along with Ramadan and the narghilè, and the miscegenation is assured. The song counts for little, have you seen the honourable jury’s faces?).



**Figure 29**, Tweet by Mariagiovanna Maglie, *Un Vincitore molto annunciato Si chiama Maometto, la frasetta in arabo c'è, c'è anche il Ramadan e il narghilè, e il meticcio è assicurato. La canzone importa poco, Avete guardato le facce della giuria d'onore?#Sanremo2019*, 2019

Maglie's rant is directed against Mahmood's North African origins by disparaging the religious ritual of the Ramadan and the narghilè, a smoking instrument popular in North Africa and the Middle East. Furthermore, the reference to miscegenation is a sad reminder of Fascist era anti- miscegenation laws, instituted during Italian colonialism in Africa in the twentieth century. Maglie, appears to be concerned with “contamination” of Italians with foreigners, particularly those with “undesirable” backgrounds. The journalist moreover, suggests



Mahmood's victory is a political move in order to enforce diversity in a music context. In an era in which migration and integration issues are at the forefront in the Italian political scene, this musician's triumph appears to Maglie as an affront.

The winner was also considered "too foreign" for other notable viewers including Salvini who, in one tweet (Figure 30) subtly questioned the "Italianness" of the song and stating that he preferred Ultimo's lyrics.<sup>620</sup> Salvini chimed in the discussion with the following tweet: "#Mahmood.... Mah.... La canzone Italiana più bella? Io avrei scelto #Ultimo, voi che dite??" (Mahmoood.... Well... The best Italian song? I would have chosen Ultimo, what do you say?).



**Figure 30**, Tweet by Matteo Salvini, #Mahmood...mah... *La canzone italiana più bella?!? Io avrei scelto #Ultimo, voi che dite??* #Sanremo2019, 2019

The politician suggested Mahmood is not truly Italian because of his origins and the song's reference to North African culture and religion. Ultimo, in Salvini's thought, is a "true

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<sup>620</sup> The Local, *Singer Mahmood Won Sanremo 2019 and Salvini is not Happy*

Italian” because of the absence of any “ethnicity” from his persona and song. Therefore, he deserved to win the music contest.

Despite numerous social media comments concerning Mahmood’s origins including remarks that “an immigrant should not win an Italian contest” and “send him back home to sing”, the Sanremo presenters’ tenaciously defended him.<sup>621</sup> They stated the young man’s origins are irrelevant and he represents a “new multi-ethnic Italy”.<sup>622</sup> Mahmood even had to state publicly “he is “100% Italian” and that he has always lived in Milan, occasionally travelling to Egypt to see his father.<sup>623</sup> Although those negative comments do not represent the majority of the Italian population, they reveal a part of Italy’s “underbelly”. Scholars Adina Nerghes and Ju-Sung Lee in their analysis on the refugee crisis and Twitter, affirm that social media has the power of emotionally charging mainstream media narratives, thus users generally taking a stance and passionately discussing news events (so-called digital activism).<sup>624</sup> Particularly concerning contentious subjects such as migration, the academics observed a strong positive-negative dichotomy in how Twitter users express their opinions, therefore Maglie and Salvini’s tweets that air distaste towards Mahmood’s legitimate victory are unsurprising. Furthermore, Nerghes and Lee argue that Twitter debates can create social distortion, therefore exacerbating an already polarized issue.<sup>625</sup>

Political scholar Sandro Mezzadra in his essay *The New European Migratory Regime and the Shifting patterns of Contemporary Racism* (2012), argues that Italy’s current nationalism is an effect of the new migratory regimes and porous European borders.<sup>626</sup> Mezzadra suggests that

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<sup>621</sup> Mattia Pirola, *Vincitore Sanremo 2019, Polemiche (Ignoranti) sulle Origini di Mahmood*

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.

<sup>623</sup> Il Fatto Quotidiano, Razzismo, *Mahmood a Floris*: “Ho scoperto solo dopo Sanremo di essere straniero nel mio Paese”, Last Accessed October 4<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/03/20/razzismo-mahmood-a-floris-ho-scoperto-solo-dopo-sanremo-di-essere-straniero-nel-mio-paese/5050567/>

<sup>624</sup> Adina Nerghes and Lee Ju-Sung, “Narratives of the Refugee Crisis: A Comparative Study of Mainstream-Media and Twitter.” *Media and Communication* 7, no. 2 (2019): p. 277

<sup>625</sup> Ibid. p. 279

<sup>626</sup> Sandro Mezzadra, “The New European Migratory Regime and the Shifting Patterns of Contemporary Racism”, in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* ed. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, (New York, PELGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2012), p. 38

the ongoing Italian nationalistic wave is a result of racism morphing itself, thus exclusion of the so-called other from what is considered “a true Italian”.<sup>627</sup> Furthermore, Mezzadra cites philosopher Étienne Balibar who states that “racism constitutes a supplement internal to nationalism”, therefore the recent nationalist sentiment can be interpreted as a defence mechanism against new migratory patterns.<sup>628</sup> In addition, post-colonial scholar Cristina Lombardi-Diop, in her paper *Postracial/Postcolonial Italy* (2012), argues that Italy currently lives in oblivion in regard to race and the belief in Italian society’s supposed homogeneity.<sup>629</sup> Lombardi-Diop asserts Italians currently perceive themselves as “purely white”, devoid of external “dark contamination”, thus an entrenched hostility in including “external elements” within their community.<sup>630</sup> “Whiteness”, she writes, “has constituted for Italians a form of representational cohesiveness at different historical moments, providing an ideological and discursive tool for national identification and self-representation.”<sup>631</sup>

The incident with singer Mahmood’s victory at Sanremo illustrates the Italian self-perception as a homogenous, white population, furthermore aggressively pushing back against any type of “intrusion,” as Maglie’s tweet suggests. The fact that someone with African origins could possibly win the most prestigious Italian award created fear and discomfort. Maglie’s sinister phrase revolving around miscegenation shows a deeply rooted belief in a closed, uniform Italian society. I suggest that Mahmood’s episode illustrates the ongoing difficult integration process and Italy’s slow - and in some ways unwilling - transformation into a multicultural state.

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<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid. p. 39

<sup>629</sup> Cristina Lombardi-Diop, “Postracial/Postcolonial Italy”, in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* ed. Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, (New York, PELGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2012), pp. 175 - 176

<sup>630</sup> Ibid. p. 176

<sup>631</sup> Ibid.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **LA LEGA'S VISUAL CULTURE**

## INTRODUCTION

On a cold winter day in January, in view of March 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 regional and federal elections to choose the new president of the Lombardy region, the candidate Attilio Fontana was interviewed by a local radio, Radio Padania.<sup>632</sup> Fontana was the party head representing the centre-right coalition as well as member of an extreme right and xenophobic political party: La Lega. He was questioned concerning his stance on current immigration (mostly from African countries) to Italy. The candidate, in a soft-spoken voice, explained his beliefs: "Italy cannot accept all immigrants... We need to decide whether or not our ethnic group, our white race, our society should continue to exist, or be wiped out". Fontana furthermore expounded that diligence was necessary "Because they outnumber us, because they are more determined than we are to occupy this land."<sup>633</sup> Unsurprisingly these remarks provoked loud protests from many Italians and numerous political figures as well as requests for the candidate to step down following his explicitly xenophobic remarks.<sup>634</sup> Fontana, to remediate, justified himself by saying it was just a mental slip, an error in expression never to be repeated. He clarified by stating he simply believes in a different type of hospitality respecting "our" traditions and society.<sup>635</sup>

Fontana won the regional elections on March 4<sup>th</sup> with 49,79 % of the vote against his centre left opponent Giorgio Gori from political party Partito Democratico (PD) who merely got 29,09 %.<sup>636</sup> La Lega's politician is now Lombardia's governor. Even though it would be

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<sup>632</sup> Attilio Fontana (Lega): "Razza bianca è a rischio. Dobbiamo ribellarci". *Dopo Berlusconi a destra è gara di xenofobia*, Il Fatto Quotidiano. Last Accessed February 3 2019, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/01/15/attilio-fontana-lega-razza-bianca-e-rischio-dobbiamo-ribellarci-dopo-berlusconi-destra-e-gara-di-xenofobia/4093643/>

<sup>633</sup> Ibid.

<sup>634</sup> Oriana Liso, *Elezioni, bufera su Attilio Fontana per la "razza bianca". Salvini: "Siamo invasi". Gori: "E' un Borghese in giacca"*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 3 2019, [https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/01/15/news/elezioni\\_lombardia\\_attilio\\_fontana\\_centrodestra\\_razza\\_bianca\\_polemiche-186540209/](https://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/01/15/news/elezioni_lombardia_attilio_fontana_centrodestra_razza_bianca_polemiche-186540209/)

<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> *Risultati delle Elezioni Regionali 2018, Voti Presidente*. Regione Lombardia. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.elezioni2018.regione.lombardia.it/voti-presidente>

comforting to think Fontana's statements truly were the result of a gaffe, his anti-immigrant sentiments are unfortunately common if not widespread, which is corroborated not only by his electoral victory, but also by La Lega's popularity and rise in the public sphere.<sup>637</sup> This political party, since its creation in the eighties, has been on the front line of stigmatising groups of people based on religion, ethnicity, provenance, sexual orientation and political beliefs.<sup>638</sup> Fontana simply gave voice to a deep-seated fear in the wake of African, Asian, Central and Southern American, Eastern European and Middle Eastern migrants arriving to Italy's shores in the past decades.<sup>639</sup> As explained in the first chapter, Italy currently holds a deeply-embedded mentality associating "Italianness" to "whiteness" despite its numerous contradictions as well as historical facts challenging this belief.

#### SCOPE OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter, I will examine La Lega along with its political propaganda posters and logos moving from its origins, rise, consolidation, main figures, evolution, stance and current status. I analyse this political group in the context of a populist surge in Italy, Europe and in the USA, which culminated, or perhaps was rejuvenated by the 2016 election of Donald Trump. The start of this chapter covers the recent and seemingly unstoppable rise of right-wing populist political groups, as well as their supporters in Europe. The Foundation for European Progressive Studies published a report called *The State of Populism* (2016), indicating a surge in 2016 of populist organizations throughout European countries.<sup>640</sup> The report attempted to understand

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<sup>637</sup> *Sondaggi, la Lega al 33,5% stacca il Movimento 5 Stelle di 3,5 punti: è il risultato più alto di sempre.* Il Fatto Quotidiano. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/09/08/sondaggi-la-lega-al-335-stacca-il-movimento-5-stelle-di-35-punti-e-il-risultato-piu-alto-di-sempre/4612245/>

<sup>638</sup> Fabrizio Battistelli, *Capri Espiatori e Galline dalle Uova d'Oro: Perché la Destra è Vincente sull'Immigrazione*, Articolo 21. Last Accessed February 9<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.articolo21.org/2018/06/capri-espiatori-e-galline-dalle-uova-doro-perche-la-destra-e-vincente-sullimmigrazione/>

<sup>639</sup> *Dati Statistici sull'Immigrazione in Italia dal 2008 al 2013 e Aggiornamento 2014.* Ministero dell'Interno. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. [http://ucs.interno.gov.it/files/allegatipag/1263/immigrazione\\_in\\_italia.pdf](http://ucs.interno.gov.it/files/allegatipag/1263/immigrazione_in_italia.pdf)

<sup>640</sup> Ernst Stetter, Tibor Kaldot, Maria Freitas and Tamás Boros. *The State of Populism in the European Union 2016.* (Brussels, Foundation for European Progressive Studies, 2016) Last Accessed 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019 [https://www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzes/264/state\\_of\\_populism\\_in\\_europe\\_in\\_2016pdf](https://www.policysolutions.hu/userfiles/elemzes/264/state_of_populism_in_europe_in_2016pdf).

what pushes voters to believe in promises of lower unemployment, tougher borders to oppose “out of control” immigration, cutting down on outsourcing as well as nationalist ideas expounded by these political groups. I then define populism and examine its contemporary evolution in Western democracies. Numerous scholars give various definitions to this complex movement thus resulting in a plethora of diverging opinions. However, there are several key points upon which academics agree concerning right-wing populism: the anti-elitist and anti-establishment sentiments, an aversion to professional political leaders collectively seen as corrupt and distant from “ordinary” people, the belief that “anyone” can be a politician and that the needs of local populations are not the purview of a small group of privileged elites. Other characteristics include strong patriotic sentiments and consequently anti-immigration stances.

I also analyse the specific Italian context following the result of March 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 elections, which saw La Lega and Movimento 5 Stelle triumph and humiliate the centre-left progressive party Partito Democratico (PD) and other smaller leftist parties. I seek to understand the reasons behind these organizations’ popularity, what Italian voters expect from their leaders, and how art and visual culture were mobilized to serve the ends of certain right leaning parties within the election. In this framework, I shall restrict my research scope to examining La Lega from its origins, explaining why it was created, who the main protagonists were, who they have become, the specific regions where La Lega consolidated its power as well as why it gained ground. My intention is to provide the reader with the context to understand its origins and why its popularity has risen continuously over a period of approximately forty years. I have closely observed how it transformed itself, where it stands in Italian politics and who its voter base is. I furthermore discuss my belief that La Lega is a far-right wing populist party and why it is an urgent matter of concern that they not be underestimated. In an era of social media when information is available immediately, where “fake news”, “dog-whistle” politics and a variety of dubious news outlets are all easily accessible, it is crucial to understand

how this political party has gained power. I focus especially on the manner in which visual culture – in this instance, political posters and logos – is used to appeal to a certain demographic and weaponize their message in ways that communicate white “Italian-ness” as under attack; thus, an anti-immigrant platform may seem normal and justified.

As an art historian, I critically examine two of its main symbols, the first representing medieval northern hero Alberto da Giussano and the second illustrating the “Sun of the Alps”, a starlike green emblem. Finally, I discuss four political posters that appeared in the streets in various elections. The six images I expound upon were created at different times during La Lega’s existence, therefore I will analyse them chronologically from the beginning of the eighties when La Lega gained traction with the creation of their two main logos, Alberto da Giussano and the Sun of the Alps, through the nineties when Southern Italians were targeted. I then reflect on the first decade of the twenty-first century when immigrants became the main culprit for Italy’s problems, until 2010 when the last poster I analyse, which is emblematic of the party’s toxicity. During the end of the eighties and nineties, La Lega blamed Italy’s unstable economic situation on the underdeveloped South of Italy and “lazy” southerners.<sup>641</sup> Interestingly, their stigmatizing of specific groups of people was initially internal and stemmed from anti-southern racism, which did not start with La Lega, but pre-existed since Italian unification in 1861.<sup>642</sup> La Lega simply exploited numerous existing prejudices for political gain and used specific language and visual representations to promote these ideas.

However, there has been a shift in their discourse, not only in the message they convey, but also in their visual publicity and propaganda. From targeting Italian southerners during the eighties and nineties, La Lega, with the onset of the twenty-first century, shifted its focus onto immigrants, specifically those from certain countries, ethnicities and of particular religions, as

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<sup>641</sup> Francesco Jori, *Dalla Liga alla Lega. Storia, Movimenti, Protagonisti*. (Venezia, Marsilio Editori, 2009), pp. 73 - 78

<sup>642</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911. Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora*. (New York, Pelgrave Macmillan, 2006) pp. 1- 3

Italy's problem to expunge.<sup>643</sup> I examine these images consumed through television, radio, internet, gatherings, street billboards and fliers by a large majority of people in the Italian peninsula and argue the danger they represent to the groups stigmatized. Apart from a few journalists and bloggers, generally non-Italians, there have not been significant protests against La Lega's denigrating and offensive imagery; in fact, it is generally viewed with acceptance or indifference by locals.<sup>644</sup> This chapter aims to examine the effectiveness of the party's visual propaganda because it contains misleading information. As stated by art historian and museologist Giuliana Tomasella, who analyses nineteenth-century Italian colonial imagery, there is a worrying lack of art history literature regarding political propaganda in Italy.<sup>645</sup> This dissertation seeks to contribute to this under-studied area.

#### POPULISM IN THE WEST

On 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2018, *The Economist* published an article entitled *Europe's Populists are Waltzing into the Main stream* in which it traced a relentless and steady rise of right wing populist groups throughout Europe.<sup>646</sup> As sources, the magazine used statistics elaborated by Harvard University and the Tony Blair Institute, which state that in 2000, the percentage of populist voters was about 8.5%, but jumped to 24.1% in 2017.<sup>647</sup> Furthermore, these educational organizations registered a steady rise of right wing populism starting in the eighties. Some of the reasons traced by scholars and studies are an increase in refugees and asylum seekers in Europe due to difficult and deadly situations in various regions of the world, a

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<sup>643</sup> Fabrizio Battistelli, *Capri Espiatori e Galline dalle Uova d'Oro*

<sup>644</sup> Richardson John E. and Monica Colombo. *Continuity and Change in Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord*. *Journal of Language and Politics* 12, no. 2 (2013): pp. 180 - 183. doi: [10.1075/jlp.12.2.02ric](https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.12.2.02ric).

<sup>645</sup> Giuliana Tomasella, *Esporre l'Italia Coloniale. Interpretazioni dell'Alterità*. (Padova, Il Poligrafo Casa Editrice, 2017) pp. 14 – 15

<sup>646</sup> *Europe's Populists are Waltzing Into the Mainstream*. *The Economist*. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.economist.com/briefing/2018/02/03/europes-populists-are-waltzing-into-the-mainstream>

<sup>647</sup> Yascha Mounk, Limor Gultchin and Martin Eiermann, *European Populism: Trends, Threats and Future Prospects*, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://institute.global/insight/renewing-centre/european-populism-trends-threats-and-future-prospects>

stagnating economy in European countries with high unemployment (especially among young generations), globalisation, fear of migrant criminality and religious clashes.<sup>648</sup>

Populism's main component is an ideology of "them" versus "us" leading to feelings of hostility on the part of "locals" towards anything from global corporations, banks, and elitist politicians to visible minorities, immigrants, Jews, Muslims or nomadic populations.<sup>649</sup> Political scientist, Ruth Wodack identifies such generalized feelings of hostility as "Politics of Fear", thus populist groups, particularly from the far right, exploit racial and/or economic anxieties to garner votes and hold power in government.<sup>650</sup> The report *The State of Populism in the European Union in 2016* traces a significant success of these political factions in Eastern Europe with Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria being the countries where populism is most prominent.<sup>651</sup> Eastern European states, according to this survey, have the highest percentage of voters willing to vote for right wing populism that supports strict border control, rejection of migrants, nativist views, patriotism, emotionally appealing charismatic leaders and the upholding of Christianity as the dominant religion.<sup>652</sup> Even though this document recorded a predominance of these organizations in Eastern Europe, it also reported a steady increase in Western Europe.<sup>653</sup>

The percentage of voters in Italy who cast their ballots for the Five Star Movement (*Movimento 5 Stelle*), an ambiguous populist political movement that emerged from comedian Beppe Grillo's<sup>654</sup> vulgar street performances as well as his blog, reached 30% in 2016 with

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<sup>648</sup> Ibid.

<sup>649</sup> Martin Eiermann, *Confronting Populist Anxieties: How the Centre-Left Can Quell the Far-Right Surge*, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://institute.global/insight/renewing-centre/populist-anxieties>

<sup>650</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015). pp. 4 - 5 doi: 10.4135/9781446270073.

<sup>651</sup> Ernst Stetter, Tibor Kaldot, Maria Freitas and Tamás Boros. *The State of Populism in the European Union 2016*, pp. 11 - 12

<sup>652</sup> Ibid. p. 35

<sup>653</sup> Ibid. pp. 10 – 12

<sup>654</sup> Beppe Grillo is a comedian recycling himself as a politician despite having no formal training. He rose throughout the eighties and nineties as an edgy political satirist huffing and puffing in the microphone, however

significant victories for Mayor in both Turin and Rome that same year.<sup>655</sup> La Lega, on the other hand, garnered only 13% support in Italy mainly in Centre – Northern regions during that period of time, which represented a slight decrease from 2015.<sup>656</sup> The Tony Blair Institute, stated in a report published on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2017, that European populist groups (left and right) have nearly doubled since the year 2000, rising from 33 to 63.<sup>657</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2018 national elections in Italy brought an overwhelming victory to the Movimento 5 Stelle, which obtained 32.2% of votes against a meagre 19% gained by the Partito Democratico (centre left) and 17% of the Lega Nord.<sup>658</sup> *The Economist* on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, a few days following the elections, traced these results to a general discontent of Italian voters towards a stagnant economy, which primarily impacted people between the ages of 15 and 24, particularly in the South.<sup>659</sup>

Movimento 5 Stelle garnered consensus in the South of Italy, which to this day suffers from high levels of poverty, unemployment, corruption, effects of organised crime and a lack of services among other problems. A further pivotal element in this strong victory is the supposed migrant emergency, which sees Italy on the front line due to its unique position on the Mediterranean Sea, hence Italians perceived anxiety over this “invasion”.<sup>660</sup> According to Lebanese journalist Justin Salhani, because of Italian media’s representation of recent migration to Italy mainly commencing in the seventies, as an emergency or “taking over the country”,

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in the twenty-first century his “political-self” exploded, not because he had actual ideas on how to fix Italy’s numerous problems, but because he simply expressed himself by yelling many Italians’ discontents with the established political class. Grillo founded his own blog where he expounds to this day his viewpoints or to be more accurate, he insults anyone not aligning with his agenda. He later created his own movement, the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (Five Star Movement), which is now part of Italian government despite having a nebulous political program. Justin Salhani, *The Rise of Beppe Grillo*, Medium, Last Accessed July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://medium.com/latterly/the-rise-of-beppe-grillo-9f724f50c3bd>

<sup>655</sup> Ernst Stetter, Tibor Kaldot, Maria Freitas and Tamás Boros. *The State of Populism in the European Union 2016*, p. 29

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> The Tony Blair Institute was established by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair to investigate significant global topics using a non-biased methodology. Martin Eiermann, *Confronting Populist Anxieties*

<sup>658</sup> *Risultati Elezioni 4 Marzo 2018*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2019, <https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2018/cameradeideputati>

<sup>659</sup> *Why the Populists Won*. The Economist. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.economist.com/europe/2018/03/08/why-the-populists-won>

<sup>660</sup> Ibid.



numerous Italians are either scared or embittered.<sup>661</sup> The Five Star Movement, despite apparently expressing indignation towards abuse of migrants' rights, they also approve of restrictive policies as far as acquiring citizenship is concerned. Furthermore, Grillo in 2015 compared newcomers in Italy to “vermin” and “filth”. Salhani argues these sentiments helped populist groups such as Five Star Movement and La Lega gain traction.<sup>662</sup>

Although a study carried out by the IPSOS MORI Institute in 2015 has shown Italy, compared to other European countries, having the lowest percentages of resident immigrants amounting to 7% of the population, local inhabitants feel threatened by “uncontrolled immigration” and wish for stricter borders as well as tougher laws on migrant criminality.<sup>663</sup> As a trained art historian, even though I deliberate on political and historical aspects of La Lega, I focus on the images they chose to expose to the public, found on billboards in the streets and on the internet. As I will explain later in this chapter, La Lega exploits these alarmist feelings through its imagery whether they use posters, social media memes or fliers, for political gain by claiming emergencies where there are none and frightening people to obtain credibility. These tactics have managed to convince a significant number of Italian citizens to vote for La Lega, hence the party is still gaining popularity as the victory in regional election in October 2018<sup>664</sup> in the Northern region of Trentino Alto Adige shows.<sup>665</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Justin Salhani, *The Rise of Beppe Grillo*

<sup>662</sup> Ibid.

<sup>663</sup> Bobby Duffy, *People in Italy and the US are most wrong on key facts about their society*. Ipsos MORI. Last Accessed September 14<sup>th</sup> 2018. <https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/people-italy-and-us-are-most-wrong-key-facts-about-their-society>

<sup>664</sup> Since 1946 Italy has been a democratic republic with the President who functions as a representative of the country and a mediator. The Prime Minister is in charge of promulgating government policies. The latter is the head of the Council of Ministers, each Minister representing a specific department such as Agriculture or Transportation. Italy is comprised of 20 regions and holds, national, regional and municipal elections. Italy is currently based on a proportional representation meaning every political party, depending on the percentage of votes obtained, has a selected number of seats in Parliament. Giuseppe Nangeroni, *Italy*, Encyclopedia Britannica, Last Accessed July 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Italy>

<sup>665</sup> Elezioni Alto Adige, *Risultati Definitivi: Exploit Lega Oltre 11%. L'Svp Tiene Sopra 40%, ex M5s al 13%*. Il Fatto Quotidiano. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/10/21/elezioni-trentino-alto-adige-proiezioni-boom-lega-al-15-svp-crolla-al-368-il-consigliere-ex-m5s-al-14/4709273/>

The Tony Blair Institute identifies an additional element to explain approval for right wing populism, particularly in Italy: mistrust against the European Union, its rules as well as political elite, seen as suspicious and corrupt.<sup>666</sup> Italians feel exasperated by the perceived arrogance of the European Commission and their abandonment concerning the rising influx of migrants following the Dublin Treaty in 1997.<sup>667</sup> Silvio Berlusconi signed the deal on Italy's behalf; he was Prime Minister at the time, in alliance with La Lega. The Dublin Treaty states that migrants are the responsibility of the country where they arrive in the EU, thus largely resulting in Italy dealing on its own with this issue because of its geographic position.<sup>668</sup> Further evidence that right wing populism is on the rise in Europe and the USA includes the Brexit Referendum of June 2016 when the UK voted to exit the European Union to regain sovereignty and have stricter border control. The United States presidential victory in November of that same year ushered in showman and self-proclaimed real estate tycoon,<sup>669</sup> Donald Trump, who ran his electoral campaign by spouting insults to non-whites, Muslims, Latinos, Blacks and others, and advocating for a wall between the USA and Mexico.<sup>670</sup> Populism, particularly on the right, is not a product of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has loomed since the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989; however, the current climate of insecurity in Europe provides a fertile ground for it to thrive anew.<sup>671</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Martin Eiermann, *Confronting Populist Anxieties*

<sup>667</sup> Redazione, *Trattato di Dublino 3: firmatari in Italia, cos'è e cosa prevede*, The Italian Times, Last Accessed January 22nd 2021, <https://www.theitaliantimes.it/2020/02/07/trattato-dublino-firmatari-italia-immigrazione/>

<sup>668</sup> Ibid.

<sup>669</sup> Donald Trump has filed for his companies' bankruptcy at least six times even though he has never filed for personal bankruptcy making his claim of having excellent business acumen questionable. Russ Buettner and Charles V. Bagli, *How Donald Trump Bankrupted His Atlantic City Casinos, but Still Earned Millions*, The New York Times, Last Accessed July 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/12/nyregion/donald-trump-atlantic-city.html>. Trump has furthermore refused to turn over his tax returns, breaking a tradition of USA presidents to make them public. Numerous speculations exist; however, one of the theories elaborated is they would reveal a troubled financial situation. Russ Buettner and Susanne Craig, *Decade in the Red: Trump Tax Figures Show Over \$1 Billion in Business Losses*, The New York Times, Last Accessed July 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/05/07/us/politics/donald-trump-taxes.html>

<sup>670</sup> Mark Mardell, *What Links Trump's Victory and Brexit?* BBC. Last Accessed February 10<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2016-37922961>

<sup>671</sup> Yascha Mounk, Limor Gultchin and Martin Eiermann *European Populism*

It is within this context that I wish to clarify the meaning of populism from a political standpoint as well as distinguish its right from its left manifestations. As previously mentioned, I will concentrate on right-wing populism as exemplified by La Lega. As the Tony Blair Institute states, in Europe these associations are significantly more predominant than their left wing counterparts.<sup>672</sup> Politician and history professor Nicola Tranfaglia provides a basic definition: “Populism, understood as the skill of involving masses of humans, telling them exactly what they want to hear and not being compelled to carry out a precise program or act by following a previous ideology (...), it has – so to speak – the necessary flexibility to gradually accommodate the needs and desires of its people”.<sup>673</sup> The root of the word itself contains “population”, thus the intrinsic belief is that the population’s duty is to govern *rather than* a restricted group of competent individuals who make decisions for the majority.<sup>674</sup> One example of populism is the so-called “silent majority”,<sup>675</sup> a phrase repeated by Donald Trump as well as his electoral base, claiming that voices of a large number of citizens, mainly USA’s rust-belt, had not been heard and expressed rancour towards a political class they felt didn’t adequately address their issues.<sup>676</sup>

Populism is the product of a fragile society, suspicious and cynical about its politicians. It comes from social as well as economic anxieties, reflected in mistrust, hatred and resentment.<sup>677</sup> For this reason, numerous people who do not feel adequately represented may

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<sup>672</sup> Ibid

<sup>673</sup> Nicola Tranfaglia, *Populismo. Un Carattere Originale nella Storia dell'Italia*. (Roma, Lit Edizioni Srl, 2014) pp. 16 - 17

<sup>674</sup> Ibid

<sup>675</sup> The term “silent majority” has a nebulous definition however according to recent investigation it is referred mainly to white America who are not protesting and go along with traditional values. It is generally identified as a group of people not wanting government’s firm grip, believe in individualistic entrepreneurship, oppose organizations such as Planned Parenthood and are sceptical towards social justice activists. Journalists and researchers believe this side of the USA population constitutes Trump’s main body of voters. Sam Sanders, *Trump Champions The 'Silent Majority,' But What Does That Mean In 2016?*, NPR, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2016/01/22/463884201/trump-champions-the-silent-majority-but-what-does-that-mean-in-2016>

<sup>676</sup> Marie Whitaker, *Editorial: Rural America and a Silent Majority Powered Trump to a Win*. Nbc News. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/2016-election-day/analysis-rural-america-silent-majority-powered-trump-win-n681221>

<sup>677</sup> Ruth Wodak. *The Politics of Fear*, pp. 25 - 27

turn to “anti-political” forces -- individuals or groups who offer to defeat a rotten system and fix it.<sup>678</sup> Populism is identifiable because it emphasises antagonism whether it is against political “elites”, large corporations, banks or the wealthy as preached by left wing factions or against visible minorities, migrants, people benefitting from welfare or religious groups such as Jews and Muslims as preached by the right wing counterpart.<sup>679</sup> The search for sustainable solutions to society’s problems does not appear to figure in populist agendas; complaining or simple unrealistic answers are the chosen paths.<sup>680</sup> One of the reasons for falling into the scapegoat trap is that often competence or experience is not a required skill for populist leaders.<sup>681</sup> Tranfaglia argues that voters distance themselves from a small group of trained and experienced individuals due to their perceived arrogance as in the case of Hillary Clinton calling Trump’s electoral base “deplorables” during the 2016 presidential race.<sup>682</sup> What voters seem to wish for are politicians who are courageous, charismatic, bold and willing to “tell it like it is” in contrast to the poised and technical language employed by de facto politicians.<sup>683</sup> Unfortunately, this often leads to incompetent governments unable to face the challenges of managing a country resulting in long-term disasters.<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> Ibid.

<sup>679</sup> Ibid. p. 70

<sup>680</sup> Ibid. p. 70 - 71

<sup>681</sup> Nicola Tranfaglia, *Populismo*, p 30

<sup>682</sup> *Clinton: Half of Trump supporters “basket of deplorables”*. BBC. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/election-us-2016-37329812/clinton-half-of-trump-supporters-basket-of-deplorables>

<sup>683</sup> Nicola Tranfaglia, *Populismo*, p.41

<sup>684</sup> One key example is Trump’s mismanagement of Puerto Rico’s recovery following the devastating hurricanes in 2017. The island was without electricity for numerous months and recovery funds are being delivered at a slow pace. Pedro Reina-Pérez, *Trump’s Malign Neglect of Puerto Rico*, The Atlantic, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/01/puerto-rico-was-invisible-trump-made-things-worse/604984/> Trump has furthermore not delivered his coveted border wall with Mexico, which “Mexico will pay for”. *Trump’s Campaign Promises - has he Delivered on them?*, BBC, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-37982000>. The appointment of Trump’s daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared to top advisory positions despite being dangerously unqualified brings nepotism, which has always existed, to a new level. Smith David, *Trump Nepotism Attacked after ‘out-of-her-depth’ Ivanka Given Key Summit Role*, The Guardian, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/01/donald-trump-ivanka-g20-north-korea-nepotism>

A fundamental aspect of populism, specifically in the context of the twenty-first century, is the lack of mediation between its leaders and the rest of the population.<sup>685</sup> With social media easily accessible, they can communicate more easily with their audience and vice versa. Twitter,<sup>686</sup> YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are just some of the on-line tools used to gain visibility and receive instant feedback, therefore making the political ruling class appear more accessible, caring and synchronized with its citizens.<sup>687</sup> In some cases, as previously mentioned, the lack of experience and skills contributes to the danger of divulging “fake news” and creating misunderstandings that generate tensions.<sup>688</sup> One notorious example is Donald Trump claiming three million undocumented migrants voted illegally for Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election.<sup>689</sup> Although this information has no reliable sources and has been discredited, it appears to be pervasively supported by his base.<sup>690</sup>

The ideal ground for populist movements to thrive is, as mentioned earlier, a mix of cultural, sociological, racial and economic anxieties resulting in divisive, inconclusive policies as well as empty rhetoric. In Europe, high unemployment, inflation, a sense of abandonment, loneliness caused by individualistic societies, discouragement, tensions due to migration, frustration because of increased cost of living, cultural clashes and a sense of entitlement brought by social media have created a ripe terrain for these movements.<sup>691</sup> Right -wing populism is more of a draw than its left-wing counterpart, comprising approximately 74 groups out of a total of 102.<sup>692</sup> European leftist populist organizations predominate in Southern Europe

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<sup>685</sup> Alessandro Dal Lago, *Populismo Digitale. La Crisi, la Rete e la Nuova Destra*. (Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 2017) pp. 10 - 11

<sup>686</sup> For example, Trump appears to have a lofty use of Twitter often delivering dubious claims, insults and political information. *Donald Trump on Twitter – 2009 / 2020 Analysis*, Tweet Binder, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.tweetbinder.com/blog/trump-twitter/>

<sup>687</sup> Ibid

<sup>688</sup> Ibid

<sup>689</sup> Ryan Struyk and Lauren Pearle, *Fact-checking Trump's repeated unsubstantiated claim of widespread voter fraud*. ABC News. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/fact-checking-trumps-repeated-unsubstantiated-claim-widespread-voter/story?id=45021067>

<sup>690</sup> Ibid

<sup>691</sup> Damian Spruce, *The Cosmopolitanization of the EU's Borders?*, Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies Volume 4 No. 2 (2007), pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>692</sup> Yascha Mounk, Limor Gultchin and Martin Eiermann, *European Populism*

except in Italy, and they are mainly preoccupied with targeting large corporations, elitism, banks and austerity measures, which primarily impact people with lower incomes.<sup>693</sup> Such organizations oppose globalisation, which is portrayed as driven by big businesses overshadowing local production and causing financial loss to autochthonous citizens. These groups are more marginal than their right-wing counterparts, but statistics show their influence is growing, having risen from 8.1% in 2000 to 16% in 2017.<sup>694</sup> Even though a fierce opposition to immigration belongs to right-wing factions, researcher Martin Eiermann states that left-wing groups are willing to exploit that type of rhetoric to garner more votes.<sup>695</sup> In recent years, public discourse that focuses on tightening of nations' frontiers has obtained increasing approval as shown by the Movimento 5 Stelle in Italy, which initially presented itself as an "anti-establishment" association, perhaps more left leaning in its intention to abolish inequality and fight elitism.<sup>696</sup> This however is now changing due to their collaboration with La Lega, thus a rise in hostility towards immigrants often leading to anti-migrant abuse,<sup>697</sup> seen as criminals and a burden on local economy.<sup>698</sup>

## RIGHT WING POPULISM

In this context, I wish to analyse right wing populism's steady rise in Europe. In greater depth Scholar and security policy expert Christina Schori Liang argues that right wing populism is born out of hostility and fear of the "diverse", in this case migrants of African and Middle Eastern descent, Muslims, Jews, the LGBT2+ community, along with increased

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<sup>693</sup> Ibid.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid.

<sup>695</sup> Martin Eiermann, *Confronting Populist Anxieties*

<sup>696</sup> Ibid.

<sup>697</sup> For example, in May 2019 a nomadic family was assigned a low-income apartment in Rome and was met with harassment and hostility. Claims from some locals' opposing their entrance was "they did not deserve them". *Roma, Case ai Rom: Tensioni a Casal Bruciato, il Piano della Raggi non Ferma le Proteste*, Il Messaggero, Last Accessed July 20th 2020, [https://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/news/rom\\_case\\_popolari\\_roma\\_casal\\_bruciato-4474210.html](https://www.ilmessaggero.it/roma/news/rom_case_popolari_roma_casal_bruciato-4474210.html)

<sup>698</sup> Ibid

globalisation.<sup>699</sup> Liang contends there are specific guidelines to recognize these groups' (movements), which often advocate dangerous fanaticism, such as Holocaust denial and ideologies of a "pure" Christian Europe. Globalisation is the first issue manipulated to inject fear into right wing populist voters. Therefore, anxiety arises over local labour being transferred abroad where a workforce is cheaper and environmental regulations less strict.<sup>700</sup> Fear of unemployment is a driving factor to seek out governments promoting nationalistic discourse; protectionist stances, endorsement of local businesses and penalties for companies moving abroad.

A second major factor according to Liang is Islam; that is, an "islamisation" of Europe due to the increasing Muslim community and recent terrorist attacks in the West carried out by radicalized Muslims.<sup>701</sup> A significant number of Europeans see Islam negatively, thus they view it as detrimental to local traditions as well as attracting a wave of fanatics.<sup>702</sup> An example is resistance towards Turkey entering the European Union because it's its predominant culture is not in alignment with Europe's "undeniably" Christian background.<sup>703</sup> Numerous populist groups are firmly entrenched in the notion that Europe ought to be predominantly Christian with limited space for religious diversity; pivotal to these associations are a robust belief in local traditions, closed mindedness towards differing backgrounds from one's own and closed borders. Nativism is the focal point of these movements, featuring an ingrained conviction that the native born should take precedence when it comes to public services such as health, education, housing, jobs etc. Whomever does not meet this criterion (e.g. undocumented immigrants) takes second place for basic care and rights. To summarise Liang's contention,

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<sup>699</sup> Christina Schori Liang. *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*, in *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right* edited by Christina Schori Liang, pp. 1 - 3 (Farnham, Routledge, 2007). Last Accessed February 5, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central

<sup>700</sup> Ibid p. 8

<sup>701</sup> Ibid p. 20

<sup>702</sup> Ibid pp. 20 - 21

<sup>703</sup> Ibid p 18

these political parties are easily recognisable because of their “ethnic purity” precepts: closed borders, keeping Europe white and homogenous, Christianity as the sole religion, support for local job markets and animosity towards anything external, which is seen as “alien”.<sup>704</sup> Their principal underlying belief is that a non-homogenous society attracts crime, unemployment, societal problems and brings racial mixing hence no longer a “pure” (white) society – immigration being the main culprit.

Wodak furthermore contends that right wing populism engages in so-called “anti-intellectualism” as well as in “arrogance of ignorance”; in other words, propagating misleading information,<sup>705</sup> often provided by dubious sources with little or no fact checking, yet creating strong emotional reactions.<sup>706</sup> Vigorous appeals to “common sense” are often invoked while making outrageous claims, thus injecting fear and mistrust and presenting themselves as the sole saviours against the “axis of evil”.<sup>707</sup> A primary example is current Italian Vice Prime Minister and La Lega’s party secretary Matteo Salvini, who on his website [leganord.org](http://leganord.org) posts the lengthy essay “The Revolution of Common Sense”, presenting himself and his party as the only entities capable of “right thinking” and discrediting all dissenting opinions.<sup>708</sup> This rhetoric falls frequently in the “feelings *versus* facts” trap by appealing to viewers’ emotions, rather than their critical intellect, which would question what constitutes “common sense”. In addition to arousing fear and anger against vulnerable segments of the population, these factions create emergencies where none actually exist.

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<sup>704</sup> Ibid

<sup>705</sup> For example, Trump during his July 4<sup>th</sup> 2019 speech claimed that continental troops in their fight against the British Empire “took over the airports” despite there being none in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Trump later claimed it was “the teleprompter’s fault”. Suyin Haynes, *President Trump Said Revolutionary War Troops 'Took Over the Airports' in His Fourth of July Speech*, The Times, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://time.com/5620936/donald-trump-revolutionary-war-airports/>

<sup>706</sup> Ruth Wodak. *The Politics of Fear*. pp. 1 - 2

<sup>707</sup> Ibid. Former USA President George W. Bush used this term in the State of the Union back in 2002 to identify countries such as Iran, Iraq and North Korea. He considered them enemies of the USA therefore needed military intervention therefore initiating the devastating and catastrophic Iraq war. *Text of President Bush's 2002 State of the Union Address*, The Washington Post, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/onpolitics/transcripts/sou012902.htm>

<sup>708</sup> *La Rivoluzione del Buon Senso*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 10<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.leganord.org/la-rivoluzione-del-buonsenso>



This last is best exemplified in Michael Moore’s documentary *Fahrenheit 11/9* (2018) on Donald Trump’s election: creating non-existing dangers such as “immigrants’ caravan” or “illegal voters” which, factually speaking, are distorted versions of reality.<sup>709</sup> This process is carried out by using xenophobic, misogynist, homophobic and bluntly hateful claims such as “Mexicans are rapists”<sup>710</sup> or “There is a lot of Moroccan scum”<sup>711</sup> or why must the USA welcome immigrants from “shithole countries”<sup>712</sup> in order to divert attention from actual problems or policies. Once news outlets report and condemn this behaviour, loud claims are heard that free speech is gone and the opinion “of the people” is not respected.<sup>713</sup> Wodak states that these strategies have worked efficiently to legitimize and transfer right wing populist groups from extremist fringes to mainstream politics.<sup>714</sup> Since more traditional types of government have supposedly failed to take society’s crucial concerns into account, these factions offer illusory easy solutions, strong ideologies and solid identities.

#### LA LEGA

On a close analysis, the Italian party La Lega resembles Wodak’s description. My aim is to examine its political function and exploitation of art and media as a dangerous right wing populist organization, currently holding significant power in the Italian government. First, I will examine their political objectives and then I will trace their origins, leaders, voters and how they morphed from a regional separatist group to an “Italy first” coalition. I wish to explain why La Lega took root and thrived in Italy, as well as understand its powerful messages, which, are often conveyed through their easily accessible visual imagery. A look at how their political

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<sup>709</sup> Michael Moore, *Fahrenheit 11/9*, Movie. Directed by Micheal Moore, Flint, Briarcliff Entertainment, 2018

<sup>710</sup> Ibid

<sup>711</sup> *Far-right Dutch MP says 'there is a lot of Moroccan scum' as he launches election campaign*. The Journal. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.thejournal.ie/geert-wilders-moroccans-3247287-Feb2017/>

<sup>712</sup> Ali Vitali, Frank V Thorp and Kasie Hunt, *Trump Referred to Haiti and African Nations as 'Shithole' Countries*, NBC News, Last Accessed July 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/trump-referred-haiti-african-countries-shithole-nations-n836946>

<sup>713</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear*, p. 18

<sup>714</sup> Ibid.

agenda for the 2018 national elections evinced an “Italians first” mandate.<sup>715</sup> In the 74-page pdf file available on their official website, a detailed schedule is offered to the public explaining their plans for every sphere of public life: from work, to immigration, sport, taxes, etc....

In the section concerning immigration, some of their proposals include: reducing mobility for undocumented migrants, extending the time frame for which they must stay in detainment camps and easier criteria to expel them.<sup>716</sup> As suggested by a section uniquely dedicated to Islam, there are stricter rules for Muslim immigrants and residents.<sup>717</sup> While some of their propositions are aimed at ensuring secure borders and transparency in dealing with migrant influx, the racial tone is set from the start. In these pages, the title “Africa cannot reside in Italy!” figures as well as a phrase arguing that Italy needs not to “host every migrant”<sup>718</sup> even though statistics from June 2018 record a significant decrease in arrivals on Italian shores.<sup>719</sup>

At this point, it is useful to delve into the background of La Lega and analyse how it has changed over approximately forty years of existence. According to La Lega’s own account, its first nucleus was created in February 1979 when a young medical student dropout, Umberto Bossi met the leader of Union Valdôtaine, Bruno Salvadori.<sup>720</sup> The Union Valdôtaine is a regionalist association founded in 1945, which promulgates the French minority in the northwest Italian region of Valle D’Aosta. Even though it qualifies as a political group, it operates on a local scale and aims at protecting local language, interests and culture. Salvadori tragically died in a car accident in 1980. However, Bossi carried on with an autonomist project

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<sup>715</sup> *Elezioni 2018 – Programma di Governo, Lega Nord*. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. p. 1 [file:///Users/deborahgint/Downloads/Programma\\_Lega-SalviniPremier\\_2018%20\(2\).pdf](file:///Users/deborahgint/Downloads/Programma_Lega-SalviniPremier_2018%20(2).pdf).

<sup>716</sup> Ibid p. 6

<sup>717</sup> Ibid p. 8

<sup>718</sup> Ibid. p. 1

<sup>719</sup> Jessica Phelan, *Italians Overestimate Immigrant Population More than any Other Europeans: Study*. The Local It. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.thelocal.it/20180829/italians-overestimate-number-of-immigrants-in-italy-more-than-any-other-europeans-study>

<sup>720</sup> *Cronistoria della Lega Nord dalle Origini ad Oggi. Prima Parte 1979 – 1987*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. p. 32 [https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia\\_ln/01\\_lega\\_nord\\_storia79\\_87.pdf](https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/01_lega_nord_storia79_87.pdf)

for the northern Italian regions.<sup>721</sup> His core message was that the central Italian Regions, around Rome, were draining resources from the northern economy in favour of the “lazy” and impoverished South by redirecting money from taxpayers from the North.<sup>722</sup> He created the Lega Autonomista Lombarda in his hometown of Varese, north of Milan, with separatist aims. As with the Union Valdôtaine, this group not only aimed at highlighting local culture, traditions, foods, population and dialects but also diffused ideals of independence for the North, which he viewed as slave of Rome and the South. The fictitious term “Padania” was created during this time, indicating the region to be detached. This terminology comes from “Pianura Padana”, a valley in the northern region of Lombardy.<sup>723</sup>

According to journalist and politologist Ilvo Diamanti, who extensively studied the rise of the Northern League (Lega Nord), the “mother of all Leagues” in Italy is the so-called Liga Veneta (Venetian League), which came from the union between the Venetian Filological Society, an organisation aimed at propounding Venetian culture and language, and the Union Valdôtaine.<sup>724</sup> The latter, in 1979, had reached out to regionalist and local forces with the objective of creating alliances as well as founding one sole organization with a single name to promote local interests. The Venetian Philological Society decided to join and in 1980, the “Liga Veneta” was created as a political group aimed at the advancement of regional identity, economy and politics. This organisation quickly gained ground and in 1983, during regional elections, obtained 4,2% of votes thus bringing it to national attention as well as electing their first congressman, Achille Tramarin, and first senator, Graziano Girardi.<sup>725</sup>

The Liga Veneta eventually made an alliance with Lega Lombarda to form what became La Lega and contributed to the initial stages of the project by donating lavish sums of money

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<sup>721</sup> Ibid pp. 32 - 33

<sup>722</sup> Ibid pp. 34 - 35

<sup>723</sup> Ibid. p. 5

<sup>724</sup> Diamanti Ilvo, *La Lega. Geografia, Storia e Sociologia di un Soggetto Politico*. (Roma, Donzelli Editore, 1993) p. 45

<sup>725</sup> Ibid. pp. 45 - 46

to the Lega Lombarda.<sup>726</sup> The Lega Autonomista Lombarda started gaining ground during the beginning of the eighties thanks to Bossi's personal charisma. In 1982, he published the newly formed movement's manifesto on the newspaper *Lombardia Autonomista*, essentially declaring a Northern identity as well as liberation of the North from Rome's "yoke".<sup>727</sup> Part of the appeal was based on targeting the domination and corruption of the main political party, Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy), therefore protesting against a supposed looting of Northerners' taxes by Rome and the South.<sup>728</sup> Bossi quickly gained popularity by unifying an identity discourse to a socio-economic one, subsequently incorporating the Liga Veneta in 1987 and officially forming the Lega Nord on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December 1989 in Bergamo.<sup>729</sup> In this context, he started fomenting his anti-immigration ideas by claiming, "melting-pots represent an invisible vortex and multiracial societies go against nature".<sup>730</sup> During this period, the La Lega became a relevant "anti-system" political force that would continue to grow throughout the nineties and into the twenty-first century.<sup>731</sup> On the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 1990, during local elections in Lombardy, La Lega obtained significant success placing itself as the second major party with 18,94% of votes, just after the Christian Democrats, which won 28,56% votes.<sup>732</sup> Furthermore, the first La Lega-affiliated mayor was elected in Cene, a small town near Bergamo. The major breakthrough came on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1992 with national elections, which established the new leading parties for the two Parliamentary branches: the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate.<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>726</sup> Ibid. pp. 57 - 58

<sup>727</sup> Ibid. pp. 58 - 59

<sup>728</sup> Ibid. pp. 52 - 53

<sup>729</sup> Ibid. pp. 65 - 66

<sup>730</sup> Francesco Jori, *Dalla Liga alla Lega*. p. 68. In December 2019, La Lega Nord officially became La Lega, thus representing a national party instead of a regional one since the Centre and the South of Italy ought to be included. From that moment on it is referred to as La Lega. Monica Rubino, *La nuova Lega a congresso diventa nazionale. Salvini: "A battesimo movimento che rilancia il paese". E sul caso Gregoretti "E' processo a popolo Italiano"*. La Repubblica, Last Accessed January 22nd 2021, [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/12/21/news/congresso\\_lega\\_nuovo\\_statuto-244007094/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2019/12/21/news/congresso_lega_nuovo_statuto-244007094/)

<sup>731</sup> Ilvo Diamanti, La Lega. pp. 72 - 73

<sup>732</sup> *Cronistoria della Lega Nord dalle Origini ad Oggi. Prima Parte 1988 – 1995*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. pp. 7 - 8 [https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia\\_ln/02\\_lega\\_nord\\_storia88\\_95.pdf](https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/02_lega_nord_storia88_95.pdf)

<sup>733</sup> Ibid. p. 11

La Lega gained 8.2% of the votes on a national scale, therefore becoming the fourth major Italian political coalition. Furthermore, it obtained 25 senators and 55 deputies.<sup>734</sup>

Before exploring their visual imagery, I briefly discuss the voters who were influenced by La Lega's propaganda and analyse Italy's political climate during the group's rise. La Lega's growth occurred at a specific moment, while Italian politics were going through a troubled period with numerous prominent political figures being brought to justice on corruption charges, therefore exposing a rotten system, with ties to organised crime.<sup>735</sup> Italian citizens, disgusted and exhausted, sought a fresh new coalition, supposedly corruption free that could bring hope and care to its voters, while working for public good.<sup>736</sup> Many saw the La Lega as the "new kid on the block".

Political expert and pollster Renato Mannheimer in his book *La Lega Lombarda* dating from 1991, identifies its typical voter: male, not highly educated – that is, often not having completed high school, small entrepreneurs, blue collar workers, deeply Catholic and mainly living in the northern regions, specifically in Lombardy and Veneto.<sup>737</sup> Mannheimer conducted polls whose results identified the primary reason for this demographics' attraction to La Lega as alienation towards Roman "colonisation" and desire for economic independence. Nevertheless, hostility towards Southern Italians and foreigners were also prominent.<sup>738</sup> Furthermore, a desire to uphold local culture, traditions and dialect seemed to be a strong motivation for the rise to power of La Lega. Diamanti also assessed the demographic of the 1993 political coalition and, although he identified men with lower levels of education as the main component, interestingly, he showed most sympathisers' ages ranged between 18 and 35, which is peculiar considering the fact that often people of an older generation are more

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<sup>734</sup> Ibid. pp. 11 - 12

<sup>735</sup> Piero Colaprico, *Capire Tangentopoli*. (Milano, Il Saggiatore, 1996) pp. 12 - 13

<sup>736</sup> Ilvo Diamanti, *La Lega*. pp. 100 – 109

<sup>737</sup> Renato Mannheimer, *La Lega Lombarda*, (Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 1991), pp. 126 – 135

<sup>738</sup> Ibid. pp. 135 - 158

susceptible to vote xenophobic parties.<sup>739</sup> This might be because older strata of the populace are perhaps attracted towards more traditional political parties and younger generations are keener to try something “fresh”. This data coincides with the studies cited at the beginning of this chapter: people with lower education seemed to be more prone to vote for populist groups than traditional political organisations.

Identity is not the only reason why La Lega came to power. The year 1992 was crucial in Italian history and politics, signalling the end of the so-called “Prima Repubblica” (First Republic) constituted by the dominance of three main parties: “Democrazia Cristiana” (Christian Democracy), “Partito Comunista Italiano” (Italian Communist Party) and the “Partito Socialista Italiano” (Italian Socialist Party).<sup>740</sup> The reason goes back to February 1992 when a series of investigations for bribery and fraud called operation “Mani Pulite” (Clean Hands) led by magistrate Antonio Di Pietro, uncovered vast networks of illegal financing by those same political parties, numerous businesses as well as high profile politicians having secret bank accounts in tax havens.<sup>741</sup>

This scandal, known as “Tangentopoli” (Bribesville), made headlines and created considerable controversy over power abuse. These investigations disgusted and alienated Italian voters, who saw public money used illicitly by greedy politicians for personal purposes.<sup>742</sup> It is not surprising that many voters reacted by seeking new “uncontaminated” leaders and La Lega, who openly criticized Tangentopoli’s numerous scandals, rapidly gained attention. In this context, Lega’s overtly polemic stance and incendiary language became appealing, given the unsettling situation of the political status quo. Predictably, during national elections in 1994, the Lega obtained 8,36% of national votes as well as formed part of the main political centre-right coalition “Polo della Libertà” (Pole of Freedom) alongside with “Alleanza

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<sup>739</sup> Ilvo Diamanti, *La Lega*. pp. 78 – 82

<sup>740</sup> Piero Colaprico, *Capire Tangentopoli*. pp. 38 - 48

<sup>741</sup> Ibid. pp. 12 - 16

<sup>742</sup> Ibid. pp. 23 - 29

Nazionale” (National Alliance, a far right party descending from Fascism) and “Forza Italia” (Go Italy) led by businessman and television mogul Silvio Berlusconi, who became Prime Minister.<sup>743</sup> This event is known as the start of the “Seconda Repubblica” (Second Republic) and was seen as the beginning of a new corruption-free era.<sup>744</sup>

#### ALBERTO DA GIUSSANO

La Lega’s specific visual propaganda, as with any political coalition, is carefully assembled. I first analyse their main symbol used in all their political posters: Northern medieval mythical hero Alberto da Giussano (Figure 31).<sup>745</sup> The image represents the mythical medieval warrior in an attacking position symbolized by the unsheathed sword in preparation for battle. He is positioned in a belligerent attitude evinced by the shield held near his torso. A winged lion holding a sword with one paw on a closed book is depicted on the shield: the winged lion symbolizes Saint Mark, Venice’s patron saint.<sup>746</sup> The firmly planted legs suggest the soldier is launching the first attack; his stance conveys feelings of battle, defence, courage, zeal, sacrifice and loyalty. The aim is to galvanise viewers against potential enemies and towards the defence of their territories. Yet, who was Alberto da Giussano? Writer Mariella Carpinello identifies him as a legendary figure of the twelfth century who, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1176 led the Battle of Legnano when the Lega Lombarda (Lombard League), a conglomeration

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<sup>743</sup> *Elezioni della Camera dei Deputati del 27 Marzo 1994*. Ministero dell’Interno. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20090612091446/http://elezionistorico.interno.it/liste.php?tp=C&dt=27%2F03%2F1994&cta=I&tpEnte=A&tpSeg=C&numEnte=0&sut1=&sut2=&sut3=&descEnte=&descArea=ITALIA&codTipologiaSegLeader=>

<sup>744</sup> Ilvio Diamanti, *La Lega*. pp. 139 - 144

<sup>745</sup> *Alberto da Giussano*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 11<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/191-alberto-da-giussano>

<sup>746</sup> The lion represents St Mark, Venice’s saint patron, and is considered a symbol of power. The legend narrates that St Mark, on his voyage towards Alexandria in Egypt, an angel appeared to him while dreaming, under the guise of a winged lion announcing he would die in Egypt. To this day Venice is represented as the winged lion therefore it is possible that La Lega, having originated around that area, uses it as a symbol for regional identity. *Il Leone di San Marco a Venezia: Simbolo di Maestà e Potenza*, Arte 2000, Last Accessed July 21st 2020, <https://www.arte2000.it/blog/aneddoti/leone-san-marco-veneziana-simbolo-maesta-potenza/>

of northern Italian communes, won an epic field battle against the Holy Roman Emperor Federico Barbarossa.<sup>747</sup>



**Figure 31,** *Alberto da Giussano*, Logo

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<sup>747</sup> Mariella Carpinello, *Alberto da Giussano*. (Milano, Rusconi Libri s.r.l., 1993) pp. 57 - 65



The Holy Roman Empire, created around 962 during medieval times, held ruthless control over northern and central Italy, limiting its sovereignty as well as burdening it with taxes.<sup>748</sup> Several uprisings by local communities, beginning in Lodi convinced several Northern provinces to unite and rebel against the emperor, subsequently gaining control over adjacent territories. After several devastating skirmishes between Germans and Italians, the Battle of Legnano (a few kilometres North of Milan) marked an astounding victory for local town troops, limiting Federico Barbarossa's hegemony over northern Italy. As previously mentioned, several historians question Alberto da Giussano's actual existence. However, he represents a powerful reminder of a time during which Northern Italy was ruthlessly dominated by a foreign, German Emperor.<sup>749</sup> However, at the end of the twentieth century, the scenario had significantly changed and there was no foreign invasion; domination and violent uprising was of little interest to La Lega's voters and politicians. What mattered were the emotions created by Alberto da Giussano's mythological figure as well as his legendary deeds. Comparing Rome's central government or an "invasion" of foreign immigrants to an oppressive Medieval Germanic emperor or to Italy's unification is a misconception.

As previously argued, populist right wing coalitions in their relentless propaganda, seem to brush off factual evidence in favour of emotional fervour and nationalist feelings against "alien entities".<sup>750</sup> The image of Alberto da Giussano used by La Lega is directly copied from the statue of an unknown warrior located in a central square in the northern town of Legnano.<sup>751</sup> Artist Enrico Butti created the monument in 1900<sup>752</sup> naming it *Il Guerriero di Legnano* (The

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<sup>748</sup> Ibid pp. 29 - 38

<sup>749</sup> Marina Degl'Innocenti, *Il Guerriero di Legnano*. pp. 91 - 96

<sup>750</sup> Fabrizio Ravelli, *Alla Ricerca della Ampolla Perduta*. Il Venerdì, January 11, 2019. pp. 16 - 18

<sup>751</sup> Marina Degl'Innocenti, *Il Guerriero di Legnano*. P. 13

<sup>752</sup> The monument in the small province of Legnano was conceived following a visit by Giuseppe Garibaldi, Italy's main protagonist in the unification process, achieved in 1861. He travelled to Legnano in 1862 and gave a speech exhorting the inhabitants to erect a statue to glorify the epic victory of Legnano dating May 29<sup>th</sup> 1176 in which the foreign tyrant was defeated. Priest Don Gaspare Maineri raised some money for the project and then

Warrior of Legnano). A close look evinces similar iconography to La Lega's image: preparation for battle suggested by the unsheathed sword, armour attire, shield ready to protect his torso and a defiant attitude towards supposed enemies. Legnano, in fact, was the location in which the 1176 battle occurred and in spite of Alberto da Giussano's questionable real existence, overwhelming evidence proves that a battle did take place<sup>753</sup>. Indeed, the La Lega is nicknamed "Carroccio", meaning a medieval cart decorated with Northern Italian regional symbols used during solemn processions or wartime. Author Marina Degl'Innocenti, when describing the Legnano soldier monument as well as the contrasts between the Northern League and Federico Barbarossa, claims the "carroccio" was paraded in the famous final battle in 1176.<sup>754</sup>

Scholar Damien Spruce argues the importance to La Lega in constructing myths in order to idealize specific past events, in this case the liberation from a foreign invader during the twelfth century.<sup>755</sup> Mythology is deliberately evoked for political gain, although the context is farfetched and the authenticity of the historical figure is dubious. Spruce contends "By locating the basis of their authority in a far-off past, beyond the complexities of the present, they are tactically avoiding having to justify their own positions".<sup>756</sup> Alberto da Giussano is a metaphor, not only for the Northern Italian territories' current stance against southerners and/or foreigners, but also a defiant emblem against Rome's "dictatorship", bureaucracy and corrupt politicians. His image embodies a unifying element to validate a unique (Northern) Italian identity. This symbol, the main logo for La Lega, is present in most of its visual campaigns. Professor Felicity

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passed it to the Italian Archeology Society and the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan. Following donations from all of Italy the statue was inaugurated in summer 1900. Ibid. 35 - 36

<sup>753</sup> The Battle of Legnano was fought on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1176 between German emperor Federico Barbarossa who detained power in northern Italy, and northern Italian communes sided by Pope Alexander III and the Lombard League. The fight took place in Legnano and was won by the latter thus marking the last descent by Barbarossa. It is considered a glorious patriotic event because Italy finally expelled a foreign invader from its territory. Paolo Grillo, *Legnano 1176: una Battaglia per la Libertà*, (Roma - Bari, Gius. Laterzi & Figli Spa, 2010) pp. 135 - 137

<sup>754</sup> Marina Degl'Innocenti, *Il Guerriero di Legnano*. pp. 91 - 96

<sup>755</sup> Damien Spruce, *Empire and Counter-Empire in the Italian Far Right: Conflicting Nationalisms and the Split Between the Lega Nord and Alleanza Nazionale on Immigration*. Theory, Culture & Society, 24(5) (2007), pp. 113 - 114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276407081285>

<sup>756</sup> Ibid. p. 103

J. Rash convincingly suggests nationalists groups often evoke myths and fairy tales to give credibility to their arguments since they are easy to deliver and contain a “feel good factor” meaning a clear distinction between good and evil, making it simple to take sides.<sup>757</sup> Furthermore, the happy ending factor is present implying good overcomes evil and wins, as with the story of Alberto da Giussano defeating the German Emperor.<sup>758</sup> It is easier to appeal to an individual’s emotions, primitive impulses and biases than its critical intellect and knowledge based on proven facts.

### SOLE DELLE ALPI

The second symbol I wish to explore is the so-called “Sole delle Alpi” (Sun of the Alps) or, more commonly known, the six-petal rosette.<sup>759</sup> This seemingly plain image (Figure 32) is a green circle containing a symmetrical six-fold dihedral flower-like symbol. In contrast to the belligerent image of Alberto da Giussano, this is a popular symbol often used in Celtic and Alpine mythology as well as in its decorations.<sup>760</sup> Journalist and La Lega activist Gilberto Oneto suggests numerous meanings: sun, rotation, wheel, light, female fertility, cycle of life, flower and religious symbol (Jesus who is commonly referred to as Sol Justitiae or also the Star of David). Its first appearance is dated to the Bronze Age and it was also found in decorations on Cantabrian stelae from the Iron Age.<sup>761</sup> During Medieval times, it was used in Langobardic ornaments, which might explain its wide use in vernacular Alpine, Gaelic, Celtic and Germanic cultures. Oneto states that it was never employed as a noble symbol, but always as a popular one; thus, it embellishes ordinary buildings, every day utensils and clothes, suggesting it was an insignia “of the people for the people”.

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<sup>757</sup> Felicity J. Rash, *German Images of the Self and the Other: Nationalist, Colonialist and Anti-Semitic Discourse 1871-1918*. (Basingstoke, Pellgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 27 – 29 <https://link-springer-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/book/10.1057%2F9781137030214>

<sup>758</sup> Ibid. p. 31

<sup>759</sup> Sole Delle Alpi, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 11<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<https://www.leganord.org/component/phocadownload/category/190-sole-delle-alpi>

<sup>760</sup> Gilberto Oneto, *Il “Sole delle Alpi”*, *Simbolo Padano* in Quaderni Padani, Year 1, No 1 – Summer 1995, p. 3

<sup>761</sup> Ibid. p. 6



**Figure 32, *Il Sole delle Alpi*, Logo**

In modern history, however, it was used by the La Lega starting in 1982 following publication of *Bandiere di Libertà* (Flags of Freedom), which explicitly identified the Sun of the Alps as one of its main logos.<sup>762</sup> The number six, indicating its six petals, is not casual, symbolising the double of three – the perfect number according to Celtic cultures as well as the number of days during which God created the Universe.<sup>763</sup> It can be furthermore interpreted as a reference to the Holy Trinity or as the sum of the first three numbers: 1+2+3. Oneto argues the six petals are a metaphor for different ethno-linguistic roots inhabiting Northern Italy: Celtic

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<sup>762</sup> Ibid. p. 3

<sup>763</sup> Ibid. p. 5

– Italian (Piedmontese, Ligurian, Lombard, Emilian and Romagnol), Venetian, Tyrolese (Südtiroler and Welschtiroler), Friulian, Ladino and Occitan Arpitano.<sup>764</sup>

Although the exact meaning of the Sun of the Alps is unclear, it is supposed to be a representation of Northern Italy, its local cultures, populations and languages.<sup>765</sup> For this reason, it is one of La Lega's main emblems. The Sun of the Alps, although not intended to galvanize potential voters against perceived enemies, is nevertheless a unifying symbol with the intention of distinguishing "Padania" populations from others, its objective being to instil a sense of identity, recognition and pride. In 2015, the La Lega published on its official website the "Statuto della Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania" (Statute of the La Lega for the Independence of the Padania).<sup>766</sup> The third clause states the two symbols representing them are the image of Alberto da Giussano taken from the Legnano monument, and the Sun of the Alps. In fact, all of their political posters contain those two logos along with the writings "Lega Nord", "La Lega" and "Padania". To conclude this section on La Lega's two main logos, I suggest it is harmless to evoke folkloristic representations or emphasise local traditions, languages and dialects. It is however problematic to use them in distorted ways to demonize anything perceived as "alien". It is inappropriate and even dangerous to compare vastly different historical contexts for political gain, thereby arousing hostilities, disputes, and even worse, violent scenarios. A myth should be treated as such, therefore appropriately contextualized and recognizing its doubtful factual existence.

## POLITICAL POSTERS

In the next paragraphs, I will discuss four different La Lega posters in chronological order. Each one was created for political purposes to garner votes. The first four images were,

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<sup>764</sup> Ibid.

<sup>765</sup> Ibid. p. 6

<sup>766</sup> *Statuto della Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. p. 1 <https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/statuto/Statuto.pdf>. La Lega Padania extends beyond the Po Valley to encompass all of Northern Italy and as far south as Tuscany and Le Marche.

not only legally exposed in the streets and visible to a large public, but also on display on their main website and social media outlets (mainly Facebook). Up to this day, anyone can download them. The final poster I discuss was not on view on their official website but solely on Facebook and apparently, it was lawfully displayed in the streets for municipal elections in 2010. Through my examination, I argue that La Lega promotes a deeply xenophobic and aggressive ideology, which is greatly present in Italian society. Under seemingly cartoonish representations and political criticism, misleading messages are strongly evident, aimed at excluding specific segments of the population.

CON LEGA NORD CONTRO ROMA LADRONA



**Figure 33,** *Con Lega Nord Contro Roma Ladrona*, 2002, Billboard, 100 x 70 cm

The first poster (Figure 33) dates from 2002 and illustrates the Italian peninsula on a white background; on the upper end, a yellow squawking chicken lays a golden egg. The bird, seen in profile, stands on the edge of a brick building labelled “Padania” written in green letters. Underneath the chicken, a green funnel is positioned, collecting the eggs and funnelling them into a large green basket held by a jolly overweight woman dressed in traditional attire from the central region of Lazio. The peasant woman collecting the eggs is placed where the capital is situated. Underneath the woman, the word “Rome” appears. The top of the poster titles “Sveglia Padano!” (Wake up “Padanian! i.e. Northern Italian); beneath the slogan, a circle encloses both La Lega’s main logos: Alberto da Giussano and the Sun of the Alps as well as “Lega Nord” and “Bossi”, which refers to the party and its then founder and leader Umberto Bossi. On the bottom of the poster, the phrase “Con Lega Nord Contro Roma Ladrona” (With Lega Nord Against Rome the thief) appears in bold red letters.

The representation alludes to the fable of the hen that lays golden eggs; a farmer discovered one of his hens laying golden eggs until one day, tired of waiting for the eggs to be produced, he killed the animal hoping to find gold inside.<sup>767</sup> Unfortunately for him, the entrails were no different from ordinary hens’; hence he lost a potential fortune.<sup>768</sup> It is a story told to warn people away from greed. The poster is a clear polemic against Rome’s oppressive taxation system of the “industrious North” and of its laziness, inefficiency and greed, not to mention deep corruption symbolized by the avidity of the overweight woman. The message implies that Northern Italy has to work twice as hard to financially support Rome’s centralized government as well as the South, which is perceived as mostly idle and simply collecting the revenue of others’ hard work. This image is also a reaction against the previously mentioned corruption scandals that destabilized Italian politics during the beginning of the nineties called

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<sup>767</sup> *The Golden Egg*. Moral Stories. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.moralstories.org/the-golden-egg/>

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

“Tangentopoli”. Linguists Riccardo Gualdo and Maria Vittoria Dell'Anna, while considering Italian political discourse through posters during the Second Republic, contend that La Lega possesses a “simple communication style”, meaning not particularly refined, but with straightforward messages.<sup>769</sup> The posters’ format is 100 x 70 cm, generally favouring drawings instead of photographs and opting for cartoonish representations emphasised by distinct colours, such as a white background, red dress, yellow chicken, green funnel and so on. The authors cite an article appearing on *Il Sole 24 Ore* written in 1992 on La Lega’s iconography, which is defined as “medieval-style cartoons characterized by strong regional identities”.<sup>770</sup>

Overwhelming evidence proves that La Lega did not invent anti-southern prejudices and stereotypes; however, they have exploited them for political gain. Hostility towards the South of Italy, meaning from Rome downwards, commenced during the nineteenth century amidst efforts from a restricted circle of idealistic Northern intellectuals to unify the disaggregated Italian peninsula.<sup>771</sup> Prior to unification on March 17, 1861, Italy was composed of several independent or occupied states, each one with its own rules, whether they were a Bourbon Dynasty, a constitutional monarchy or the Pope.<sup>772</sup> They had and still have distinct languages, dialects, cultures and traditions. Therefore, unification sought to “patch” together significantly different regions and populations.<sup>773</sup> This blueprint was carried out in order to force Italy to measure up to its more advanced and powerful European neighbours (e.g., France, Great Britain, Germany etc.) which had already unified and were experiencing remarkable economic achievements.<sup>774</sup> It was also set in motion in order to liberate Italy from foreign rule and finally achieve sovereignty.

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<sup>769</sup> Riccardo Gualdo, Vittoria Maria Dell’Anna, *La faconda Repubblica: la Lingua della Politica in Italia (1992-2004)*. p. 203 (Lecce, Manni, 2004).

<sup>770</sup> Ibid.

<sup>771</sup> Giorgio Galli, *Storia dell’Italia tra Imprevisto e Previsioni. Dal Risorgimento alla Crisi Europea (1815 – 2015)*. pp. 13 - 17 (Milano, Mimesis Edizioni, 2014)

<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> Manlio Graziano, *Italia Senza Nazione?* (Roma, Donzelli Editore, 2007) pp. 43 - 44

<sup>774</sup> Ibid. pp. 7 - 9



According to Professors Vittorio Daniele and Paolo Malanima, the South, under Bourbon rule, was largely agricultural under a feudal system in contrast to the more industrialised North.<sup>775</sup> Southern populations were largely illiterate, infrastructures were sparse and only a few landowners and aristocrats held the majority of wealth.<sup>776</sup> These barriers limited full economic growth as well as affected the newly formed unified country. Italy was thriving to rival its European counterparts in spite of its numerous weaknesses and strongly centralized government, largely laying the blame on the South for Italy's underdevelopment.<sup>777</sup> The stereotype of southern populations as lazy, stupid, ignorant, inefficient, corrupt, violent and "Mafiosi", "close to Africa", thus inferior, began to gain ground throughout the nineteenth century and persisted well into the twentieth century.<sup>778</sup>

Scholar Aliza S. Wong convincingly argues that images of a pathologically backward South were recurrent in Italy with positivist scientists such as Cesare Lombroso defining southern people as "born criminals" due to specific phenotypes, being darker in skin than their northern counterparts.<sup>779</sup> Historically, parts of the South were colonised by Arabs,<sup>780</sup> and Southern Italy is geographically closer to the African continent and endured numerous incursions by the Ottomans.<sup>781</sup> Therefore, Southern populations inevitably had darker complexions, making them "inferior" in the perspective of nineteenth-century racial theories. The South of Italy was often referred to as a gangrenous parasite, shadowing the North and often showing "feminine" behaviour such as delicate, emotional, weak and hysterical.<sup>782</sup> The image of the idle lazy South was frequently juxtaposed to the "moral", industrialised North.

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<sup>775</sup> Paolo Malanima and Vittorio Daniele, *Il Divario Nord-Sud in Italia 1861 – 2011*. (Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore, 2011) pp. 11 - 19

<sup>776</sup> Ibid. pp. 25 - 27

<sup>777</sup> Manlio Graziano, *Italia Senza Nazione?* pp. 27 – 30

<sup>778</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911. Meridionalism, Empire, and Diaspora*. (New York, Pelgrave Macmillan, 2006) pp. 12 - 13

<sup>779</sup> Ibid. pp. 47 - 49

<sup>780</sup> *Presenza degli Arabi in Italia*. Arab. Last Accessed february 12<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.arab.it/presenza.html>

<sup>781</sup> Arturo Capasso, *Quando I Saraceni Sbarcarono sulle Nostre Coste*. Scena Illustrata sul Web. Last Accessed February 12<sup>th</sup> 2019. [http://www.scenaillustrata.com/public/spip.php?page=anteprimastampa&id\\_article=1271](http://www.scenaillustrata.com/public/spip.php?page=anteprimastampa&id_article=1271)

<sup>782</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911*. pp. 11 - 23

Southerners were seen as inferior foreigners to the point of specifically refusing services to them, for example, the renting of rooms in Turin or Milan in the 1960's during the massive emigration to the industrial triangle North (Turin, Milan and Genova) as well as other wealthier countries (i.e. Australia and North America).<sup>783</sup> It is no surprise that La Lega's poster chooses a peasant woman to represent Rome and by extension, the South.

According to Economics' Professor Emanuele Felice, the South's development stagnated under Bourbon tyranny.<sup>784</sup> The vast majority of the population worked in fields, was ruled by a feudal system, peasants were treated like enslaved people, ruthless aristocratic rulers withheld resources without investing them in proper services such as housing or infrastructure which consequently delayed progress.<sup>785</sup> The South existed under a quasi-medieval system. Therefore, its social, economic and cultural problems were even further exacerbated following annexation by the North to the rest of Italy. Felice suggests that the South experienced a "passive industrialisation" in contrast to the Centre – North's "active industrialisation"; that is, it did not experience growth from within but significantly relied on centralized government subsidies.<sup>786</sup> Following unification, northern and central regions significantly progressed in terms of welfare, economy and industrialisation, whereas the southern regions stagnated. In the wake of World War II, in the 1950's and 1960's, Italy experienced the professed "Italian Economic Miracle" during which its Gross Domestic Product rose by 5,9% yearly between

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<sup>783</sup> According to sources cited by Wong, between 1876 and 1914, an estimated 14,037,531 Italians from all of Italy migrated to other countries and approximately 4,9913,136 Southerners relocated in search of a better life. Ibid. As recently as September 2019 there was an episode of anti-Southern racism against a young 28-year-old woman near Milan who in the search of an apartment, she was explicitly rejected by the landlady because of her Southern origins. The 50-year-old Milanese explicitly said in a recorded message that Southerners are to her just like "blacks and gypsies", insolvent and in no instance, she will rent her apartment to "them". She proudly declares she is 100% racist and a faithful follower of Matteo Salvini, current leader of La Lega. This episode reopened a difficult side of Italian history where Southern people were widely discriminated against. The young victim of this deplorable episode received numerous solidarity messages from all of Italy. *Deborah Prencipe e l'Appartamento Negato: «Sono Razzista al Cento per Cento, non Affitto ai Meridionali»*, Corriere della Sera, Last Accessed July 21st 2020, [https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/19\\_settembre\\_13/razzista-non-affitto-casa-meridionali-deborah-prencipe-salvini-telefonata-facebook-robecchetto-con-induno-5ecf7ce8-d61e-11e9-8d78-c16bbb32544a.shtml](https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/19_settembre_13/razzista-non-affitto-casa-meridionali-deborah-prencipe-salvini-telefonata-facebook-robecchetto-con-induno-5ecf7ce8-d61e-11e9-8d78-c16bbb32544a.shtml)

<sup>784</sup> Emanuele Felice, *Perché il Sud è Rimasto Indietro*. (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2013) pp. 17 - 20

<sup>785</sup> Ibid. pp. 41 - 50

<sup>786</sup> Ibid. pp. 107 - 109

1951 and 1963 and in 1961 hit a record of 8,3%, more than its European counterparts.<sup>787</sup> During this period, the South seemed to make progress.

Nevertheless, progress declined again following the 1973 oil crisis and even though the Centre – North’s development remained stable, the South considerably regressed.<sup>788</sup> The prosperity gap between the “two Italies” remains today.<sup>789</sup> Felice furthermore suggests that projects aimed at reinvigorating the South did not produce desired effects; in 1950, the “Cassa per il Mezzogiorno” (Fund for the South) was instituted as well as “Associazione per lo Sviluppo dell’Industria nel Mezzogiorno” (Association for the Development of Southern Industries) was created in 1946.<sup>790</sup> These state-controlled Institutions sought to assist the South in development to approach the North in terms of welfare. However, persistence of a “feudal mentality”, illegal employment, sparse industrialisation, lack of education, nepotism, organised crime and a seeming absence of interest in progress, opportunity and knowledge by a significant part of the population made these efforts less than successful. Felice furthermore argues that simply receiving external subsidies without a vigorous change from within does not produce substantial long-term benefits. Moreover, the perceived weakness of the centralised state, combined with illegal work and tax evasion produced fertile ground for organised crime, also protected by politicians in Rome not just from the South, like Giulio Andreotti.<sup>791</sup>

To support Felice’s conclusions, a report dating 2017 by Banca d’Italia (the Bank of Italy) concerning the gap between North and South reveals through quantitative methodology that northern and central regions have higher wealth than their southern counterparts.<sup>792</sup> By using statistical data and survey polls, the south shows lower levels of happiness and

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<sup>787</sup> Andrea Villa, *Il Miracolo Economico Italiano*, Treccani. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019.  
[http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-miracolo-economico-italiano\\_%28II-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Tecnica%29/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-miracolo-economico-italiano_%28II-Contributo-italiano-alla-storia-del-Pensiero:-Tecnica%29/)

<sup>788</sup> Ibid.

<sup>789</sup> Emanuele Felice, *Perché il Sud è Rimasto Indietro*. pp. 91 - 92

<sup>790</sup> Ibid. pp. 110 - 113

<sup>791</sup> Ibid. pp. 61 - 64

<sup>792</sup> Giovanni D’Alessio, *Benessere, Contesto Socio-Economico e Differenze di Prezzo: il Divario tra Nord e Sud* in *Questioni di Economia e Finanza*. No 385, July 2017. pp. 5 - 6.

satisfaction even though this can probably be related to paucity of services as well as depressed incomes.<sup>793</sup> The author of the report, economist Giovanni d'Alessio states however, that northerners pay more taxes because the North has higher costs of living – hence salaries are higher.<sup>794</sup> While taking into account the collected data, it is pivotal to consider numerous variables of the interviewees, such as overall health, type of work, education, geography, climate, criminality and so on.<sup>795</sup> Therefore, to return to La Lega's poster concerning the "parasitic South", evidence indeed suggests higher levels of poverty and government subsidies, but instead of engaging in meaningful, informed conversations on this complex issue, it oversimplifies it by relegating it to a racial problem.<sup>796</sup> The message sent through the overweight peasant woman and the golden egg-laying chicken is "lazy southerners stealing the North's hard-earned money".

Wodak presents this strategy as "positive self-presentation and negative presentation of others" through the argumentum ad hominem, meaning attacking your opponent personally instead of concentrating on deconstructing their argument through rational discourse.<sup>797</sup> This occurs frequently in right wing populist groups. As a case in point, Donald Trump routinely

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<sup>793</sup> Ibid. pp. 8 - 10

<sup>794</sup> Ibid. pp.14 - 16

<sup>795</sup> Ibid. pp. 15 - 16

<sup>796</sup> In a video uploaded in July 2011, Mario Borghezio, one of the rowdiest members of La Lega, was filmed at a rally while speaking on a podium to La Lega fans. He yelled in a microphone to a cheering crowd the following: "Noi che siamo celti e longobardi, non siamo merdaccia levantina o mediterranea. Noi la padania bianca e cristiana, bianca e cristiana. Quelli di Lepanto con le bandiere nel cuore crociato. Noi, noi che non diventeremo mai islamci. Noi, noi seguaci di Bossi, fino alla fine" (We who are Celts and Longobards, not Levantine or Mediterranean shit. We the white and Christian Padania, white and Christian. Those of Lepanto with flags in their crusader hearts. Us, us who will never become Islamic. Us, us Bossi's followers, until the end). The explicitly xenophobic remarks are exemplary of the racist intents of this group, furthered by the direct praise of Northern populations by disparaging Mediterranean ones (Southern Italy in the case of the Roma Ladrona poster). Moreover, the reference to the Battle of Lepanto, fought in 1571 in what is now known as Greece, between the Holy League, led by Catholic states, and the Ottoman Empire with the latter's defeat, yet again, shows this "distant past" nostalgia. The Ottoman's loss and the Catholic victory, in Borghezio's view proves the innate superiority of Northern, whiter populations. Even though Borghezio is one of La Lega's most embarrassing individuals, this anti-Southern, Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric reeks from their ideology. Stefano Ragusa, *Padania Bianca e Cristiana*, uploaded July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011, Youtube Video, video duration 0:28, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7LQluHiGsM&ab\\_channel=StefanoRagusa](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q7LQluHiGsM&ab_channel=StefanoRagusa)

<sup>797</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Semiotics of Racism- A Critical Discourse-Historical Analysis* in Discourse, of Course: An Overview of Research in Discursive Studies. Edited by Jan Renkema. (Amsterdam, Benjamins, 2009) p. 10. <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.148.29wod>

insults or ridicules his opponents, (or other individuals) physical appearance or behaviours, such as journalists, who question his statements and decisions, or women who have accused him of sexual harassment, assault and rape.<sup>798</sup> This type of abusive discourse indicates weak arguments and personal insecurities as well as a desire to appeal to biases, prejudices and constructing false narratives versus factual evidence. Wodak moreover evinces “intensifying strategies” such as illocutionary utterances as we see in this poster, and in numerous others by La Lega, which serve to sharpen their message. “Sveglia Padano!” and “Contro Roma Ladrona” are examples of this simplistic, peremptory language.<sup>799</sup>

La Lega has been anti-immigration since its creation, even though anti-Southern Italian propaganda characterized its initial militancy. Being originally a regionalist, separatist group, the idea of something “foreign” whether it came from the South of Italy or from another country, triggered fear and hostility. By probing official documents obtained from La Lega’s website, in the section describing their chronological history, already on February 20<sup>th</sup> 1990 they commented upon the passing of the Martelli law, a first attempt to regulate immigration in Italy, as a disgraceful, unlawful “military coup”.<sup>800</sup> In 1999, they furthermore describe their effort to abrogate the Turco – Napolitano law, which also sought to regulate immigration in Italy as well as recognized basic rights such as medical assistance for undocumented foreigners. La Lega voters strived to gather 500,000 signatures to cancel this law, which they felt attracted crime, uncontrolled immigration and put autochthonous northerners at a disadvantage.<sup>801</sup> Laws

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<sup>798</sup> *Trump Clashes with Jim Acosta in Testy Exchange*, Filmed November 7<sup>th</sup> 2018. YouTube Video, 7:58. Posted November 7<sup>th</sup> 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdFe-LmFRV8>. Following the accusation of sexual assault by columnist E Jean Carroll who claimed Trump molested her in a Manhattan department store in the nineties, the USA president simply dismissed the accusation by stating “she was not his type”. *Trump Says Sexual Assault Accuser E Jean Carroll 'Not my Type'*, BBC, Last Accessed July 21<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48754959>

<sup>799</sup> Ruth Wodak, *The Semiotics of Racism*. p. 9

<sup>800</sup> *Cronistoria della Lega Nord dalle Origini ad Oggi. Prima Parte 1988 – 1995*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. p. 7 [https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia\\_ln/02\\_lega\\_nord\\_storia88\\_95.pdf](https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/02_lega_nord_storia88_95.pdf)

<sup>801</sup> *Cronistoria della Lega Nord dalle Origini ad Oggi. Quarta Parte 1999*, Lega Nord. Last Accessed February 12<sup>th</sup> 2019. pp. 2 - 3 [https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia\\_ln/04\\_lega\\_nord\\_storia1999.pdf](https://www.leganord.org/phocadownload/ilmovimento/storia_ln/04_lega_nord_storia1999.pdf)

attempting to manage this phenomenon were decreed in the wake of a steadily increasing influx of migrants on Italian soil. The Italian National Institute of Statistics reports a clear rise of foreign presence on Italian territory: during the beginning of the nineties non-autochthonous individuals were an estimated 0.8% of the population.<sup>802</sup> By 2006, they amounted to 5% and as of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 approximately 8.3% foreigners are registered as residing in Italy.<sup>803</sup>

#### SI ALLA POLENTA NO AL COUS COUS

The second image (Figure 34) tackles food as the main protagonist of Italian sovereignty versus “contamination” by foreign cuisine.



**Figure 34,** *Si alla Polenta, No al Cous Cous*, Billboard

This representation displays a green background that fades downward to yellow. At the top (on the green background), a wooden plate with a heap of polenta, a corn meal porridge,

<sup>802</sup> *Dati Statistici sull'Immigrazione in Italia dal 2008 al 2013 e Aggiornamento 2014.*

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*



typical of northern Italy, particularly Bergamo where it, and not pasta, is the primary starch. In the foreground, two short utterances state: “Si alla Polenta” (Yes to Polenta) and “No al Cous Cous” (No to Cous Cous). The affirmation “Si” as well as the negation “No” are coloured in red even though the rest of the phrases are blue. On the lower part, “Orgogliosi delle Nostre Tradizioni” (Proud of our Traditions) is written in white with a green banner background, green being the colour of La Lega. Placed on the top right of the poster are the inevitable logos: a circle with Alberto da Giussano and the Sun of the Alps along with “Lega Nord Padania” written in white and black. Since this image is not present on the official website of the La Lega, it is hard to date it, however it seems to have appeared during the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In the 2006 documentary, *Camicie Verdi: Bruciare il Tricolore* (Green Shirts: Burn the Tricolour) directed by journalist Claudio Lazzaro, Franco Carli, La Lega secretary for the municipality of Calco near Bergamo, is interviewed and questioned concerning the possibility of constructing a mosque in that district.<sup>804</sup> Carli explains he organised an event in response to that project called *Si alla Polenta, No al Cous Cous* in which a group of protestors placed themselves on the ground where the mosque would supposedly be erected and eat polenta along with other traditional northern Italian dishes. He further explains that “they” (probably referring to his followers) keep such local specialties in high esteem.<sup>805</sup> Polenta becomes a metaphor for local, autochthonous populations versus cous cous, which represents a foreign, “alien” body menacing northern Italian “purity”. Thus, food in this context, is used as a marker for “us” vs “them”. Ironically, polenta is made out of corn, whose provenance is from South America and cous cous is indeed a typical North African dish made out of wheat since Roman times.

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<sup>804</sup> Claudio Lazzaro, *Camicie Verdi*, YouTube. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXMpmbvNxPA>

<sup>805</sup> Ibid.

However, it is also traditional in certain parts of Sicily due to previous Arab rule as well as in south-west Sardegna.<sup>806</sup>

Journalist Benedetta Grasso, while discussing this particular poster identifies this phenomenon as “gastronomic racism”, which perfectly fits La Lega’s battle against non-Italian food, specifically from Africa and the Middle East.<sup>807</sup> Then Minister of Agriculture and La Lega affiliate, Luca Zaia (current Governor of the Veneto region), promoted initiatives by municipalities such as Lucca (in Tuscany) to ban the opening of businesses selling “ethnically different” foods or as in Trieste where non “authentic” Italian food such as kebab and curry must be placed on the menu with local specialties such as polenta and musetto (a type of sausage). In Treviso in March 2010, the Moroccan community was prevented from organising a street festival to stir up the world’s largest cous cous dish.<sup>808</sup> One could argue that these attempts are merely a way to protect the local economy from competition. However, Grasso rightfully notices that La Lega’s gastronomic skirmishes are never against French crêpes or Swiss raclette, but always against African and Middle-Eastern cuisines.<sup>809</sup> Food has become a pretext for exasperated nationalism.

Student Margot Tuchler, throughout her honours thesis on food, nationalism and xenophobia in Italy, posits a poignant correlation between French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and food as a marker for exclusion in Italy.<sup>810</sup> Tuchler supports the importance of food in Italian culture, not only on a national scale, but also on a regional one.<sup>811</sup> Italy has distinctive regional cuisines, which differ, not only amongst regions but also

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<sup>806</sup> Margot Tuchler, *Si alla Polenta, No al Cous Cous*: Food, Nationalism, and Xenophobia in Contemporary Italy, Honors Thesis, Trinity College of Arts & Sciences, 2015. p. 44

<sup>807</sup> Benedetta Grasso, *Polenta vs Cous Cous. Legally Banning Ethnic Food from Northern Italy*, Italy. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. <http://www.iitaly.org/magazine/dining-in-out/articles-reviews/article/polenta-vs-cous-cous-legally-banning-ethnic-food>

<sup>808</sup> Ibid.

<sup>809</sup> Ibid.

<sup>810</sup> Margot Tuchler, *Si alla Polenta, No al Cous Cous*. p. 30

<sup>811</sup> Ibid. p. 25



by towns and villages: i.e. dishes from Milan are distinctly different from those of Cremona, a city about 100 km distant.<sup>812</sup>

Bourdieu describes habitus as “structured structures, generative principles of distinct and distinctive practices - what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it (...) habitus are also structuring structures, different classifying schemes, classification principles, different principles of vision and division, different tastes.”<sup>813</sup> Habitus makes different differences; they implement distinctions between what is good and what is bad”.<sup>814</sup> Paraphrased, habitus comprises a set of customs ingrained from a young age, which becomes the norm, “common sense”, and anything differing is considered strange or even regarded with hostility. Given the centrality of food in Italian culture, it is unsurprising that a nationalist political party uses it as a marker for exclusion, furthered by the fact this type of food is traditionally associated with peasants, not nobles, prior to the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century, after which such simple traditional cuisine became more fashionable and gentrified. Since Italians have a particularly emotional attachment to traditional Italian food, the argument “us versus them”, meaning “us” symbolized by polenta and “them” illustrated through “cous cous”, is legitimized and moreover displaces the racism from people and religion onto a less overt target, food.

### LORO HANNO SUBITO L’IMMIGRAZIONE

The following poster (Figure 35) is perhaps one of La Lega’s most emblematic hallmarks: dating to 2008, it was produced during the general elections of that same year.<sup>815</sup> They obtained a remarkable result, 8.3% of the popular vote, enough to form part of the governing coalition along with Silvio Berlusconi and his party Popolo della Libertà (People of

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<sup>812</sup> Ibid. pp. 18 - 19

<sup>813</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Physical Space, Social Space and Habitus*. (Speech, University of Oslo, 1995). Library Archives Illinois.  
[https://archives.library.illinois.edu/erec/University%20Archives/2401001/Production\\_website/pages/Stewarding Excellence/Physical%20Space,%20Social%20Space%20and%20Habitus.pdf](https://archives.library.illinois.edu/erec/University%20Archives/2401001/Production_website/pages/Stewarding%20Excellence/Physical%20Space,%20Social%20Space%20and%20Habitus.pdf) p. 17

<sup>814</sup> Ibid.

<sup>815</sup> *Speciale Elezioni 2008*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019.  
[https://www.repubblica.it/speciale/2008/elezioni/camera/riepilogo\\_nazionale.html](https://www.repubblica.it/speciale/2008/elezioni/camera/riepilogo_nazionale.html)

Freedom).<sup>816</sup> The image shows the face of an Indigenous American man, supposedly the chief of a tribe, dressed in traditional Great Plains attire. On the top part, in capitalized blue letters it states *Loro Hanno Subito l'Immigrazione* (They have endured immigration), on the lower side the phrase continues *Ora Vivono nelle Riserve!* (Now they live on reservations!); on the bottom right side the red exclamation *Pensaci* (Think about it) appears as well as La Lega's logos Alberto da Giussano and the Sun of the Alps. The first problematic attribute is the discrepancy between North America's forced colonisation by European people and contemporary immigration to Italy. Two vastly different historical moments and contexts are compared freely to emotionally incite the viewer. The second problem is the seemingly hypocritical argument of a group having constructed its main themes around the denigration of non-white, non-western cultures, yet suddenly empathising with Indigenous American populations negatively affected by European colonisation. The third issue is the exploitation of the image of an Indigenous man to attract pity from viewers; in other words, displaying the "noble" Native American whose land was ravaged will inspire an emotional connection to their own experience in having their home country "invaded" by foreigners. The viewer is called upon to feel compassion towards the "poor", "helpless" Native who is powerless in the wake of his territories' invasion and destruction. At the same time, the viewer is somehow reminded of Italy being "invaded" by "hordes" of immigrants.

Although the representation of an Indigenous person for political gain is new in Italian politics, it is far from uncommon in North America where the marketing of picturesque, romantic, often-distorted ideas of Native populations has been normalized for centuries.<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>816</sup> Ibid.

<sup>817</sup> Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: the Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*. (Vancouver, Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992) <https://www-deslibris-ca.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/ID/440172> pp. 15 - 16



**Figure 35,** *Loro Hanno Subito l'Immigrazione, Ora Vivono nelle Riserve!* 2008, Billboard

Historian Daniel Francis in *The Imaginary Indian* written in 1992 argues that White Canadians have gradually constructed their own imaginary representation of what an Indigenous person should look like, whether it is derogatory or praiseworthy.<sup>818</sup> “Indians” are

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<sup>818</sup> Ibid. pp. 21 - 22

often imagined to be galloping on their horses through prairies with feathered headdresses, breechcloths, holding tomahawks and possessing an “inner nobility” of spirit. However, this “knowledge” is based on fantasized accounts of European settlers.<sup>819</sup> The representation and marketing of American Natives as “noble savages”, which in the wake of adversities, such as Europeans devastating their lands and exterminating the game upon which they relied for survival, united and never “broke-down”, is a common stereotype in Northern American settler-colonial literature and representation.<sup>820</sup> La Lega recycles this image to make a dubious argument in a country that is arguably ill-informed concerning European colonisation of the American continent. Scholars John E. Richardson and Monica Colombo, while discussing La Lega’s visual imagery, ponder why the Native American man in this poster is not looking directly at the viewer; only his profile is visible, while his eyes gaze upwards as if hopeful, regretful, stoic and even heroic.<sup>821</sup> He is an object to be looked at. This tactic transforms him into a symbol of victimization representing something that “could” have been done, but was not.<sup>822</sup> “We” (i.e., autochthonous Italians), however, do have the power to fight this “threat” and block immigrants from “invading our land”. If “we” do not actively join the fight “we” will also be condemned to live in reservations. Richardson and Colombo furthermore suggest that, through this poster, La Lega is attempting to appeal to a larger group of the population by invoking injustice in the treatment of oppressed people, Indigenous Americans in this case.<sup>823</sup> The “emotional trigger” tactic seems to have at least partially benefitted La Lega, since it achieved remarkable results allowing them to become part of the Berlusconi government at that time.<sup>824</sup>

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<sup>819</sup> Ibid. pp. 23 - 24

<sup>820</sup> Ibid.

<sup>821</sup> John E. Richardson and Monica Colombo. *Continuity and Change in Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord*. Journal of Language and Politics 12, no. 2 (2013): p. 194. doi:10.1075/jlp.12.2.02ric.

<sup>822</sup> Ibid.

<sup>823</sup> Ibid. pp. 194 - 195

<sup>824</sup> *Speciale Elezioni 2008*, La Repubblica.

## INDOVINA CHI É L'ULTIMO?

The final poster I examine (Figure 36) appeared in 2010 for local elections. It came into view in the municipality of Gualdo Tadino in the central region of Umbria; however, is not listed in La Lega's official website. The title reads "Indovina chi é l'Ultimo?" (Guess who comes Last?) in white capital letters on a green background. Beneath stand four men and one woman holding an infant, apparently standing in line in front of a closed door. The penultimate person prevents the last from entering through a door and towering over these figures is the title in red "Per i Diritti su Casa, Scuola, Lavoro e Sanità" (For housing, school, work and health care rights). The lower part of the poster states in capital white letters: "Precedenza ai Gualdesi Cittadini Italiani" (Priority to Gualdese Italian Citizens) with a green backdrop. Finally, on the lower right side, the ubiquitous logos, Alberto da Giussano and the Sun of the Alps along with the words "Lega Nord" and "Padania". The web address of La Lega's blog concerning this specific municipality is also featured although nowadays, it is no longer in use. Gualdo is not the only town where this electoral poster appeared; it was also legally placed in public spaces in numerous communities across Italy.

The first striking aspect is the grotesque facial features of the four non-Italian people in line. From the right side an Asian man, then a Nomadic (Roma or Sinti) woman with her child, followed by a black man with sunglasses and finally what appears to be a Middle Eastern dressed in traditional attire, a menacing expression, holding a dagger with his left hand and the right one pushing away a helpless elderly white man. The latter is the only one not represented in a derogatory way; he is frail because of his age and his physical condition, holding a cane and probably needing medical assistance.





**Figure 36,** *Indovina Chi Viene Ultimo?* 2010, Billboard

Statistics compiled by the Minister of Interior in 2014 indicate the percentage of foreigners residing in Italy increased by 43,39 % between 2008 and 2013.<sup>825</sup> However, there is no evidence proving that autochthonous Italians are discriminated against in favour of

<sup>825</sup> *Dati Statistici sull'Immigrazione in Italia dal 2008 al 2013 e Aggiornamento 2014.* Ministero dell'Interno.

immigrants concerning housing, health care, education and other public services. La Lega's poster appears to be presenting dubious information in addition to ridiculing non-whites, who are inevitably perceived as undeserving migrants. This poster is a clear manifestation of denigrating stereotypes created by existing prejudices. The manner in which the four non-whites are represented in distorted physical characteristics as well as their unjust appropriation of services merely reserved for "de facto" Italians (whites) clearly illustrates La Lega's aggressive racist visual propaganda.

Scholar and social psychologist Daniel Bar-Tal defines stereotypes as "beliefs about another group in such terms as personality traits, attributions, or behavioural descriptions".<sup>826</sup> Prejudice, on the other hand, is classified as "negative attitudes toward another group that express negative affective or emotional reactions".<sup>827</sup> Finally Bar-Tal suggests that delegitimizing is a "categorization of groups into extreme negative social categories which are excluded from human groups, who are seen as acting within the limits of acceptable norms and/or values."<sup>828</sup> Delegitimization may be viewed as a denial of categorized group's humanity".<sup>829</sup> In other words, delegitimization occurs when specific actions are taken to discredit a group of people whether it is Muslims, Jews, women or black people. The scholar offers two motives for such a phenomenon.<sup>830</sup> The first occurs during times of conflict--that is, while two groups experience stereotyping, prejudice, tension or even violence, and ultimately, delegitimization is intensified to the point where both groups justify threats and attacks.<sup>831</sup> A poignant example is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which both sides represent each other in deriding ways in order to legitimize reciprocal aggression. The second instance, coherent with

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<sup>826</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal, « Delegitimization: The Extreme Case Stereotyping and Prejudice », in *Stereotyping and Prejudice: Changing Conceptions*. ed. by Daniel Bar-Tal, *Springer Series in Social Psychology*. (New York, Springer-Verlag, 1989) p. 169

<sup>827</sup> Ibid.

<sup>828</sup> Ibid.

<sup>829</sup> Ibid. p. 170

<sup>830</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal. *Causes and Consequences of Delegitimization: Models of Conflict and Ethnocentrism*. *Journal of Social Issues* 46 No. 1 (1990) p. 67

<sup>831</sup> Ibid. pp. 67 - 68

La Lega's message, takes place to justify ethnocentricity.<sup>832</sup> This occurs when a specific group over-legitimizes itself, which means that it perceives itself as superior to out-groups. The despised other groups are categorized as inhuman, outcast, possessing negative traits (ugly, stupid, etc.); they may be identified as political enemies (i.e. traitors).<sup>833</sup> The ethnocentric model denotes fear, contempt as well as a desire to reaffirm itself and ensure survival. These strategies often occur through written and oral language and visual culture.<sup>834</sup>

La Lega's poster indicates a blatant use of dehumanization: a careful observation of the facial features of the non-whites evinces a denigrating, inhuman way of representation. The Asian man is portrayed with a yellowish complexion, extremely slanted eyes (represented only as diagonal lines) and buckteeth. The Nomadic woman wears a fringed shawl and hoop earrings, thus equalling the age-old stereotype of the "zingara" or "gypsy" and a headscarf. The black African man has grotesque red lips and sports gaudy jewellery and sunglasses, and the Middle Eastern individual sneers with menace and holds a dagger (a reference to the entrenched belief that all people from the Middle East are Muslim terrorists or cut-throat and thieves). All caricatures are in contrast to the vulnerability and bewilderment of helpless and elderly white man, unjustly pushed away. The non-white figures in this illustration are denied dignity and designed to attract feelings of hostility and denigration through laughter from white Italian viewers. I argue that this poster perfectly embodies the political party's aims to discriminate against "foreign bodies" and exalt Italy as a purely white Christian country. In order to achieve this goal, they use images to exploit an existing anxiety and fear over the recent increase in immigration and diversification of demographics. La Lega adopts delegitimizing strategies for political gain, by appealing to bias present in the Italian peninsula, as demonstrated by their electoral success.

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<sup>832</sup> Ibid. p. 73

<sup>833</sup> Ibid. pp. 74 - 75

<sup>834</sup> Ibid. p. 78



Psychology scholars Chiara Volpato, Federica Durante, Alessandro Gabbiadini, Luca Andrighetto and Silvia Mari suggest a specific correlation between degrading images of non-whites used during the Fascist period and La Lega's visual propaganda.<sup>835</sup> The academics explain that images are an effective way to communicate implicit messages, which is why visual denigration is often used as a way to convince viewers to agree.<sup>836</sup> They analysed a range of representations found in the Fascist magazine *La Difesa della Razza* (The Defence of the Race), which was published in Italy between the years 1938 and 1943, and compared them to a selection of posters produced by La Lega making correlations between dehumanization of the "other". Despite the difference in context, disturbing similarities are present in the messages' toxicity.<sup>837</sup> Representation of non-whites, Jews, Muslims and all "undesirable" categories as monsters, animals, subhuman and outcasts, depressingly persists throughout La Lega's visual tactics.<sup>838</sup> Furthermore, sending the public misleading messages such as "immigrants steal jobs, houses, healthcare or education" from autochthonous Italians is parallel to Fascists' claiming Jews were a plague on Italian society and had to be removed.<sup>839</sup>

To corroborate these scholars' research, a survey completed between April and August 2017 and released on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2018 by the Pew Research Centre showed how distorted Italians' perceptions are about migrants.<sup>840</sup> The aim of the study was to analyse Western Europeans' attitudes towards immigrants, religion and nationalism. The study showed that Italians held the most negative responses towards migrants compared to fellow European countries, specifically Muslims, and stated that "true Italians" have to be white and have been

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<sup>835</sup> Chiara Volpato, Silvia Mari, Alessandro Gabbiadini, Federica Durante and Luca Andrighetto. *Picturing the Other: Targets of Delegitimization Across Time*. International Journal of Conflict and Violence 4, no. 2 (2010): p. 270.

<sup>836</sup> Ibid. p. 271

<sup>837</sup> Ibid. pp. 273 - 275

<sup>838</sup> Ibid. p. 278

<sup>839</sup> Ibid.

<sup>840</sup> Kelsey Jo Starr and Jeff Diamant, *Western Europeans Vary in their Nationalist, Anti -Immigrant and Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes*. Pew Research Center. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/06/19/western-europeans-vary-in-their-nationalist-anti-immigrant-and-anti-religious-minority-attitudes/>

born in Italy. The Italian respondents in this survey estimated that about 25% of the national population is made up of immigrants whereas in reality, it amounts to roughly 8%.<sup>841</sup>

Moreover, the Eurobarometer, which conducts surveys in every European country, stated that 74% of Italians believed immigrants brought higher levels of crime, 58% that they steal jobs from natives and 62% believed they are a burden on the welfare system.<sup>842</sup> These values are the highest in Europe according to this survey, which placed Sweden at the lowest levels of anti-immigration hostility.<sup>843</sup> Messages such as those communicated by La Lega increase fear, aversion and eventually lead to violence and harm against the targeted group. Bar-Tal contends that negative stereotyping, prejudice and delegitimization can lead to aggressive conflict and therefore must be avoided at all costs.<sup>844</sup> The final poster is a mere example of the xenophobic, offensive, ideology delivered by La Lega that has and still is causing harm. Post-colonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha in his renowned essay on stereotypes *The Other Question: the Stereotype and the Colonial Discourse* (1983), affirms the following: “(...) the stereotype, (...), is a form of knowledge and identification and identification that vacillates between what is always “in place”, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated – as if the essential duplicity of the Asiatic or the bestial sexual license of the African that needs no proof, can never really, in discourse, be proved.”<sup>845</sup>

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<sup>841</sup> Ibid.

<sup>842</sup> Jessica Phelan, *Italians Overestimate Immigrant Population More than any Other Europeans: Study*.

<sup>843</sup> Kelsey Jo Starr and Jeff Diamant, *Western Europeans Vary in their Nationalist, Anti -Immigrant and Anti-Religious Minority Attitudes*.

<sup>844</sup> Daniel Bar-Tal. *Causes and Consequences of Delegitimization: Models of Conflict and Ethnocentrism*. p. 78

<sup>845</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, “The Other Question: The Stereotype and Colonial Discourse” in *Visual Culture: The Reader. Culture, Media, and Identities*, ed. by Jessica Evans, and Stuart Hall. (London: SAGE Publications in association with the Open University, 1999), p. 370

## CONCLUSION

On the February 3rd 2018, a 28-year-old man, Luca Traini, went on a “hunting spree” in Macerata, a town in central Italy, to kill black men.<sup>846</sup> The reason, as it was later revealed, was to take revenge for the murder of 18-year-old Pamela Mastropietro, an Italian woman with a drug addiction brutally assassinated by suspect Innocent Oseghale, a Nigerian immigrant and drug dealer. Even though Oseghale was still a suspect and not yet found guilty, the fact that a black man had allegedly killed a white Italian woman convinced Traini that all black men were criminals and had to be eliminated. He wounded six people without killing anyone. A brief look at this man’s past revealed that he was a candidate for La Lega in 2017 municipal elections for the town of Corridonia, near Macerata.<sup>847</sup> This aggression illustrates how La Lega’s hateful ideology evolved from targeting Southern Italians, to migrants, specifically those of African descent.

He did not earn any votes; however, it should come as no surprise that La Lega’s rhetoric might foment this type of violence. Further examples of this political coalition’s toxicity are the racist attacks against former Minister for Integration and the first black Italian Minister, Cécile Kyenge.<sup>848</sup> During her time in office, she faced distressing racist incidents, often by La Lega politicians who referred to her as an “orangutan” and openly doubted her political legitimacy because of her African ancestry.<sup>849</sup> These incidents constitute the “tip of the iceberg” of the venom infused by this political party, which has spent decades spewing, often through vulgar language, a white - Christian supremacist ideology. Nowadays La Lega is one of the

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<sup>846</sup> Agnese Ananasso, *Raid Razzista a Macerata, Spari Contro gli Africani: 6 Feriti. Fermato Italiano Incensurato*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/03/news/macerata\\_sparatoria-187934230/?ref=RHPPTP-BL-I0-C12-P1-S1.12-T1](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/03/news/macerata_sparatoria-187934230/?ref=RHPPTP-BL-I0-C12-P1-S1.12-T1)

<sup>847</sup> Giovanni Gagliardi, *Chi è Luca Traini, l'ex Candidato della Lega che ha Sparato a Macerata*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/03/news/macerata\\_luca\\_traini-187950304/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/03/news/macerata_luca_traini-187950304/)

<sup>848</sup> Tom Kington, *Italy's First Black Minister: I Had Bananas Thrown at me but I'm Here to Stay*. The Guardian. Last Accessed February 6<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/08/cecile-kyenge-quest-for-tolerance>

<sup>849</sup> Ibid.

central government's main components and one of its representatives, Matteo Salvini, former Minister of Interior between 2018 and 2019, has galvanized popular approval thanks to his approachable charisma.<sup>850</sup>

To conclude this chapter, I wish to dedicate a paragraph to Salvini who garnered 33% of consensus in Italy as of December 2018.<sup>851</sup> As I have explored throughout this chapter, La Lega has mutated from a regionalist, folkloristic organisation emphasising local culture and language into a toxic, xenophobic national political coalition. Salvini began rising to power on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2013 following La Lega primaries to elect its new leader.<sup>852</sup> He earned 82% of votes making him this movement's main political figure.<sup>853</sup> He commenced his political journey for La Lega during the beginning of the 1990's and rose to prominence thanks to his "down to earth" attitude meaning a simplistic rhetoric, crass language, overwhelming social media activity, and direct interaction with his supporters by often going to rallies, manifestations and social events.<sup>854</sup>

He tactically rides a populist wave of frustration, ignorance, desire for easy explanations and simple solutions, as well as deep-seated hatred towards anything and anyone perceived as "different", especially migrants from "undesirable" parts of the world. Salvini has managed to galvanise popular consensus by using immigrants and the "overwhelming" criminality they bring in Italy as easy scapegoats. Journalist Ezio Mauro has noted how statistics show Italy has a low violent crime rate as well as lower percentages of migrants on its territory compared to

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<sup>850</sup> During national elections in 2018, La Lega led by Salvini managed to become the third major political force in the country. *Speciale Elezioni 2018*, La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019.

<https://elezioni.repubblica.it/2018/cameradeideputati>. Throughout my time in Italy, whilst writing the dissertation, I went to see and listen to Salvini's rallies. When compared to other more traditional and professional politicians he is indeed more relatable. He often eats, drinks (earthly pleasures, easily approachable), takes selfies and makes simple jokes as his marketing tool. Unsurprisingly people flock to see him talk and crave pictures with him also because he tends to be funny and places humor in "boring" politics.

<sup>851</sup> Ibid.

<sup>852</sup> Matteo Pucciarelli, *Anatomia di un Populista. La Vera Storia di Matteo Salvini*. (Milano, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore, 2016) pp. 20 - 21

<sup>853</sup> Ibid.

<sup>854</sup> Ibid. pp. 17 - 20

other European countries.<sup>855</sup> This however seems to be of little importance to Salvini's fans and La Lega, who not only are responsible for fearmongering rhetoric, but also downplay their xenophobic tactics to shape the current political climate by claiming racism "is an invention of the left".<sup>856</sup> Salvini, through the use of social media – posting numerous pictures of his private life including his meals and informal moments with his partner, makes himself more "available" and "approachable" to his public. La Lega has truly become the party "of the people" manifesting its deepest, most irrational impulses to the detriment of more vulnerable segments of the population.<sup>857</sup> Even though Salvini's popularity has vacillated throughout 2018 going from 36.2% to 33%, he is still one of Italy's main political figures and La Lega, his hallmark.<sup>858</sup>

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<sup>855</sup> Ezio Mauro, *L'Uomo Bianco*. (Milano, Feltrinelli Editore, 2018) pp. 37 – 38

<sup>856</sup> Silvio Buzzanca, *Salvini: "L'Allarme Razzismo è un'Invenzione della Sinistra". E Tace sul Spari e Violenze Contro gli Immigrati*. La Repubblica. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2018/07/28/news/salvini\\_allarme\\_razzismo\\_e\\_un\\_invenzione\\_della\\_sinistra\\_-202889571/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2018/07/28/news/salvini_allarme_razzismo_e_un_invenzione_della_sinistra_-202889571/)

<sup>857</sup> Matteo Pucciarelli, *Anatomia di un Populista*. pp. 17 – 20

<sup>858</sup> *Sondaggi, la Lega al 33,5% stacca il Movimento 5 Stelle di 3,5 punti: è il risultato più alto di sempre*. Il Fatto Quotidiano. Last Accessed February 8<sup>th</sup> 2019. <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2018/09/08/sondaggi-la-lega-al-335-stacca-il-movimento-5-stelle-di-35-punti-e-il-risultato-piu-alto-di-sempre/4612245/>

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ADRIAN PACI AND IMMIGRATION TO ITALY A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

## INTRODUCTION

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the Triennale Museum in Milan inaugurated the exhibition *The Restless Earth*.<sup>859</sup> Organised conjointly with the Trussardi Foundation, it showed works by over sixty artists regarding migration and the refugee crisis in our present time.<sup>860</sup> The title of the show, borrowed from a collection of poems written by Caribbean writer, Édouard Glissant, reflected on different perspectives regarding transnational migration, voyage, refugees, multiculturalism, hosting countries, integration, human rights and acceptance. The artists, who came from a wide variety of backgrounds and perspectives, offered their insights concerning these delicate themes. Among them, one artwork by Albanian-born but naturalised Italian artist, Adrian Paci was featured.<sup>861</sup> His video entitled *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea* (Centre for Temporary Permanence) drew attention to the condition of asylum seekers detained in these prison-like structures while awaiting their fate.

## SCOPE OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter analyses three artworks by Paci who currently resides in Milan, Italy, following his exodus from his home country in 1997.<sup>862</sup> A trained artist, Paci arrived in Italy after fleeing from the political instability and violence in Albania, with his young family. He is part of a mass migration of Albanians to Italy that occurred throughout the 1990's, when, for the first time, the Italian peninsula experienced a strong influx of people in search of a better life.<sup>863</sup> Paci, arriving in Milan, became a building restorer<sup>864</sup> whereas in his hometown,

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<sup>859</sup> Fondazione Nicola Trussardi, *The Restless Earth*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.fondazionenicolatrussardi.com/en/mostre/the-restless-earth/>

<sup>860</sup> Ibid.

<sup>861</sup> Cristina Morandi, *The Restless Earth (La Terra Inquieta)*, CAA.reviews, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://caareviews.org/reviews/3327#.XleuYRNKilt>

<sup>862</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Gili Ed., *Adrian Paci: Transit*, (Milano, Mousse Publishing, 2013), p.56

<sup>863</sup> Antonela Destanisha, *La Criminalità Albanese: Sviluppo e Collegamenti Internazionali*, Tesi Magistrale, Università degli Studi di Milano, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Anno Accademico 2010/2011, pp. 20 - 27

<sup>864</sup> In a moving interview with Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Paci on the occasion of his personal exhibition at Sant Eustorgio cloisters in spring 2017, admits that throughout his experience as a building restorer he worked at that same place. During those days he would fantasize about exhibiting his art there, a dream that decades later became true thanks to his former colleague and restorer Luciano Formica. Francesca Bonazzoli,

Shkodër, he worked as an art professor at the Shkodër University teaching art history and aesthetics.<sup>865</sup> His personal story of being a migrant permeates his artistic practice, expressing themes of loss, abandonment, nostalgia, discrimination, hostility, hope, family bonds and the thrill of an unknown territory in which to settle. Working with a wide range of media, including video, sculpture, performance, photography, collage, installations and paintings, Paci focuses on deeply personal interpretations of pivotal issues such as migration, xenophobia and instability. Through private details concerning his personal and family life, the artist makes powerful political statements taking the viewer “beyond” statistics, numbers, surveys, polls and policies.<sup>866</sup> Paci adds a human dimension to complex themes often difficult to understand by simply absorbing information from media outlets.

This chapter’s aim is to discuss how contemporary art responds to issues concerning migration, specifically to Italy. My objective is not only to understand Paci’s outtake on current migration patterns in Italy and in the world but to understand how contemporary artists respond to a deeply political yet personal phenomenon. In the previous segments I have analysed a specific side of Italy’s history where stigmatisation of the “different” was not only adamant but also overwhelmingly accepted by the majority of Italians. Then I moved to examine Italian media images and how uniquely one side of immigration is conveniently shown, hence creating the idea of a “migrant crisis” and exacerbating xenophobic attitudes.

In the third chapter I focus on political posters by extreme right-wing political party La Lega and contend how toxic the message they exude is. In the current part of my dissertation however I turn my focus towards contemporary art, specifically video, and expose a more favourable, empathic view. I highlight Paci’s work because of the consistency in his work in

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*Memorie di Migrazione nelle Opere di Adrian Paci*, Corriere della Sera, Last Accessed July 27th 2020, [https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/17\\_aprile\\_16/memorie-migrazione-opere-adrian-paci-c847ea14-21f5-11e7-807d-a69c30112ddd.shtml](https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/17_aprile_16/memorie-migrazione-opere-adrian-paci-c847ea14-21f5-11e7-807d-a69c30112ddd.shtml)

<sup>865</sup> Ibid. pp. 57 - 58

<sup>866</sup> Ibid. pp. 56 - 57



highlighting themes of migration from a personal perspective. If in the previous chapters I analysed negative, statistical, and often aggressive imagery aimed at demonising immigrants, southerners and colonized people, in the following segment my aim is to bring a positive outlook permeated by artistic introspection. Paci not only reflects his personal experience as a migrant in a country at times hostile, but also confronts viewers with the humane side of newcomers and what this experience entails in the private sphere. As previously argued, Italy has only recently become an immigration country thus its lack of preparedness and often hostility against foreigners, particularly those with “undesirable” provenances or with specific phenotypes. Artists, Italians and non-Italians, have been consistently responding to this demographic shift, however art historians, with the exception of cinema, are still relatively silent on this subject.

The chapter starts with a brief description of the historical background that led Paci to emigrate to Italy. Following the brutality and the fall of Enver Hoxha’s dictatorship, Albania was left in a precarious state of economic instability and violence, which forced numerous Albanians to flee the country.<sup>867</sup> Furthermore, an era of political turmoil reigned while Yugoslavia’s breakup unfolded along with the Yugoslav Wars<sup>868</sup>, which ravaged the region throughout the 1990’s causing incalculable human losses and destruction.<sup>869</sup> It was then that

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<sup>867</sup> Angela Vattese Ed., *Adrian Paci*, (Milano, Edizioni Charta, 2006), pp. 107 - 108

<sup>868</sup> The Yugoslav Wars were a series of devastating conflicts in the Balkans between the years 1991 and 2001. Yugoslavia was a country formed following the Second World War constituted by six different states: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Republic of Macedonia. Tensions rose amid strong religious and ethnic hostilities as well as increasing nationalism on behalf of the six nations fuelling the desire to separate from Yugoslavia. After the death of Yugoslavian dictator Josip Broz Tito, havoc in the region arose thus causing massacres of ethnic minorities such as in Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995 where Muslim men and boys were killed at the hands of Bosnian Serbs. At the end of the twentieth century, following international negotiations where the United States took place six independent states were formed. John Zameitica and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Yugoslav Conflict: An Analysis of the Causes of the Yugoslav War, the Policies of the Republics and the Regional and International Implications of the Conflict*, (Adelphi Paper, 270. London: Brassey's, 1992), pp. 3 - 4

<sup>869</sup> BBC, *Balkans War: a Brief Guide*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-17632399>

numerous Eastern Europeans escaped to Western Europe, especially Italy and Greece, which lie in close proximity (Figure 37).<sup>870</sup>



**FIGURE 37,** Map of Southern – Eastern Europe

It was during this mass exodus that Italians, who had not for a long time experienced hefty influxes of people, started manifesting prejudice and xenophobia against Albanian migrants, also fuelled by the fear of Albanian organised crime groups.<sup>871</sup> Following this section, I focus chronologically on Paci's works: the first one is entitled *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea* and is a short video lasting approximately five minutes.<sup>872</sup> It was realised at the San José airport in California in 2007, therefore close to the Mexican border with the US, and

<sup>870</sup> Antonela Destanisha, *La Criminalità Albanese*, p. 14

<sup>871</sup> Ted Perlmutter, *The Politics of Proximity: The Italian Response to the Albanian Crisis*, *The International Migration Review* 32 (1) (1998): p. 211. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/019791839803200109>.

<sup>872</sup> Vimeo Video, *Adrian Paci / Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, Duration 5:30, Posted by cfmt, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2012, <https://vimeo.com/41969513>

shows a group of people, seemingly South and Central American migrants, walking up a flight of passenger stairs, which are not docked at the side of an airplane, and instead lead nowhere.<sup>873</sup> The airplane however is not depicted at any point in the video, thus leaving them in a state of limbo. This work is a powerful denunciation of Italian detention centres, which, as I will examine, were created in 1998 to hold asylum seekers while their destiny is decided by Italian law and bureaucracy.<sup>874</sup> Paci furthermore, by filming in San José, draws a direct correlation between mistreatment of migrants at Italian borders and migrants being detained at the high-profile USA - Mexican border.

The second work is a collage made in 2008 called *It was not a Performance* in which Paci compares two images: the first one, on the top, is a personal photograph depicting his community in which the artist appears as a young boy with a red circle drawn on his face to identify him.<sup>875</sup> On the bottom part, Paci illustrates a cut-out from the newspaper *La Padania*, which used to be the official printed news outlet for right wing political party La Lega, extensively discussed in chapter three. La Lega frequently targets migrants as the cause of Italian social and economic ills.<sup>876</sup> Unsurprisingly, the news image Paci chose reads *Invasione Pianificata* (Planned Invasion), where a long line of Albanian migrants awaits anxiously in line to obtain a work permit.<sup>877</sup> The artist recognises himself in that cut out and therefore encircles his anxious face in red. In this work, Paci gives a comparison between how he sees himself in his home country surrounded by his loved ones and how his host country sees him as merely a number and an unwelcome “invader”.

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<sup>873</sup> Erika Cammerata, *Adrian Paci e Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, Ritrovare l'Arte WorldPress (Blog), Posted on April 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://ritrovareartewordpress.wordpress.com/2017/04/03/adrian-paci-e-centro-di-permanenza/>

<sup>874</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Gili Ed., *Adrian Paci: Transit*, p. 64

<sup>875</sup> Barbara Fässler, *Interview with Adrian Paci*, November 11<sup>th</sup> 2013, Undo.Net, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://1995-2015.undo.net/it/argomenti/1385146410>

<sup>876</sup> Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, *Lega Nord and the Political Construction of Otherness in Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics: Inventing the Padania: Lega Nord and the Northern Question*. Research in Migration and Ethnic Relations Series. (Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002), p. 117

<sup>877</sup> Barbara Fässler, *Interview with Adrian Paci*

The final work is a twenty-five-minute video entitled *The Column* made in 2013 taking place on a ship departing from China and directed towards Europe.<sup>878</sup> The short movie follows a group of Chinese workers as they sculpt a marble block on a moving ship and transforming it into a Corinthian column ready to be sold in the West. This brief yet poignant piece opens discussions on some of today's critical concerns: globalisation, labour outsourcing, Western exploitation of migrant workers and a voracious consumer appetite for material goods.<sup>879</sup> I argue that Paci, through these three works, reveals distressing truths concerning an increasingly globalised world where 68,5 million people are forced migrants.<sup>880</sup> The artist, in a strong yet poetic manner, leads viewers to reflect on uncomfortable, sensitive issues, thus showing painful contradictions in modern days.

As a conclusion, I interview the artist himself, exploring relevant details of his life experience, his work and what he aspires to achieve through his art. This chapter aims to give a scholarly outlook on the important and timely artwork of an artist who is not yet in the academic spotlight.

## ENVER HOXHA'S DICTATORSHIP AND ALBANIAN MIGRATION TO ITALY

In order to properly understand Paci's background and, at least in part, his artistic production, I roughly explore the past fifty years of Albania's history and what led to the mass exodus of Albanians in the nineties. On February 14th, 2004, the independent Albanian newspaper *Gaeta Shqiptare* published a daunting article on the country's difficult economic situation, defining it as "Europe's poorest nation".<sup>881</sup> Substantiated with the most up to date data, scholar Artan Puto explained that although unemployment was slowly decreasing and the

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<sup>878</sup> Vimeo Video, *The Column Trailer by Adrian Paci*, Duration 2:28, Posted by Kobe Studio, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015, <https://vimeo.com/121131655>

<sup>879</sup> Vimeo Video, *Adrian Paci: The Column at Jeu de Paume*, duration 11:33, Posted by Jeu De Paume/Magazine, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2014, <https://vimeo.com/98044998>

<sup>880</sup> Claudio Paravati and Luca Di Sciullo, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazioni 2018*, (Roma, Centro Studi and Ricerche IDOS with Centro Studi Confronti, 2018), p. 37

<sup>881</sup> Artan Puto, *Albania, il Paese più Povero d'Europa*, Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.balcanicaucaso.org/aree/Albania/Albania-il-paese-piu-povero-d-Europa-25330>

GDP was making timid progress, the situation for locals, particularly for those living in rural areas, remained grim. Although commodity prices were similar to the rest of Europe, Albanian salaries were estimated to be approximately fifteen times lower than their European counterparts. According to the Ministry of Finance and National Strategy Direction for Social and Economic Development, Albanians on average spent 60% of their salaries on food meanwhile citizens of the rest of Europe generally spent between 15% and 22% on the same products.<sup>882</sup>

One out of six families lived under one dollar per day and one out of two families with less than two dollars a day. Puto continued his explanation by positing that Albania's main cause for its impoverishment was that imports exceed exports, hence, creating a significant deficit. Experts argued that the only way to reinvigorate this precarious economic state was to stimulate the local economy and increase exports.<sup>883</sup>

Almost fifteen years later there seems to have been improvements as stated by the World Bank that analysed the GDP between 1998 and 2018.<sup>884</sup> An article, dated October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019 and published in *Albanianews.it* indicates that despite a recent slight decrease in economic growth, Albania has been financially improving.<sup>885</sup> In spite of the long road ahead, the prospects appear positive. Two questions arise: why was Albania so poor and what led to the mass migration towards Italy at the end of the twentieth century? One of the answers lies in the aftermath of Enver Hoxha's brutal dictatorship starting in 1944 until his death in 1985.<sup>886</sup> Despite bringing some improvements to the country, his regime was considered one of the harshest during the time of the Soviet Union even if Albania was never formally part of the USSR.

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<sup>882</sup> Ibid.

<sup>883</sup> Ibid.

<sup>884</sup> Albanianews.it, *Banca Mondiale: per l'Albania stime di crescita nel 2019 al 2,9%*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.albanianews.it/notizie/economia/banca-mondiale-albania-2019>

<sup>885</sup> Ibid.

<sup>886</sup> Antonello Biagini, *Storia dell'Albania Contemporanea*, (Milano, RCS Libri S.p.A., 2005), pp. 131 – 145

Hoxha rose to power during the Second World War amidst Italian occupation of Albania. Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, throughout his Fascist government, led colonial invasions of foreign countries with the intent of garnering international recognition as well as bringing new resources to Italy.<sup>887</sup> Between the night of April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 1939, Italian troops entered Albanian territory and with minor effort seized power.<sup>888</sup> In this context, opposition was fomented by one of its main leaders -- Hoxha, at the time, a young professor indoctrinated by Marxist philosophy.<sup>889</sup> In 1941, the Communist Party of Albania formed and in 1944, once Italian and German troops evacuated, Hoxha formally became Albania's commander in chief.<sup>890</sup> Despite Albania not belonging to the Soviet Union, Hoxha's regime was considered one of the most violent and repressive communist dictatorships: his rigorous imposition of Marxist-Leninist doctrines<sup>891</sup> signalled, during the early fifties, a significant impoverishment of the country's already meagre resources.<sup>892</sup> Moreover, under Hoxha's ruthless rule, political opponents were imprisoned, tortured and assassinated.<sup>893</sup> Protest and dissent were brutally repressed, resulting in a traumatised population, but also a stagnating national economy. Furthermore, Albania was the first atheist country in the world with all religions being formally banned in 1967.<sup>894</sup> Places of worship were destroyed and all religious practice was violently

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<sup>887</sup> Ibid. p. 127

<sup>888</sup> Ibid. p. 128

<sup>889</sup> Ibid. pp. 130 – 131

<sup>890</sup> Ibid. pp. 136 - 137

<sup>891</sup> Authors Russell King and Nicola Mai in their volume on Albanian migration towards Italy expound on Hoxha's rigid implementation of a Marxist-Leninist type of governance. Firstly, he isolated Albania from the rest of the world in order to prevent the country from being "contaminated" by the "corrupt capitalist" West hence making trade an arduous enterprise. Apart from Yugoslavia from which he later broke off because of tensions with Tito, Albania was left to do business solely with Mao's China therefore significantly impoverishing the country. Private property was gradually abolished in favour of collective ownership and accumulation of wealth of the individual was forbidden. Basically, Hoxha's regime sought to eradicate individual entrepreneurship to benefit society however this produced considerable poverty. Despite bringing some positive changes such as welfare payments, pensions, literacy and education, the overwhelming lack of resources brought Albania to economically collapse. A further implementation of Marxist ideology was the erasure of religion seen as the "opiate of the people". Russel King and Nicola Mai, *Out of Albania: from Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*, (New York: Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 33 - 40

<sup>892</sup> Ibid. p. 138

<sup>893</sup> Amik Kasoruh, *Un Incubo di Mezzo Secolo: l'Albania di Enver Hoxha*, (Lecce, Salento Books, 2015), pp. 65 - 69

<sup>894</sup> Antonello Biagini, *Storia dell'Albania Contemporanea*, p. 144

repressed. Hoxha died in 1985 and left Albania to his ally Ramiz Alia<sup>895</sup> who, despite his more progressive views, proved unable to lead the country to stability.<sup>896</sup>

In 1991, the USSR collapsed and the communist ideology, which was imposed on Eastern Europe for the previous fifty years, diminished due to vast disillusionment and the catastrophic effects its policies had.<sup>897</sup> Albania, was not only severely impoverished, but also entirely closed to the rest of the world. Internal mismanagement, corruption, a lack of democracy, high unemployment, and poverty but also no industrial infrastructure left the Albanian population angry and resentful, thus internal havoc unfolded. Following fraudulent elections in 1996, which saw the Democratic Party win with 55% of votes as well as the fall of investments, thus compromising the savings of citizens, civil unrest ensued between January and July 1997.<sup>898</sup> It is in this timeframe that Paci, as well as numerous other Albanians, fled the country in search of a more peaceful existence.<sup>899</sup> Italy, being in close proximity, became one of the main destinations for Albanian migrants.

It is estimated that between 1989 and 2001 approximately 600,000 Albanians left their homeland to go either to Italy, Greece or other European nations.<sup>900</sup> Roughly one fifth of the Albanian population emigrated during that period of time and the overall population dropped by 4%. The rural population diminished by a staggering 13%.<sup>901</sup> Italy, between 1991 and the early twenty-first century, was on the receiving end of a significant number of Albanian

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<sup>895</sup> Ramiz Alia was part of the communist party and a loyal servant to Hoxha. During the dictatorship he was Minister for Education and Culture as well as occupied dubious roles such as secretary for the Central Committee for Ideology and Propaganda. Following Hoxha's death in 1985 he took the lead however Albania was showing signs of tiredness and dislike towards the Communist regime. Despite easing travel restrictions, loosening trade to improve the economic situation and allowing political and cultural debate he was unable to strengthen the country and further destabilized it. Young people especially were protesting for freedom and prosperity. Russel King and Nicola Mai, *Out of Albania*, pp. 40 – 42

<sup>896</sup> Ibid. pp. 145 - 147

<sup>897</sup> Ibid. pp. 148 - 149

<sup>898</sup> Ibid. pp. 150 - 151

<sup>899</sup> Ted Perlmutter, *The Politics of Proximity*, p. 203

<sup>900</sup> Alberto Zezza, Marco Stampini, Benjamin Davis and Calogero Carletto, *A Country on the Move: International Migration in Post-Communist Albania*. The International Migration Review 40 (4), 2006: 767–768. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2006.00043.x>

<sup>901</sup> Ibid. p. 768

migrants.<sup>902</sup> For the first time, Italy was transformed into a potential haven for immigrants - and one that was entirely unequipped for such a phenomenon.

Author Aliza S. Wong in her volume on discrimination against Southern Italians describes the shift Italy has gone through during the past century.<sup>903</sup> Between 1867 and 1988 around twenty-seven million Italians left their motherland for the American continent, Australia and the UK.<sup>904</sup> Italy because of poverty, particularly in the South, experienced a mass exodus to wealthier lands. However, Wong affirms, there has also been and still is internal migration from the South to the North. The latter has more resources, therefore numerous Southerners moved there in search of a better life despite, especially during the middle of the twentieth century, experiencing prejudice. It is therefore an ironic shift that Italians who have experienced mass emigration, internal and external, as well as xenophobic hostility, have now become an overwhelmingly intolerant country. Wong argues this change was unexpected and involved the disconcerting process of the “other” becoming self.<sup>905</sup> There is still a significant amount of research to be done on why a country where so many left for abroad and faced xenophobic behaviour, now seems not only oblivious to others with similar experiences but also partakes in discriminatory attacks and policies.<sup>906</sup>

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<sup>902</sup> Ibid. pp. 772 - 773

<sup>903</sup> Aliza S. Wong, *Race and the Nation in Liberal Italy, 1861 – 1911*, (New York and Hampshire, Pelgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2006), pp. 113 - 114

<sup>904</sup> Ibid. pp. 151 - 152

<sup>905</sup> Ibid. p. 150

<sup>906</sup> Italian singer Gianni Morandi in a social media post in April 2015 compares two pictures: one in black and white of Italian immigrants disembarking on a new land during the past century and the other of African migrants coming to Southern Italy during the past months. He warned not to forget Italian history and have compassion also because Italians faced considerable hardship whilst going abroad to settle often in less-than-ideal conditions. He posited on the absence of difference towards poor Italians migrating after the Second World War and immigrants coming today from the Middle East and Africa because of poverty and war. The reaction that he got online was explosive and despite being numerous positive comments his social media profile was inundated by vitriol stating Italians were true hard workers and today’s migrants coming to Italy are just “parasites” living off of the taxpayer’s dime. Even Morandi stated he was not expecting such a venomous backlash. Guido Scorza, *Gianni Morandi e la sua “lezione” sull’Italia e i Social Network*, Il Fatto Quotidiano, Last Accessed August 5th 2020, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/04/23/gianni-morandi-e-la-sua-lezione-sullitalia-e-i-social-network/1615969/>



Scholar Ted Perlmutter, in his article on the Italian response to the wave of Albanian migrants, contends that the initial reaction was of solidarity and compassion.<sup>907</sup> Although Perlmutter hypothesizes that this benevolent response was in part due to the relatively new occurrence of such migrations and the fact that the numbers were perceived as “under control” and “not too many”.<sup>908</sup>

According to scholar Kosta Bajraba the Albanian population is a homogenous population: 98% are ethnically Albanian and the main religion professed is Islam.<sup>909</sup> Minorities include sixty thousand Greeks, five thousand Macedonians and Serbian-Montenegrins as well as other racial minorities.<sup>910</sup> Author Adem Ferizaj contends Albanians are mainly ethnically white and therefore are relatively accepted in Europe.<sup>911</sup> He posits issues such as Eurocentrism and “whiteness” are why Europe has mixed feelings on Albanians: on one side they have a “proper” phenotype, however on the other they are Muslims and come from an incredibly poor country.<sup>912</sup> African and Middle Eastern migrants do not have this “privilege” and are considered foreign because of “unfitting” phenotypes.<sup>913</sup> Thus, as the flow increased and Albanians steadily integrated into Italian society, negative attitudes started emerging.<sup>914</sup> Denigrating stereotypes equating Albanians to criminals and representing them as “hoards” gained popularity in national media as well as throughout the Italian population.<sup>915</sup> For example images

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<sup>907</sup> Ted Perlmutter, *The Politics of Proximity*, p. 208

<sup>908</sup> Ibid.

<sup>909</sup> Barjarba Kosta, “Migration and Ethnicity in Albania: Synergies and Interdependencies.” *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11, no. 1 (2004), p. 233

<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> Adem Ferizaj, *Islamophobia and “Whiteness” as Two Sides of the Same Coin*, From Poverty to Power, Last Accessed August 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/islamophobia-and-whiteness-as-two-sides-of-the-same-coin/>

<sup>912</sup> Ibid.

<sup>913</sup> For example, former Minister for Integration Cecile Kyenge, originally Congolese, suffered numerous attacks specifically linked to her African ancestry such as having bananas’ thrown at her, being compared to an “orangutan” and arguing her provenance is from a “bongo bongo” country. Despite there being a worrying amount of vitriol against Albanian immigrants in the nineties and even now, there are no reports of hatred against their specific phenotypes. *Black Italian Minister Kyenge Suffers Banana Insult*, BBC, Last Accessed August 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-23480489>

<sup>914</sup> Ibid. pp. 211 - 212

<sup>915</sup> Ibid.

on Italian mainstream newspaper such as *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Giornale* not only represented Albanian migration as indefinite masses of people disembarking in Italy but also had headlines reporting words such as “invasion”, “assault” and “hell”.<sup>916</sup> Since Italy was new to the influx of immigrants, unlike its European counterparts (i.e. the UK and France), it is unquestionable the situation must have been difficult. However, the images shown to the Italian public as well as the wording used evinces a use of a highly emotional versus informative type of reporting.<sup>917</sup> For example, photographs were circulated to the Italian population, of indefinite masses of people in the Southern city of Bari on August 8<sup>th</sup> 1991 (Figure 38). The ship Vlora containing thousands of Albanian migrants attempting to reach Italy’s shores are represented as hoards assaulting Italian harbours. Furthermore, Italian newspaper headlines such as *Il Corriere della Sera*, reported alarming and sensationalist phrases (Figure 39) such as *Diecimila Profughi all’Assalto* (ten thousand refugees launching an assault).<sup>918</sup>

Scholars John Richardson and Monica Colombo, in their analysis of extreme right-wing anti-immigration political party La Lega, assert that showing groups of people from an elevated perspective puts the viewer at an advantage point.<sup>919</sup> Moreover, showing masses of humans with no identifiable features contributes to dehumanise the image. The strategy used, according to the academics, is to radically decontextualize the image hence simply showing spectators large groups of people without any context on why they are there, where they come from, the reasons behind the exodus and what they wish to achieve.<sup>920</sup>

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<sup>916</sup> Traglia Davide, *La Storia dei 430 Mila Albanesi Immigrati in Italia e il Valore dell’Accoglienza*, The Vision, Last Accessed August 11th 2020, <https://thevision.com/attualita/albanesi-immigrati/>

<sup>917</sup> Sebastian Bendinelli, *Cosa si Diceva degli Immigrati Albanesi 26 Anni fa*, The Submarine, Last Accessed August 11th 2020, <https://thesubmarine.it/2017/08/14/migranti-albanesi-26-anni-fa/>

<sup>918</sup> Ibid.

<sup>919</sup> Monica Colombo and John Richardson. “Continuity and Change in Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord.” *Journal of Language and Politics* 12, no. 2 (2013): p. 192. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.12.2.02ric>

<sup>920</sup> Ibid.



**FIGURE 38,** *Ship Vlora Containing Twenty Thousand Albanians Disembarks at Bari's Harbour, August 8<sup>th</sup> 1991, Photograph*

The reasons behind this method of reporting are basically hostility against newcomers and anxiety over this relatively novel situation in the Italian peninsula. Also, the peremptory tone of the headline containing emotionally charged words such as “assault” and “desperate” contribute to trigger readers instead of properly informing them. Restrictive policies, therefore, paved the way, such as the previously discussed Bossi – Fini law promulgated in 2002, which severely curtailed migrants’ movements on Italian territory.<sup>921</sup> The latter law hindered access to employment for Albanians; therefore, many resorted to illegal activity such as prostitution, organised crime or black-market labour.<sup>922</sup> These issues made headlines throughout the 1990’s in Italian media by showing “hordes” of Albanians disembarking and frightening headlines, thus worsening the already spoiled image of Albanian immigrants.

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<sup>921</sup> Alberto Zezza, Marco Stampini, Benjamin Davis and Calogero Carletto, *A Country on the Move*, pp. 773

<sup>922</sup> Ted Perlmutter, *The Politics of Proximity*, p. 212



FIGURE 39, Corriere della Sera, *Diecimila Profughi all'Assalto*, March 8th 1991, Newspaper extract

For example, op-eds with titles such as *Più Mafiosi che Fuggiaschi* (More mafiosi than escapees) arguing Albanese migrants were predominantly delinquents without showing any evidence for that claim (Figure 40). Or images capturing a man washing a car's windshield, a common type of labour done by migrants without legal documentation to work in Italy, subtitles *Dopo l'Invasione dei Polacchi s'Annuncia quella degli Albanesi* (After the Polish invasion the Albanese one is coming) here again without presenting any factual research on the claim's veracity (Figure 41).<sup>923</sup> It can be suggested these headlines were compounded because they represented a “catchy” headline for people to read, therefore sales of the specific newspaper would increase.

<sup>923</sup> Even in February 2013 a racist headline on Italian newspaper *Il Tirreno* attracted the public's attention and denunciation. The title was “Al “Turista” Albanese Piace il Furto” (The Albanian “tourist” likes theft) meaning harmful stereotypes are still present and difficult to eradicate. On a more positive note, the title of the newspaper was loudly denounced and sued for defamation by news outlet Albania News. «*Al turista albanese piace il furto*». *Se questo è giornalismo*. Globalist, Last Accessed August 11th 2020, <https://www.globalist.it/media/2016/05/08/al-turista-albanese-piace-il-furto-se-questo-e-giornalismo-40146.html>



# *L'Espresso: più mafiosi che fuggiaschi*

MILANO — *L'Espresso* contro il governo Prodi. Commenti duri, accuse di fuoco. Anche da sinistra. Per dire che l'esecutivo ha combinato «un enorme disastro». E per spiegare che, dietro l'esodo «ci sono più mafiosi che profughi». Ma eccole, le prime pagine del settimanale (in edicola da oggi). Comincia il vice direttore Antonio Padellaro: «Adesso che è stato proclamato lo stato d'emergenza, l'idea che bastasse un appello televisivo di

rietà o, al contrario, la dissuasione preventiva. Soluzioni eccessive, ma con il pregio della chiarezza. Il governo, invece, ha evitato di decidere, aggrappandosi all'eterna speranza italica del «forse tutto si aggiusta». Ma non basta. Perché «tutto nasce dalle relazioni pericolose tra i politici di Roma con quelli di Tirana». E perché «la rivolta albanese



G. Pansa

avrebbe rappresentato l'occasione per i clan criminali di in-

posto e forse suscitano più diffidenza degli zingari». Anche perché «non riescono quasi mai a integrarsi».

E Giampaolo Pansa, il condirettore? Stessi toni: «Proprio sfigati, noi elettori dell'Ulivo. Abbiamo nel governo così tante brave persone, ma quando si muovono tutte assieme le vediamo sbagliare sempre più spesso... Questa storia dell'Albania che collassa ha visto il governo Prodi fare una cappellata dopo l'altra». Insomma: «Ci promettano anche di rimpatriarli appena sarà finito il caos, ma non ci credo nemmeno se lo ve-

FIGURE 40, *L'Espresso, Più Mafiosi che Fuggiaschi*, Newspaper extract



Dopo l'invasione dei polacchi s'annuncia quella degli albanesi

FIGURE 41, *Dopo L'Invasione dei Polacchi s'Annuncia quella degli Albanesi*, Newspaper Extract

Perlmutter furthermore discusses the strange “humanitarian – military” operation the Italian Navy and Coast Guard carried out on the Adriatic Sea in an attempt to curb arrivals.<sup>924</sup> As previously mentioned, the attitude towards arriving Albanians was one of acceptance and pity, but as their numbers grew, it rapidly morphed into hostility and retraction.<sup>925</sup> Despite Italy’s patrolling of its shores and unpreparedness in dealing with Albanian asylum seekers, the Albanian population living in Italy is one of the largest outside of Albania.<sup>926</sup> According to data collected by ISTAT (National Italian Statistic Institute) in 2010 Albanians constituted the second most populated migrant community living in Italy (466,684) after Romanians (887,763).<sup>927</sup> It is during this period of upheaval that Paci arrived in Italy and developed his artistic practice including these three significant artworks.<sup>928</sup>

#### CENTRO DI PERMANENZA TEMPORANEA

The first artwork that I discuss is a still video, five minutes and thirty seconds long, that was filmed in San José, California, in 2007, not far from the USA – Mexican border.<sup>929</sup> Translated in English as *Centre for Temporary Permanence* (Figure 42), the work makes a pointed reference to existing institutions in Italy, later called Centres of Identification and Expulsion, and as of June 2019, Permanent Centres for Repatriation.<sup>930</sup> The function of these locations is to detain illegal migrants in order to determine whether they are allowed to stay on Italian territory or to expel them.<sup>931</sup> Once detained, migrants are held there and reside in a

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<sup>924</sup> Ibid. pp. 206 - 207

<sup>925</sup> Ibid. pp. 208 - 209

<sup>926</sup> Alberto Zezza, Marco Stampini, Benjamin Davis and Calogero Carletto, *A Country on the Move*, pp. 773

<sup>927</sup> Istat, *1 Gennaio 2011: La Popolazione Residente Straniera in Italia*, Last Accessed March 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2011/09/ReportStranieriResidenti.pdf>

<sup>928</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Gili Ed., *Adrian Paci: Transit*, p. 64

<sup>929</sup> Vimeo Video, *Adrian Paci / Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*,

<sup>930</sup> Osservatorio, Detenzione, Accoglienza, Migranti Puglia, *Centri detenzione: I Centri per il rimpatrio*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://www.osservatoriomigranti.org/?cie>

<sup>931</sup> Progetto Melting Pot Europa, *Cosa sono i C.I.E.*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.meltingpot.org/Cosa-sono-i-C-I-E-Centri-di-Identificazione-ed-Espulsione.html#.XlgJgxNKhPN>

temporary limbo<sup>932</sup> without any idea of what their future might be, powerless to decide their own fates. The video commences on a sunny day showing an empty airplane stairway in the midst of a functioning airstrip. The solitary staircase stands immobile although the viewer clearly hears airplanes landing and taking off in the surroundings. As the video focuses on the upper part of the stairs, a line of people slowly walks towards it and climbs to the top until all of its tiers are full (Figure 43).



**FIGURE 42,** Adrian Paci, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, 2007, 4'32'', video, colour, sound (video still), Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

<sup>932</sup> The time frame established for migrants residing in these spaces changed over time as the Turco – Napolitano law morphed. Initially, in 1998 when the law was promulgated, the time span was of a thirty-day maximum. Following the Bossi – Fini law in 2002 it was increased to sixty days and in 2008, with new modifications, one hundred and eighty days became the time limit in which migrants could stay. In 2011 the law morphed again and the maximum went up to eighteen months only to be reduced to ninety days in 2014. As of 2017 the average stay in these spaces is 25,5 days. Senato della Repubblica – XVII Legislatura, *Rapporto sui Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione in Italia*, Published December 2017, Last Accessed August 24th 2020, [https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittiumaniXVII/Rapporto\\_Cie-Cpr.pdf](https://www.senato.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/file/repository/commissioni/dirittiumaniXVII/Rapporto_Cie-Cpr.pdf) According to the prefecture's official website, detainees have the right to legal assistance either by a lawyer of their choice and at their expense or by one provided by the Italian government. Moreover, it is their legal right to access an interpreter, have pocket money (€2,50 per day), partake in Italian classes, have external visits, eat regularly, access a telephone and postal service, recreational activities and medical treatment including psychological assistance. Prefettura, *Regolamento Interno del Centro di Permanenza ed Assistenza Istituito ai Sensi dell'Articolo 14 del Decreto Legislativo 25 Luglio 1998*, Last Accessed August 24th 2020, [http://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1176/regolamento\\_CIE\\_per\\_gli\\_ospiti.pdf](http://www.prefettura.it/FILES/AllegatiPag/1176/regolamento_CIE_per_gli_ospiti.pdf)





**FIGURE 43**, Adrian Paci, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, 2007, 4'32'', video, colour, sound (video still), Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

The camera first frames their legs and feet while walking, then, from a distance, films them from the top of the staircase as they ascend (Figure 44).



**FIGURE 44**, Adrian Paci, *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, 2007, 4'32'', video, colour, sound (video still), Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich



Once all are “on board” Paci produces close shots of their expressions, which vary between expectation, weariness, fear, desolation, resignation, sadness, anger and curiosity. At that point the camera slowly moves away in order to frame the entirety of the staircase from different angles. What emerges is that all the people of the video occupy it and stand there in silence with airplanes, by now visible to the viewer, moving in the background. The striking aspect of the video is the absence of an airplane for them to board. Customarily, all passengers walk up some type of ramp or staircase to enter an aircraft that will take them to their destination. Yet in this short film, these men and women ascend only to wait futilely. Since no airplane is present for their transportation, there is no possibility of flight or destination, only uncertainty on what to do next. In contrast, everything around them is in motion.

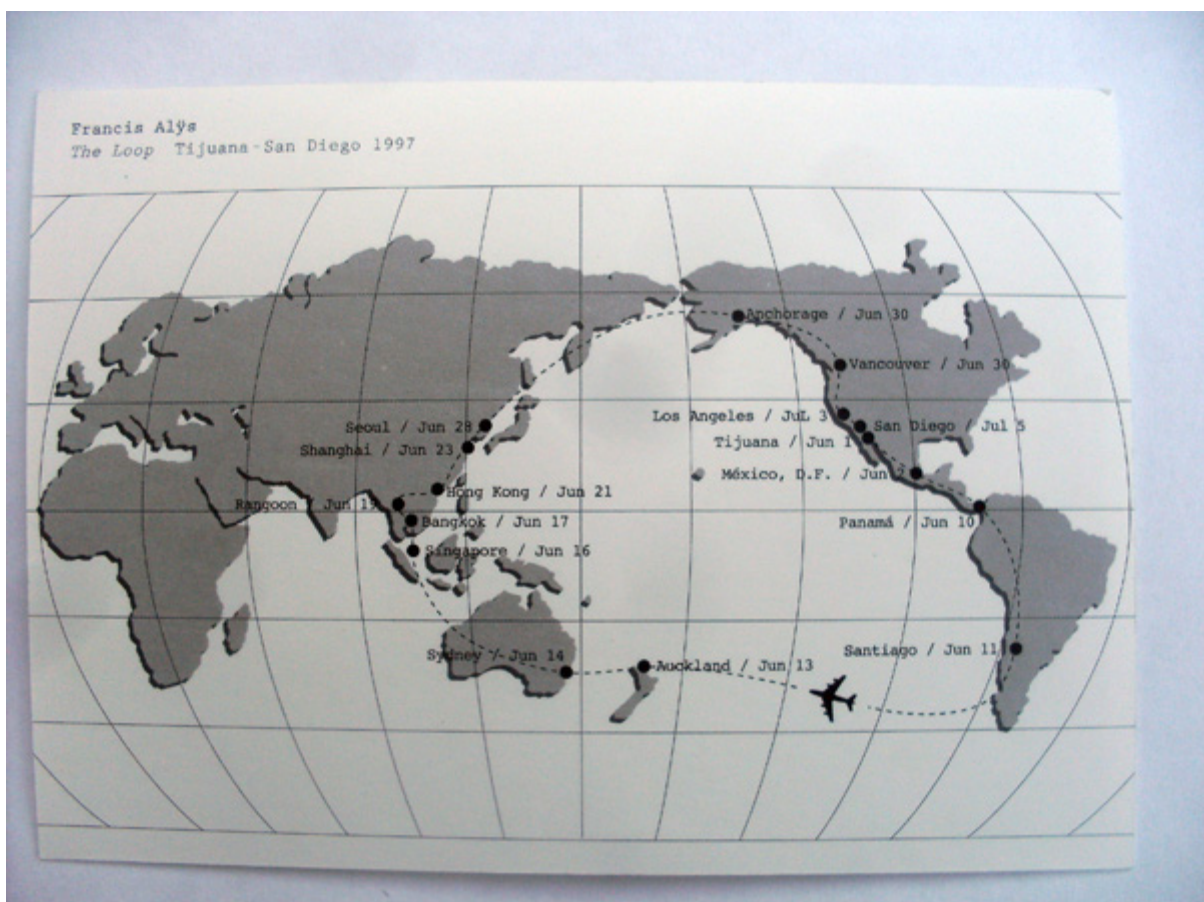
Paci uses the airport as a metaphor for a place of transit through which most people pass with a precise destination in mind. He furthermore employs for the video what appear to be Central and Southern American migrants, underlining the similarities between ordeals faced by migrants in Italy and at the border between Mexico and the USA. Later on in this chapter, in my interview with the artist, he affirms that what truly interested him about these structures was the name itself: “temporary permanence”. In Paci’s view this wording created a universal dissonance that spoke to a global condition of being a migrant with a “wrong” provenance waiting at the border of a richer (whiter) country. The irony of saying that your permanence is uniquely temporary is another example of unfair treatment against these individuals.

Paci is not the sole artist reflecting on issues of migration between borders, particularly the USA – Mexican frontier, which is often a controversial topic. Belgian artist Francis Alÿs in his work *The Loop* created in 1997 reflects on the line dividing Mexico and the USA, more specifically between San Diego and Tijuana (Figure 45).<sup>933</sup> This performance sought to go from Tijuana to San Diego without crossing the border, a fraught site. To accomplish this ambitious

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<sup>933</sup> Pascale Riou, “L’Artiste : Habitant, Résident, Touriste. Réflexions À Propos De Francis Alÿs.” *Mondes Du Tourisme* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.4000/tourisme.2073>, p. 4

task the artist travelled for thirty-five days around the globe: from Tijuana he went to Mexico City, then to Panama, then to Santiago de Chile, Auckland and continued his loop around the Pacific until he arrived in San Diego.<sup>934</sup> This symbolic performance aimed at showing how difficult and absurd barriers can be especially depending on which side the individual is departing from. This piece can be considered a political act indicating the arduous task of traversing from one country to the other, documenting that most people do not have the means to travel the same manner he did.



**FIGURE 45,** Francis Alÿs, *The Loop*, 1997, Tijuana - San Diego, Performance

<sup>934</sup> Ibid. pp. 4 - 5

Independent curator Emma Mahony, whilst discussing *The Loop*, describes the artist's choice to transform this performance into a series of postcards that viewers can freely keep.<sup>935</sup> This action is taken so spectators might have a grasp of the significant difficulty this journey entails even for a privileged person such as Alÿs. Furthermore, it might inspire to undertake similar journeys and also reflect on the theme of borders. Mahony argues the artist was inspired by the desperation numerous people face in traversing this fraught passage, and therefore sought to document the situation's difficulty. Paci, in a similar way, chooses his video's location near the border between the US and Mexico because of the intrinsic meaning it entails. Capturing on camera a symbolic performance in such a location conveys a powerful message to viewers since it directly shows how a basic strip of land can represent a distressful situation and even define an individual's human dignity.

As mentioned, Centres for Temporary Permanence are institutions currently in place in Italy.<sup>936</sup> The Turco – Napolitano law, which attempted to regulate immigration to Italy, initially instituted them in 1998.<sup>937</sup> Their name evolved to *Centri d'Identificazione e Espulsione* (Identification and Expulsion Centres) with a Legislative Decree in 2002.<sup>938</sup> In 2017, following the Legislative Decree 13/2017, the name was further modified to *Centri di Permanenza per i Rimpatri* (Repatriation Detention Centres), which is the current nomenclature.<sup>939</sup> The morphing of these institutions' name came with governmental changes in Italy: the first terminology, Centres for Temporary Permanence, was coined during Romano Prodi's government, a left-

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<sup>935</sup> Emma Mahony, *Francis Alÿs, A Story of Deception*, Tate Modern, June – September 2010, Circa Art Magazine, Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://circaartmagazine.website/newreviews/francis-aly-s-a-story-of-deception-tate-modern-june-september-2010/>

<sup>936</sup> Medici per I Diritti Umani, *Arcipelago CIE: Indagine sui Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione Italiani*, (Modena, Infinito Edizioni, 2013), pp. 17 - 18

<sup>937</sup> Ibid.

<sup>938</sup> Open Migration, *La sospensione dei diritti nei CPR*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://openmigration.org/analisi/la-sospensione-dei-diritti-nei-cpr/>

<sup>939</sup> Ibid.

wing coalition.<sup>940</sup> The objective was attempt to regulate immigration to Italy. However, the second shift in nomenclature, Identification and Expulsion Centres, was brought by Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing government thus bringing an increasingly protectionist stance to Italian policies concerning migrants.<sup>941</sup> Unsurprisingly one of the signers of the Bossi-Fini law was Umberto Bossi, a notorious anti-immigration politician and one of the founders of the strongly nationalistic and formerly separatist party La Lega.<sup>942</sup> The final change in terminology, Repatriation Detention Centres, specifically including terms "repatriation" and "detention" was brought by left-wing government led by Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni.<sup>943</sup> This further modification might suggest Italians' increasing hostility against newcomers thus the rise in "need" for laws severely limiting it.

These institutions were set up to detain migrants on Italian territory who are devoid of regular permits and whose expulsion is not immediately attainable.<sup>944</sup> The maximum period of time for which they can legally be held is ninety days, with a fifteen-day extension for particularly complex cases and up to one hundred and twenty days if the individual has been previously incarcerated.<sup>945</sup> There are currently seven of these structures active on Italian territory in five different regions, which should have 1035 available spaces, however the current total capacity is 715.<sup>946</sup> According to the Chamber of Deputies in an article published on June 27<sup>th</sup>, 2017, there are plans to increase these detention centres thereby increasing the number of detainees.<sup>947</sup> Despite these structures' apparent usefulness – preventing people without proper

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<sup>940</sup> *Cosa sono i C.I.E. (Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione), Rinominati dal Decreto Legge 13/2017 C.P.R. (Centri di Permanenza per i Rimpatri)*, Meltingpot, Last Accessed August 12th 2020,

<https://www.meltingpot.org/Cosa-sono-i-C-I-E-Centri-di-Identificazione-ed-Espulsione.html#.XzKMgxMza3I>

<sup>941</sup> Ibid.

<sup>942</sup> Davide Romano and Fabio Bonasera, *Inganno Padano: La Vera Storia della Lega Nord*, (Palermo, La Zisa Comunicazione, 2010), p. 17

<sup>943</sup> Ibid.

<sup>944</sup> Open Migration, *La sospensione dei diritti nei CPR*

<sup>945</sup> Ibid.

<sup>946</sup> Camera dei Deputati, *Centri di Permanenza per i Rimpatri*

<sup>947</sup> Ibid.

documentation to circulate on Italian territory, there have been numerous concerns over their functioning methods and the “detainees” treatment.<sup>948</sup>

Paci, in a poetic manner, underlines the frustration and sadness of individuals being kept in a state of immobility when all around them is moving, in the case of the video in an airfield. The staircase is overflowing with people, therefore making a direct reference to how overcrowded these spaces are, the forced idleness they are obliged to endure making it impossible to produce or change their situation. Of crucial importance is the fact that in the artist’s video the individuals filmed do not communicate with one another regardless of the fact that they are “cramped” together. No person seems to come to their rescue, total indifference around them reigns. Yet, regardless of dire circumstances, at the end of the movie, the migrants look directly at the camera as if they were questioning viewers on their own carelessness or ignorance concerning this situation. The artist appears to humanize specific individuals’ who suffer such injustice and allows them to place to the fore their own feelings.

According to a report by the website Osservatorio Migranti (Migrants Monitoring Unit) the “inmates” are prohibited from having contact with the external world, therefore resulting in spending most of the time in their rooms without any activity.<sup>949</sup> Despite the Turco – Napolitano law stipulating the respect for migrants’ human dignity, according to numerous reports and denunciations by activists, politicians, journalists and academics, there is much to be desired.<sup>950</sup> In June 2005, Amnesty International published a fifty-five-page report with concerns over the treatment of migrants detained in these centres.<sup>951</sup> The report is based on critical comments made by people held there as well as external inspectors. In the introduction, Amnesty states it

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<sup>948</sup> Donatella Di Cesare, *Crimini contro l’Ospitalità*, (Genova, Il Melangolo, 2014), pp. 7 - 8

<sup>949</sup> Contacts via telephone are allowed; however, they must not exit the structure, which is surrounded by fences and guarded by armed personnel. Osservatorio, Detenzione, Accoglienza, Migranti Puglia, *Centri detenzione: I Centri per il rimpatrio*,

<sup>950</sup> Open Migration, *La sospensione dei diritti nei CPR*

<sup>951</sup> Amnesty International, *Italy. Temporary Stay – Permanent Rights: the Treatment of Foreign Nationals Detained in “Temporary Stay and Assistance Centers (CPTAS)*, Published June 20<sup>th</sup> 2005

understands the necessity for countries to assure all people entering have appropriate legal documentation. However, it affirms the inviolability of human dignity and the necessity to implement strong guidelines so that migrants, regardless of their legal status, receive proper, fair and a humane treatment. Amnesty notes this seldom happens, substantiating the report with numerous accounts of physical harm, verbal abuse, xenophobic behaviour, lack of hygiene, inadequate food, denial of legal counselling or representation, isolation and the withholding of information regarding individual procedures.<sup>952</sup>

The non-profit organisation, *Medici Senza Frontiere* (Doctors without Borders), while viewing some of these locations reported instances in which “inmates” self-harm due to frustration, depression and anxiety mainly driven by their future’s uncertainty and alienation from the outside world.<sup>953</sup> The report furthermore denounces that, in January 2004 some migrants held in the CPT in Bologna, had accused the personnel of illicitly adulterating meals and drinks that made them drowsy and severely ill.<sup>954</sup> Due to restrictions in accessing these structures, confirming these denunciations is a significant challenge. However, the sheer volume of negative reports and the centres’ secretive way of functioning suggest these are not just rumours.<sup>955</sup> In Paci’s video, the migrant/passengers do not speak to one another and do not even make eye contact, perhaps referring to the solitude and estrangement they experience. The only sound to be heard is of the planes in motion; that is, the outside world moving in stark contrast to the people’s stillness.

The artwork ends with the migrants standing on the staircase, motionless, staring in front of them without a specific objective. The artist films the scene from different angles; if in the beginning of the short movie seldomly airplanes could be seen, but by the end it is a continuous

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<sup>952</sup> Ibid.

<sup>953</sup> Helen Dardanelli, *La Lunga Ora D'aria. L'identità Umiliata Nei Centri Di Permanenza Temporanea*. Meridiana 62, no. 62 (2008): 207–32. [www.jstor.org/stable/23204810](http://www.jstor.org/stable/23204810), p. 231

<sup>954</sup> Amnesty International, *Italy. Temporary Stay – Permanent Rights*, p. 18

<sup>955</sup> Ibid. pp. 18 - 19

landing and taking off therefore emphasising immigrants' immobility whilst the surrounding is in constant movement. The camera moves away slowly from the staircase focusing on different angles as if to highlight the crowd of people who for no fault of their own are kept in limbo. As the movie comes to an end the focus is placed on the front side of the stairs with people directly fixating on the camera as if they were expecting something and at the same time denouncing to the viewers the unfairness of their uncertain destiny. As the focus keeps distancing, the screen blackens hence the end.

Aforementioned artist Francis Alÿs in 2008 created a performance piece *Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River* at the strait of Gibraltar, between Morocco and Spain.<sup>956</sup> It connects the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>957</sup> This strip of sea is 13 km long and is the closest location separating Europe and Africa, hence hefty flows of migrants crossing this passage daily from Morocco to reach Spain.<sup>958</sup> It is symbolic due to the geographic proximity between these two continents as well as a passage traversed by migrants in order to reach the yearned for European continent.<sup>959</sup> This piece (Figure 46) comprises of a video, photographs, installations and maps and was created in August 2008. The video, lasting 7:46 minutes,<sup>960</sup> films two groups of young children forming two straight lines at the beach and moving forward in the sea water until their feet no longer touch the bottom and they are forced to swim. The film is comprised of two separate screens in which both groups of kids advance towards the water. One ensemble of children is located on the Spanish side and the other on the Moroccan side of the Gibraltar Strait, thus the artist's attempt to create a human bridge crossing this symbolic passage. All teenagers hold in their hands small floating boats, which have been

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<sup>956</sup> Du Keke, *FRANCIS ALÿS: GIBRALTAR FOCUS*, Leap: the International Art Portal of Contemporary China, Last Accessed September 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://www.leapleapleap.com/2013/10/francis-aly-s-gibraltar-focus/>

<sup>957</sup> Ibid.

<sup>958</sup> Danny Wildemeersch, "What Can We Learn from Art Practices? Exploring New Perspectives on Critical Engagement with Plurality and Difference in Community Art Education." *International Journal of Art & Design Education* 38, no. 1 (2019): pp. 172 – 173, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12168>

<sup>959</sup> Ibid.

<sup>960</sup> *Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River*, Francis Alÿs, Last Accessed September 8<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://francisalys.com/dont-cross-the-bridge-before-you-get-to-the-river/?platform=hootsuite>



created by using beach footwear (flip-flop boats). Unsurprisingly both groups never meet across the route and the video ends with the straight lines of children being gradually dispersed and only seeing the movements of the water and the waves. The camera at one-point films underwater and all viewers are able to see is the turbid, turbulent water with sounds of the children swimming. Despite the ludic element of the performance Alÿs projects an eerie message: as mentioned this passage is traversed on a daily basis by migrants coming to Europe, attempting to reach it regardless of the perils it represents. The artist chose children playing at the beach because of the recreational aspect in an area often devoid of a whimsical character. This performance can be interpreted as an allegory for the two sides' impossibility to unite, and have a calm steady flow of people traversing without the constraint of a border.



**FIGURE 46,** Francis Alÿs, *Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River*, 2008, Videos, Paintings, Drawings, Sculpture, Photographic Installation, dimensions variable

The line of children resembles Paci's line on the staircase; the impossibility to get to the new destination, the unknown, not having control over one's life, the choice of using a video to



capture a symbolic performance in order to convey a potent message to viewers. Aljys's short film, despite using a different setting from Paci, also uses the border as an allegory of constraint even though he does not reference a specific institution. Choosing children and teenagers to perform in his video poetically illustrates naiveness in the wake of a grave situation, in a fraught passage, which sometimes inflicts dire consequences. Paci, on the other hand, selects adults who are well aware of their difficult situation rendering the short movie a stark reminder of the seriousness represented by this condition.<sup>961</sup>

Scholars Francesca Esposito, Jose Ornelas, Erica Briozzo and Caterina Arcidiacono who conducted fieldwork at the centre Ponte Galeria in Rome between March 2014 and January 2017<sup>962</sup> express serious concerns regarding the treatment of the people “hosted” in CPT's. During their research, they interviewed the “inmates” asking them about their feelings regarding their incarceration. The collected data portrays a gloomy, distressing environment, where people are stripped of their human rights and dignity, subjected to verbal and physical abuse, isolated from family and friends and have no activity but to spend their days waiting for a sign of their fate – generally a piece of paper.<sup>963</sup> Furthermore, the academics point out that

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<sup>961</sup> For the sake of my argument, I chose Adrian Paci's short video because it focuses on the Italian situation furthermore analysing these peculiar institutions. Francis Aljys's work often revolves around borders, identity, and migration, however, in my dissertation I specifically want to concentrate on Italy and its current immigration process. Paci is not the sole artist highlighting this phenomenon, however he is unique inasmuch he centres *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea* on controversial structures present specifically on Italian soil. Furthermore, he chooses video as his medium of expression thus opting for an immersive experience for the spectators and the people involved in the performance.

<sup>962</sup> José Ornelas, Francesca Esposito, Erica Briozzo and Caterina Arcidiacono. *Ecology of Sites of Confinement: Everyday Life in a Detention Centre for Illegalized Non-Citizens*. *American Journal of Community Psychology* 63, no. 1-2 (2019): p. 190. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12313>.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid. An investigation done by Doctors Without Borders in 2013 carefully analyzed the internal arrangement of these detainment structures. It concluded there were indeed rooms (four beds in each one) and bathrooms for migrants held there however they were often overcrowded and, in some cases, there was no door for the washroom meaning a lack of privacy. The common areas were set up so that detainees could eat, watch TV, go to class and when available practice sport. These centres are also provided with gardens so that individuals residing there can go out for fresh air. Overall, however, they reported that migrants spent most of their time in their rooms without activities to keep them busy. These spaces' over crowdedness is represented in Paci's video because of the density of people waiting on the staircase in the middle of the airport. There appears to be no free space hence reminding viewers of the absolute lack of personal comfort detainees are forced to endure. *Medici per I Diritti Umani, Arcipelago CIE: Indagine sui Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione Italiani*, (Modena, Infinito Edizioni, 2013), pp. 41 - 42

legal services are scarce and inadequate, often lacking necessary interpreting services.<sup>964</sup> Researcher Anna Simone argues that these establishments are set in place in order to purposely exclude “non – citizens” from being an active part of society and deprive them of their humanity.<sup>965</sup> She uses theory by economist Max Weber to substantiate her contention that this process is part of the government’s exclusionary power.<sup>966</sup> In other words, the hospitality of people without proper documents becomes a pretext to exclude specific subjects who are deemed “illegal”. Paci, in his video, underlines the fact that this group of people is deliberately treated as undesirables and prevented from living normal lives.

Philosophy professor Donatella Di Cesare in 2014 published a short pamphlet called *Crimes Against Hospitality* in which she talks about her visit to one of these centres and unapologetically denounces them as systems not meant to regulate the migration flow but to dehumanize specific people on the basis of race and provenance.<sup>967</sup> She describes witnessing a severe lack of hygiene, migrants stripped of their clothes for disinfestation from diseases such as scabies, the heavy usage of psychiatric drugs and people left alone without any comfort, legal counselling or occasions to connect with others speaking their same language.<sup>968</sup> Di Cesare argues these “protocols” are not a way to protect Italy from illegal migrants, but to strip them of their human rights and eventually expel them.<sup>969</sup> She further states that self-harm and suicide attempts are common.<sup>970</sup> For this reason, there is an urgent need for a humane system of hospitality and, in case of expulsion, a plan to provide a safe way of operating it. She also denounces the fact that some of the expelled migrants were simply repatriated to a country that

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<sup>964</sup> Ibid. p. 198

<sup>965</sup> Anna Simone, *Le Frontiere Dell'esclusione. Il Caso Dei Centri Di Permanenza Temporanea in Italia Dopo La Legge Bossi-Fini*. Sociologia Del Diritto Xxxiii, no. 3 (2006): p. 134  
<http://search.ebscohost.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=24273182&scope=sit>  
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<sup>966</sup> Ibid. pp. 132 - 133

<sup>967</sup> Donatella Di Cesare, *Crimini contro l'Ospitalità*, pp. 10 - 18

<sup>968</sup> Ibid. pp. 24 - 28

<sup>969</sup> Ibid. pp. 44 - 48

<sup>970</sup> Ibid. pp. 62 - 63

was not theirs and left without any resources to provide for themselves. The existence of these structures is well known by the Italian government and the public; however, with few exceptions, they turn a blind eye.<sup>971</sup>

Author Awad Ibrahim in his essay “The Question is the Foreigner: The Spectre of Blackness and the Economy of Hospitality in Canada” expounds on the idea of being the “other”.<sup>972</sup> He reflects on his personal experience as a Sudanese black man with a “different” name living in Canada.<sup>973</sup> He recollects arriving to North America as a refugee and working as a University professor in a space that did not welcome him because of racial reasons and also due to his “unusual” name.<sup>974</sup> Ibrahim ponders on Derrida’s idea of “unconditional hospitality”, therefore welcoming people regardless of race, religion and provenance.<sup>975</sup> The author argues he has seldomly felt accepted in North America mainly because of his black body hence being regarded as an outcast in the “Great White North”.<sup>976</sup> Ibrahim, contrary to people represented by Paci, lives in Western countries and has a prestigious job, as a University professor, and has proper documentation, therefore his residence should not be questioned.<sup>977</sup> However, this is not the case suggested by incidents involving being stopped and searched by the police, being

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<sup>971</sup> Journalist Emilie Kassie, in her accusation against detention centres at the border between the USA and Mexico, affirms the usage of these sites has grown exponentially in the past decades as well as their cost. Just as Italy’s Centres for Temporary Permanence withhold asylum seekers and people devoid of legal documentation, USA’s detention centres operate in a similar manner. Kassie affirms these spaces were not born under the Trump administration; however, it has increasingly relied on them due to augmenting (even though since 2007 there has been a slight decrease) numbers of refugees and asylum seekers coming to the USA border. The journalist contends these sites have become spaces where basic human rights are disregarded; children sleeping on concrete floor, denial of soap and toothpaste, people crammed into small rooms, families separated at the border are just few human rights violations denounced in regards to border detention centres. Border Patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have both come under scrutiny over mistreatment of people held in these structures. According to Kassie these cruel conditions pertain to a “zero tolerance” stance taken by the Trump administration in order to deter illegal migration. Emily Kassie, *DETAINED: How the US Built the World's Largest Immigrant Detention System*, The Guardian, Last Accessed August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/sep/24/detained-us-largest-immigrant-detention-trump>

<sup>972</sup> Awad Ibrahim, “The Question of the Question is the Foreigner: The Spectre of Blackness and the Economy of Hospitality in Canada”, in *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada*, edited by Charmaine A. Nelson, (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 167 – 168

<sup>973</sup> Ibid. pp. 168 – 169

<sup>974</sup> Ibid. pp. 179 - 180

<sup>975</sup> Ibid. pp. 169 - 170

<sup>976</sup> Ibid. p. 170

<sup>977</sup> Ibid. p. 180

mistaken for a Muslim because of his name's phonetics and the seemingly harmless question "but where are you really from?" which evinces a perception of non-belonging in North America despite residing there legally.<sup>978</sup> Migrants represented by Paci, even if granted entrance by border patrol, might likely experience difficulties because of a restricted idea of hospitality often based on provenance.

Scholar Jenny Burman furthermore reflects on the concept of belonging in Canada inherently perceived as being white. Burman argues artist Camille Turner's performance as a fake Canadian beauty queen flaunting the Canadian flag, clutching a maple leaf purse and being dressed in clothes representing the Canadian colours (red and white) in order to prove that "despite" her blackness she is a "true" Canadian.<sup>979</sup> The author argues in Canada black histories are often excluded because of their "foreignness" hence not being deemed important enough to fit mainstream narratives.<sup>980</sup> Paci, I argue, not only places at the fore migrants without proper legal documentation but also specifically chooses non-whites in order to show viewers how the concept of immigrating can be ambiguous depending on race. Unsurprisingly the artist focuses on the Mexican – USA border to illustrate the difficulties for non-whites to enter a predominantly white space.

Israeli curator Edna Moshenson, in her essay concerning Paci's work, argues that *Centre for Temporary Permanence* embodies the concept of *liquid modernity* elaborated by Polish intellectual Zygmunt Bauman.<sup>981</sup> His theory elaborates on contemporary society's "dual

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<sup>978</sup> Ibid. pp. 177 - 181

<sup>979</sup> Jenny Burman, "Out of Northwhere: Nation, Politics and Belonging", in *Ebony Roots, Northern Soil: Perspectives on Blackness in Canada*, edited by Charmaine A. Nelson, (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 106 - 107

<sup>980</sup> Ibid. pp. 110 – 111. Camille Turner is a Canadian artist based in Toronto. Originally Jamaican, part of her work explores her identity as a black woman in a predominantly white country. One of her interests involve understanding her perceived "otherness" in a space often excluding blackness. One of her most notable performances was Miss Canadiana in which she stages a fake beauty pageant where she is the winner. She furthermore is ironically dressed in red and white, Canada's flag colors and shows off a maple leaf purse. This act aims at challenging the notion of beauty and being Canadian as uniquely white. The Canadian Encyclopedia, *Camille Turner*, Last Accessed August 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/camille-turner>

<sup>981</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Gili Ed., *Adrian Paci: Transit*, pp. 65 - 66

nature”; on one hand, we strive for order, domestication and peace so that reality is deemed more “controllable” and less scary, but on the other hand, humanity is in constant motion with travelling, globalisation, precariousness and gradual crumbling of traditional norms and values. Thus, according to Moshenson, Paci’s video illustrates the mutability of modern existence.<sup>982</sup> The people represented are in a state of uncertainty due to economic instability and volatile circumstances in their home countries, which are also countries subjected to destabilization and impoverishment by Western nations.<sup>983</sup> The author further points out that although globalisation helps connect different parts of the world at an impressive speed,<sup>984</sup> at the same time, it can destabilize social order and create, as Paci’s artwork poignantly expresses, significant hardship for some.

The second theory Moshenson quotes is the idea of *non-place* put forth by French anthropologist Marc Augé in which he suggests that “If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place”.<sup>985</sup> Augé contends that airports are a pivotal symbol of a world in motion where nothing is stable and all is in constant transition.<sup>986</sup> More so than trains or buses, airplanes signal the crossing of international, not merely domestic,

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<sup>982</sup> Ibid.

<sup>983</sup> Journalist Annalisa Camilli, during the beginning of March 2020 when Italy’s lockdown due to coronavirus had begun, points out the stark deterioration of the conditions at the Centres for Temporary Permanence: The reason being inadequate preparation in the face of a global pandemic and Italian government not promulgating specific provisions for these places hence suggesting carelessness towards people kept there. Migrants stranded in these spaces, Camilli argues, are cramped in small cells, do not have access to proper protection gear such as masks, gloves and sanitization alcohol and cannot even be repatriated because of the impossibility for most airplanes to fly. Furthermore, associations helping detainees can no longer visit the CTD due to the lockdown. An already difficult situation was aggravated by the Covid 19. Annalisa Camilli, *Nei Centri per il Rimpatrio Nessuna Protezione Contro il Coronavirus*, Internazionale, Last Accessed August 23rd 2020,

<https://www.internazionale.it/notizie/annalisa-camilli/2020/03/20/cpr-coronavirus-covid-19-rimpatrio>

<sup>984</sup> The coronavirus pandemic has furthermore aggravated access to basic education for people without an internet connection. Lockdowns and social distancing have significantly altered the way educators perform hence largely conducting classes online. This results in poorer strata of the population or people living in rural areas having difficulties with internet connection and therefore not being able to join online courses. This problem further exacerbates inequalities. Tony Romm, ‘*It Shouldn’t Take a pandemic*’: *Coronavirus Exposes Internet Inequality Among U.S. Students as Schools Close their Doors*, The Washington Post, Last Accessed August 23rd 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/03/16/schools-internet-inequality-coronavirus/>

<sup>985</sup> Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, (London, Verso, 2008)

<sup>986</sup> Ibid.

borders. They therefore imply the need for permission – signalled by passports or visas - to enter countries in which the traveller does not have nationality. For those whose rights have not been denied, airports are comfortable places of mindlessness or even fantasy which function purely to transport us from one destination to the other without fears or problems linked to our status. However, as Paci shows us in his long close ups and slow camera movements, for others they are infernal locations where, as postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak posits, they are deemed “subaltern”, unable to speak due to their “Third World” provenance as well as their race and, in some cases, gender.<sup>987</sup> In Spivak’s words, subaltern denotes people who do not belong to a Western country and who are the “wrong” race or gender.<sup>988</sup> Their humanity, I suggest, is reduced to documentation and simple “misfortune” of “not being born on the right side of the world”.

Paci subtly yet powerfully denounces the on-going stratification of the population and skilfully films near the USA Mexican border in California to illustrate a shared condition. By choosing Southern and Central American migrants, he underlines specific contexts in which the ugly truth of racial discrimination perpetrated by Western countries against poorer ones occurs. This impoverishment forces people from these nations to flee to richer, Western states to have access to basic living standards. Whether it happens in North America or in Europe, it is history repeating itself.

#### IT WAS NOT A PERFORMANCE

In 2008 Paci completed a small collage entitled *It was not a Performance* (Figure 47) in which he juxtaposes two images where he is represented in two different lights.<sup>989</sup> In the top photo, Paci, as a child, has his face encircled in red and is dressed in what appears to be military or traditional Albanian attire. People from Paci’s community surround him: three rows are

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<sup>987</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Nelson Cary and Grossberg Lawrence, (University of Illinois Press, Chicago: Illinois), 1988, pp. 95 - 99

<sup>988</sup> Ibid.

<sup>989</sup> Barbara Fässler, *Interview with Adrian Paci*

visible, with the people in the front wearing military uniforms and shoulder rifles, and those in the second and third rows, where the artist is standing, are more casually dressed. Paci also seems to be holding a rifle. He is posing for the picture and his expression shows confidence and a sense of ease as expected by anyone in a private moment in front of the camera. During my interview with Paci, the artist explained that this picture was taken to celebrate Hoxha's dictatorship and the Albanian army, hence the military garb and typical dresses worn by the artist and the women in the background.<sup>990</sup> Paci, furthermore states that he was forced into this role, thus representing a proud communist youth. The elements of nostalgia towards his younger more idealistic self, combined with the disillusionment that the communist Albanian dictatorship represented are key components of this image. The environment is formal and the artist appears to be playing a constructed role, thus he is not allowed to express his individuality in favour of the collective, in this case the communist regime.

On a different note, is the picture beneath, which is a cut-out from the newspaper *La Padania* where the artist recognises himself in the picture on the right and circles his face in red as in the image above. *La Padania*, as previously mentioned, was the official journal of Lega, an Italian far-right xenophobic political party that promulgates exclusivist "Italy First" ideologies often to the detriment of immigrants, specifically those from an underprivileged background.<sup>991</sup> In the lower picture, he waits in line with numerous other migrants for residency permits to stay in Italy. The line is dense with people pressed together and the end of the line is literally not in sight, but continues (the image implies) beyond the viewers' vision off the page. It is a long line of people, to the fore facial features are easily recognizable but in the background the crowd is blurred as if it were an indistinct bunch. The difference between the artist's expressions in the two images is stark: as a child, his face is relaxed and at ease whereas

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<sup>990</sup> Personal communication with Adrian Paci on March 25th 2020 through Skype

<sup>991</sup> *La Padania*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.padania.org/>. Due to financial reasons this newspaper ceased its activity in 2014.



in the cut-out, he is an adult and appears tired, disoriented and simply part of an indefinite mass of people with whom the few things he shares are likely his precarious visa status and Albanian provenance. The headline of this article is *Invasione Pianificata* meaning Planned Invasion, referring to the widely held notion that immigrants are “taking over the country”.



it was not a performance



FIGURE 47, Adrian Paci, *It was not a Performance* (I), 2001, framed photograph, 150 x 125 cm / 59.1 x 49.2 in, Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich



As argued in the second chapter, mainstream Italian media, when discussing migrants has a tendency to show the most dramatic, sensationalized images in order to attract viewers.<sup>992</sup> This lower picture in the artwork focuses on a specific aspect of this phenomenon and simplistically defines it as an “invasion”. Although *La Padania* was the official newspaper for a specific political party and conveyed an extreme narrative, its representations were not far off from what most news outlets propose. Paci contrasts his private sphere, where he is valued as a human being in a familiar setting, with the public sphere where the media presents him as part of an indistinct mass of people ready to “invade”. Moreover, Paci posits on the “character construction” in both images: in the above picture he is forced in the role of a proud communist Albanian boy and in the second one he is a disoriented migrant in the midst of a “hoard” of similar people. In a way the artist illustrates how misleading images can be and how a whole persona is construed by a mere image. In both images Paci is playing a role, whether voluntary or involuntary. Furthermore, the artist reveals how simplistically *La Padania* defined the complex immigration process by juxtaposing his individuality and nationality with a personal picture. Behind the unruly “masses” there are people and each has a different background and a story to tell.

Scholar Christina Schori Liang in her essay *Europe for Europeans: the Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right* (2007) argues that throughout the twenty-first century, extreme right-wing political groups have gained traction and flourished in Europe.<sup>993</sup> Their message features a strong sense of nationalism, nativism, authoritarianism and a strict “closed borders” policy, often targeting immigrants, especially with specific provenances, as a source of contamination for the local “authentic” population. Liang furthermore contends the

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<sup>992</sup> Paola Parmiggiani and Pierluigi Musarò Ed., *Media e Migrazioni*, (Milano, Edizioni Franco Angeli, 2014)

<sup>993</sup> Christina Schori Liang Ed., *Europe for the Europeans: The Foreign and Security Policy of the Populist Radical Right*, (England, Routledge, 2007). ProQuest Ebook Central, p. 2  
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=438789>

rise of these organisations is a manifestation of deep concerns about globalisation in which low skilled workers migrate to European countries and are more easily employed by businesses interested in low wage labour.<sup>994</sup> It is false to believe hostility against migrants is the result of a purely xenophobic sentiment; it is also due to a real threat of unemployment by local blue-collar workers who are faced with competition from foreign laborers and whose jobs are more likely to be given to someone willing to work for less or to be replaced by automation.<sup>995</sup> The image posted on *La Padania* is indeed a xenophobic trope aimed at exacerbating existing prejudices, which statistics show are on the rise, although fears of unemployment on behalf of the local population are not to be underestimated. Political groups such as La Lega have also developed platforms which gained popularity because of issues<sup>996</sup> overlooked by most traditional politicians of any stance. One of La Lega's main positions is the belief that local labour should be favoured over immigrant workers who, statistics show, are more prone to accept lower pay and demanding hours, thus making them ideal prey for unscrupulous employers.<sup>997</sup>

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<sup>994</sup> Ibid. pp. 5 - 6

<sup>995</sup> Ibid. pp. 8 – 9 Immigration economist George J. Borjas explains in his article *Yes, Immigration Hurts American Workers* that not all types of immigration are beneficial. Migrants can be a strong asset however they can also destabilize the economy of the receiving country. Borjas argues high amounts of low skilled workers migrating might create more unemployment amongst autochthonous blue-collar laborers. This can be one explanation to why right-wing populist groups gain traction amongst this particular stratum of the population. La Lega, regardless of its corrosive xenophobia, was seen as the party protecting low skilled workers from redundancy. George J. Borjas, *Yes, Immigration Hurts American Workers*, Politico, Last Accessed June 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/trump-clinton-immigration-economy-unemployment-jobs-214216?fbclid=IwAR2veG1U\\_t8Wtj7qTjFPgFMjjJGYFlwgafXfVi\\_KqWp-8ZbJkY3-eZKUmtM](https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/trump-clinton-immigration-economy-unemployment-jobs-214216?fbclid=IwAR2veG1U_t8Wtj7qTjFPgFMjjJGYFlwgafXfVi_KqWp-8ZbJkY3-eZKUmtM) It is however striking to notice how corporations exploiting these workers and low skilled migrant laborers, therefore responsible for this situation, do not come under scrutiny. It appears to be easier to attack more vulnerable groups of people. For example, the Shelburne Riots in Nova Scotia in 1784 are considered the first known race riots erupting primarily because of resentment of white settlers in Canada against free black settlers. The latter worked for significantly lower wages than their white counterparts who were also poor and living in daunting conditions. This ignited repeated attacks against free blacks for racial reasons even though it was disguised as a class tension. Jess Robertson, *The Shelburne Race Riots*, The Canadian Encyclopaedia, Last Accessed August 25<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-shelburne-race-riots>

<sup>996</sup> As aforementioned, La Lega sides with Italian blue-collar workers earning low wages, having difficulties making ends meet, targets delinquents (strategically preferring when it is a foreigner committing a crime) such as drug dealers, hustlers, robbers and sex workers, critiques European “domination” in favour of Italian hegemony, high taxes, Italian deficit, illegal migration and outsourcing or automation of jobs. These issues are perceived as vital by the majority of Lega voters who feel other more centrist Italian political parties such as Partito Democratico (Democratic Party, centre – left) or Popolo della Libertà (Freedom population, centre – right) do not adequately concentrate on. Davide Romano and Fabio Bonasera, *Inganno Padano*, pp. 56 - 57

<sup>997</sup> Margarita Cachafeiro Gómez-Reino, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Italian Politics*, p. 118

Political science scholar Margarita Gómez-Reino Cachafeiro, in her essay on La Lega's construction of "the Other", points out a strong appeal to national identity in the party's political message.<sup>998</sup> As explained in the previous chapter, this political group formed during the beginning of the eighties in Italy's northern part as a regional separatist movement.<sup>999</sup> The aim was to protect local traditions, language and culture from any type of contamination from the "outside world". It slowly grew and morphed into an organisation targeting Southern Italians, since at the time there was an intense migration from the South to the North due to poverty and unemployment in the South. Southerners were deemed inferior and often the subject of intensely denigrating campaigns claiming they stole local jobs and were "different". Cachafeiro argues that caricatures were often used, comparing Southern Italians to vermin or robbers, criminals and peasants.<sup>1000</sup> However, over time their targets switched to non-Italian migrants coming to Italy in search of work (Figures 48 and 49).<sup>1001</sup> During the beginning of the 1990s, with significant numbers of Albanians arriving to Italian shores, La Lega focused on them, inundating their rhetoric with anti-Albanian slogans.<sup>1002</sup> As immigration to Italy rose and the first laws were promulgated to regulate this phenomenon, such as the Martelli law in 1990, La Lega started battling against it.<sup>1003</sup> The article Paci uses is a common feature in this group's message —showing Albanian workers as hordes and adding the slogan "Planned Invasion".

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<sup>998</sup> Ibid. p. 137

<sup>999</sup> Ibid. pp. 119 - 126

<sup>1000</sup> Ibid. pp. 120 - 121

<sup>1001</sup> Ibid. p. 122 Scholars John E. Richardson and Monica Colombo in their analysis of La Lega's posters argue that during the beginning of the twenty-first century this political parties started publishing strongly anti-immigration billboards. Up to that moment their focus had been on waves of Southern Italians coming to work to Northern Italy however, as shown by the posters they started creating throughout the beginning of the twenty-first century, La Lega started targeting foreigners' "invasion" in Italian territory. The peremptory language used in both images such as "Stop!" or "O Legge o Lotta Popolare" (either laws regulating immigration or autochthonous Italians will engage in popular struggle) suggests an alarmist message aimed at frightening viewers. La Lega conveniently illustrates in both posters their logo, Medieval fictitious figure Alberto da Giussano, who back in the twelfth century fought off foreign invaders in the Battle of Legnano. He is positioned as a warrior ready to fight with his sword unsheathed and bravely confronting the supposed enemy, in this case immigrants. Monica Colombo and John Richardson. "Continuity and Change in Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord." pp. 187 – 189

<sup>1002</sup> Ibid. p. 124

<sup>1003</sup> Ibid. p. 127



**FIGURE 48,** *Immigrazione Stop! La Nostra Terra non è in Vendita. O Legge o Lotta Popolare*, 2001, Poster



FIGURE 49, *Stop! Immigrazione Clandestina*, 2001, Poster

Paci's title *It was not a Performance* furthermore suggests an ironic vein because of the grotesque nature of La Padania's image showing migrants as cattle attempting an "incursion" in Italian territory. Juxtaposing the private sphere with people from Paci's community, as shown in the top picture, to the dehumanising cut-out below from a public newspaper, can evince a sense of absurdity. It is misleading, however, to consider La Lega's problematic news article completely devoid of any factual truth. Political science scholar Antonela Destanisha, in her thesis on Albanian criminality and mass Italian migration, presents factual evidence evincing that Albanians did indeed migrate to Italy in great numbers throughout the 1990's.<sup>1004</sup> Italy was considerably unprepared for this unprecedented event.<sup>1005</sup> Destanisha furthermore contends this large exodus fuelled the proliferation of Albanian organised crime, which operated illicit drug-smuggling rings and exploited immigrants without proper documentation.<sup>1006</sup> Organised crime facilitated illegal border crossing into Italy and prostitution.<sup>1007</sup> Albania's opening to the rest of the world following the isolation it faced during Hoxha's brutal communist dictatorship created a ground ripe for criminal organisations specialised in charging exorbitant amounts of money to Albanians desiring to migrate. Destanisha suggests this number often started with 750 US dollars per person, which is more than the average Albanians' annual income.<sup>1008</sup> This phenomenon moreover enabled migrants to fall into exploitative systems in order to pay debts to these organisations. Thus, boats filled with Albanians coming to Italy's shores, an increase in prostitution, and the selling of illicit drugs in Italy led to the spread of negative images.<sup>1009</sup> While *La Padania's* illustration of Albanian migration is superficial and dangerous, it is the partial result of complex challenges Italy was facing and still faces today.

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<sup>1004</sup> Antonela Destanisha, *La Criminalità Albanese*, pp. 26 - 27

<sup>1005</sup> Ted Perlmutter, *The Politics of Proximity*, p. 206

<sup>1006</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1007</sup> Antonela Destanisha, *La Criminalità Albanese*, p. 41

<sup>1008</sup> Ibid. p. 33

<sup>1009</sup> Ted Perlmutter, *The Politics of Proximity*, p. 212

Sociologist Paola Parmiggiani suggests that mainstream media, when discussing immigration, often uses stereotypical images and emotional triggers.<sup>1010</sup> This usually happens by linking migrants, especially if from specific backgrounds such as Romanians, Albanians or North Africans, to security and criminality issues.<sup>1011</sup> The long line of people shown in *La Padania* projects a sense of threat, unruliness, lack of civility and order, as well as migrants' arrogance by "daring" to enter Italy and establish themselves. Parmiggiani contends that media perspectives often foreground the "migrant aspect" when discussing delinquency and safety where immigrants are involved.<sup>1012</sup> Instead of focusing on the actual issue, the legal status and the origins of the migrants are intensely scrutinised as the actual cause of criminality.<sup>1013</sup> The migrant "emergency", whether it involves delinquency or victimisation, is preponderant thus conveying a distorted and spoiled image of migrants to the public.<sup>1014</sup> Paci challenges this image by showing his own perspective and humanity.

Scholar Andrea Pogliano suggests that Italian mainstream news outlets predominantly frame the migratory phenomenon in terms of security issues, focusing on mass disembarkation, overflowing buildings where undocumented immigrants are "stacked", and migrant degeneracy.<sup>1015</sup> While these problems certainly exist, the prevalence of these issues shown in mainstream media oversimplify and project an erroneous idea to viewers. Policy and statistical analyst Giacomo Solano, instead of focusing on art and media images, tackles the issue of the language used in Italian news in regards to migrants.<sup>1016</sup> In Paci's work, the wording "Planned Invasion" communicates a peremptory, alarmist tone as if preparing for battle. Solano, by analysing a vast array of language used by the National Agency of Associated Press (ANSA),

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<sup>1010</sup> Paola Parmiggiani and Pierluigi Musarò Ed., *Media e Migrazioni*, (Milano, Edizioni Franco Angeli, 2014), p. 64

<sup>1011</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1012</sup> Ibid. pp. 64 - 65

<sup>1013</sup> Ibid. p. 65

<sup>1014</sup> Ibid. pp. 65 - 66

<sup>1015</sup> Ibid. pp. 89 - 90

<sup>1016</sup> Ibid. p. 109



concluded that the majority of terms utilised are closely associated with an emergency or a problem to solve, and generally tied to the marginalisation or deviance of the immigrants.<sup>1017</sup> Furthermore, Solano argues the words “clandestine” and “illegal migrant” are used profusely without mentioning the inter-related nuances that underlie this complex phenomenon. In other words, the type of language used in most cases relates to crisis points instead of discussing integration or legal residencies.<sup>1018</sup> Paci decries this inhuman process by juxtaposing it with his personal humanity.

## THE COLUMN

*The Column* is perhaps one of Paci’s most complex and accomplished works to date. Produced in 2013, it is a slow-motion video, twenty-five minutes and forty seconds long, created for the Parisian art centre Jeu de Paume on the occasion of his first solo exhibition in that space.<sup>1019</sup> The short film traces the voyage of a marble block from a quarry in Beijing, China where it was extracted (Figure 50), to its journey on a ship (Figure 51) where Chinese workers transform it into a Corinthian column. The marble column would terminate its voyage in Europe to be exhibited as an installation for Paci’s solo show at Jeu de Paume.<sup>1020</sup> The video was projected for the first time during the same exhibition and the column was placed in the Tuilleries Gardens in front of the exhibition centre. The artist commissioned the whole process and directed the film. Most of the artwork focuses on the actual transformation of the raw block of stone into a beautiful piece of decoration, illustrating the “messy” procedure (Figure 52) about which most people consuming goods are oblivious.

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<sup>1017</sup> Ibid. pp. 114 - 115

<sup>1018</sup> Ibid. p. 119

<sup>1019</sup> Vimeo Video, *Adrian Paci: The Column at Jeu de Paume*, duration 11:33, Posted by Jeu De Paume/Magazine, June 12<sup>th</sup> 2014, <https://vimeo.com/98044998>

<sup>1020</sup> Ibid.



**FIGURE 50**, Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
 Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich



**FIGURE 51**, Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
 Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

As the video documented, Chinese laborers worked relentlessly in all-weather conditions and at any hour of the day or night to accomplish that task (Figure 53).





**FIGURE 52,** Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
 Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich



**FIGURE 53,** Adrian Paci, *The Column*, 2013, 25'44'', video, colour, sound, (video still)  
 Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

The video shows the strenuous effort these men put into the production of a consumer good, therefore directly referencing the exploitation of blue-collar workers who are often given

with low monetary compensation. Paci organized and financed the entirety of the project, from quarrying in the Beijing mine, hiring workers for the job (extracting, transporting, carving, packing and cleaning), filming, renting the ship, and arranging for it to ship the goods to Paris at the Jeu de Paume. Paci then exhibited the video of this complex process. Despite paying the workers, the artist also participated in the process of exploitation of low-skilled laborers for personal gain.

In a 2013 interview between the artist and curators Marta Gili and Marie Fraser, Paci explained how the idea for *The Column* originated.<sup>1021</sup> The nucleus of the project came from a friend, a restorer, who needed a block of marble for the renovation of a castle. He informed Paci about the boats on which they transport blocks of stone and transform them to the demands of the customer, while in transit from China to Europe, describing them as “factory boats”. This resulted in advantageous prices, significantly shorter delays in concluding a product and swift manufacture. The artist confessed that this idea both fascinated and terrified him: in his view it represented an outrageous manifestation of modern day capitalism and exploitation in which low wage workers from China are ruthlessly used by Western consumers in order to cut costs and have the product rapidly delivered.<sup>1022</sup> Although Paci was unable to find a company providing this service, the artist travelled to China to arrange the realisation of this project.<sup>1023</sup> As mentioned, Paci himself used this gruelling process to his own advantage. To reflect on these nuanced and complex issues, Paci filmed the whole process, making it into an art piece for the public.<sup>1024</sup> The work is a testimonial to an increasingly globalised world that ignores the implications of fast production, outsourcing and cheap labour often done by migrant workers.

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<sup>1021</sup> Marie Fraser and Marta Gili Ed., *Adrian Paci: Transit*, p. 39

<sup>1022</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1023</sup> Channel Louisiana, *Adrian Paci: the Story of a Stone*, Last Accessed March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://channel.louisiana.dk/video/adrian-paci-story-stone>

<sup>1024</sup> Ibid.

In 2002 artist and filmmaker Steve McQueen created *Western Deep*, a short movie lasting 24:12 minutes, created at the Tau Tona mine in South Africa near Johannesburg (Figure 54).<sup>1025</sup> It is one of the deepest gold mines in the world measuring 3.9 KM deep. During the *apartheid* regime it was known as “Western Deep” because of its remarkable depth.<sup>1026</sup> The artist records miners, mainly black men, going down into the mine’s “abyss” evincing daunting, dangerous working conditions. The darkness, dim light, jarring noises and the claustrophobic atmosphere contribute to conveying an uncomfortable, frightening atmosphere. McQueen seems to focus primarily on the workers rather than on the socio-political situation in South Africa.<sup>1027</sup> These men, to make a living, travel into the depths of “hell” where temperatures can reach seventy degrees Celsius and the pressure can be 920 times higher than in regular conditions.<sup>1028</sup> McQueen exposes the crudest side of gold extraction -- that is, individuals contributing to capitalist production regardless of their own well-being. The camera follows the laborers into a dark elevator that descends into the obscure, accompanied by unpleasant, metallic sounds. The protagonists here are not only the men working in dangerous surroundings, but also the exploited earth itself. How long and until what point can gold extraction go on, and what are its ecological implications? Conversely, Paci’s video is more focused on the overall process of globalization, with the Chinese workers merely part of a complex scheme of fast production, optimized timing, and relatively low expenditure, despite the difficulty of the job. Although both videos highlight the rawest, most gruelling side of capitalist production they do so from differing angles. McQueen’s video emphasises the racialized workers, all black South

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<sup>1025</sup> Rachel Taylor, *Steve McQueen: Caribs’ Leap/Western Deep 2002*, Tate, Last Accessed September 14<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/mcqueen-caribs-leap-western-deep-t12019>

<sup>1026</sup> T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis*, (Durham & London, Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 33 - 34

<sup>1027</sup> Ibid. p. 37

<sup>1028</sup> Rachel Taylor, *Steve McQueen: Caribs’ Leap/Western Deep 2002*



African men during the period of apartheid.<sup>1029</sup> McQueen's aforementioned piece highlights the individual toll of such daunting types of labour rather than investigating the grander scheme.



**FIGURE 54,** Steve McQueen, *Western Deep*, 2002, Super 8mm colour film, transferred to video, sound, 24 minutes 12 seconds

Art historian T.J. Demos argues that *Western Deep* can be connected to philosopher Giorgio Agamben's concept of *bare life*,<sup>1030</sup> under which regime specific individuals are considered less than human therefore justifying their mistreatment and suffering. McQueen documents the unfiltered reality low-wage miners are subjected to: forced to go into the depths of the earth, in suffocating heat, inside a cage, exposed to unsustainable atmospheric pressure; there, they perform daunting tasks in their search for gold, from which they are unlikely to profit. Contrary to Paci, McQueen does not organize this performance but rather represents a day's work in these miners' lives. Both artists use film to offer viewers vivid images and capture the protagonists' emotions. Paci and McQueen, even though they produce these works eleven

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<sup>1029</sup> T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image*, p. 42

<sup>1030</sup> Ibid. p. 50

years apart and have slightly differing messages, both ponder similar contemporary themes: treatment of physical labourers, specifically non-white in non-Western countries, globalization, richer countries profiting from exploitation, extreme work conditions, speed in performing labour and efficiency regardless of the human toll.

Researchers Paul Tranter and Rodney S. Tolley, in their book concerning speed in cities, argue that global cities are addicted to speed, often equating it to efficiency and happiness.<sup>1031</sup> The over-valuation of speed became ubiquitous once industrialization developed and fossil fuels granted large numbers of people access to rapid mobility. Tranter and Tolley suggest capitalism is the driving force behind speed; they suggest “speed was a desire that suited capitalism and was fostered by capitalism”.<sup>1032</sup> Production’s aim is profit; therefore, the faster this production goes, the more profits increase, the greater quantity of products and services consumed, the better a capitalist society can function.<sup>1033</sup> This is one of the reasons cheap labour is profitable since businesses can hire more workers to perform so the final product is ready in a shorter amount of time.

Political scientist Simon Glezos suggests that “capitalism encourages the social acceleration of time, while that acceleration in turn advances capitalism’s social integration”.<sup>1034</sup> This acceleration has significantly altered the ways in which production, labour, exchanges and circulation operate. Workers and business owners are constantly adapting to an accelerating world, demanding an exceptional increase in tasks performed along with augmenting productivity in shorter times.<sup>1035</sup> Glezos argues this accelerated mode brings a shift in social, economic and political patterns. On the one hand, speed brings constant

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<sup>1031</sup> Paul Tranter and Rodney S Tolley, *Slow Cities: Conquering Our Speed Addiction for Health and Sustainability*. (Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2020) <https://doi.org/10.1016/C2017-0-03013-6>, pp. 39 - 40

<sup>1032</sup> Ibid. p. 66

<sup>1033</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1034</sup> Simon Glezos, *The Politics of Speed: Capitalism, the State and War in an Accelerating World. Interventions*. (London, Routledge, 2012), p. 85

<sup>1035</sup> Ibid. p. 87



innovation and crosses thresholds and borders, on the other, it may increase exploitation and exhaustion.

Capitalism needs to constantly accelerate flows (i.e., money or people) in order to correctly function and expand. In Paci's video, the artist demonstrates to viewers what capitalistic production can accomplish, by enabling the speedy creation and delivery of a beautiful piece of architecture, which arrives finished and ready to be exhibited in the heart of Paris. Speed, in this artwork, is central inasmuch it proves the barriers production and profit can cross regardless of workers' value and well-being.

In May 2019, *The Economist* published a short article on the improvement of working conditions and wages, and the record low levels of unemployment and underemployment in mostly wealthy Western countries.<sup>1036</sup> The essay contended that the left and "capitalism's critics" in general ought to review factual evidence on the rise of the job market in the past few decades.<sup>1037</sup> It uses as evidence statistical data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which shows that overall-working conditions and tax revenues have significantly improved in recent years, even after the economic recession of 2008.

Despite positive change in specific countries as wealth increases, the constant demand for cheap labour and an insatiable appetite for immediate goods at the lowest price to be delivered without delay implies a darker side to a globally positive picture.<sup>1038</sup> Paci's work

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<sup>1036</sup> The Economist, *The Rich World is Enjoying an Unprecedented Jobs Boom*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2019/05/23/the-rich-world-is-enjoying-an-unprecedented-jobs-boom>

<sup>1037</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1038</sup> In January 2019 at the World Economic Forum a discussion sparred between former Yahoo CFO Ken Goldman and Winnie Byanyima, executive director of charitable organization Oxfam. Goldman argued levels of unemployment are decreasing globally hence a reduction in poverty however Byanyima contested the work conditions of large strata of the population are unacceptable. She counts the story of a taxi driver in Kenya not being able to afford a room to rent or a woman working in a poultry factory being forced to wear a diaper because of a lack of bathroom breaks. Byanyima stated the lack of dignity these people are faced with and deems that indefensible. Watch: *Oxfam Director Winnie Byanyima Takes Down Top Executive who Claims Unemployment is Low*, Scroll.it, Last Accessed August 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://scroll.in/video/912092/watch-oxfam-director-winnie-byanyima-takes-down-top-executive-who-claims-unemployment-is-low>

tackles China's employment of low-wage workers who perform physically demanding duties in daunting conditions, himself relying on this type of exploitation for *The Column*'s creation. Researcher Dmitriy Plekhanov argues that despite evidence provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China demonstrating that, in the past decades, wages in China have risen considerably, along with an increase in the general wealth of the population, there are still striking poverty levels among low-wage workers, particularly from rural areas.<sup>1039</sup> According to the China Labour Force Dynamics Survey, the income for 20% of the wealthiest workers is 14 times higher than the earnings of 20% of the lowest earning strata of the population. Plekhanov moreover contends that poor labour conditions in China have attracted more Western companies willing to take advantage of looser labour regulations.<sup>1040</sup>

A decade earlier, in 2010, *The Economist* had published a short article arguing that the “Chinese economic miracle” is based on manufacturing workers toiling for lower remunerations in comparison to their Canadian or German counterparts.<sup>1041</sup> It furthermore affirms the rich world heavily relies on its cheap production and on top of that, Chinese labour added 1000 dollars per year to every American household. Low priced goods, inexpensive supplies for local businesses and cheap labour have contributed to keeping prices convenient in the West.<sup>1042</sup>

Economist and Nobel Prize winner Joseph E. Stiglitz, in his short book on globalization, despite recognising positive outcomes such as reducing poverty on a global scale, also warns against its drawbacks.<sup>1043</sup> The author ponders difficulties in integrating economies from all over the globe and challenges facing taxation of moving capital as well as equal distribution of wealth. The failure to face up to these difficulties has led to an increase in the economic divide

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<sup>1039</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1040</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1041</sup> The Economist, *The Rising Power of the Chinese Worker*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2010/07/29/the-rising-power-of-the-chinese-worker>

<sup>1042</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1043</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalizzazione*, (Roma, Donizelli Editore, 2011), pp. 37 - 38

in the past thirty years at the expense of poorer nations, and Stiglitz argues that institutions responsible for governing this process such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are not properly addressing these issues.<sup>1044</sup> One of the side effects is a further impoverishment of specific areas of the world, as well as certain strata of the population that already had significant poverty. Paci's work sheds light on workers from East Asia with gruelling jobs who travel from one side of the globe to another to deliver a finished product to a richer country. The irony of the artwork is that these Chinese workers produce a Corinthian column, a cornerstone of Western civilisation from Ancient Greeks times, thus transforming a revered European symbol into one "Made in China" or "Made in International Waters". Nowadays consumers rarely seem to care about their goods' provenance as long as the production time is low, the price is cheap and the delivery is rapid.

Paci reflects on the idea of "sweatships" analogous to "sweatshops": profitable companies setting up centres of production in countries with low wages and inadequate labour protection where employees work extenuating hours for low wages.<sup>1045</sup> Companies such as H&M and Apple have come under the scrutiny for exploiting such methods for maximum profit.<sup>1046</sup> It is however worth reflecting on how Western consumers play a major role in these questionable economic practices. Sociologist Luke Martell highlights the asymmetries of globalization: some nations struggle with market competition, export less and have weaker

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<sup>1044</sup> Ibid. p. 39

<sup>1045</sup> Kaufmann Repetto, 2013, *The Column*, Press Release. International waters are defined as areas pertaining to the sea or ocean where no country's jurisdiction applies. According to the United Nations (UN), international waters start from about 200 nautical miles from the coastline of a specific country and continue outwards. According to the Convention of the Law of the Sea, established by the UN in 1994, the applicable jurisdiction on a vessel pertains to the country it belongs to. Therefore, in Paci's case it is likely the ship on which the workers sculpted the Corinthian column falls under Chinese laws. Oceans and Law of the Sea, *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Overview and Full Text*, United Nations, Last Accessed August 27th 2020, [https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_overview\\_convention.htm](https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm)

<sup>1046</sup> Jacobs Harrison, *Inside 'iPhone City,' the Massive Chinese Factory Town where Half of the World's iPhones are Produced*, Business Insider, Last Accessed February 27th 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/apple-iphone-factory-foxconn-china-photos-tour-2018-5?IR=T>

Guilbert Kieran, *H&M Accused of Failing to Ensure Fair Wages for Global Factory Workers*, Reuters, Last Accessed February 27th 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-workers-garment-abuse/hm-accused-of-failing-to-ensure-fair-wages-for-global-factory-workers-idUSKCN1M41GR>

economies.<sup>1047</sup> Furthermore, many states implement protectionist measures to counteract specific detrimental effects of international competition and outsourcing (e.g., applying tariffs as in the case of former US President Donald Trump’s “trade war” with China).<sup>1048</sup>

Although modern globalization has brought a significant reduction in poverty and made trade more efficient, Paci also invites spectators to reflect on its downsides as in the case of online purchases. Behind the ease of clicking on a screen and having a product delivered quickly, an often complex and intolerable process is involved. The artist sheds light on the exploitation that lies behind our comfortable consumption, as well as the high stakes for the environment due to transportation.<sup>1049</sup> Paci invites us to reflect on an ongoing modern process that we may take for granted. The slow steady chugging of the boat, audible in the background, reinforces this sense of “ongoing” travel – the dogged labour, the endless transit that never reaches a destination. His video, in fact, does not end with the column arriving at the Jeu de Paume in Paris, ready to be exhibited, but concludes instead with the boat crossing the ocean.<sup>1050</sup>

The rise of nationalist and protectionist political movements aimed at reinvigorating local economies and protecting native workers from foreign competition, as we have seen in Italy, is therefore foreseeable. It can be interpreted as an attempt to protect low skilled jobs-- even though numerous occupations taken by migrants are rejected by locals-- and to secure domestic production. The pivotal event marking the beginning of 2020, in fact, is Brexit, the

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<sup>1047</sup> Luke Martell, *Sociologia della Globalizzazione*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2010), pp. 184 - 185

<sup>1048</sup> BBC, *A Quick Guide to the US-China Trade War*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-45899310>

<sup>1049</sup> Luke Martell, *Sociologia della Globalizzazione*, p. 192. On a more positive note the Covid-caused lockdowns around the world has benefitted nature. There have been photos showing Venice’s unique clear waters, an event which drew attention since the city’s famous canals are always turbid and murky due to the intense pollution produced especially by boats. In US national parks animals ventured near empty cabin lodges, in Argentina seals laid on the streets generally jammed with cars and the Himalayas were visible without a thick layer of smog surrounding them. Oliver Milman, *Pandemic Side-Effects Offer Glimpse of Alternative Future on Earth Day 2020*, The Guardian, Last Accessed August 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/22/environment-pandemic-side-effects-earth-day-coronavirus>

<sup>1050</sup> Vimeo Video, *The Column Trailer by Adrian Paci*, Duration 2:28, Posted by Kobe Studio, March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015, <https://vimeo.com/121131655>

exit of the UK from the European Union as an attempt to “regain” national sovereignty, thus protecting national economy and labour.<sup>1051</sup> These events are predictable in the wake of an exacerbation of economic divide between rich and poor during the past thirty years and specific jobs being either outsourced or replaced by automation.<sup>1052</sup> Martell contends China has played a vital role in globalization because of its rapid economic rise even though internal divisions soared as rural populations fell behind.<sup>1053</sup> Given the pivotal role China plays in the global economy, it comes as no wonder that Paci chose Chinese manufacturers willing to travel for long distances and perform arduous labour for his artwork.

To conclude this chapter, I cite the work of Economists Naohiko Ijiri, Tomohiko Inui and Toshiyuki Matsuura. In their chapter *Outsourcing to China* (2010), they use data from the WTO *International Trade Statistics* to show that Chinese merchandise exports comprised 8% of the world total as of 2006,<sup>1054</sup> ranking third after the US and Germany in merchandising trade. In the period between 1996 and 2007, the total amount of Chinese exports went from US\$151 billion to US\$1,218 billion. The researchers claim one of the main factors is foreign owned firms, making China the favourite area of the world for manufacturing outsourcing.<sup>1055</sup>

The artist, in a quietly poetic yet poignant manner gives spectators a glimpse into how modern economic forces play out on a human level, showing that behind the readymade, cheap commodities, actual people are being exploited in devastating ways. It is not a causality that Paci chose China since the “Made in China” has significantly affected the renowned “Made in

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<sup>1051</sup> BBC, *Brexit: What happens now?*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-46393399>

<sup>1052</sup> Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalizzazione*, p. 37

<sup>1053</sup> Luke Martell, *Sociologia della Globalizzazione*, p. 195

<sup>1054</sup> Ijiri Naohiko, Inui Tomohiko, Matsuura Toshiyuki, *Outsourcing to China* in *China and the World Economy* ed. Yao Shujie, Milner Chris and Greenaway David, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 135

<sup>1055</sup> Ibid. p. 139. According to Global Times in 2020, China’s exports gained 3.6%, up to \$2.59 trillion. GT Staff Reporters, *Chinese exports rise 3.6% in coronavirus-plagued 2020; only economy with positive trade growth*, Global Times, Last Accessed April 9<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202101/1212770.shtml#:~:text=For%20all%20of%202020%2C%20exports,1.1%20percent%20to%20%242.06%20trillion.>

Italy”, specifically pertaining to luxury goods. Researchers Robert Anderton and Paul Brenton indicate that the rise in contemporary globalization is due to reductions in trade barriers, cheaper means of transportation and communication and less internationalisation of production in order to cut costs as well as avoid strict labour laws.<sup>1056</sup> Paci films this exact process, participates in it and includes the viewer at the same time; not only through the video but also through the column itself, which is shown as an installation in the exhibition and showing the whole process behind its extraction and construction. The column is made in Corinthian style, a technique that originated in the Greek city of Corinth between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C. and gained significant popularity throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>1057</sup> What distinguishes the Corinthian technique is a more decorative pattern versus the more austere Ionic and Doric orders. The capital of the column is generally carved into acanthus leaves and has a more elaborate, almost sinuous aesthetic. It is considered, along with Doric and Ionic styles, emblematic of Western civilization; for this reason, Paci chooses this symbol of Western culture, mastery and beauty as a “ready-made” product coming from China, modelled by Chinese workers. *The Column* offers an artistic reflection for this on-going, complex conversation nowadays more poignant than ever.

## CONCLUSION

Paci’s work goes beyond the three pieces I analysed in this chapter. However, for the purpose of my argument, I have discussed the artworks that I believe best speak to issues of migration and transnational connections. Earlier works, however, also touch on these themes: *Home to Go* (Figure 55), for example, is a project the artist dating 2001 in which he presents himself to the public scantily clothed and bearing on his bent back a tiled roof tied with

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<sup>1056</sup> Paul Brenton and Robert Anderton *Globalisation and the Labour Market* in *Globalisation and the Labour Market: Trade, Technology and Less-Skilled Workers in Europe and the United States* edited by John Whalley, Paul Brenton and Bob Anderton in Routledge Studies in the Modern World Economy, (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 1 <https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9780203488850>

<sup>1057</sup> Vlad L. Borrelli, *Corinzio Stile*, Enciclopedia Treccani, Last Accessed September 15th 2020, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/stile-corinzio\\_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27-Arte-Antica%29/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/stile-corinzio_%28Enciclopedia-dell%27-Arte-Antica%29/)

ropes.<sup>1058</sup> This performance evokes the heavy burden of migrating, therefore moving to a new and likely unfamiliar location, and yet perpetually carrying the weight of a life left behind and all the memories with which it is associated. It furthermore evinces the *Via Crucis*: a half-naked Jesus Christ, humiliated, carrying the cross on his shoulders to redeem humanity from its sins.<sup>1059</sup> The artist gives a deeply humane outlook on issues often perceived in numeric and policy terms. He illustrates in a quiet yet potent manner the human toll in a world obsessed with working efficiency, social status, the economy and money.<sup>1060</sup>

Paci's artworks focus on the private dimension of a collective experience, not in productive terms, but in a subtly familiar way drawing our attention to each person's unique sensitivity, individuality and vulnerability. Despite showing groups of migrants or workers on a ship, the artist, underlines each person's individuality, sufferance and the desolation which is shared by all the people he represents.

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<sup>1058</sup> Enzo Fiammetta, *Home to Go di Adrian Paci*, Ghibellina PhotoRoad, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://www.gibellinaphotoroad.it/en/adrian-paci-home-to-go-9>

<sup>1059</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1060</sup> Throughout the current coronavirus crisis numerous countries such as Italy, France and Spain have imposed on its citizens complete lockdowns meaning anyone can exit their residences only for strict necessities such as buying food or medication. This was barely the case in the United States where former President Donald Trump often bolstered about re-opening the country in the midst of the pandemic regardless of the high risk this entailed. During this time US economy is imploding and over forty million Americans have lost their jobs thus the urgency of "getting back to work" even though health professionals advise against it. This novel virus has shown to what extent today's society is work obsessed regardless if it is a hazard to public health. Ed Pilkington, *You Can't Ask the Virus for a Truce': Reopening America is Trump's Biggest Gamble*, The Guardian, Last Accessed August 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/may/09/trump-reopening-america-coronavirus> Texas Republican governor lieutenant Dan Patrick has gone to the extent of stating publicly he would rather see the elderly perish instead of a country's shutdown. In May 2020 Patrick appeared on Fox News to speak to host Tucker Carlson about the economic crisis unfolding because of the coronavirus and he argued it is better to be productive and earn profits instead of a total lockdown, which has demonstrated to be an effective way to protect from the pandemic. He contended he was comfortable with the idea of grandparents dying to save the economy. Lois Beckett, *Older People Would Rather Die than Let Covid-19 Harm US Economy – Texas Official*, The Guardian, Last Accessed August 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/older-people-would-rather-die-than-let-covid-19-lockdown-harm-us-economy-texas-official-dan-patrick>





**FIGURE 55**, Adrian Paci, *Home to Go*, 2001, Plaster, Marble, Dust, Tiles, Rope, 165 x 90 x 120 cm / 65 x 35.4 x 47.2 in, Courtesy of the artist and Kaufmann Repetto Milan / New York, and Galerie Peter Kilchman, Zürich

An individual experience is illustrated as a collective, shared destiny seemingly impossible to change. In many of Paci's works, migrants and transnational workers occupy a pivotal point because of the type of representation they are subjected to in mainstream media outlets, meaning in terms of their perceived utility, making them tokens rather than human beings. In a conversation with art curator Cristina Cannelli, Paci revealed that he attempts to give dignity to those who have been stripped of it so as to offer a personal perspective on a

phenomenon mainly seen from news outlets or through political propaganda.<sup>1061</sup> His work seeks the subject's raw emotions without journalistic or didactic filters. Unsurprisingly, most of his artistic production not only focuses on migrants but also specifically on asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>1062</sup> He admits his own experience of escaping from an economically-ravaged country that went through a devastating dictatorship and arriving in a different place and starting from scratch deeply influenced him.<sup>1063</sup> In this chapter, I have presented a selection of his artworks to show a deeply personal yet political view on migration and globalization where too often the public views it through the lens of "cold" statistics and reporting from mainstream media. Paci offers an intimate and personal view. Seldom do nuanced accounts of the complex immigration process have any visibility in mainstream Italian media: mainly alarmist and statistical accounts are offered. Despite a flourishing migrant cultural network such as literary magazine *El Ghibli*, and exhibitions are dedicated to this topic, these types of news outlets still remain on the edges of mainstream information production in Italy.<sup>1064</sup> Paci offers viewers a holistic perspective devoid of any prejudice. The artist depicts the raw, "unglamorous" side of occurrences happening daily in the contemporary world, such as the "dirty" process of fast production, migrants being held in inhumane conditions in designated structures at borders, mainstream media representations of the immigration process often published or broadcast without any context and in an alarming manner. For example, *The Column* clearly illustrates the "messiness" (with Chinese workers' lack of protection) entailed in producing such a splendid architectural work. In *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*, Paci unapologetically focuses the camera on the facial expressions of the migrants stranded on the staircase, thus denouncing this harrowing situation. *This is Not a Performance* instead highlights the

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<sup>1061</sup> Florian Steininger and Andreas Hopper, *Adrian Paci: Lost Communities*, (Munich, Hirmer Verlag, 2020), p. 182

<sup>1062</sup> Ibid. p. 184

<sup>1063</sup> Adam Budak, *Adrian Paci Prova*, (Milano, Postmedia Books, 2019)

<sup>1064</sup> El Ghibli, *Rivista di Letteratura della Migrazione*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://www.el-ghibli.org/>

dehumanizing processes specific individuals are subjected to, in contrast to a more familiar, happier previous life. This emphasis on the often-negative human aspect involved in global processes is Paci's main feature.

#### INTERVIEW WITH ADRIAN PACI

**First of all, I wish to thank you for accepting to talk to me, it is an important addition for my fourth chapter and my thesis in general. The first question I would like to ask you concerns the situation you went through in Albania when you decided to move to Italy. Why Italy and Milan specifically? With what type of visa did you arrive?<sup>1065</sup>**

I arrived in Italy in two separate moments; the first in 1992 with a scholarship I came to Milan and enrolled in a school called Beato Angelico, which was an art learning institution. I followed a course on art and liturgy. This was a moment of great enthusiasm in Albania due to the fall of Hoxha's regime and the country's opening towards the external world. There was a significant will to escape from Albania because, firstly a harrowing anarchy reigned and then Albanians longed to concretely touch with their own hands' opportunities that had been negated throughout the dictatorship. There were considerable illusions regarding going to Italy and what could be accomplished there. These fantasies swiftly gave way to a great delusion due to the crisis ensuing in 1997 when Albania plummeted again into chaos. At this point I decided to return to Milan because I had friends living there who could help me out. I therefore permanently moved back with my family. Therefore, the first time in Milan I was a student trying to absorb as much as possible and the second time I moved to Italy, I was an immigrant and refugee trying to make a living with my family.

**Was it challenging to remain a full-time artist since it is not the most profitable type of work and many abandon it by opting for more lucrative activities?**

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<sup>1065</sup> Personal communication with Adrian Paci on March 25th 2020 through Skype

First of all, you become an artist, you are never born as such. I have always been very attached to art from a young age, I always so myself as producing art despite at certain points of my life I had other urgencies. At one point I worked as a restorer but fortunately I managed to continue with my artistic production, for example I represented the Albanian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1999 and in 2005. I also exhibited in Sweden and only later on I managed to publicly expose my work in Milan. It was not a linear process.

**As far as your work goes, did you start reflecting on the theme of migration when you moved to Italy or you were already thinking about it?**

I never really reflected on the theme of migration in general, I solely thought about my personal experience. My reflections are on what I lived through, on what happened around me, I do not believe migration is a theme but an experience. It gives you sounds, rhythms, images, spaces and then it is transformed in artistic labour. I am interested in individual events that can be transferred to a collective experience because I am aware migration is part of a more ample discourse. My aim is not to talk about myself but to transmit my personal experience to a bigger picture. What I talk about however does not strictly pertain to the specific migrant, it is also about global mobilization. The objective is to go from the personal and move beyond.

**The first art work of yours I talk about is *Centro di Permanenza Temporanea*; how did the idea to reflect upon this problematic space originate and what do you wish to transmit to viewers?**

What really interested me as far as these spaces are concerned is the name in itself, my work is not at all referenced to the actual structures. This tension between being a centre and its temporality since whenever we think about a centre something stable comes in mind, we tend to associate it to something permanent. I am trying to transmit to spectators the tension between a stable element and it being at the same time something temporary. This is also the reason for

which I filmed it in America, because I am not interested in the technicalities of these spaces but just by the oxymoron the name represents.

**The second art piece I discuss, perhaps one of your lesser-known works is *It Was Not a Performance*, could you please tell me how you found the article on the newspaper *La Padania* and what was your immediate reaction?**

I simply bought the newspaper at a kiosk; I obviously do not buy *La Padania* but since that picture was on the front cover I could not resist. It was funny because I had just been back to Albania where that picture with me as a kid with a rifle had been found. That photograph in particular was a celebration of an anniversary of the Albanian army so the following day after my return from Albania I went to a newspaper stand, saw *La Padania* and bought it. I hence combined these two images each representing different roles. The image with me as a proud soldier was not really a personal family image, I was just a vicar of the Communist youth ready to defend the nation therefore even if I was playing a role, surely a heroic, celebratory one. Instead, in the other one, I was “interpreting” the role of the immigrant standing in line for a residency permit but both I was not acting voluntarily in these pictures but it was life that “forced” me into these positions.

**The last work I talk about is *The Column* in which you commission the extraction, the transportation, the manufacturing and the delivery of a block of marble, which is transformed in a splendid Corinthian column on a ship transiting from China to Europe. It seems to be a reflection on the type of impact globalization and outsourcing have in modern days. Could you give an overview on this piece?**

It is a reflection on labour, on its exploitation, on connecting times of production and of transportation all linked to saving money as well as the idea of work being something on the move since the extraction occurs in China, the carving in international waters and the finished product in Paris. The column in a Western model produced in Asia that was then exhibited as

a finished product in Europe. The Corinthian style in particular is a symbol of a bygone era, which is being recreated in modern times. This passage from nature (quarry) to culture (art centre in Paris), the relation between humans and nature, between the ship, a metal container and the water of the ocean surrounding it and also with the marble. All of this is contained in the “belly” of the ship; these are all elements living together, that exchange amongst them, sometimes one takes more preponderance than the other but at the end it is one whole body.

To me the convergence of these elements adds to the soul of this piece and not just the reflection on globalized labour and outsourcing, which are more economic discourses and I am not the most qualified person to comment on those matters.

**Thank you for your time!**

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**BOUCHRA KHALILI  
THE MAPPING JOURNEY PROJECT  
2008 - 2011**

**ECONOMIC MIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN  
EUROPE**



## INTRODUCTION

While Europe is dealing with the global health catastrophe of novel coronavirus Covid-19, which has destabilized entire continents,<sup>1066</sup> a different but equally grave problem looms at the border between Turkey and Greece.<sup>1067</sup> An estimated thirteen thousand asylum-seekers hope to cross the Greek border, that is to say, Europe's fence.<sup>1068</sup> Following devastation brought about by the Syrian conflict, the Iraq War, the bombings in Yemen and the Israeli-Palestinian tensions, nearly 4 million asylum-seekers are at present in Turkey.<sup>1069</sup>

In a heavy defeat in the Idlib province of Syria, bordering with Turkey, thirty-three Turkish soldiers perished at the end of February 2020 under the attacks of troops loyal to current Syrian president Bashar El Assad. Following this event, Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in an attempt to galvanize Europe into addressing the Syrian conflict, threatened to open its borders, thereby "unleashing" the multitudes of asylum-seekers seeking protection in Europe.<sup>1070</sup> Journalist Irene Dominioni, in her article on Linkiesta, argues this move endeavours to blackmail Europe into increasing its funding to Turkey to "guard" the overwhelming numbers of displaced people escaping from Middle East conflicts and preventing them from crossing the EU border.<sup>1071</sup> When an estimated 4,000 asylum-seekers attempted to cross the

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<sup>1066</sup> Luke Hurst and Lauren Chadwick, *Coronavirus Latest: More than 200,000 Cases of Virus Worldwide*, Euronews, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.euronews.com/2020/03/17/coronavirus-clinical-trial-for-vaccine-begins-as-eu-expected-to-close-external-borders>

<sup>1067</sup> La Repubblica, *Emergenza Profughi, Alta la Tensione al Confini. Salvini all'Ue: "Mandate i Militari". Von der Leyen: "Le Frontiere Greche sono Europee"*, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/03/03/news/emergenza\\_profughi\\_resta\\_alta\\_la\\_tensione\\_al\\_confini\\_greci\\_a-turchia\\_in\\_arrivo\\_vertici\\_ue-250094634/?ref=RHPPLF-BH-I250072667-C8-P4-S1.8-T1](https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/03/03/news/emergenza_profughi_resta_alta_la_tensione_al_confini_greci_a-turchia_in_arrivo_vertici_ue-250094634/?ref=RHPPLF-BH-I250072667-C8-P4-S1.8-T1)

<sup>1068</sup> Marco Ansaldo, *Scontri al Confini Turchia-Grecia, i Profughi Siriani Respinti con i Gas Lacrimogeni. Onu: sono "Almeno 13mila"*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/02/29/news/migranti\\_siria\\_scontri\\_profughi\\_confini\\_grecia\\_turchia-249884680/](https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/02/29/news/migranti_siria_scontri_profughi_confini_grecia_turchia-249884680/)

<sup>1069</sup> UNHCR, *Turkey: Global Focus*, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/2544>

<sup>1070</sup> La Repubblica, *Strage di Soldati Turchi in Siria. Erdogan Annuncia: non Fermeremo più i Migranti verso l'Europa. Onu: "Rischio Escalation"*, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/02/27/news/strage\\_di\\_soldati\\_turchi\\_in\\_siria\\_erdogan\\_annuncia\\_non\\_fermeremo\\_i\\_migranti\\_verso\\_l\\_europa-249766856/](https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/02/27/news/strage_di_soldati_turchi_in_siria_erdogan_annuncia_non_fermeremo_i_migranti_verso_l_europa-249766856/)

<sup>1071</sup> Irene Dominioni, *La Crisi dei Profughi Siriani Mostra che Erdoğan ha l'Europa in Pugno*, Linkiesta, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2020/03/03/turchia-grecia-migranti-confini-profughi-siriani/45655/>

Greek border on February 29<sup>th</sup> 2020, local police responded with teargas and violence.<sup>1072</sup> With Europe unwilling to cede to Erdoğan's demand, the future remains uncertain.<sup>1073</sup>

## SCOPE OF THE CHAPTER

This chapter focuses specifically on asylum-seekers, refugees and economic migrants attempting to come to Europe; they comprise of three particular categories of migrants, which I will discuss later in this chapter. I reflect on Europe's current borders and migration policies in order to understand the underlying narrative driving significant numbers of people to flee their home countries and attempt to reach a better life in Europe. To this end, *The Mapping Journey Project* by French Moroccan artist Bouchra Khalili<sup>1074</sup> provides a meaningful perspective. This artwork comprises a series of eight videos, produced between 2008 and 2011, in which eight different migrants, seven men and one woman, recount their experience of transition to Europe and many of them traverse or stay in Italy due to its key geographic location.<sup>1075</sup> The eight short videos are single-channelled, based on long static shots, and last between three and twelve minutes in which the protagonists speak in Arabic, Italian or English with English subtitles.<sup>1076</sup> Each short film focuses on a colourful map showing Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Russia and a part of the Asian continent often with background noises resembling traffic jams in crowded cities. In each video, the hand of the interviewee appears as they describe their journey from their home country to Europe, including the hardships they faced and still endure. While narrating their stories, the protagonists trace their route on the map with a sharpie, pausing only to talk about residing in a specific location for an extended period.

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<sup>1072</sup> Marta Ottaviani, *Crisi. Lacrimogeni Contro i Profughi Siriani, Grecia Blocca il Passaggio dalla Turchia*, Avvenire, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.avvenire.it/mondo/pagine/lacrimogeni-contro-i-profughi-siriani-in-grecia>

<sup>1073</sup> Irene Dominioni, *La Crisi dei Profughi Siriani*

<sup>1074</sup> Bouchra Khalili, *The Mapping Journey Project*. Video Installation. 2008 – 2011, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bouchrakhalili.com/the-mapping-journey-project/>

<sup>1075</sup> Mor Charpentier, *Bouchra Khalili: Exhibition Views*, Artist Portfolio

<sup>1076</sup> Ibid.

Khalili was born in 1975 in Casablanca, Morocco, but received her formal artistic training in Paris: first in film theory at Sorbonne University Nouvelle, and then in video at the École Nationale Supérieure d'Arts de Paris-Cergy.<sup>1077</sup> She currently lives and works between Berlin and Paris. Her body of artwork touches upon deeply political themes such as migration, labour, colonialism, post-colonialism, borders and nationalism.<sup>1078</sup> Khalili uses numerous artistic media — video, photography, drawing, installation — and focuses on representing especially refugees, asylum-seekers and economic migrants in an attempt to dignify them, despite the dehumanizing conditions that surrounds them. Self-agency and affirmation are core concepts of Khalili's work; she shows the harrowing effects of specific state boundaries such as frontiers and exclusionary politics on individuals, thus challenging the popular notion of personal responsibility.

One of her most notable works is *Seaman* from 2012 (Figure 56), in which Khalili films a Filipino seaman at the Hamburg harbour.<sup>1079</sup> In the video the port is empty and only cargo ships are visible; however, what is central to the piece is the off-screen narration of the seaman who recounts the hardship of his life, the solitude endured whilst long months away at sea, his relationship with his family at home and the harshness of working as a seaman. In 2012, Khalili produced the photographic series *Wet Feet* (Figure 57) set in Miami concerning Cuban and Haitian immigrants lacking proper documentation.<sup>1080</sup> The pictures document boats and abandoned objects near the Miami River where these individuals arrived following a harrowing journey and possibly a distressful stay in the US due to the absence of appropriate documents. The term “wet feet/dry feet policy” refers to specific policies concerning Cuban illegal migrants; if intercepted at sea attempting to reach the US, they risk being deported back to Cuba.

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<sup>1077</sup> Coline Milliard, “Introducing Bouchra Khalili”, in *Modern Painters*, January (2013), p. 37

<sup>1078</sup> Ibid. p. 36

<sup>1079</sup> Mor Charpentier, *Bouchra Khalili: Exhibition Views*, Artist Portfolio

<sup>1080</sup> Ibid.





**Figure 56,** Bouchra Khalili, *The Seaman*, 2012, Digital Film, 10', Color, sound, Edition of 5 + 2 AP



**Figure 57,** Bouchra Khalili, *Wet Feet Series*, 2012, Lost Boats, C-Prints, 100 x 125 cm, Edition of 5 + 2AP

On the other hand, if they are blocked on US soil, after one year, they might be allowed access to documentation to legally stay. This policy, in contrast, does not apply to Haitian migrants. Miami is historically a city of immigration either legal or illegal, where smuggling and drug dealing happen on a daily basis; the artist depicts the “unglamorous”, melancholic side of the so-called American Dream, revealing what it means to numerous hopeful individuals.<sup>1081</sup> In *The Mapping Journey Project*, the viewer sees only the main characters’ hands and hears their voices, without seeing their faces or bodies. It is only possible to listen to their stories and follow their dangerous voyages. Thus, the artist focuses on the substance of what the protagonists say without the “distractions” of physical appearance. Seven out of eight of these stories are similar because they narrate attempts to flee from their home countries to Europe in order to live a proper life, earn acceptable incomes and possibly send money back to their families. However, in the third video, a Palestinian man, recounts his journey from Ramallah, the West Bank, to Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. He describes the ordeal of crossing Israeli checkpoints and avoiding the danger of being shot at by Israeli soldiers. With this short film, Khalili illustrates that displacement is not solely the result of economic distress but also of power and control over a desired land.<sup>1082</sup>

*The Constellations* (Figure 58) constitutes the final part of *The Mapping Journey Project* and is a series of eight silkscreens, produced in 2011, tracing the journeys of the eight participants as if their voyages were astronomical constellations.<sup>1083</sup> Khalili poetically illustrates traumatic journeys as beautiful stars connecting with one another. Borders’ blocking individuals, in this instance, are represented as ephemeral lines since in the sky, there are no frontiers and nations do not control specific spaces through policies and patrolling. In her vision, humans are not controlled, blocked, mistreated, expelled or imprisoned. The artist

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<sup>1081</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1082</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1083</sup> Ibid.

presents an ancestral practice, tracing constellations to understand direction, as a manner of showing each of the eight individuals' endeavours to reach specific destinations during which unexpected events occur. If, in *The Mapping Journey Project*, spectators are confronted with anguishing stories filled with obstructions and barriers, in *The Constellations* Khalili presents a hopeful version of these distressing journeys.



**Figure 3,** Bouchra Khalili, *The Constellations*, Fig. 6, 2011, silkscreen print, printed on paper, mounted and framed, 60 x 40 cm

## CHAPTER STRUCTURE

I concentrate on the experience of traveling across European borders as an economic migrant, asylum-seeker and/or refugee burdened with the spoiled image of an “undesirable”

person. I then discuss how Khalili's piece interprets this widely broadcast experience on a human level. I start by contextualizing Khalili's work in the broader spectrum of artists working on similar issues. *The Mapping Journey Project* is not the sole project concerning displaced individuals; numerous artists ponder on analogous themes reflecting on current situations. Although this chapter focuses on Khalili's exceptionally poignant account of asylum-seekers and refugees, there are numerous other artistic productions highlighting parallel topics. To contextualize Khalili's work, I then present a brief overview of the history of European Union policies regarding asylum-seekers, such as the Geneva Convention and the Dublin Regulation, as well as more recent actions the EU has implemented to regulate this type of migration.<sup>1084</sup> *The Mapping Journey Project* is the result of a context where carefully crafted policies have been put in place and their effects reverberate on an individual level, as described by the eight people interviewed. Understanding the current political situation in the EU and Italy concerning asylum-seekers and refugees- in particular, the alliance between Libya, Italy and Tunisia - is paramount to interpreting *The Mapping Journey Project*.

Following the description of the EU and specific regulations concerning asylum-seekers and refugees, I focus on certain policies that Italy – on the front lines of processing newly arrived migrants, given its geographic position – has developed. Several questions arise: how does Italy manage the flow of asylum-seekers and refugees on its borders? What happens once they arrive on Italian territory and what occurs after that? What types of institutional structures are they accommodated in and what, if any, employment is available to them? What kind of visa do they have a right to apply for and what criteria determine denial and expulsion? These questions mirror the experience of the storytellers in Khalili's artwork.

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<sup>1084</sup> International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention)*, 12 August 1949, 75 UNTS 287, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36d2.html>



Next, I examine political agreements and alliances among Italy, Libya and Tunisia in an attempt to curb the migratory flows coming to Europe.<sup>1085</sup> Since the end of the twentieth century, these nations have united to stop and repatriate migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe. Even though statistics show this effort has reduced arrivals at European borders, it has also created a fertile ground for migrant detention camps in Libya and Tunisia that have been described by survivors as modern-day concentration camps.<sup>1086</sup>

I then reflect on Khalili's installation *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008-11), both visually and conceptually. Her work accurately depicts how forced migration, whether for economic or humanitarian reasons, affects people on a personal level. Asylum-seekers, refugees and economic migrants with illegal status (without proper documentation to reside in the destination country) are often represented as a security problem or a humanitarian crisis, but seldom as human beings. This is not to say that borders should never operate as a mechanism of exclusion or that countries should not implement particular legislation concerning migrants entering their territory. However, this chapter intends to observe the toll these laws exact on a personal level, as shown through Khalili's piece. The stories her protagonists recount are the results of specific policies put in place by the European Union or by the State of Israel (regarding the Palestinian's story). Citing Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben's theory of *homo sacer* and Hannah Arendt's reflections on Jews who were denied basic humanity during World War II, I shall explore how certain categories of migrants, especially with specific provenances, are not considered fully dignified human beings and how the public has come to accept their hardships as normal. Rarely do the mainstream news media outlets show viewers the asylum-seekers', refugees or economic migrants' points of view.

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<sup>1085</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities: The Case of Italy and Libya*. (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011)

<sup>1086</sup> Ibid.

As discussed in the third chapter regarding the political party, La Lega, Eastern Europe has shown a growing trend of extremist xenophobic movements whose main precept is to secure borders against the perceived danger of anything foreign, people in this case.<sup>1087</sup> The beginning of 2020 has also seen the implementation of Brexit, the separation of the UK from Europe following the Referendum in 2016.<sup>1088</sup> The popular vote expressed the desire to “regain” national sovereignty and to limit the influx of immigrants unless they have needed skills.<sup>1089</sup> *The Mapping Journey Project* opens up an essential discussion on these pivotal issues where 68.5 million people around the globe are currently displaced.<sup>1090</sup> The scope of this chapter is twofold: to shed light on the current European context surrounding this divisive chasm and to show how Khalili’s art piece distils the flood of statistics regarding specific groups of migrants to individual human experience. Numerous artists challenge the manner in which displaced individuals are perceived and treated by governments, mainstream media and autochthonous citizens. *The Mapping Journey Project* is a poignant denunciation of the ordeals these people are forced to endure for daring to search for a better life, find proper work to support a serene existence. Furthermore, using video, the artist gives spectators a direct point of view as well as a clear picture of the eight individuals’ stories. I believe this piece, not only because of its medium, but also because of the complete focus on the people’s voyages without background music or surrounding movement, gives a direct, personal account. Viewers, for once, have a series of first-person migrant narratives, thus a restoration of dignity and humanity through art, contrasting the stereotyping and dehumanizing addressed in the first three chapters.

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<sup>1087</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1088</sup> BBC, *Brexit: What happens now?*, Last Accessed February 27<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-46393399>

<sup>1089</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1090</sup> Claudio Paravati and Luca Di Sciullo, *Dossier Statistico Immigrazioni 2018*, (Roma, Centro Studi and Ricerche IDOS with Centro Studi Confronti, 2018), p. 37

## CONTEMPORARY ART, ASYLUM-SEEKERS, REFUGEES AND ECONOMIC MIGRANTS

Khalili's work pertains to a wide framework of artists reflecting on similar issues. Art historian T.J. Demos offers readers an overview of similar projects pertaining to migration and displacement.<sup>1091</sup> In 1988, renowned Lebanese artist Mona Hatoum created a 15-minute-long video titled *Measures of a Distance* (Figure 59) in which she describes her relationship with her mother.<sup>1092</sup>



**Figure 59,** Mona Hatoum, *Measures of Distance*, 1988, Colour video, sound, 15 minutes. Courtesy Jay Jopling/White Cube (London)

<sup>1091</sup> T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis*, (Durham & London, Duke University Press, 2013), p. 1

<sup>1092</sup> Ibid. p. 6

The artist's parents are Palestinian; however, she was born in Beirut and forced into exile in 1975 because of the Lebanese civil war.<sup>1093</sup> The video portrays intimate-coloured photographs of her mother while she takes a shower and simultaneously, letters written in Arabic appear superimposed over the mother's body, blurring the images. The deeply personal and tender correspondence between Hatoum and her mother while separated illustrates an account of displacement, exile, and loneliness. The artist shows a private glimpse of a family moment in which relationships, longing and anxiety over the ongoing conflict are revealed. Most individuals hear about conflicts through mainstream media outlets and have an impersonal account. In contrast, Hatoum subverts this by weaving together the personal and political. Viewers, as in Khalili's work, have a direct account of a devastating war and the toll it takes in the private sphere.

Italian artistic film director Gianfranco Rosi's 2020 film *Notturmo* (Nocturnal) is based on the lives of refugees, asylum-seekers and people in general affected by the devastation of the wars in the Middle East.<sup>1094</sup> Rosi spent three years living in Syria, Kurdistan, Lebanon and Iraq at his own risk in order to film the catastrophic effects the conflicts and terrorism have on civilians. Contrary to Khalili, *Notturmo* (Figure 60) is a full-length film lasting one hour and forty minutes with minimal dialogue and long shots.<sup>1095</sup> No violence is seen, yet the results of war are visible through the desolate landscapes, nervous soldiers patrolling checkpoints, children drawing naïve pictures of the brutality they witnessed at the hands of ISIS, patients at a mental institution attempting to recover from harrowing trauma and child labour.

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<sup>1093</sup> Lima, *Measures of Distance: Mona Hatoum*, 1988, 15'26", Last Accessed June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/catalogue/art/mona-hatoum/measures-of-distance/6408#>

<sup>1094</sup> Gabriele Niola, *Notturmo di Gianfranco Rosi è il Racconto Poetico e Vero di un Medio Oriente Tormentato*, Wired, Last Accessed September 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.wired.it/play/cinema/2020/09/09/notturmo-recensione/?refresh\\_ce=](https://www.wired.it/play/cinema/2020/09/09/notturmo-recensione/?refresh_ce=)

<sup>1095</sup> Francesco Boille, *Notturmo Porta lo Spettatore ai Confini dell'Umanità*, Internazionale, Last Accessed September 26<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/francesco-boille/2020/09/10/notturmo-rosi-venezia>

In Khalili's short movies, the protagonists narrate their troubled journey; however, the only background the viewers see is a colourful paper map where the individuals trace their voyage. The sole narrative is what the protagonists say. In Rosi's movie, instead, the dialogue is almost non-existent and spectators can only see the dilapidated surroundings along with the despondent individuals. *The Mapping Journey Project* allows spectators to create their own images in their minds whilst being guided by the narrators' words and the traces on the maps.



**Figure 60**, *Notturmo*, Directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 2020, Italy, France Germany, Distributed by 01 Distribution (Italy) and Météore Films (France)

*Notturmo*, instead, offers vivid representations of the destroyed surroundings and of the individuals involved, thus letting the audience imagine the stories occurring. Although in differing ways, both pieces raise the issue of people forced to flee from specific areas of the globe whether for war, poverty, famine or persecution. In 2016, Rosi also produced the feature film *Fuocoammare* (Fire at Sea), set on the Italian island of Lampedusa where numerous displaced migrants arrive daily in desperate conditions (Figure 61).<sup>1096</sup>



**Figure 61,** *Fuocoammare*, Directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 2016, Italy, Distributed by 01 Distribution (Italy)

<sup>1096</sup> Roberto Chiesi, "Fuocoammare Di Gianfranco Rosi." *Cineforum* 56, no. 3 (2016), p. 15

The movie focuses, in part, on the life of Pietro Bartolo, the doctor who works at the island's hospital and offers health assistance to the numerous migrants passing through Lampedusa. Bartolo gives a disenchanted account of what he sees, whether visiting migrants or witnessing horrifying events, including helping to collect corpses of migrants who did not survive the journey. In Khalili's videos, almost all the protagonists cross the Mediterranean Sea and tell their stories of the difficulties entailed. Sailing across this strip of water, especially in the dilapidated vessels often used to carry migrants, can be fatal.

Rosi invites one of the asylum-seekers at the Lampedusa centre to narrate his personal story, which is similar to that of the subjects in Khalili's piece. The man was forced to flee his home country in Africa because of war and poverty, then he was detained and tortured in Libya, and finally managed to arrive to Italy's shores where he hopes to live a life free from terror.<sup>1097</sup> Like *Notturmo*, *Fuocoammare* makes use of long steady shots; the film tends to be slow, there is little action involved. Instead, Rosi chooses to focus on "normal" daily life in Lampedusa: Dr Bartolo visiting patients, the Italian Coast Guard rescuing migrants at sea or filming Samuele, a young Italian boy born on Lampedusa, in his everyday life, eating dinner or traveling on his father's boat.<sup>1098</sup> The intent is to humanize all individuals involved regardless of provenance, background or identity and show spectators the bleak side of migrants disembarking in Lampedusa in desperate conditions. Video once again effectively captures the gravity of the situation and represents the protagonists' emotions thus offering viewers an alternative scenario from the sensationalized one often presented on mainstream media. No numbers or statistics, just human beings. Rosi and Khalili illustrate the plight of individuals forced into fragile circumstances and disregarded by wealthier nations. The films show us dignified people, not only with a story to tell but also with dreams, desires and aspirations.

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<sup>1097</sup> Ibid. p. 17

<sup>1098</sup> Ibid.



In 2017, Albanian artist Adrian Paci, whose work I discuss extensively in the previous chapter, exhibited art pieces revolving around asylum-seekers and refugees.<sup>1099</sup> His works use video as a medium to communicate their message's essence. The first production, *My Song in Your Kitchen* (Figure 62), is a short movie lasting almost fifteen minutes filmed at Casa Monlué in Milan, a temporary centre for people who have been granted asylum in Italy. The space filmed by Paci is austere, empty, cold and almost inhospitable.<sup>1100</sup> Guests are shown engaging in daily activities such as cooking, walking, chatting as any “regular” person would do in their everyday lives. Throughout the video, the protagonists start singing and dancing to Balkan music, bringing a moment of solace in a grim context.



**Figure 62,** Adrian Paci, *My Song in Your Kitchen*, 2017. Video, color, sound. 13'44".  
Courtesy of the artist, kaufmann repetto, Milan / New York and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

<sup>1099</sup> Gabi Scardi, “Present, Elsewhere, Beyond”, in *Adrian Paci: The Guardians* edited by Gabi Scardi, (Milano, Mousse Publishing, 2017), pp. 4 - 6

<sup>1100</sup> Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, *LabExpo: My Song in your Kitchen: Adrian Paci*, Youtube Video, 15:06, July 21<sup>st</sup> 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Alpt0i1ctUM>

Throughout Paci's artistic practice, there is always an attempt to bring humanity to individuals considered outcasts from "proper society", in this case autochthonous Italians. The artist purposefully chose food and music because all humans can relate to that; such elements evoke memories, nostalgia as well as a sense of normalcy. In *My Song in Your Kitchen*, the individuals interacting as they prepare a meal come from different parts of Africa; however, the musicians who join them in the kitchen play music originally from Albania, Paci's home country, and the video is set in a refugee centre in Italy.<sup>1101</sup> The mix of provenances, yet the shared humanity even in precarious circumstances, aims to convey a strikingly ordinary moment of preparing food, something so often taken for granted, but in this film, it arouses an extraordinary sense of community and a light-hearted moment.

The second short movie by Paci is *Rasha*, an almost twenty-minute-long video where a Palestinian woman narrates, with the help of an interpreter, her troubled journey from her home country to Italy (Figure 63).<sup>1102</sup> *Rasha* was filmed at the religious community of Sant Egidio in Rome where migrants, particularly refugees and asylum-seekers, are assisted. By the artist's own admission, Rasha herself insisted to have her story told in order to fully express her suffering and simultaneously raise awareness about the gravity of the conditions numerous people are subjected to.<sup>1103</sup> Rasha Meish, originally Palestinian, arrived at a refugee camp in Syria where a violent blast blinded her. Following the incident, she managed to arrive, through humanitarian organizations, to Rome at Sant Egidio with her three children.

Rasha's storytelling is about suffering and violence; she gives a raw account of daily horrors occurring in the Middle East.<sup>1104</sup> Paci focuses on a close-up of her face in order to

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<sup>1101</sup> Gabi Scardi, "Present, Elsewhere, Beyond", p. 4

<sup>1102</sup> Ibid. p. 6 - 7

<sup>1103</sup> Giuseppe Frangi, *Adrian Paci: Seguo quel che mi Appare*, Comunione e Liberazione, Last Accessed September 28th 2020, <https://it.clonline.org/storie/incontri/2017/07/10/adrian-paci-intervista-mostra-museo-diocesano-rasha-meeting-rimini>

<sup>1104</sup> Gabi Scardi, "Present, Elsewhere, Beyond", p. 7

highlight her facial expressions and gestures in order to convey her personal vulnerability and, more generally, the human toll devastating wars have on a single individual.



**Figure 63**, Adrian Paci, *Rasha*, 2017, Single channel video, colour, sound, 20.56 minutes, Ed. of 6 (+ 2 AP), Courtesy of the artist, kaufmann repetto, Milan / New York and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zürich

Once again, the artist aims to draw attention to the direct account of events generally solely filtered by mainstream media, through sensationalized images, statistics, impassive narrations and reporters' descriptions. The aforementioned art pieces were produced in the first two decades of the twenty-first century and not only do they convey issues of asylum-seeking in wealthier nations, but also use video as a medium in order to deliver a powerful, poignant account. These works are but a sample of a larger artistic production concerning these pressing issues. I suggest they are pivotal inasmuch they dignify individuals so often dismissed and offer the possibility for them to narrate their stories directly, and be shown as regular human beings carrying out "normal" daily activities instead of only being represented as stranded and desperate on sinking boats with life vests.

## THE EUROPEAN UNION, ASYLUM-SEEKING POLICY AND ECONOMIC MIGRANTS

The European Union is a conglomeration of twenty-seven countries coming together following the Second World War.<sup>1105</sup> It started as an alliance concerning coal and steel between France and Germany in 1950.<sup>1106</sup> At the time, these two materials were crucial to an efficient economy, so the two nations joined forces despite having been long-time enemies. Later the alliance expanded to include other countries such as Luxemburg and Italy. The main reason for its origin was to avoid war amongst these nations and to facilitate trade of material goods and swifter mobility for its citizens.<sup>1107</sup> In 1985, the Schengen Area was created, thus making passage easier for citizens moving between twenty-two of these countries. This meant these national borders were more porous. Furthermore, nineteen of the twenty-seven countries use a single currency - the Euro, which was adopted at the beginning of 2002. The European Union is comprised of seven main entities: the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, the European Council, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the Central Bank and the Court of Auditors.<sup>1108</sup>

According to statistics provided by Eurostat, between January and September 2019 the total first time requests for asylum-seeking in Europe amounted to roughly 473,000.<sup>1109</sup> During the fourth quarter of 2019, there was a 22% increase in first time asylum-seekers requests when compared to the same period of the previous year.<sup>1110</sup> The asylum-seekers came from 142 countries, but the three main nationalities were Syrian, Afghan and Venezuelan.<sup>1111</sup> For the fourth quarter of 2019, the European nations receiving the most requests were Spain, France,

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<sup>1105</sup> Europa.eu, *About the EU*, Last Accessed March 18<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu_en)

<sup>1106</sup> Philip Thody, *An Historical Introduction to the European Union*, (London, Taylor & Francis, 1997), pp. 2 – 3

<sup>1107</sup> Europa.eu, *About the EU*

<sup>1108</sup> Piero S. Graglia, *L'Unione Europea: Perché Stare Insieme*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2019), p. 43

<sup>1109</sup> Mara Bierbach, *Seeking Asylum in Europe in 2019: Facts and Figures*, Info Migrants, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/21810/seeking-asylum-in-europe-in-2019-facts-and-figures>

<sup>1110</sup> Statistics Explained, *Asylum Quarterly Report*, (Eurostat, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2020), p. 1

<sup>1111</sup> Ibid. p. 2

Germany and Greece.<sup>1112</sup> Despite a 13% decrease compared to 2018, Germany is the European country with the highest number of asylum-seeker applicants to date.<sup>1113</sup> The terms “refugee” and “asylum-seeker” have two different meanings even though they are connected to similar experiences. Amnesty International specifies the former are those who have been granted protection in a foreign country because of fear of persecution (war, famine, religion, race, climate change etc.) and the latter are people who have not yet been given international shelter and are attempting to escape.<sup>1114</sup> Not all asylum-seekers become refugees.<sup>1115</sup>

According to the European Commission’s official website, the right to asylum was recognised for the first time during the 1951 Geneva Convention on refugee protection.<sup>1116</sup> The description furthermore states that an influx of asylum-seekers is not a linear process but highly variable. For example, in 2001, approximately 425,000 applications were registered in contrast to fewer than 200,000 in 2006. To quote their own words concerning reception of asylum-seekers, “EU Member States have a shared responsibility to welcome asylum-seekers in a dignified manner, ensuring they are treated fairly and that their case is examined to uniform standards so that, no matter where an applicant applies, the outcome will be similar”.<sup>1117</sup> According to the European Union’s official website, economic migrants are defined as the following “A person who leaves their country of origin purely for economic reasons that are not in any way related to the refugee definition, in order to seek material improvements in their

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<sup>1112</sup> Ibid. p. 4

<sup>1113</sup> The statistics used for this piece come from Eurostat, the EU’s official statistics office. The period of time taken into account comprises from 2017 until September 2019. The year 2019 registered a drop of requests however Germany remains the main sought-after destination for asylum-seekers. DW, *Germany: Asylum Seeker Claims Fall in 2019*, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-asylum-seeker-claims-fall-in-2019/a-51797406>

<sup>1114</sup> Amnesty International, *What’s the Difference Between a Refugee and an Asylum Seeker?*, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.amnesty.org.au/refugee-and-an-asylum-seeker-difference/>

<sup>1115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1116</sup> European Commission, *Common European Asylum System*, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum_en)

<sup>1117</sup> Ibid.

livelihood”.<sup>1118</sup> Economic migrants are not regarded as refugees and therefore do not benefit from international protection.<sup>1119</sup>

The need for an entity and regulations in Europe concerning people seeking international protection originated following the devastation of the Second World War, including millions of displaced people.<sup>1120</sup> In December 1949, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was created. It originated with two main intents: to provide protection for people escaping dire conditions and to help them rebuild their lives, through integration in new communities or enacting voluntary repatriations. The first international document, which clearly defined the meaning of a refugee, was the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees dating 1951 and becoming law in 1954. Five reasons for persecution were identified: religious creed, political opinions, race, nationality and belonging to a specific social group.

Although the European Union originated with an economic intent; that is, the creation of a single market in which goods could freely circulate for mutual profit, in 1986 when the Single European Act was signed, it was decided the same had to apply to people.<sup>1121</sup> The first real attempt to regulate asylum-seeking demands came from the Dublin Convention, later renamed Dublin Regulation, in 1990, where EU member states attempted to stipulate which EU country would deal with asylum requests.<sup>1122</sup> The Regulation came into effect on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1997 with the intent of curbing the “asylum shopping effect”, i.e. establishing that asylum requests should be dealt with by the first state of entry.

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<sup>1118</sup> European Commission, *Economic Migrant*, Last Accessed July 27<sup>th</sup> 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european\\_migration\\_network/glossary\\_search/economic-migrant\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search/economic-migrant_en)

<sup>1119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1120</sup> Pamela Pasian, *Le Donne Rifugiate: l'Esperienza del Progetto Fontego del Comune di Venezia e l'Attività delle Opere Riunite Buon Pastore*, Corso di Laurea Specialistica in Istituzioni e Politiche dei Diritti Umani e della Pace, Università degli Studi di Padova Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Anno Accademico 2007/2008, p. 9

<sup>1121</sup> Ibid. p. 19

<sup>1122</sup> UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency and ECRE, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, *The Dublin Regulation*, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.unhcr.org/4a9d13d59.pdf>

Later in London, three main issues were promulgated: first, the “safe third country”, which allowed states to refuse asylum to people who previously transited through a nation deemed safe.<sup>1123</sup> The second issue was a rejection of unfounded claims of persecution without appeal and the third was the selection of “safe countries of origin” where a swifter procedure could be applied to people coming from those places. The Dublin Regulation changed twice—first in 2003<sup>1124</sup> and then in 2013 with amendments. However, the main concern was to establish which country assessed the asylum request.<sup>1125</sup> As the organization *Open Migration* states, one of the main issues with this regulation is that most requests occur in Italy, Greece and Spain because of their geographic position.<sup>1126</sup>

One way that EU nations are able to recognise which people are entering Europe is through a central data bank called *Eurodac* where the asylum-seekers’ fingerprints are registered in order to understand where their first entrance occurred.<sup>1127</sup> This is especially useful to trace those who have entered illegally. Asylum-seekers’ requests can be rejected, however, as article 33 of the Geneva Convention establishes the *non-refoulement* principle, meaning that people requesting international protection must not be sent back to their country of origin if evidence proves they will be persecuted and their lives are under threat.<sup>1128</sup> This means that even if one country rejects their request, another EU country shall shelter them. Furthermore,

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<sup>1123</sup> Ibid. p. 21

<sup>1124</sup> Pamela Pasian, *Le Donne Rifugiate*, p. 30

<sup>1125</sup> European Commission, *Country Responsible for Asylum Application (Dublin)*, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/asylum/examination-of-applicants_en)

<sup>1126</sup> Annapaola Ammirati, *What is the Dublin Regulation*, Open Migration, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://openmigration.org/en/analyses/what-is-the-dublin-regulation/>. In September 2020 however the President of the European Commission, Ursula Von der Leyen, considered the necessity of modifying the Dublin Regulation due to its stronger pressure on Italy, Greece and Spain, countries geographically placed on the Mediterranean Sea, where most asylum-seekers first arrive. Up to now, no concrete action has been taken, however the EU agrees the urgency in changing the treaty so that all countries of the EU are involved either in receiving asylum-seekers or in sponsoring their repatriation in case of rejection. Alberto d’Argenio, *Patto sui Migranti, la Commissione UE: Solidarietà Obbligatoria. Redistribuzione o Solidarietà Obbligatoria*. La Repubblica. Last Accessed October 5th 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/09/23/news/migranti\\_ue\\_alleggeriremo\\_peso\\_su\\_paesi\\_primo\\_ingresso-268264577/?ref=RHPPTP-BH-I268245129-C12-P7-S1.8-T1](https://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2020/09/23/news/migranti_ue_alleggeriremo_peso_su_paesi_primo_ingresso-268264577/?ref=RHPPTP-BH-I268245129-C12-P7-S1.8-T1)

<sup>1127</sup> Pamela Pasian, *Le Donne Rifugiate*, pp. 27 – 28

<sup>1128</sup> Adele Del Guercio, *La Protezione dei Richiedenti Asilo nel Diritto Internazionale ed Europeo*, (Napoli, Editoriale Scientifica s.r.l., 2016), p. 45



one of the first actions taken was the institution of the *European Refugee Fund* in September 2000.<sup>1129</sup> The objective was disbursing funds to European countries involved in hosting asylum seekers and refugees.

The criteria with which the designated state where asylum is requested are, above all, family reunification.<sup>1130</sup> If the person requesting protection has a family member in a particular country, then the latter will have to take into consideration the demand. However, if the asylum-seeker has no family member in one of the EU states, the visa status or residency permit is examined. The country these documents (if any) belong to has the obligation to take the request in charge. If entry into the EU has been carried out irregularly, then it is the responsibility of the first crossed state to take into account the individual's plea. Thus, if none of the aforementioned criteria applies, then the country to which the person has presented the request must handle it. Moreover, the country examining the demand is responsible for informing the applicant about rights, expectations, designated legal teams and all must be communicated in a language understood by all parties.<sup>1131</sup>

Once the asylum-seeker has entered a EU country, that country also has the duty of supplying medical assistance, housing (hotels, Asylum Processing Centres, reception centres, private homes, etc.) and protecting vulnerable people such as disabled, children, elderly and those having been subjected to torture or other inhumane treatment.<sup>1132</sup> In addition, the European Council on Refugees and Exiles states it is fundamental for asylum-seekers and refugees to access the job market.<sup>1133</sup> To conclude this section, according to the EU's official website, articles 78 and 80 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and

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<sup>1129</sup> Timothy Hatton, *European Asylum Policy*, National Institute Economic Review 194, no. 1 (2005): p. 110

<sup>1130</sup> Pamela Pasian, *Le Donne Rifugiate*, p. 31

<sup>1131</sup> Ibid. p. 33

<sup>1132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1133</sup> Hala Akari, *Asylum Seekers in the EU Labour Market: the Example of Sweden*, European Council on Refugees and Exiles, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.ecre.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Working-Paper-02.pdf>, pp. 2 – 3

article 18 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights regulate the common asylum policy of the EU.<sup>1134</sup> The ultimate aim is to offer a safe protection network to third-country nationals seeking shelter from dire contexts.

Despite the well-meaning dispositions provided on paper regarding asylum-seekers and refugees' safety, the EU has stringent provisions meant to substantially exclude this category of individuals. Scholar Joseph Pugliese in his essay "Technologies of Extraterritorialisation, Statist Visuality and Irregular Migrants and Refugees", argues the EU enacts severe exclusion measures through biometrics, hence the analysis of biological data of asylum-seekers and refugees, state policies and institutions such as incarceration centres, all meant to exclude this category of individuals.<sup>1135</sup> Pugliese suggests these provisions are a racialised practice aimed at excluding non-white, non-Western individuals from "fortress Europe" with the pretext of keeping it safe. Pugliese furthermore suggests that despite the EU's statements to treat asylum-seekers and refugees with humanity, this often falls short considering the numbers of people perishing in the Mediterranean Sea in the past 24 years, intense surveillance of borders, including water, borders as well as the pact between Italy, Libya and Tunisia aimed at capturing and repatriating undocumented individuals.<sup>1136</sup>

Albeit Pugliese does correctly argue that the EU has harsh measures aimed at preserving Europe's borders and population, it is false to assume it is uniquely aimed against people coming from Africa and the Middle East. As amply discussed in the previous chapter, Eastern Europeans, a largely white population, in the nineties and even nowadays, face severe prejudice and hardship whilst attempting to reside in Western Europe.<sup>1137</sup> Due to technology's

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<sup>1134</sup> Ina Sokolska, *Asylum Policy*, European Parliament, Last Accessed March 31<sup>st</sup> 2020, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/151/asylum-policy>

<sup>1135</sup> Joseph Pugliese, "Technologies of Extraterritorialisation, Statist Visuality and Irregular Migrants and Refugees." *Griffith Law Review* 22, no. 3 (2013): pp. 571 - 572

<sup>1136</sup> *Ibid.* p. 590

<sup>1137</sup> Nicola Mai and Russell King, *Out of Albania: From Crisis Migration to Social Inclusion in Italy*. (New York, Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 114 - 115

advancement, there are now more sophisticated ways of tracking people entering borders illegally, however exclusion of the foreigner is not a new occurrence. The Dublin Regulation reveals European countries' unwillingness to adequately confront the processing of asylum-seekers and refugees arriving at its frontiers. Discharging this issue onto other countries--Italy and Greece in this case, indicates negligence. The reason why some EU countries receive more requests for asylum than others is likely due to more hospitable policies in place and more internal wealth. For example, Eastern European countries, such as Hungary or Poland, have a zero-tolerance approach to asylum requests making it a hostile environment for these individuals.<sup>1138</sup>

Economist Timothy J. Hatton argues that European countries have significantly restricted laws concerning reception of asylum-seekers and refugees in an attempt to deflect their influx.<sup>1139</sup> In the past decades, there have been increasing numbers of people seeking international protection; therefore, the EU, mainly through the Amsterdam Treaty and the European Council of Ministers of Tampere, established a common policy regarding asylum-seeking. Hatton identifies four types of policies: those aimed at restricting access, reforms in assessment of asylum-seeking requests, legislation regulating the outcome of the demands and modifications on how applicants are treated during this process.<sup>1140</sup> Hatton contends these decisions were aimed at decreasing heavy flows of people arriving at Europe's borders. For example, one of the limitations imposed was access to welfare benefits, harsher detention sentences and fewer rights to access proper work.<sup>1141</sup>

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<sup>1138</sup> DW, *EU Migration Policy: Eastern European Leaders get Tough on New Plans*, Last Accessed October 11<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/eu-migration-policy-eastern-european-leaders-get-tough-on-new-plans/a-55040039>

<sup>1139</sup> Timothy Hatton, *European Asylum Policy*, p. 106

<sup>1140</sup> *Ibid.* p. 110

<sup>1141</sup> *Ibid.* p. 109

## ITALY'S ASYLUM-SEEKING POLICY AND TREATIES WITH LIBYA AND TUNISIA

In the Italian Constitution, the right for asylum is guaranteed in article 10 section 3 stating that foreigners deprived of freedom in their country of provenance qualify for asylum in Italy provided specific laws are followed.<sup>1142</sup> On Italian soil, the Italian Territorial Commissions have the responsibility to decide whether a person qualifies as a refugee. The procedure implies that the first step asylum-seekers make is to present their request at a police office or headquarters at the national border where they cross. The request is then sent to the territorial commission, which releases a temporary residence visa. Following this procedure, different steps can be undertaken. The applicants reside where they wish within Italy unless they entered the state without proper documentation, crossed the border illegally or if they already have an expulsion ordinance.<sup>1143</sup> In that case, they are detained in special designated centres and escaping warrants immediate cancellation of their asylum request. Applicants' appeals are permitted.<sup>1144</sup> As previously mentioned, the asylum demand is granted if there is a proven fear of persecution or death in the country of origin.<sup>1145</sup>

Sociology professor Chiara Marchetti, in arguing about the hosting process in Italy, points out the omissions present in the Italian legal system.<sup>1146</sup> While there are numerous structures designated to host and give immediate assistance to asylum-seekers and refugees, they are ill-equipped to provide long-term solutions including adequate integration into Italian society. The Italian initial reception focuses mainly on the emergency aspect; in other words, hosting for an indefinite period of time people seeking international protection and assisting them for basic needs such as food, medical care and shelter. However, Marchetti notes a

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<sup>1142</sup> Arianna Bretschneider, *Diritto D'asilo E Status Di Rifugiato Politico Nell'ordinamento Italiano*, Il Politico 73, no. 2 (218) (2008), p. 6

<sup>1143</sup> Ibid. p. 20

<sup>1144</sup> Ibid. p. 21

<sup>1145</sup> Ibid. p. 5

<sup>1146</sup> Chiara Marchetti, *Le Sfide Dell'accoglienza. Passato E Presente Dei Sistemi Istituzionali Di Accoglienza Per Richiedenti Asilo E Rifugiati in Italia*, Meridiana 86, no. 86 (2016), pp. 122 - 123

continuing lack in services such as Italian language courses, employment and housing assistance, even for those whose refugee status has been approved.<sup>1147</sup>

The aforementioned process can take from one month up to one year depending on bureaucracy.<sup>1148</sup> This type of policy therefore causes asylum-seekers and refugees to remain in an extended “limbo” and denies them the ability to establish appropriate living conditions. Seen the absence of any type of practicality or swiftness in these procedures, this hints at the deliberate hindering of these individuals’ asylum request. The scholar appears to suggest this purposefully renders almost impossible the applications’ system in order to exclude these individuals from Italian society. If efficiency were fully evaluated, these procedures would be quicker and less bureaucratic so these individuals could move forward with their lives. Marchetti illustrates how arrivals increased from North Africa in 2011 because of the Arab Spring when displaced people from Tunisia and Libya migrated to Italy.<sup>1149</sup>

In the following section, I briefly explain agreements made between Italy, Tunisia and Libya in the twenty-first century in order to regulate the flows of people coming into Europe.<sup>1150</sup> Given that several of the storytellers in *The Mapping Project* mention passing through Tunisia and Libya in horrific conditions, I believe it is crucial to understand what these treaties entail and how they dictate the nature of the migrant experience of transit. Italy and Libya’s connection goes back to the former’s colonial endeavours during the beginning of the twentieth

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<sup>1147</sup> Ibid. p. 140

<sup>1148</sup> Ibid. p. 126

<sup>1149</sup> The Arab Spring indicates a series of uprisings commencing in December 2010 with the self-immolation by Tunisian fruit vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi in the Tunisian city Sidi Bouzid. Bouazizi, as an act of protest against abuse of power by authorities who he felt treated him unfairly, set himself on fire in a public square and died a few weeks later of his extensive burns. This incident sparked outrage in North Africa and the Middle East causing wide protest that turned violent and caused numerous fatalities. Countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrein were fuelled by deadly confrontations against what was perceived by the population as dictatorial governments that needed to be overthrown. In nations such as Syria and Yemen the conflicts are still ongoing. *Arab Spring: Pro-Democracy Protests*, Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica Britannica, Last Accessed October 10<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Arab-Spring>

<sup>1150</sup> Alessandra Bajec, *Working to Control Migration Flows: Italy, Lybia and Tunisia*, Aspenia Online, Last Accessed April 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://aspeniaonline.it/working-to-control-migration-flows-italy-lybia-and-tunisia/>

century.<sup>1151</sup> At that time, Libya was under Ottoman rule and Italy, desperate to emerge on the international scene as a powerful nation following its piecemeal unification in 1861, attacked the African country. This act aimed to establish Italy's power in a strategic region overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and maintaining commercial relations with other African nations.<sup>1152</sup> This action, however, proved to be catastrophic, from a humanitarian as well as a financial point of view.<sup>1153</sup>

Thus in 1951, Libya declared its independence under the rule of King Idris.<sup>1154</sup> In 1969, Muammar Mohammed Abu Minyar Gaddafi, later on referred as Colonel Gaddafi, took control by overthrowing the king and establishing his dictatorship. Gaddafi signed agreements with Italy in order to settle past horrors brought by Italian colonialism and find ways to lessen migrant arrivals to Europe, which often happen through Libya.<sup>1155</sup> The first official attempt at settling past tensions came through then Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lamberto Dini and his then Libyan colleague, Omar el Mountasser in 1998. This was known as the "Joint Communication" where Italy admitted its past colonial wrongs and agreed to work with Libya to attempt gradual remedial measures, such as returning artworks and repatriating Libyans dispersed during the colonial era.<sup>1156</sup>

Despite the conscientious endeavours to reach a peaceful settlement, Colonel Gaddafi was dissatisfied, which led to the 2008 Benghazi Treaty between the two countries.<sup>1157</sup> Outside the city of Benghazi, then Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi and Gaddafi signed a joint

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<sup>1151</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities: The Case of Italy and Libya*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 108

<sup>1152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1153</sup> Historian Angelo Del Boca describes the horrendous massacres perpetuated by Italians against the Libyan population following colonial conquests in the first half of the twentieth century. According to Meuccio Ruini, Minister of the Colonies in 1920, the Libyan venture caused approximately 10.000 Italian deaths and an indefinite number (thousands) of Libyans perishing. Furthermore, the monetary losses represented one of the main causes for Italians devastating defeat. Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani Brava Gente?*, (Vincenza, Neri Pozza Editore, 2005)

<sup>1154</sup> Italy's colonial ventures in Libya ended after Second World War with France and Britain claiming parts of it. Ibid. p. 112

<sup>1155</sup> Ibid. p. 115

<sup>1156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1157</sup> Ibid. p. 135

agreement intended to be mutually beneficial.<sup>1158</sup> One of the crucial axioms of this pact was cracking down on illegal migration from Libya to Italy. Patrolling Libya's coasts and returning undocumented migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea formed part of the deal. Journalist Alessandra Bajec points out that despite the problematics of repatriations, since Libya is a country that presents life-threatening situations for asylum-seekers fleeing African countries including Libya itself, statistics gauging levels of individuals arriving to Italy show this tactic proved to be successful.<sup>1159</sup> Data showed that numbers of irregular migrants arriving from Libya went from almost 40,000 in 2008 down to 3,200 in the first seven months of 2009.<sup>1160</sup>

Migration scholar Emanuela Paoletti, in her research concerning bilateral relations between Italy and Libya, gives further details about migrant detention centres in the latter country.<sup>1161</sup> Humanitarian organizations consider these locations to be highly controversial based on numerous accounts of the detainees' inhumane treatment.<sup>1162</sup> In 2004, Law n. 241 was instituted in Italy giving the Ministry of Interior the authority to finance such centres overseas in an attempt to curb arrivals of asylum seekers to its borders.<sup>1163</sup> The stated purpose of these centres was to assist victims of human trafficking, but NGO's and international organisations have denounced them as modern day concentration camps.<sup>1164</sup> Journalist Eduardo Lubrano

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<sup>1158</sup> The alliance was divided in three parts. First, a mutual pledge not to militarily attack one another, hence avoiding war that would inevitably bring destabilization. Second, Italy's responsibility in paying Libya US\$5 billion over twenty-five years along with other monetary commitments from both states. The third, and pivotal point for this chapter was the mutual agreement to fight against illegal migration. Ibid.

<sup>1159</sup> Alessandra Bajec, *Working to Control Migration Flows*

<sup>1160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1161</sup> On the matter of Libyan detention centres, photo journalist Narciso Contreras in his series *Libya: A Human Marketplace* 2016, produced a photographic documentary on these spaces. He shows how migrants are illegally held there by militias currently running the country during the ongoing Libyan civil war. He shows the crude reality of daily life for people attempting to reach Europe and the inhumane treatment they receive. His work attempts to show the stark truth of these places and devastation brought by the enduring conflict.

<sup>1162</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities*, p. 143

<sup>1163</sup> Ibid. p. 141

<sup>1164</sup> Ibid. p. 143



affirms there are approximately twenty-three official centres, however, there might be more unofficial ones.<sup>1165</sup>

Moreover, Paoletti contends that Italy is directly involved in repatriating asylum-seekers to Libya in order to expel them, thereby contradicting the principle of “non-refoulement” (non-forcible return).<sup>1166</sup> This practice is problematic due to the well-documented risk of persecution and death in Libya and its detention centres.<sup>1167</sup> The scholar quotes non-profit organisation Caritas statistics on immigration, which affirms that in 2005 alone, 26,985 people were returned to Libya by Italy as part of their agreement.<sup>1168</sup> Italy has been severely criticized by Amnesty International and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) just to cite two organizations, on the grounds of faulty legal arguments and the problematic ways in which these repatriations are conducted.<sup>1169</sup> Furthermore, in 2003 Italy financed the return of undocumented migrants from Libya to their supposed countries of provenance,<sup>1170</sup> thus raising additional human rights concerns.<sup>1171</sup>

A fundamental question arises: why have migrants’ primarily crossed Libya in order to reach the European continent? According to Paoletti, two reasons predominate: first, Libya, due to its rich oil resources, attracted a considerable number of Middle Eastern and African workers escaping poverty and/or devastation in their home countries; and second, the ease in granting visas to reside permanently or temporarily or not even requiring one for people coming from Africa and the Middle East.<sup>1172</sup> During his rule, Gaddafi sought “pan-African” unity. Therefore, in his effort to eradicate Western colonisation, he welcomed people from African nations by

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<sup>1165</sup> Eduardo Lubrano, *Migranti: i Centri di Detenzione in Libia e Quanti Sono*, Impakter, Last Accessed April 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.impakter.it/migranti-i-centri-di-detenzione-in-libia-e-quanti-sono/>

<sup>1166</sup> Emanuela Paoletti, *The Migration of Power and North-South Inequalities*, p. 148

<sup>1167</sup> Ibid. pp. 150 - 151

<sup>1168</sup> Ibid. p. 143

<sup>1169</sup> Ibid. p. 148

<sup>1170</sup> Paoletti discusses an account provided by the European Commission in 2005, which reported that between 2003 and 2004 Italy financed fifty flights for 5,688 migrants to the following countries: Egypt, Ghana, Mali, Eritrea, Nigeria, Sudan, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Syria. Ibid. p. 151

<sup>1171</sup> Ibid. p. 151

<sup>1172</sup> Ibid. pp. 80 - 81

facilitating their stay in Libya.<sup>1173</sup> Furthermore, there are no formal distinctions between economic migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees; thus, all cases are treated in approximately the same manner.<sup>1174</sup> This means Libya's borders are easier to cross for people searching for asylum and are facilitated in residing there.<sup>1175</sup>

In 2017, Italy also began to cooperate with Tunisia, a major point of departure for irregular migrants, in order to curb arrivals.<sup>1176</sup> In February 2017, then Minister of Foreign Affairs Angelino Alfano and his Tunisian counterpart Khemaies Jhinaoui signed a formal agreement that committed them to impede illegal migration and clandestine departures from Tunisia.<sup>1177</sup> Italy significantly pressured Tunisia to prevent illegal departures and repatriate Tunisians found in Italy without proper documentation.<sup>1178</sup> According to Baject, this deal cost US\$ 12 million.<sup>1179</sup> It therefore becomes evident that Italy and Europe in general sought to contain irregular migration by increasing repatriations and preventing departures from African and Middle Eastern countries.

In the absence of concerted effort in creating a more efficient and strategic attempt in allowing asylum-seekers to find refuge in safer, wealthier countries, the “blockade’s” interest seemed to be to hold back migrants from entering Europe even using inhumane methods such as repatriating them to Libyan detention centres, denounced as potentially life-threatening. As previously stated, I do agree all countries have a duty to ensure people entering their borders do so following lawful procedures and have proper documentation; however, it does not justify denigrating people or stripping them of their human rights. The aims of the agreements, it seems, is obtaining a “fortress Europe”.

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<sup>1173</sup> Ibid. p. 81

<sup>1174</sup> Ibid. p. 90

<sup>1175</sup> Ibid. p. 92

<sup>1176</sup> Alessandra Bocchi, *Tunisia and Italy Sign Deal on Illegal Migration, Agree to Support Libya*, Libya Herald, Last Accessed April 15<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/02/09/tunisia-and-italy-sign-deal-on-illegal-migration-agree-to-support-libya/>

<sup>1177</sup> Bajec Alessandra, *Working to Control Migration Flows*

<sup>1178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1179</sup> Ibid.

## THE MAPPING JOURNEY PROJECT

The video series, *The Mapping Journey Project*, was created between 2008 and 2011. Khalili created eight short videos ranging from two to almost twelve minutes in which actual migrants recount their troubled journeys. The background of each video is a colourful map printed on paper that clearly delineates countries and borders. A storyteller's hand appears holding a marker used to trace the journey that s/he recounts. The video shots are still, meaning the camera is focused on one point and does not move, and despite the noisy background. Viewers can mainly hear the person's recollection of events and view their hand. This interesting perspective emphasizes their voices (in true oral storytelling tradition) without the "distraction" of their physical appearance. Most of the individuals recorded commence their narration by disclosing their provenances which are African, Middle-Eastern, Asian and one is Palestinian. They all appear to be young individuals, probably not older than thirty, judging from their voices and hands.

Each narrator's account revolves around the hardships they faced, especially the impossibility of moving freely in countries and perhaps settling in on one place. The stories themselves clearly illustrate each individual's struggles for survival; in many instances their existence is threatened. As independent curator Diana Nawi states, "migration and travel are not simply tied to ideas of economic opportunity, exile or escape. Rather, they also refuse state control and power, and the restrictions of nationalism, regionalism, and ideology."<sup>1180</sup> The artist highlights personal recollections from people who have experienced the most brutal side of migration in contrast to the sensationalized version of a news anchor or a journalist, often adopted by mainstream media. Khalili's piece gives viewers a unique perspective on asylum seekers and refugees' first-hand account, devoid of filters such as reporters or journalists' "intermediation". The stories narrated by the individuals in *The Mapping Journey Project* are

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<sup>1180</sup> Mor Charpentier, *Bouchra Khalili: Exhibition Views*, Artist Portfolio

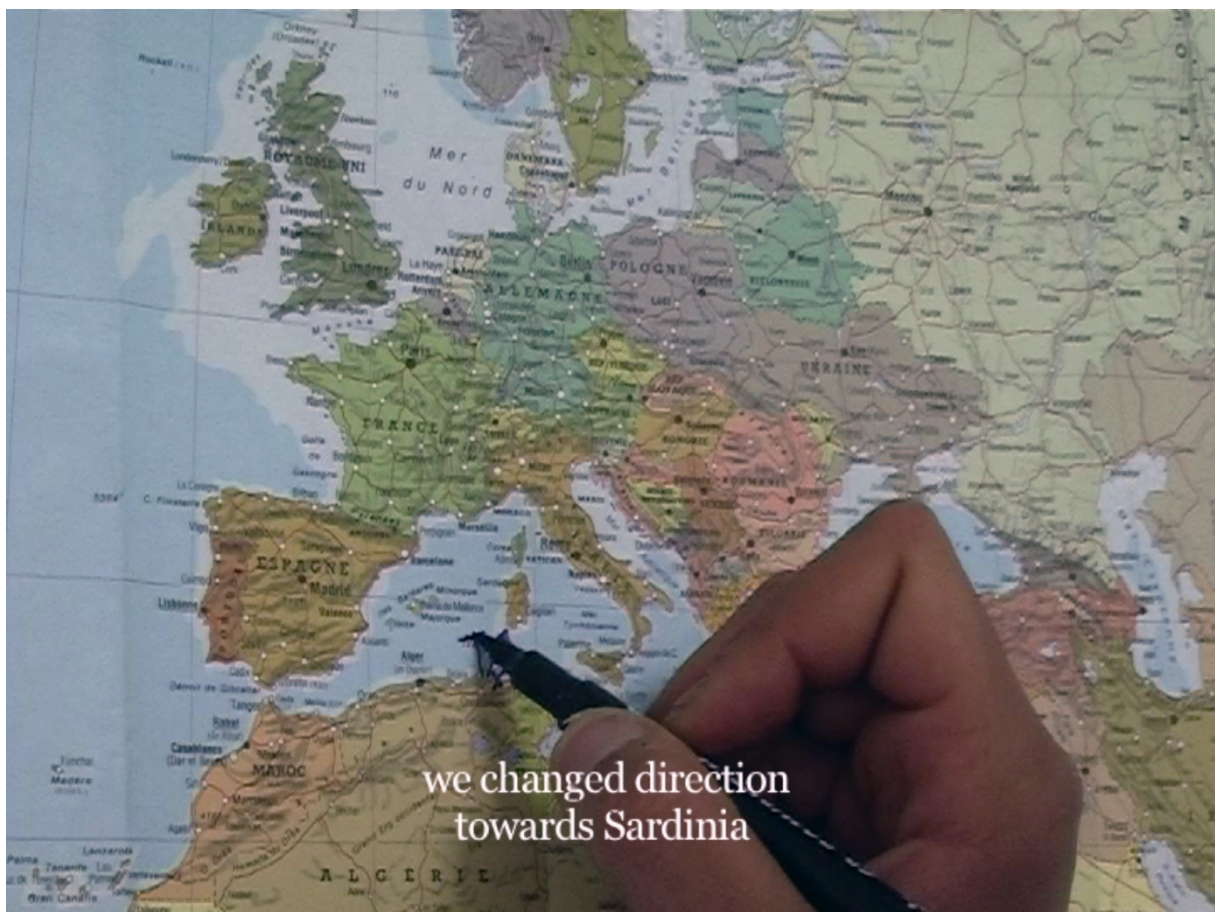
the authentic personal experiences. I suggest this work is a significant contribution to current knowledge on such issues; instead of the constant flow of statistics, news chronicles, documentaries, desperate images and reports this piece “hits” spectators with raw narrations, thus revealing there are actual human beings at the core of these issues. As stated previously, a large number of artists dedicate their artistic practice to issues of migration, particularly asylum-seeking; however, I argue Khalili bravely seeks the in-person narration in an attempt to confer dignity to migrants often making these perilous journeys and being subjected to abuse.

The voice qualities (intonation, volume and pitch) migrants use to describe their experience is the opposite of sensational. They speak in calm, even tones, without drama or emotion. Yet when viewers listen to what they say, it is hard to imagine living through such hardships. For example, a Palestinian man describes the ordeal he had to undertake in order to see his partner who lives just fifteen kilometres away, or the detention experiences in Libya where these individuals suffered severe abuse at the hands of the prison guards. Furthermore, not allowing viewers see the individuals’ physical appearance compels the beholder to imagine each journey as if they were undertaking it, thus conferring an empathic, personalised response. In the following paragraphs, I briefly describe the eight videos one by one. From there, I suggest a theoretical framework and draw my conclusions.

#### VIDEO NUMBER ONE

This production (Figure 64), made in 2008, lasts four minutes and twenty seconds; it is the recollection of an Algerian man from the coastal city Annaba. He describes himself as a fisherman and diver who willingly helped people to reach Europe. He took a boat with only forty euros in his pocket and managed to reach the relatively nearby Italian island of Sardinia. He recounts not being able to go directly to Sardinia because of radar. Therefore, a “detour” in international waters was necessary, which made the voyage significantly longer. Instead of 230 km, it took 350 km to reach the island. From Sardinia, he and his “passengers” managed to

arrive in Naples. Then, after scraping along with little or no money, he got to Milan. At this point, the narrator describes finding a job in which he worked long hours in daunting conditions for very little money. From there, he left to go to Nice, later on to Paris, and finally to Marseille where he illegally sold cigarettes. At the end of the video, he reveals he still resided in Marseille and hoped to join the Foreign Legion, a French military unit accepting foreigners. If that did not work out, he planned to move to Sweden so that he could “turn things around”.



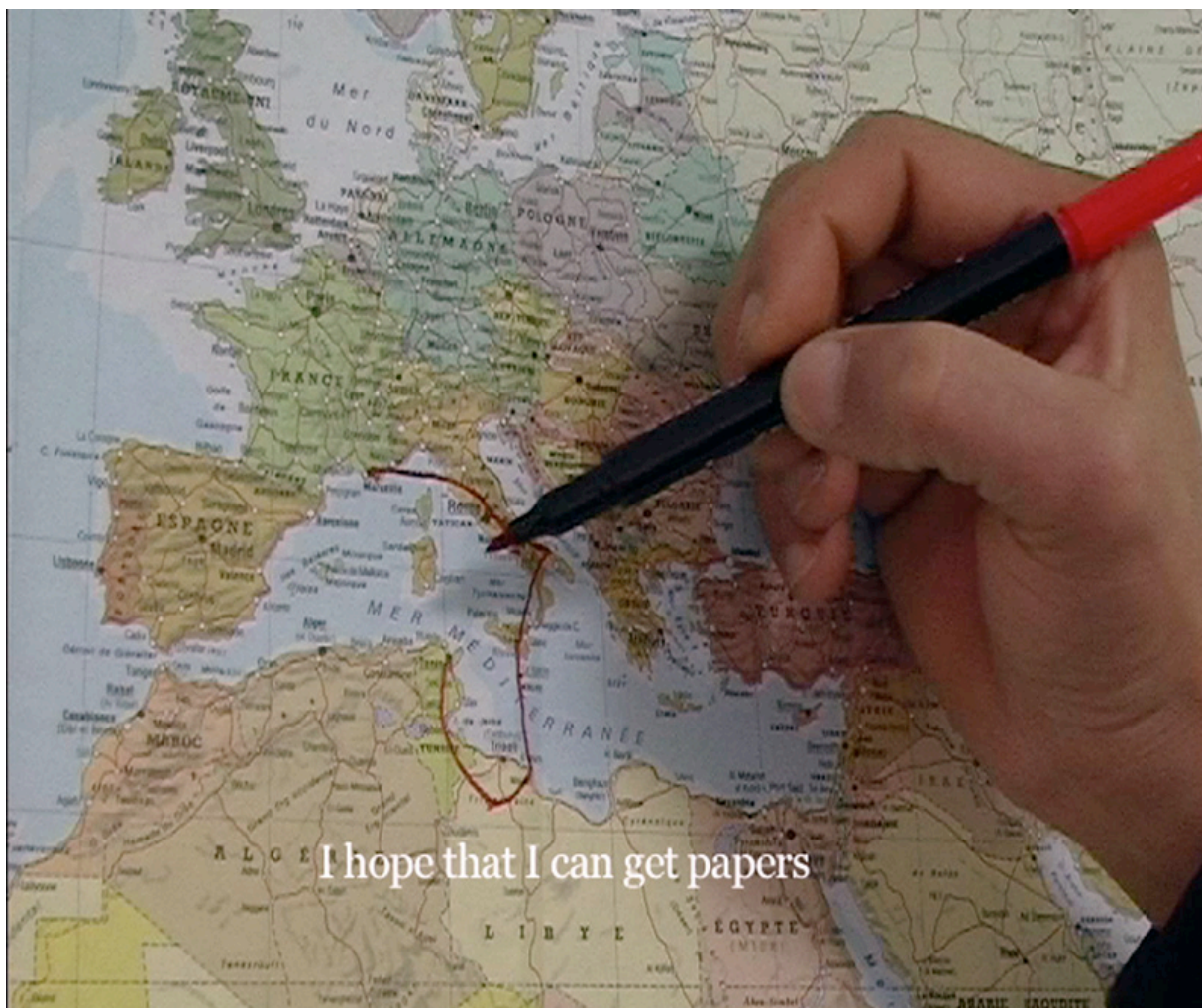
**Figure 64,** *The Mapping Journey* #1, 2008, Video, 4', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

## VIDEO NUMBER TWO

In the following video (Figure 65), dated 2008 and lasting approximately three minutes, a young Tunisian man's journey started in Tunis and crossed into the Libyan city Al Khums. From there, he, along with other passengers, boarded a small boat and went to the island of Lampedusa. After two days, he was arrested by the Italian police and taken to Bari, where he



resided in a Red Cross Camp. There, he and the people with him received a letter of expulsion from the Italian authorities. However, they all left illegally for Naples before deportation. He found a place to live there as well as a job at the clothing market. Later on, he moved on to Rome. From Rome, he left for Marseille where he stayed for a month, hoping to obtain proper documentation to stay in Europe. He finishes his story by affirming he simply wished to work without causing trouble and longed to see his mother again.

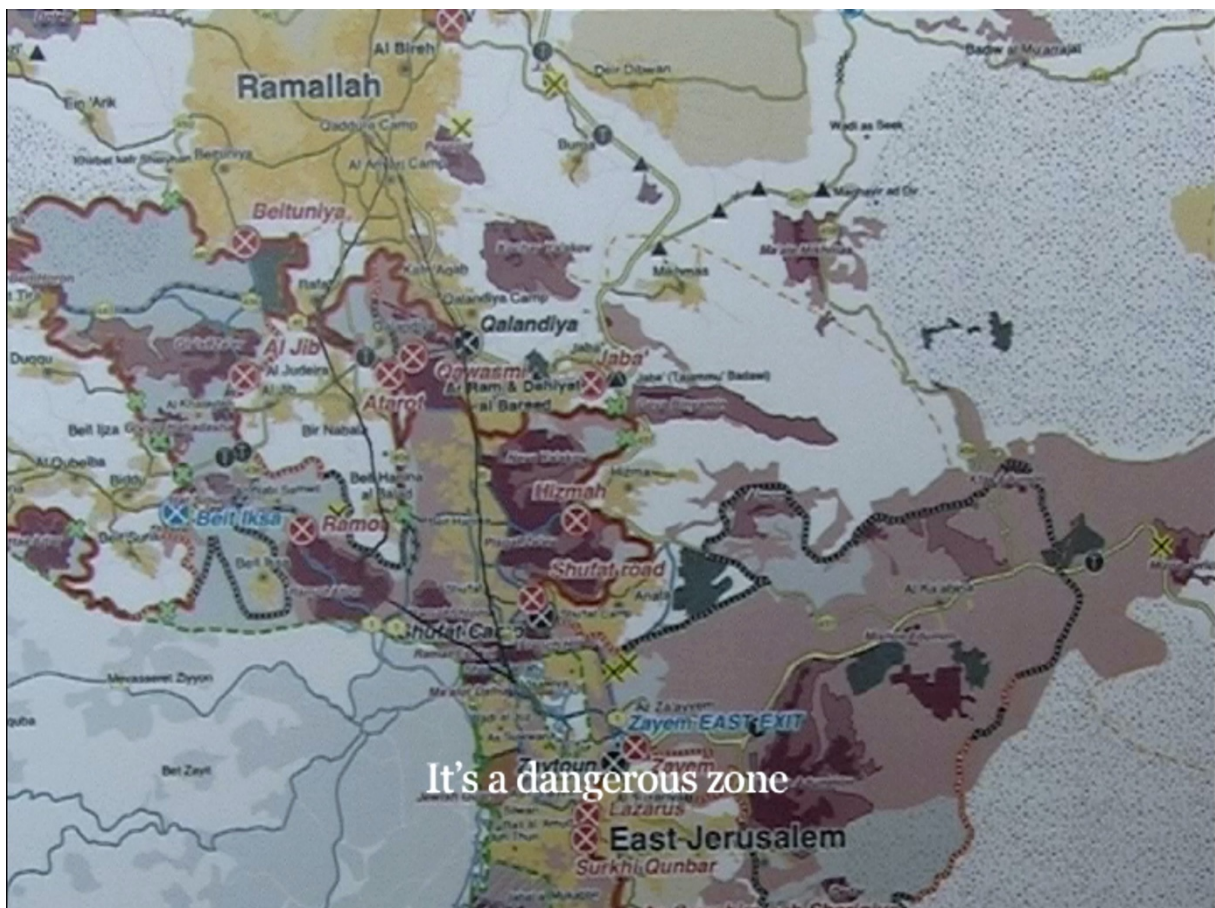


**Figure 65,** *The Mapping Journey #2*, 2008, Video, 3', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

### VIDEO NUMBER THREE

The following video lasting four minutes (Figure 66) touches upon a sensitive topic; it is a Palestinian man's recollection of his arduous journey from Ramallah, a Palestinian city in the West Bank to the neighbourhood Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem, which is Israeli territory,

in order to visit his partner. He states that the distance between Ramallah and East Jerusalem is fourteen km; therefore, by car it should take approximately fifteen minutes to reach. However, he describes the numerous Israeli checkpoints, prolonging the trip to one hour. The man speaks about the tortuous roads and even describes climbing on foot through mountains in order to avoid Israeli soldiers, who he defines as dangerous and authorized to shoot at people illegally traversing Israeli territories. This video is different and stands out from the others given the contentious history between the State of Palestine and Israel. He often mentions “freedom of movement”, alluding to a strip of land becoming through time segregated, contentious and sometimes violent. He terminates his story by affirming that he has not been to East Jerusalem in one month and a half and is uncertain of when he will be able to return.



**Figure 66,** *The Mapping Journey #3*, 2009, Video, 4', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.



## VIDEO NUMBER FOUR

In the fourth video lasting five minutes (Figure 67) and produced in 2010, a young woman from Mogadishu recounts how she flew to Hargeisa, another Somali city. She then travelled by bus to Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa and from there to Gedarf in Sudan. At that point, she travelled to Khartoum and from there, to Kufra in Libya in a small car. The next destination was Benghazi on the Libyan coast and right after, to Tripoli, Libya's capital where she spent two months. The young woman took a boat and disembarked on the Italian island of Lampedusa where she described being caught by Italian authorities and transferred to Palermo and then once again to the nearby village of Salinagrande. From there, she received proper documentation to stay in the country and then transferred to Bari where she currently resides. She concludes saying that she is unhappy and wishes to move to either Norway or England.



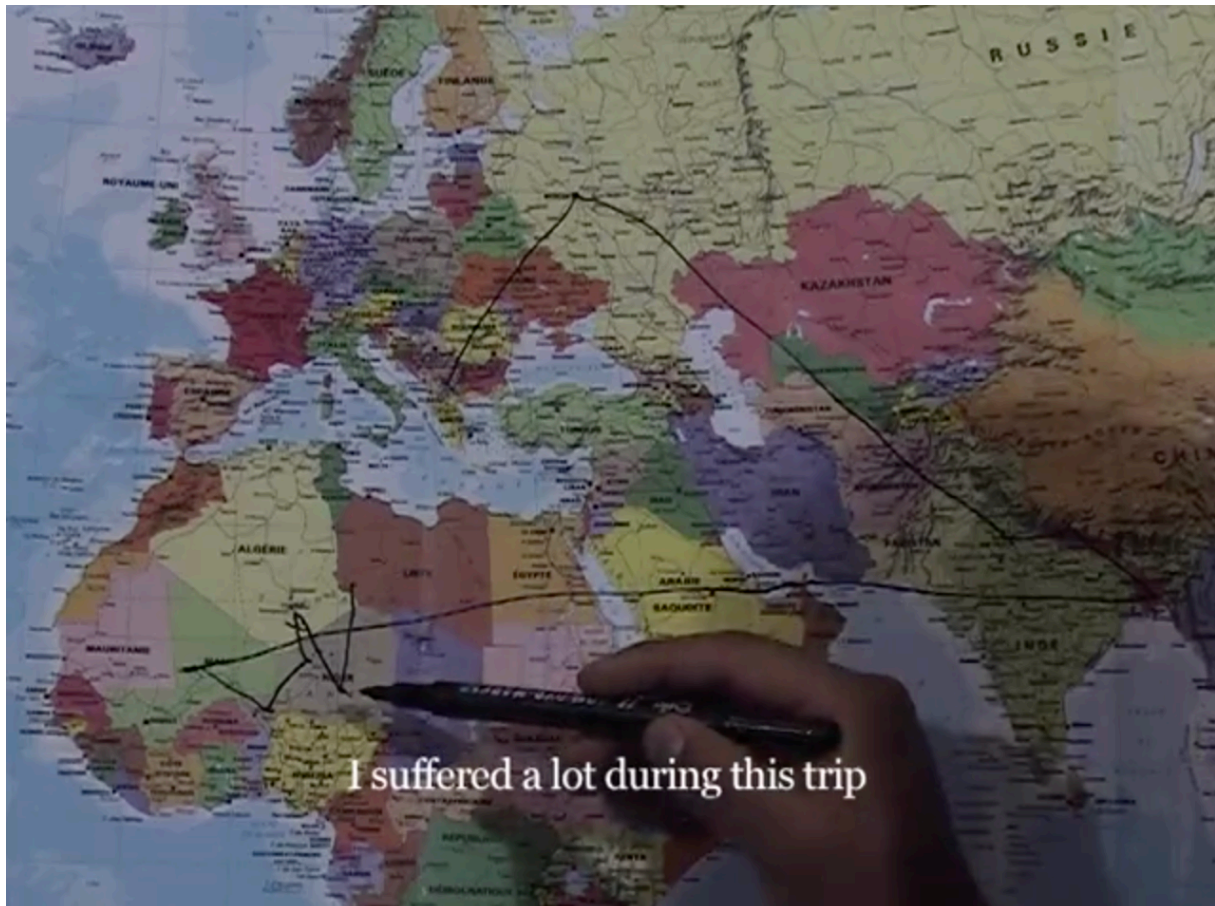
Figure 67, *The Mapping Journey #4*, 2010, Video, 5', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

## VIDEO NUMBER FIVE

In this piece (Figure 68), filmed in 2010, and eleven minutes long, a man from Bangladesh describes his turbulent journey. He stated that since he was a child his dream has been to go to Italy. In December 1999, he left his home for New Delhi and from there, he travelled to Moscow. The journey continued to Skopje in Macedonia where his false documentation was discovered. The police apprehended him and he ended up staying for eight months and twenty days in jail. He was then transferred back to Bangladesh. Regardless of these barriers, he took a plane to Dubai and from there, flew to Mali, more precisely its capital, Bamako. In that city, he gave his passport to the illegal organisation that had arranged his trip because they claimed it necessary to obtain a visa for Europe. However, it was revealed to be a scam as the "organizers" disappeared. With no place to stay or go, he found another group that could arrange his trip to Europe. They asked for a thousand Euros to reach Spain. With his mother's financial help, he travelled to Niamey in Niger, then to Agadez and from there to a village in Algeria, where he was once again arrested by the police. Following a four-month internment in an Algerian prison, he was then expelled and went back to Agadez where he resided for several months and worked in a sugar factory with the help of a good-hearted man. The narrator however affirms he had not yet lost his hopes of reaching Europe; soon after, he tried again by going to Libya.

Enduring several hardships, he managed to arrive in the Libyan city Ghat where the local police once again detained him. Nevertheless, he managed to work there for almost a year and then moved to Sabha and thence to the capital, Tripoli. From the coastal Libyan city Zuwara, he embarked on a vessel by paying the €2500 fee and then endured harsh conditions during the Mediterranean crossing. He and the other twenty-four passengers were rescued and taken to Lampedusa. Once he arrived on Italian soil, he was placed in a migrant community for minors being younger than eighteen. There, he was taken care of and went to school, learned

Italian and worked as a barman. At that point, he opted to go to Rome in September 2007 and still resides there by working in a bar-restaurant. He concludes his story by claiming that his trip to Europe took a total of five years. He ultimately wishes to return to Bangladesh and start a small business there.



**Figure 68,** *The Mapping Journey #5*, 2010, Video, 12', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

#### VIDEO NUMBER SIX

In the following video lasting almost four minutes (Figure 69), made in 2010, a man from Jalalabad, Afghanistan went to the nearby Pakistani city Peshawar, and from there he moved to Kuwait and then to Zehedan in Iran. Soon he moved on to the capital Teheran and after a strenuous crossing into Turkey, he managed to arrive to Istanbul. The next destination was Sofia, after that Debrecen in Hungary, then Vienna in Austria and finally Munich in Germany. Following a three-month stay in a German village, he moved to Brussels, and then



later on to London, Paris, Milan and Rome. He ends his narration by stating he wishes to reside in Italy and acquire proper residence documents.



**Figure 69,** *The Mapping Journey #6*, 2010, Video, 3'30, Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

#### VIDEO NUMBER SEVEN

In this video lasting around six minutes (Figure 70), realised in 2011, a Moroccan man from Beni-Mellal explains how he decided to explore Europe and left for Tangier with seven Euros in his pocket. From there he went to Algeciras, in Spain, where a smuggler requested two thousand Euros for the boat transportation from North Africa to Europe. The storyteller escaped, but following a wrong path, he was captured by police and brought back to Algeciras and arrested by the local police. There he spent four days in an orphanage until an uncle came to pick him up to take him to the Spanish city of Alicante where he worked for two years in the fields. Because of family disagreements, he left with another person to go to Milan, then transferred to Bologna, then Turin, and finally returned to Milan.

Documentation issues arose, therefore he returned to Alicante to his uncle only to flee again after one year and a half, this time to Girona. He ended up travelling by bus to Breda in

Holland. Following his unsuccessful job search, he moved to Utrecht where he found work in a phone shop. Despite false hopes in obtaining proper documentation from Spain, he returned to Alicante only to find out his application was rejected. After this disappointment, he stayed again in Alicante for one year and a half, then transferred to Spanish town Almeria and finally after “pit stops” in various parts of Spain moved to Sisteron, in France. Again, lacking a job, he moved back to Barcelona where he lived with a friend called Momo. He ends his story saying he just wished to have his papers and return to his home country.



**Figure 70,** *The Mapping Journey #7*, 2008, Video, 6', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

#### VIDEO NUMBER EIGHT

In the last video lasting five minutes (Figure 71), produced in 2011, the man began his journey in 2007 in Al-Fashir, a city in Sudan and crossed into Libya to Kufra and then to Tripoli.

Following a year spent there, he decided to embark in an attempt to reach Europe. He describes horrifying voyage conditions at sea resulting in the death of three passengers. Instead of arriving to Italy, the boat ended up in Izmir, a city in Turkey, from where he and the people travelling with him went to Istanbul. Due to financial distress, the narrator recalls not being able to continue any further from the Turkish city and still resides there. He concludes his story saying he was waiting for his visa and wished to move to the USA, or preferably, to Canada.



**Figure 71,** *The Mapping Journey #8*, 2008, Video, 5', Edition of 5 + 2 AP.

## THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

In 2005, Amnesty International published a report on Centres for Temporary Permanence, which I examined in the previous chapter.<sup>1181</sup> It states; “Amnesty International

<sup>1181</sup> Amnesty International, *Italy. Temporary Stay – Permanent Rights: the Treatment of Foreign Nationals Detained in “Temporary Stay and Assistance Centres (CPTAS)”*, Published June 20<sup>th</sup> 2005, p. 1

recognizes every country's right to exert control over entrances, residences and expulsions of foreigners on its territory. However, nations have an obligation to pursue these controls while adhering to laws and international standards in regards to human and refugee rights and never to the detriment of refugees and asylum-seekers, whatever their legal status is."<sup>1182</sup> Khalili's piece illustrates, in great detail, the dehumanising process to which the protagonists of her videos are subjected whether they are economic migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. The artist places them in the limelight without mainstream media's filter, so that viewers may better perceive their direct experience, literally through their own words and recollected mappings.

Although each video lasts between three and twelve minutes, a relatively short time, viewers are confronted with the staggering amount of time the protagonists spend "in limbo". The time frames described range from months to years in which they might have been held either in detention centres, migrancy hosting structures, in transport such as the man departing from Bangladesh and arriving in Italy or the woman leaving Somalia and arriving following an extensive journey across Africa to Italy. Although each video the timeframe is short, the public gains a sense of the ordeal these people have to endure also in terms of waiting. The people speaking in Khalili's artwork recount undergoing degrading, unjust experiences, which, in some cases, could have cost them their lives. Their juridical status or provenance, as in the case of the Palestinian man, was a justification for their harrowing treatment. Khalili, by offering their stories, gives them back their humanity even if only for two to twelve minutes.

It is useful to reflect on the context in which the artist constructed *The Mapping Journey Project* since it is unlikely that the individuals portrayed have the leisure time to tranquilly recount their journeys or that any person would be interested in hearing their stories. Khalili confers importance to their narrations by advancing them as the video's essence, rendering their grievous experiences as pivotal elements within the artwork. The artist, in her encounters with

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<sup>1182</sup> Ibid.



these individuals, offers them not only a moment to calmly speak about their past and future plans but also to “relax” without having to think about the ongoing problems they are faced with. It is a unique moment, almost therapeutic, to simply talk and expose to a largely unknowing public, certain problems plaguing the world right now.

PhD candidate Emma Chubb, whilst discussing *The Mapping Journey Project*, argues the artwork is the product of a Euro-centric artist who profits from the despair of non-white migrants, hence reinforcing the idea to a largely Western (white) audience that migrants are always inevitably brown, refugees or asylum-seekers, miserable human beings fleeing for pity to wealthy Europe.<sup>1183</sup> Chubb continues her contention by affirming Khalili engages in what she defines as “migrant orientalism”, bestowing an aura of fascination for the so-called Orient and at the same time encouraging the public (mainly European and American whites) to commiserate with the individuals depicted.<sup>1184</sup> Her argument appears to be that despite the artist’s intention in centring her artwork’s argument around the eight protagonists’ journeys, she is actually reinforcing denigrating stereotypes against migrants, and her decision to uniquely include non-white individuals perpetuates dangerous prejudices against immigrants already devalued by Western European societies.<sup>1185</sup> She moreover asserts that Khalili uses her own privileged position as a successful Western white artist (as aforementioned she is Franco – Moroccan) to assert her “dominance” over vulnerable people.

I suggest this argument is fallacious not only because the details of Khalili’s agreements with the protagonists are hazy, even to Chubb, who merely recounts in an interview by the artist a statement where she reveals meeting the participants casually.<sup>1186</sup> She quotes her saying that “sometimes they find me and vice versa”,<sup>1187</sup> which hardly qualifies for detailed information.

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<sup>1183</sup> Emma Chubb, “Differential Treatment: Migration in the Work of Yto Barrada and Bouchra Khalili.” *Journal of Arabic Literature* 46, no. 2-3 (2015), pp. 272 - 273

<sup>1184</sup> *Ibid.* p. 272

<sup>1185</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 284 - 285

<sup>1186</sup> *Ibid.* p. 282

<sup>1187</sup> *Ibid.*

It is furthermore inopportune to assess artists' creativity based on their perceived identity and provenance; the fact that Khalili does indeed reside in Europe and is of a specific ancestry should not pose barriers to her artistic production. It is correct, as Chubb states, that the participants are non-whites: mainly Arabs, Sub-Saharan Africans and one man from Bangladesh; however, numerous economic migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees arriving to Europe throughout the past decade are from those geographic areas.<sup>1188</sup> Even though there are issues of racism specifically targeting non-white migrants, the scholar lacks adequate information in assessing why exactly the artist selected those specific individuals. To conclude this section, it is incorrect to criticize artists on their perceived "privilege" or ethnic background instead of focusing on the concept of the piece and the merit of the artist. While in the last decade, refugees and asylum-seekers are often portrayed as non-White and non-Western subjects in desperate situations, Khalili's artwork seems, on the contrary, to emphasize the humanity of these individuals. Furthermore, the individuals' first-person recollection of their journey appears to be unedited or tampered with; they recount their voyage in a genuine manner without it being "tampered".

In May 2006 film director Andrea Segre produced a short thirty-minute video called *A Sud di Lampedusa* (South of Lampedusa) in which he interviews people from Sub-Saharan Africa who attempt to either reach Europe or move to Libya to make a living.<sup>1189</sup> The video commences with a young man from Nigeria being interviewed in which he narrates the horror of Libyan "deportation camps". He recounts the absence of any type of comfort for people detained there: denial of food, small, overcrowded cells without air conditioning or ventilation and terrible sanitary conditions. This man claims these spaces are so inhumane they should be reserved for people committing severe offences such as murder or rape. The video continues by interviewing migrants in Niger on their way to Libya, travelling on trucks generally destined

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<sup>1188</sup> Statistics Explained, *Asylum Quarterly Report*, (Eurostat, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2020), p. 1

<sup>1189</sup> *A Sud di Lampedusa*, Zalab, Last Accessed May 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <http://www.zalab.org/projects/a-sud-di-lampedusa/>

for merchandise, not human beings. Segre's movie alternates between directly focusing on individuals, mostly from countries such as Niger, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal, narrating their stories, often tragic, and recording actual buses carrying migrants travelling through the Saharan desert. Viewers are confronted with the harrowing voyage conditions, not only because of extreme heat, lack of hygiene and absence of comfort, but also because the subjects' interviews reveal these journeys' difficulties.

The means of transportation on which migrants travel from their home country to Libya resemble more an oxcart rather than a vehicle to carry humans. Numerous interviewees reveal that once arrived in Libya, they were either expelled by authorities without any explanation or they were arrested, detained in degrading conditions and, in some cases, forced to perform gruelling work. Most of the movie focuses on migrants' faces and their narrations with occasional shots of "buses" in the scorching desert as well as a pen tracing lines (indicating the journeys undertaken) on a black and white paper map, which differs from Khalili's choice of not filming the faces of her movies' protagonists. The short movie ends with one person stating that it is difficult to tell someone in grave economic straits to avoid the trip to Europe or Libya.

*A Sud di Lampedusa* is divided into three parts: departure, arrival and expulsion.<sup>1190</sup> In many ways, Segre's work resembles Khalili's piece in his bestowal of space to people directly involved in this process so they can voice their experiences. The result is a deeply emotional and disturbing account of inhumane treatment of individuals penalised by their country's poverty and dearth of employment. The protagonists' recollections express encountering utter disregard for human life or basic dignity and the seeming normalisation of this situation.

The film's message reiterates *The Mapping Journey Project* because it points out not only this phenomenon's magnitude but also public tolerance and acceptance surrounding it. The people interviewed, unsurprisingly, reveal to the interviewer the horror of Libyan detention

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<sup>1190</sup> Ibid.

camps, how Italy finances them, the risk of expulsion without even the possibility to gather one's belongings, as well as the financial difficulties plaguing Sub-Saharan African countries, which force numerous individuals to go through this ordeal.<sup>1191</sup>

Scholars Gerard Delanty, Paul Jones and Ruth Wodak, in their 2011 volume on identity, belonging and migration, assert not only that racism and xenophobia in Europe are increasing, but they are manifesting through hostility against migrants, whether they are legal residents, economic migrants, asylum-seekers or refugees.<sup>1192</sup> The academics contend this category of people are “lumped in” with the concept of “the other”, thus not belonging to the hosting (European) country. The issue of “not belonging” is not uniquely tied to a discourse of race or colour, but also legal status as with refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>1193</sup> Wodak specifically suggests that the terms “refugees”, “asylum-seekers” and “migrants” have all been conflated in British press thus not only obfuscating differences but also relegating these categories to the “undesirables”.<sup>1194</sup> The scholar identifies the latter as a process of inclusion/exclusion directed against all immigrants in which intrinsic hostility, often portrayed as a purely economic concern, shows a deep-seethed “othering” process.<sup>1195</sup> *The Mapping Journey Project*, in its own setting, challenges this narrative. By allowing marginalised people to speak, Khalili offers them the agency to express their own narrative without external filters. Unsurprisingly, individuals interviewed by Khalili come from countries formerly colonized by European countries. The storytellers, while tracing with a highlighter their journeys on the creased maps and recounting their troubled voyages, clearly state the main reason for leaving their home is extreme poverty, calamities and lack of employment.

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<sup>1191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1192</sup> Gerard Delanty, Ruth Wodak, and Paul Jones, eds. *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, Studies in Social & Political Thought, 17, (Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2011), p. 1

<sup>1193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1194</sup> Ruth Wodak, “Us” and “Them”: Inclusion and Exclusion – Discrimination Via Discourse, in *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, edited by Gerard Delanty, Ruth Wodak, and Paul Jones, p. 57

<sup>1195</sup> Ibid.

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben expounds his theory on *homo sacer*, the belief that specific lives (i.e., those of outsiders or banned individuals denied all rights of citizens, a tenet of ancient Roman law) cannot be sacrificed, but only killed.<sup>1196</sup> Philosophy professor Peter Gratton expounds on the difference between these two similar yet different words.<sup>1197</sup> The scholar asserts that in ancient Rome, whilst sacrificing individuals, there was an element of religious purification in which their pain was publicly disposed as a holy ritual.<sup>1198</sup> In other words, the death penalty was sacralised because of these subjects' belonging to Roman society. Killing, however, implied death without sacrifice, therefore dying without having the sacrality of a religious ritual. It implies anyone can kill these beings with impunity since they are outcast and their death is unworthy of "celebration".<sup>1199</sup>

This concept essentially argues that certain bodies are devoid of intrinsic value and dignity and therefore meaningless and can be eliminated without actually committing murder.<sup>1200</sup> In ancient Roman law, the expression *homo sacer* indicated individuals who had committed crimes so heinous that they could not be judged in a normal political setting.<sup>1201</sup> Only the gods could cast their punishment upon them.<sup>1202</sup> Some of these offences included beating one's parents or unlawfully seizing property from another person.<sup>1203</sup> This signified how these people were reduced to *bare life*, meaning being banned from any type of social or political life or in short, utter isolation.<sup>1204</sup> Any individual could, at this instance, take the *homo sacer's* life and go unpunished.<sup>1205</sup> According to Agamben, it is the sovereign state overruling

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<sup>1196</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: il Potere Sovrano e la Vita Nuda*, (Torino, Giulio Einaudi s.p.a., 1995 and 2005), p. 81

<sup>1197</sup> Peter Gratton, "What More Is There to Say? Revisiting Agamben's Depiction of Homo Sacer." *The European Legacy* 16, no. 5 (2011): p. 602, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2011.599553>

<sup>1198</sup> Ibid. p. 603

<sup>1199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1200</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, p. 92

<sup>1201</sup> Ibid. pp. 81 – 82

<sup>1202</sup> Ibid. pp. 90 – 91

<sup>1203</sup> Ibid. p. 95

<sup>1204</sup> Ibid. p. 113

<sup>1205</sup> Ibid. p. 115

the biological life of people inhabiting it. This process creates what is called the *state of exception*, meaning the sovereign state expels certain individuals and reduces them to *bare life*. Agamben identifies contemporary asylum-seekers and refugees as those subjected to the inhumanity of *bare life*; people who are stripped of their human rights, making it acceptable for them to be treated in often beastly ways.<sup>1206</sup>

Agamben argues that refugees and asylum-seekers shake the notion of the nation-state, in other words, the supposedly unique link between nativity and nation. Their mere existence questions the modern sovereign state since they prove birth and nation are not necessarily connected, thus a disruption in this apparent axiom.<sup>1207</sup> These individuals mark a crisis in how human rights are conceived. Reflecting upon his contention, Agamben cites German philosopher Hannah Arendt and her elaboration of Jews' denial of basic humanity during Nazi Germany<sup>1208</sup> as well as French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics, in which an individual's biological life is controlled by the state in an attempt to exert power.<sup>1209</sup> Refugees, economic migrants and asylum seekers are indeed condemned to bare life because they do not "belong" to the country they are attempting to reach.<sup>1210</sup> As it was with Jews during the Second World War, asylum-seekers, economic migrants and refugees are dehumanised and confined in specific spaces such as detention centres where all human rights are shattered.<sup>1211</sup> The sole way in which these individuals can prevent their human rights from being violated constantly is perpetually fleeing or finding shelter in other countries.<sup>1212</sup> Agamben argues that displaced people are constantly in contact with the same power that bans

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<sup>1206</sup> Ibid. p. 145

<sup>1207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1208</sup> Ibid. p. 139

<sup>1209</sup> Ibid. p. 131

<sup>1210</sup> Ibid. pp. 146 – 147

<sup>1211</sup> Ibid. pp. 189 – 190

<sup>1212</sup> Ibid. p. 205

them. Therefore, they often have to resort to deceitful methods to survive. Several narrators in Khalili's piece admit to the necessity of such survival strategies.

In 1995, Agamben published an article entitled *We Refugees*, following the essay written by Arendt in 1943 on being Jewish and being a refugee.<sup>1213</sup> Agamben argues that refugees overturn the concept of national sovereignty because they disrupt the conjunction between birth and national identity.<sup>1214</sup> Humans have rights uniquely if identified as citizens of a state, hence the refugee battles against the notion of nativity and nation. The trinity state/nation/territory is challenged and as an attempt to counteract that, countries receiving refugees, patrol their existence, as well as circumscribe their movement to designated places.<sup>1215</sup> Arendt, in her article on refugees, contends that this term has changed. In the past, they were identified as people driven to seek protection because of opposing political opinions or “subversive” acts, which can simply be something as banal as a social media post.<sup>1216</sup> Now the term refugee simply identifies a group of individuals who have been stripped of their rights and arrive in extreme poverty to new countries with the help of specific organisations.<sup>1217</sup> Arendt reflects on the fact that humans are social beings and need interaction. For this reason, these circumstances render their existence considerably harder.<sup>1218</sup> To quote her:

“(...) human beings as such have ceased to exist for quite a while; since society has discovered discrimination as the great social weapon by which one may kill men without any bloodshed; since passports or birth certificates, and sometimes even tax receipts, are no longer formal papers but matters of social distinction. It is true that most of us depend entirely upon social standards; we lose confidence in ourselves if society does not approve us; we are – and always were - ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society.”<sup>1219</sup>

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<sup>1213</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *We Refugees*. Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures 49 (2), 1995: p.

114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00397709.1995.10733798>

<sup>1214</sup> Ibid. p. 116

<sup>1215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1216</sup> Hannah Arendt, *We the Refugees*, *Pouvoirs* 144, no. 1 (2013): p. 5. <https://doi.org/10.3917/pouv.144.0005>

<sup>1217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1218</sup> Ibid. p. 12

<sup>1219</sup> Obviously, Arendt was making a personal statement because of her own identity as a Jewish woman in exile due to Nazi persecution. However, as Agamben points out, her contention still resonates for modern day displaced people. Ibid. p. 15



Arendt in her extensive volume on totalitarianism and in her chapter concerning the end of the Rights of Man argues refugees are “anomalies” and therefore elide the legislative sphere.<sup>1220</sup> They are outlaws by definition, depending on the police’s mercy, hence making the their life more difficult and prey to unpunished illegal acts.<sup>1221</sup> This fragility might render them more prone to commit illegal acts: the lack of work and absence of permanent residence might lead to delinquency.<sup>1222</sup> The philosopher ironically states that the laws of various countries protect criminals to a greater extent than displaced people whose sole crime is being forced to leave their states of provenance.<sup>1223</sup> Offenders, even those facing financial strains, have the benefit of a lawyer as well as a fair trial.<sup>1224</sup> Losing one’s place within society means losing a dignified place in the world.<sup>1225</sup> To quote Arendt:

“This calamity is far from unprecedented; in the long memory of history, forced migrations of individuals or whole groups of people for political or economic reasons look like everyday occurrences. What is unprecedented is not the loss of a home but the impossibility of finding a new one. Suddenly, there was no place on earth where migrants could go without the severest restrictions (...).”<sup>1226</sup>

What Arendt notes is that by now displaced individuals are not those who have to flee because of political opinions or actions but due to the “misfortune” of belonging to the “wrong” country, class, or race. In other words, the rights of humans are closely tied to belonging to a specific nation with laws. Outside of that realm, the individual loses basic humanity and is reduced to a beastlike condition. One of the reasons countries are hostile to ethnic heterogeneity is that it implies problems linked to natural and constructed differences, thereby fomenting tensions and eventually hatred.<sup>1227</sup>

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<sup>1220</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New edition /ed. A Harvest Book, Hb244. (New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 283

<sup>1221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1222</sup> Ibid. p. 286

<sup>1223</sup> Ibid. pp. 286 – 287

<sup>1224</sup> Ibid. p. 286

<sup>1225</sup> Ibid. p. 287

<sup>1226</sup> Ibid. p. 293

<sup>1227</sup> Ibid. p. 301

To conclude this section, I paraphrase anthropologist Michel Agier's reflections in his essay on camps, ghettos and encampments written for the catalogue of the exhibition *Frontières* (Borders) held at the Immigration Museum in Paris in 2015.<sup>1228</sup> He affirms that globalisation has not eliminated borders; on the contrary, it has multiplied them, dispersed them, disseminated them and modified them. Borders are vital to the existence of states, cities and anything considered a space as well as a link.<sup>1229</sup> Nevertheless, they have also exacerbated the concept of "alterity", the division between the autochthonous "us" and the "others".<sup>1230</sup> Borders can be invisible for some yet, they can be a nightmare for those whose identity is constantly under scrutiny and who await a verdict on their fate.<sup>1231</sup> It is also true that a veritable business has developed as a result of illegal crossings and individuals devoid of proper documentation to reside in a specific country.<sup>1232</sup> This paves the way for unlawful and dangerous work such as prostitution<sup>1233</sup> or severe exploitation, i.e. those working in agriculture for petty amounts of money.<sup>1234</sup> Khalili's and Segre's work remind viewers that beyond statistics, regulations, procedures and countries, unique human beings each with a history, exist.

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<sup>1228</sup> Catherine Wihtol de Wenden and Yvan Gastaut eds. *Frontières*, (Paris, Coédition Magellan and Cie et Musée National de l'Histoire de l'Immigration, 2015), p. 35

<sup>1229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1231</sup> Ibid. p. 46

<sup>1232</sup> Ibid. p. 47

<sup>1233</sup> Il Fatto Quotidiano, *Migranti, Portavano Giovani Nigeriane in Italia per Farle Prostituire: 4 Persone Arrestate per Tratta di Esseri Umani*, Last Accessed May 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2019/06/13/migranti-portavano-giovani-nigeriane-in-italia-per-farle-prostituire-4-persone-arrestate-per-tratta-di-esseri-umani/5252135/>

<sup>1234</sup> *Braccianti Agricoli, quei 7.000 Migranti a Basso Costo che Raccolgono un Terzo della Produzione Nazionale*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed May 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/diritti-umani/2019/10/21/news/braccianti\\_stranieri\\_l\\_estate\\_del\\_2019\\_e\\_stata\\_nella\\_capitanata\\_un\\_ennessima\\_cattiva\\_stagione-239128027/](https://www.repubblica.it/solidarieta/diritti-umani/2019/10/21/news/braccianti_stranieri_l_estate_del_2019_e_stata_nella_capitanata_un_ennessima_cattiva_stagione-239128027/). In June at Vegpro International in Sherrington, Quebec, a farm and food-processing company, 18 out of 49 foreign workers were found positive to Covid-19. Unfortunately, the spread in this context is difficult to contain because of communal housing, thus making social distancing challenging. Furthermore, these individuals work closely together, therefore rendering safety measures arduous despite attempt by the Canadian government to give guidelines to contain the spread of the disease. Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, *Quebec Says COVID-19 Outbreak Among Migrant Farm Workers Under Control*, National Post, Last Accessed October 16<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://nationalpost.com/pmnn/news-pmnn/canada-news-pmnn/quebec-reports-24-more-covid-19-deaths-as-hospitalizations-continue-to-drop>

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter's final section, I briefly comment on an art work by anonymous individual (s) realised at the beginning of 2019.<sup>1235</sup> In several cities in Italy, such as Brescia and Naples, printed death notices (Figure 72) were placed in various locations either with names of migrants (sometimes “no one” was written because the name was unknown) who had drowned in the Mediterranean while attempting to traverse it.<sup>1236</sup> In Italy, it is customary that once a person passes away, the family generally publishes a death notice with the name, age, sometimes the picture of the deceased along with the date and time of the funeral service.



**Figure 72,** Anonymous, *Migrant Obituaries in Italy*, 2019

The concept of this “installation” was to confer humanity and evoke empathy as well as make a powerful political statement for individuals who undertook a perilous journey, risking

<sup>1235</sup> Valentina Ersilia Matrascia, *A Napoli Manifesti Funebri per chi è Morto in Mare*, Inchiostro Online, Last Accessed May 9<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.unisob.na.it/inchiostro/index.htm?idrt=8673>

<sup>1236</sup> Ibid.

and ultimately encountering death.<sup>1237</sup> Even more, the authors of this piece understood the importance of memory of people who die *twice* because they *are also forgotten* and often times even their basic information such as names and age are unknown. In Italy the public receives this type of information usually by watching or reading the news media and only learns about numbers or harrowing situations such as boats sinking. The printed posters of the anonymous installation intend to bestow humanity onto people often considered foreign, undesirable or *homo sacer* and whose reported deaths are often received in utter indifference. I think *The Mapping Journey Project* succeeds in humanizing these individuals also by using the medium of video. Spectators are directly confronted with a real person's voice, hand, gestures and narration. Without moralism or pedantic rhetoric, it conveys a significant challenge for the contemporary world. Why is it that in a period of time where wealth is significantly increasing and life conditions are improving in the global North, there are people forced out of necessity to go through such ordeals?

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<sup>1237</sup> In 2019, the movie *Numéro 387* was produced by film director Madeleine Leroyer, where the tragic story of the shipwreck happening on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2015, off the Libyan coast, in which 800 people drowned, and the tireless work conducted by a handful of dedicated researches to attempt at reconstructing the identities of those who perished. The number 387 indicates the number of bodies that rescue workers managed to retrieve from the ship. This movie's aim is, not only showing the seemingly endless tragedy of humans drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, but also the indifference such losses are met with within Europe. The shipwreck, however, was exhibited at the Venice Biennale in 2019 as a "manifesto" for the ongoing disaster of ill-equipped vessels caring migrants through the Mediterranean in dangerous conditions. Madeleine Leroyer, *Numéro 387*, 2019, Little Big Story (France), Stenola Productions (Belgique), Graffiti Doc (Italie), Arte (France), RTBF (Belgique), Film.

## CONCLUSION

As I write the conclusion of my thesis, towards the end of June 2020, the entire world has been stunned by the devastating effects of Covid 19, a novel virus believed to have originated in a so-called wet market in the Chinese city of Wuhan.<sup>1238</sup> According to Worldometer statistics, there are now 137,238,469 official cases of people infected with the Sars-Cov virus and 2,958,138 recorded deaths.<sup>1239</sup> The actual number of infections and deaths is likely be considerably higher. In addition, the economic damage is affecting all 213 infected countries, creating high unemployment, poverty and social precariousness.<sup>1240</sup> The spread of this virus has effectively exposed profound social injustices around the world. For the millions of people who are being negatively affected by this pandemic, the compounding problems are not merely to do with health and medical access. Rather, the global crisis has exposed and exacerbated grave inequalities.

In Italy, one of the worst affected nations in the pandemic's first wave, a decree was proclaimed at the beginning of April 2020, which ordered the immediate closure of all borders in order to contain the spread of Covid 19.<sup>1241</sup> Migrants in need were no longer allowed to enter the country, even those in dire conditions (e.g. on ships trying to escape Libyan prisons).<sup>1242</sup> These draconian measures were passed without difficulty and justified with protectionist

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<sup>1238</sup> Jeremy Hurewitz, *China and its Exotic-Animal Wet Markets are Incubators of Human Diseases like Coronavirus*, USA Today, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2020/04/08/coronavirus-chinese-wet-markets-incubators-human-sickness-column/2957755001/>

<sup>1239</sup> *Covid-19 Coronavirus Pandemic*, Worldometer, Last Accessed April 12<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/>

<sup>1240</sup> Lora Jones, Daniele Palumbo and David Brown, *Coronavirus: A Visual Guide to the Economic Impact*, BBC, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225>

<sup>1241</sup> Alessandra Zinti, *Coronavirus Migranti, l'Italia non è più Porto Sicuro. Lampedusa: Allarme Quarantena*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/04/08/news/coronavirus\\_sbarchi\\_a\\_lampedusa\\_allarme\\_quarantena\\_per\\_i\\_migranti-253444180/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/04/08/news/coronavirus_sbarchi_a_lampedusa_allarme_quarantena_per_i_migranti-253444180/)

<sup>1242</sup> Despite the current decree there still are migrant arrivals at Italian shores since this article published on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 states 116 people disembarked in Lampedusa. La Repubblica, *Sicilia, Ricominciano gli Sbarchi: 116 Migranti Arrivati in Poche Ore a Lampedusa*, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, [https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/07/01/news/sicilia\\_ricominciano\\_gli\\_sbarchi\\_116\\_migranti\\_arrivati\\_i\\_n\\_poche\\_ore\\_a\\_lampedusa-260651960/?ref=RHPPTP-BH-I260596757-C12-P6-S2.4-TI](https://palermo.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/07/01/news/sicilia_ricominciano_gli_sbarchi_116_migranti_arrivati_i_n_poche_ore_a_lampedusa-260651960/?ref=RHPPTP-BH-I260596757-C12-P6-S2.4-TI)

stances about public safety even though they resulted in people dying as they attempted to escape from dire situations.<sup>1243</sup> This decree is supposed to last until July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 depending on the spread of the pandemic and Italy's conditions.<sup>1244</sup>

Activists have responded by loudly protesting against this announcement stating its inhumanity and the danger it represents for people in potentially fatal situations. They argue that the virus is not an excuse to no longer help people escaping harrowing circumstances.<sup>1245</sup> This new legislation ties into a lengthy history of the denigration of vulnerable strata of the population in Italy. Thus, instead of assuring an efficient and safe hosting program, the Italian government has exacerbated pre-existing problems. Immigrants already present in Italy are more likely to occupy agriculture or manufacturing jobs where protections are sparse and physical distancing is more difficult.<sup>1246</sup> Moreover, this type of manual labour cannot be done in "smart working" mode, and it tends to be precarious and badly paid. The communities in which immigrants often live tend to be poorer whilst compared to autochthonous individuals and furthermore immigrants reside in smaller housing units and have less access to proper services such as hospitals. In addition, those individuals living in structures provided specifically for newcomers are more commonly in overcrowded spaces with few resources for appropriate hygiene and physical distancing.<sup>1247</sup> These factors increase the danger in contracting the novel virus as well as make potential solutions, such as efficient health care and protective gear, harder to obtain.

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<sup>1243</sup> Alessandra Zinti, *Coronavirus Migranti*

<sup>1244</sup> Ibid. The people who signed this decree were Roberto Speranza, Minister of Health, Paola De Micheli, Minister of Transportation, Luigi Di Maio, Minister for External Affairs and Luciana Lamorgese, Minister for Internal Affairs.

<sup>1245</sup> Marco Mensurati, *Migranti, Porti Chiusi per il Coronavirus. Casarini: "Il Covid non può Essere il Motivo"*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/04/10/news/migranti\\_porti\\_chiusi\\_per\\_il\\_coronavirus\\_casarini\\_il\\_covid\\_non\\_puo\\_essere\\_il\\_motivo\\_-253694321/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/04/10/news/migranti_porti_chiusi_per_il_coronavirus_casarini_il_covid_non_puo_essere_il_motivo_-253694321/)

<sup>1246</sup> C. Silvestri, F. Innocenti, C. Stasi, *Essere Stranieri al Tempo del Coronavirus*, ARS Toscana, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.ars.toscana.it/2-articoli/4315-stranieri-migranti-coronavirus-italia-toscana.html> These jobs would entail store clerks, caregivers, and factory and farm workers for instance.

<sup>1247</sup> Ibid.

For the conclusion of the dissertation, I wish to draw attention to the figure of Aboubakar Soumahoro, an Ivorian migrant but naturalized Italian, working as a unionist fighting for immigrant laborers' rights, specifically those in agriculture.<sup>1248</sup> Soumahoro came to Italy at the age of 19 and has been deeply involved in fighting for basic human rights such as a living wage, access to health services, proper housing with running water and electricity and a humane workload for "invisible" workers.<sup>1249</sup> Covid has exposed some of the current disgraceful living conditions of numerous migrants in Italy, many of whom possess regular working permits, labouring on the land for wages as low as three euros an hour. Soumahoro also points out that many live-in overcrowded barracks in unsanitary conditions.<sup>1250</sup> Covid has exacerbated these serious pre-existing problems on Italian soil.<sup>1251</sup> The unionist moreover, argues for a more humane consumerism that does not rely on exploiting thousands of vulnerable migrants, mainly Africans but also local Italians, favouring profit over dignity of labour.<sup>1252</sup>

Soumahoro's fight intensified two years ago after Malian immigrant Soumaila Sacko's brutal murder in Calabria at the hands of autochthonous Italian, Antonio Pontoriero.<sup>1253</sup> Sacko,

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<sup>1248</sup> Arianna Poletti, *Aboubakar Soumahoro, the Ivorian Trade Unionist Shaking up Italy*, The Africa Report, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.theafricareport.com/28771/aboubakar-soumahoro-the-ivorian-trade-unionist-shaking-up-italy/>

<sup>1249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1250</sup> Ibid. Canada, also a wealthy Western country, has struggled to safely accommodate migrant workers coming to Quebec, therefore ensuring they comfortably social distance and their physical as well as mental needs are met. Reports have shown that these laborers, who generally work in farms, when arriving to Canada, are placed in prison-like structures and strictly surveyed. Furthermore, around four-hundreds of these laborers have been infected with Covid 19, thus bringing a greater challenge in properly addressing their medical issues and guaranteeing their safety. The Conversation, *Coronavirus: Canada stigmatizes, jeopardizes essential migrant workers*, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-canada-stigmatizes-jeopardizes-essential-migrant-workers-138879>

<sup>1251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1252</sup> Ibid. At the Davos World Economic Forum, held in January 2019, considerable concern was raised, not only about wealthy individuals not paying their fair share of taxes, but also conditions in which vulnerable low-skilled workers are forced to perform their daily duties. The example of poultry workers in major US corporations such as Tyson Foods Inc. having to wear adult diapers in order not avoid urinating on themselves was quoted. Martin Farrer, *Historian berates billionaires at Davos over tax avoidance*, The Guardian, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/jan/30/historian-berates-billionaires-at-davos-over-tax-avoidance>

<sup>1253</sup> Alessia Candito, *Due Anni fa l'Omicidio di Soumaila Sacko, il Bracciante "Invisibile". "Oggi Peggio di Allora"*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/06/02/news/due\\_anni\\_fa\\_l\\_omicidio\\_di\\_soumaila\\_sacko\\_il\\_bracciante\\_invisibile\\_oggi\\_peggio\\_di\\_allora\\_-258250001/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2020/06/02/news/due_anni_fa_l_omicidio_di_soumaila_sacko_il_bracciante_invisibile_oggi_peggio_di_allora_-258250001/)



like numerous unprotected individuals, worked in an Italian farm for shockingly low wages, labouring long hours while living in shacks. On one hot summer day, he went with colleagues to pick up metal sheets from an abandoned plant, in order to attempt to improve the shelter where they lived. However, upon arrival, Sacko was shot dead by Pontoriero.<sup>1254</sup> This violent assassination recalls the murder of South African migrant Jerry Masslo at the end of the 1980's who also lived in dire conditions in the Italian countryside.<sup>1255</sup> The question arises, has anything changed in three decades? Soumahoro might argue that very little if nothing has, given the locals' indifference to the miserable living conditions of "undesirables".<sup>1256</sup> The irony is that the majority of produce being sold in Italian supermarkets, the renowned "Made in Italy" merchandising mark, is often the result of migrants, with regular permits (and sometimes with no proper documentation) being exploited by food companies.

Soumahoro is asking the Italian government to recognize the human rights and dignity of these people whose labour contributes to the backbone of Italian society. His fight has placed him in conflict with the leader of political party La Lega, Matteo Salvini, who has built his career denying migrants' rights.<sup>1257</sup> The unionist suggested he "put some boots on and come join us in the fields" to which the politician answered "Ma scioperano i clandestini adesso? Ma in che Paese viviamo, dai scusate..." (Are also clandestines striking now? In what country do we live in, oh come on...).<sup>1258</sup> Salvini, like most locals, consumes food coming from these fields where "invisibles" provide quick services for miserable salaries.<sup>1259</sup> Italian Minister of

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<sup>1254</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1255</sup> Michele Colucci and Antonello Mangano, *Sulle Tracce di Jerry Masslo Trent'Anni Dopo*, L'Internazionale, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, <https://www.internazionale.it/reportage/michele-colucci/2019/07/29/jerry-masslo-morte>

<sup>1256</sup> Aboubakar Soumahoro, *Noi Partigiani Schierati Contro l'Inciviltà*, L'Espresso, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, <https://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2018/06/22/news/noi-partigiani-schierati-contro-l-incivilita-1.324080>

<sup>1257</sup> *Soumahoro a Salvini: "Anche il Cibo che Consuma lei è Frutto dello Sfruttamento"*, Globalist, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, <https://www.globalist.it/economy/2020/05/10/soumahoro-a-salvini-anche-il-cibo-che-consuma-lei-e-frutto-dello-sfruttamento-2057939.html>

<sup>1258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1259</sup> Giovanna Casadio, *600 Mila Immigrati Regolarizzati Subito per Decreto: l'Offensiva di Bellanova per Braccianti e Colf*, La Repubblica, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/05/04/news/l\\_offensiva\\_di\\_bellanova\\_nel\\_decreto\\_maggio\\_regolarizzare\\_subito\\_600\\_mila\\_immigrati\\_-255625147/](https://www.repubblica.it/politica/2020/05/04/news/l_offensiva_di_bellanova_nel_decreto_maggio_regolarizzare_subito_600_mila_immigrati_-255625147/)

Agriculture, Teresa Bellanova, in May 2020, wrote a law that” legalized” 600,000 migrants in Italy. Many were and are currently devoid of proper documentation, which makes services such as medical assistance and housing almost impossible to obtain. This legislation was approved on July 16<sup>th</sup> 2020.<sup>1260</sup>

Head of the International Organization for Migration, António Vitorino, affirmed that the coronavirus hit migrants harder, not only because of massive job loss and difficulties in finding employment, but also due to blockages at borders, leaving people in temporary structures or camps.<sup>1261</sup> He pointed out that physical distancing is an ordeal when thousands of people are stranded in specific spaces such as refugee camps, and appropriate services such as clean water and medical assistance are often inaccessible in these spaces therefore increasing the potential of infection. In addition, migrant remittances have dropped by 30%, signifying €20 billion which has not been sent back to families in their home countries.<sup>1262</sup> Vitorino states that allowing xenophobic, toxic language, particularly from political parties, only increases the risk of further destabilizing the current state of affairs and placing migrants’ lives in an even greater danger.<sup>1263</sup>

As noted in the introduction to my dissertation, during these months, not only has the coronavirus’ devastation exposed grave inadequacies and injustice in affected countries but also the brutal murder of Mr. George Floyd, an African-American man, by white police officer Derek Chauvin, has triggered a highly charged discussion on race relations and social injustices.<sup>1264</sup> It is regrettably ironic that so many people in Italy rightfully protest against such an unjustified use of lethal force, yet remain oblivious to everyday suffering of people,

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<sup>1260</sup> Camera dei Deputati. Documentazione Parlamentare, *D.L. n. 34/2020 - Misure urgenti in materia di salute e di sostegno al lavoro e all'economia (cd. decreto "Rilancio")*, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://temi.camera.it/leg18/provvedimento/decreto-legge-n-34-2020-decreto-rilancio.html>

<sup>1261</sup> *Migrants Stranded 'all Over the World' and at Risk from Coronavirus*, UN News, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/05/1063482>

<sup>1262</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1263</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1264</sup> Helier Cheung, *George Floyd Death: Why US Protests are so Powerful this Time*, BBC, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52969905>

generally African migrants, picking their food or providing services that most take for granted such as cleaners or dishwashers.<sup>1265</sup> When going to the supermarket, how many of us reflect on the well-known brutality behind tomatoes harvests? The work of Italian illustrator Mauro Biani consists of thoughtful and poignant satirical cartoons regarding deep contradictions pervading Italian and other societies.<sup>1266</sup> The first image (Figure 73) shows a black man drowning in water but his arms are lifting a basket of oranges offering them to a white man dressed in a suit standing out of the water next to him and uttering “pass me an orange”.



**FIGURE 73**, Mauro Biani, *Legalità*, 2020, Cartoon

<sup>1265</sup> News outlet Vice has conducted enquiries regarding treatment of migrant workers in Western countries and findings have shown issues with mistreatment that were exacerbated by the Covid 19 outbreak. For example, reporter Anya Zoledziowski has written about inappropriate food being served quarantined farm workers in Canada. Instead of nourishing, healthy meals, low-quality and unhealthy food was given to people who were prevented from buying groceries for themselves. Anya Zoledziowski, *Quarantined migrant workers are being fed “crappy” food*, Vice World News, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bv854m/quarantined-migrant-workers-are-being-fed-crappy-food>. Reporter Jillian Kestler-D’Amours has also denounced the issue of migrant workers, largely women, being forced to live 24/7 with their bosses without possibility of seeing their families. Furthermore, these individuals are in a difficult position to denounce any exploitation because of fear of reprisals by their employers with whom they live. Jillian Kestler-D’Amours, *Migrant caregivers are stuck with their bosses 24/7 because of Coronavirus*, Vice World News, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/889q93/migrant-domestic-caregivers-are-stuck-with-their-bosses-247-because-of-coronavirus>

<sup>1266</sup> Mauro Biani, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, <http://maurobiani.it/>

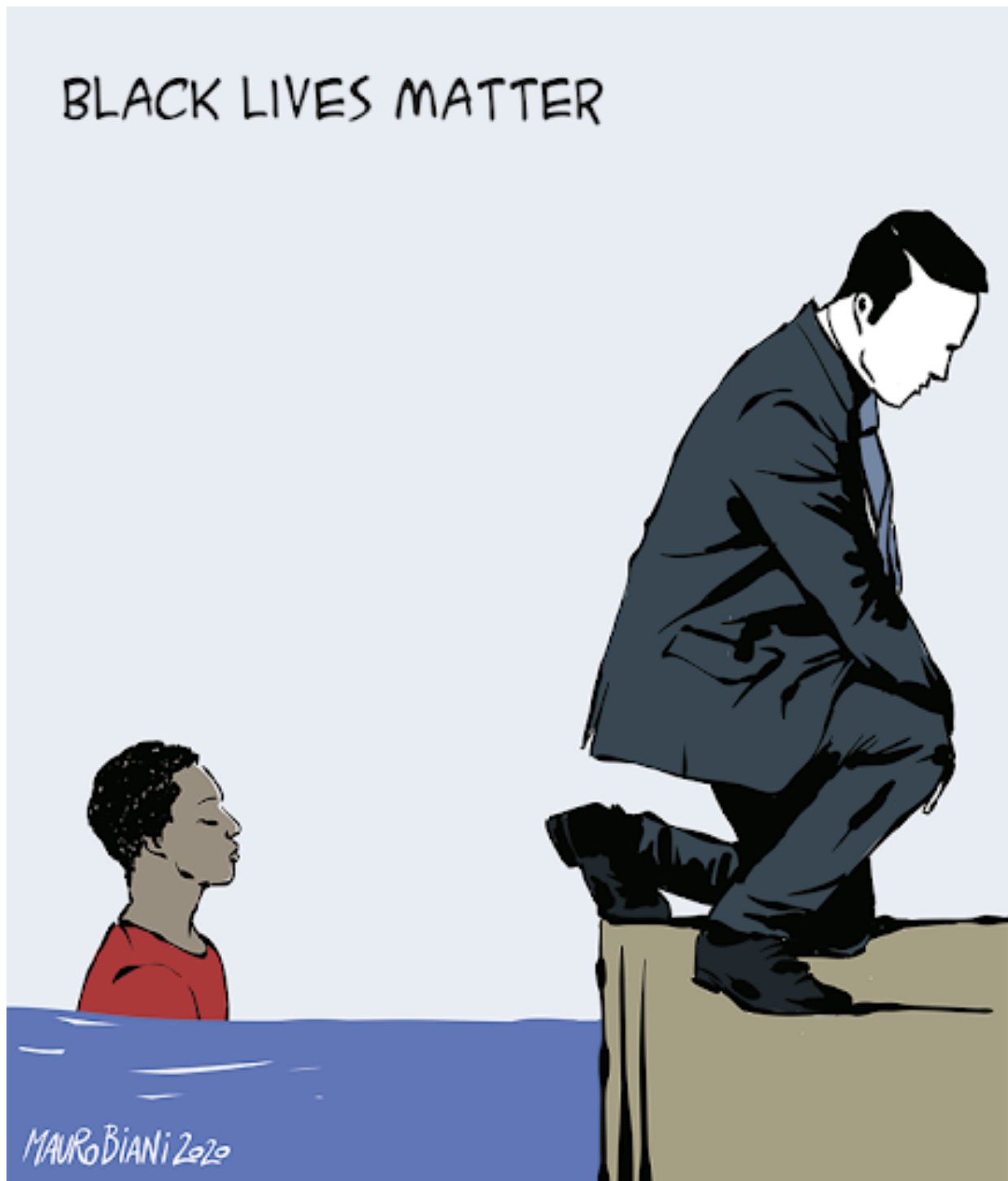
The horror of the image is captured in the fact that the drowning man is only depicted as a pair of dark outstretched arms visible from above the elbows. In this sense, Biani has – arguably to greater effect - rendered him as a representative of a class of exploited people and not as an individual. The illustration is a clear critique of the current exploitative system in Italian agriculture of which autochthonous Italians are either unaware or indifferent. For many consumers, as long as they have the products they desire, it is irrelevant if the people providing it work in misery. The second image (Figure 74) shows the same scenario; a pedestal over water with a white man dressed in a suit kneeling, a form of protest against racial injustice originating in the USA,<sup>1267</sup> and behind him, a black migrant immersed up to his torso in water. On the top part of the illustration the writing “Black Lives Matter” appears. The artist reacts caustically to the current interest displayed by privileged whites towards racial injustices directed at black people in other nations (mainly the USA), while in their midst, they remain bitterly indifferent to the suffering of African migrants coming to Europe and drowning in the Mediterranean Sea.

Biani is well-known for his politically pointed drawings often highlighting social injustices, particularly in regards to migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. His works are generally published in widely distributed Italian newspapers such as *L'Espresso* and *La Repubblica* making them visible to thousands of individuals.<sup>1268</sup> I believe that these illustrations are fundamental in pointing out current tragedies and contradictions in society. It proves there are socially engaged artists and journalists in Italy producing works sensitive to these urgent matters.

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<sup>1267</sup> Two young black American football players, Eric Reid and Colin Kaepernick initiated in 2016 the “kneeling protest” at matches in order to protest against the brutal killings of unarmed Blacks at the hands of the police. Their protest would take place throughout the singing of the national anthem, despite it being peaceful. The players received an aggressive backlash and Kaepernick no longer had a contract with the National Football League and up to this date remains unsigned. Eric Reid, *Eric Reid: Why Colin Kaepernick and I Decided to Take a Knee*, New York Times, last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/25/opinion/colin-kaepernick-football-protests.html>

<sup>1268</sup> Ibid.



**FIGURE 74**, Mauro Biani, *Black Lives Matter*, 2020, Cartoon

Recent events have furthermore increased the so-called activism of contemporary artists who use their work to protest against social inequalities. Artists Nikkolas Smith and Ricardo Chucky, for example, use their illustration to support the Black Lives Matter cause, and protest against the senseless murders of black individuals at the hands of whites, which ties into a

lengthy history of racial oppression.<sup>1269</sup> Smith created billboards representing George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery (2020), three unarmed black people needlessly assassinated by white police or civilians (Figure 75).<sup>1270</sup>



**FIGURE 75**, Nikkolas Smith, *George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery*, 2020, Digital Painting

The artist paints them in dignified poses, the two men wearing tuxedos and the woman wearing her medical technician uniform, as a manner of regaining their stolen humanity. Smith claims he is inspired by jazz musician and singer, Nina Simone, who affirmed the need for artists to reflect their times.<sup>1271</sup> Ricardo Chucky produced the illustration *Generational Oppression* (2020) [Figure 76] in which a black arm and fist rise to the ceiling in an act of

<sup>1269</sup> Roberto Croci, *Le Vite dei Neri Contano: lo Dicono gli Art-ivisti*, Il Venerdì, June 26th 2020, p. 24

<sup>1270</sup> Ibid. George Floyd was an African American man living in Minneapolis that was murdered on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2020 by white police officer Derek Chauvin by apparently placing his knee on Floyd's neck, thus suffocating him to death. Floyd was unarmed and, in the video, which recorded the last instances of his death he pleaded for his life. BBC, *George Floyd: What happened in the final moments of his life*, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52861726>. Breonna Taylor was a black medical worker living in Louisville who was shot to death in the night of March 13<sup>th</sup> 2020, by four white police officers during a botched raid. The four policemen had forced entrance in the wrong apartment. Richard A. Oppel Jr., Derrick Bryson Taylor and Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, *What to Know About Breonna Taylor's Death*, New York Times, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/breonna-taylor-police.html>. Ahmaud Arbery was a black man jogging on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020, in the Georgia town of Brunswick. He was shot to death by two white suspects who claimed they thought he was a burglar despite he was unarmed. BBC, *Ahmaud Arbery: What do we know about the case?*, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52623151>

<sup>1271</sup> Mandalit Del Barco, 'Artist' Nikkolas Smith Combines Art And Activism Into A Singular Superpower, npr, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/29/883490848/artist-nikkolas-smith-combines-art-and-activism-into-a-singular-superpower?t=1593676202662>



protest.<sup>1272</sup> The arm is “adorned” with shackles, metal handcuffs and plastic handcuffs to denounce the more than four hundred years of oppression that black people have had to endure, beginning with slavery and continuing with police brutality and wrongful imprisonment.



**FIGURE 76,** Ricardo Chucky, *Generational Oppression*, 2020, Digital Illustration

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<sup>1272</sup> The first raised up in the air is the black power salute, which was rendered famous in 1968 at the Mexico City Olympics. John Carlos and Tommy Smith, two black athletes that respectively won third and first prizes, held up their fists in a sign of protest against racial injustice. John Carlos affirms it is a “symbol of resistance and defiance”. Gary Younge, *The man who raised a black power salute at the 1968 Olympic Games*, The Guardian, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/30/black-power-salute-1968-olympics>



Images are a powerful tool to transmit messages and their magnitude increases when shared with large numbers of people. Social media has dramatically augmented visibility not only for artists, but also for political organisations wishing to propagate specific ideas. Throughout my dissertation, I have written extensively about the political party, La Lega and how its ideas and policies are damaging to migrants, visible minorities, and to the nation of Italy as a whole. They are not however an isolated case. At the end of summer 2017 Italian neo-Fascist conglomeration Forza Nuova published on its Facebook page a contemporary re-interpretation of Gino Boccasile's anti-rape propaganda poster (Figure 77) of 1944.<sup>1273</sup> I discuss this particular billboard in my first chapter and how Boccasile used racial tropes to vilify African Americans and other black allied soldiers and imply they were the primary cause behind the mass rapes in Italy during World War II.

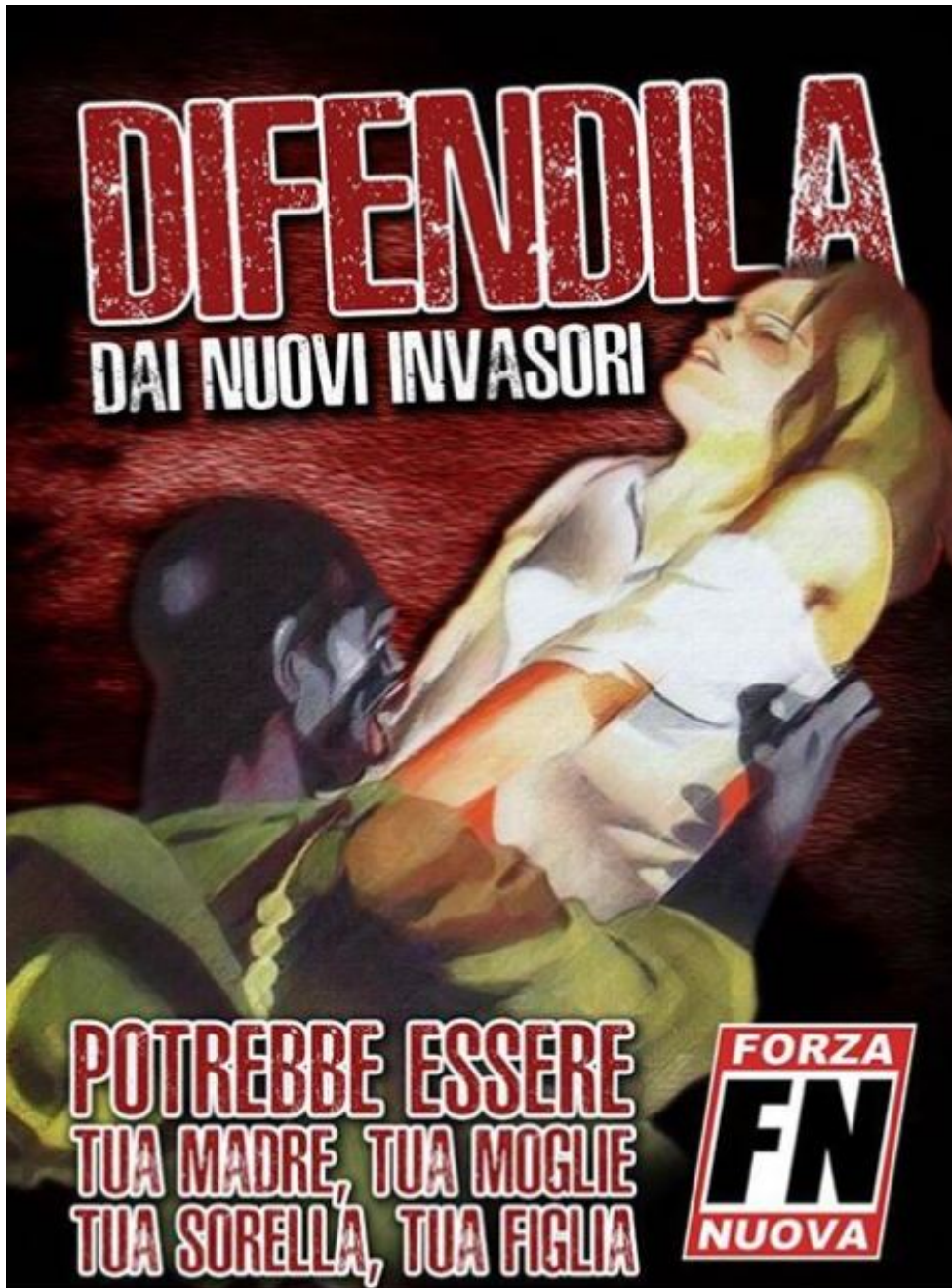
Forza Nuova, following a gang rape of a Polish couple and a South American individual in the Italian city of Rimini perpetrated by African migrants, re-published Boccasile's poster by simply adding under the peremptory word "Difendila!" (Defend her!) the phrase "Dai Nuovi Invasori" (from the new invaders).<sup>1274</sup> "The new invaders" are to be understood as migrants, Africans in this case, who have arrived to Italy to violate white women. The poster, in fact, shows an aroused black man ripping a frightened, virginal white woman's dress in a prelude to her rape. On the bottom of the image the writing "Potrebbe Essere tua Madre, tua Moglie, tua Sorella, tua Figlia" (She could be your mother, wife, sister, daughter). The African migrant is associated with a violent "invader", a sexual predator, and a rapist. This poster, despite raising protests in Italy due to its racist nature, also attracted solidarity and used the horrid gang rape

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<sup>1273</sup> *Migranti, Polemica sul Manifesto di Forza Nuova: Utilizza la Propaganda Fascista del Ventennio*, Il Fatto Quotidiano, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/09/02/migranti-polemica-sul-manifesto-di-forza-nuova-utilizza-la-propaganda-fascista-del-ventennio/3831751/>

<sup>1274</sup> Ibid.

episode as an excuse to define all African immigrants as sexual predators by default.<sup>1275</sup> The solution to this problem? In Forza Nuova's vision, closed borders to maintain Italian "purity" without the fear of cross-racial sexual mixing and the supposedly inevitable rape of white Italian women by black men.



**FIGURE 77,** Forza Nuova, *Difendila! Dai Nuovi Invasori*, 2017, Billboard

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<sup>1275</sup> Paolo Berizzi, *Il Manifesto Anti-Immigrati come ai Tempi del Fascismo: "Intervenga la Magistratura"*, Last Accessed July 3rd 2020, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/09/02/news/il\\_manifesto\\_anti-immigrati\\_come\\_ai\\_tempi\\_del\\_fascismo\\_intervenga\\_la\\_magistratura\\_-174415695/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/09/02/news/il_manifesto_anti-immigrati_come_ai_tempi_del_fascismo_intervenga_la_magistratura_-174415695/)

At the present time an intense discussion about the legitimacy of removing from public spaces racist monuments and artworks is raging.<sup>1276</sup> I now draw attention to two incidents on Italian soil in the past few years, which reveal Italy's indifference to its past deeds and an ongoing obliviousness to the denigration of specific groups of people.

The first incident occurred in 2012 in Affile, a small town near Rome, where mayor Ercole Viri, affiliated to extreme right-wing party "Brothers of Italy", allocated 150 thousand euros of public money to construct a mausoleum (still standing) dedicated to Fascist general and war criminal, Rodolfo Graziani.<sup>1277</sup> Graziani is infamous for his use of chemical weapons during the colonial wars, both in Libya and Ethiopia during the Fascist occupation. He not only slaughtered African civilians, but also sent thousands of young Italians to their deaths.<sup>1278</sup> The mayor defined him as a "great soldier" and believed his memory should be honoured and respected. Graziani, who died in 1955 in Affile, was sentenced to 19 years in prison for war crimes but only served a few months in jail.<sup>1279</sup> Unsurprisingly, this incident barely made headlines and was blandly received by the Italian public. Even though Viri was eventually sentenced for Fascism apologia, he was re-elected in 2018 as mayor with 55% of votes.<sup>1280</sup> The most galling aspect is the support he received for building such a monument: apart from few

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<sup>1276</sup> Morris Philip, *As Monuments Fall, how does the World Reckon with a Racist Past?*, National Geographic, Last Accessed July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/06/confederate-monuments-fall-question-how-rewrite-history/>. Art historian Charmaine A. Nelson argues that placing North American Confederate monuments in museums could be an imperfect solution to problematic artworks, which are a display of white supremacy, enslavement of Blacks and colonization of Indigenous people. Museums are a space where these objects could be adequately contextualized, the scholar contends, instead of being in public squares where they are being glorified. Charmaine A. Nelson, *Racist Monuments Don't Belong In Public. But They Could In A Museum*, Huffington Post, Last Accessed January 5<sup>th</sup> 2021, [https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/charmaine-nelson/racist-monuments-dont-belong-in-public-but-they-could-in-a-museum\\_a\\_23224080/](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/charmaine-nelson/racist-monuments-dont-belong-in-public-but-they-could-in-a-museum_a_23224080/)

<sup>1277</sup> Francesco Curradori, *Affile, rieleto il sindaco condannato per il sacrario di Graziani*, Il Giornale. Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/affile-rieletto-sindaco-condannato-sacrario-graziani-1539597.html>

<sup>1278</sup> *Monumento comunale al gerarca fascista, chiesti 2 anni e mezzo di carcere per sindaco di Affile*, Il Messaggero. Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. [https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/tribunale\\_tivoli\\_rodolfo\\_graziani\\_affile\\_marzabotto\\_sentenza\\_sindaco\\_affile\\_monumento\\_fascista\\_criminale\\_guerra-2152822.html](https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/tribunale_tivoli_rodolfo_graziani_affile_marzabotto_sentenza_sindaco_affile_monumento_fascista_criminale_guerra-2152822.html)

<sup>1279</sup> Mauro Favale, *Affile, parla il sindaco del sacrario a Graziani: "Pentirmi io? Alle elezioni prenderò l'80%"*. La Repubblica. Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. [http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/11/08/news/sindaco\\_affile\\_sacrario\\_graziani\\_ma\\_quale\\_fascismo\\_il\\_problema\\_sono\\_i\\_giudici\\_politicizzati-180544846/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/11/08/news/sindaco_affile_sacrario_graziani_ma_quale_fascismo_il_problema_sono_i_giudici_politicizzati-180544846/)

<sup>1280</sup> Francesco Curradori, *Affile, rieleto il sindaco condannato per il sacrario di Graziani*

left-wing political groups and anti-Fascist associations, he was praised for his tribute to an “Italian hero”.<sup>1281</sup>

The second incident occurred during the summer of 2017 when a private beach entirely dedicated to Fascism was discovered and publicized.<sup>1282</sup> The beach called “Punta Canna” was located near Chioggia, in the north-eastern part of Italy. Its owner, Gianni Scarpa, never actually defined himself as a Fascist, but simply a lover of “tidiness and discipline”. In this location, images of Mussolini were placed, along with excoriating phrases against people with drug addictions and strongly homophobic and misogynist signage.<sup>1283</sup> This beach was frequented by numerous bathers who ignored the hateful slogans and images glorifying Mussolini. It was only when a journalist from the centre-left newspaper *La Repubblica* found out about it and wrote an article, that it made headlines. Matteo Salvini defended the owner, stating “let people do their jobs”, and as for the mausoleum to Rodolfo Graziani, this news even though it made it to the front pages, was rapidly dismissed as an “eccentricity” having nothing to do with Fascism.<sup>1284</sup> Neither incident was dealt with as urgent and serious problems. Scarpa, who was initially accused of defence of Fascism, saw all the charges dropped.<sup>1285</sup> Numerous episodes of this sort show the rudimentary nature of Italy’s understanding of its own racism, Fascist past and denigration of migrants (particularly those with “undesirable” provenances) and Italian non-whites.

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<sup>1281</sup> Franca Giansoldati, *Il monumento a Rodolfo Graziani è un «affronto alla democrazia»: depositata la sentenza di condanna del sindaco di Affile*, *Il Messaggero*. Last accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. [https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/fascismo\\_rodolfo\\_graziani\\_affile\\_sentenza\\_tribunale\\_zingaretti\\_sacrario\\_anpi\\_mussolini-3533819.html](https://www.ilmessaggero.it/primopiano/cronaca/fascismo_rodolfo_graziani_affile_sentenza_tribunale_zingaretti_sacrario_anpi_mussolini-3533819.html)

<sup>1282</sup> Paolo Berizzi, *La spiaggia fascista di Chioggia: "Qui, a casa mia, vige il regime"*. *La Repubblica*. Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. [http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/07/09/news/la\\_spiaggia\\_fascista\\_di\\_chioggia\\_qui\\_a\\_casa\\_mia\\_vige\\_il\\_regime\\_-170332052/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/07/09/news/la_spiaggia_fascista_di_chioggia_qui_a_casa_mia_vige_il_regime_-170332052/)

<sup>1283</sup> Paolo Berizzi, *Spiaggia "fascista", pm chiedono archiviazione. "A Playa Punta Canna solo stravaganze"*. *La Repubblica*. Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. [http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/10/04/news/chioggia\\_spiaggia\\_fascista\\_pm\\_chiedono\\_archiviazione\\_non\\_e\\_apologia-177372619/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/10/04/news/chioggia_spiaggia_fascista_pm_chiedono_archiviazione_non_e_apologia-177372619/)

<sup>1284</sup> *Spiaggia fascista a Chioggia, il gip archivia le accuse al gestore*. *La Repubblica*. Last Accessed September 9<sup>th</sup> 2018. [http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/11/23/news/chioggia\\_spiaggia\\_fascista\\_archiviazione-181923626/](http://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/11/23/news/chioggia_spiaggia_fascista_archiviazione-181923626/)

<sup>1285</sup> *Ibid.*

In my first chapter, I argued that there is a tendency on Italian soil to conceive of Italians as uniquely white although overwhelming evidence proves this is not, nor was it ever the case. As previously stated, this is just the “tip of the iceberg” in a profusion of material, including strong but under represented examples from visual art, of Italy’s problematic refusal to acknowledge its troubling past and the country’s intolerance towards migrants as well as visible minorities who are Italian such as soccer super star Mario Balotelli.

As noticed in the dissertation’s introduction there are few art historians focusing on issues of contemporary migration, discrimination and colonialism in the Italian context. Throughout my research I have read numerous art history scholars dedicating their research to similar issues such as T.J. Demos, Paul Kaplan and Charmaine A. Nelson, however, with the exception of film studies and literature professors such as scholar Alessandra Di Maio, few have carefully examined the Italian peninsula. I argue it is particularly important for such investigations to be conducted especially in the wake of the recent racist images such as Balotelli’s despicable case in which he was represented as King Kong or Forza Nuova’s horrid re-interpretation of Boccasile’s poster. My hope is that my thesis can contribute, even in a minor way, to this largely overlooked domain.

I believe that scholars, particularly art historians, should focus more attention on the critical examination of images linked not only to Italy’s fascist and colonial past, but also to the devaluation of people of colour and migrants in general by using a racial and postcolonial methodology. There is a pressing need to open up to *why* such hostility is present and *why* instead of welcoming potential workers that could contribute to Italian economy, there is such resistance. As an art historian I have attempted to address these questions by analysing specific artworks and imagery not considered art in the canonical sense, such as political posters or newspaper front pages. In my dissertation I offered an art historical overview of issues more often scrutinized in economic and political fields, thus encountering a significant void. The

main challenge was applying art historical methodological tools to an area of study dominated by politicians, economists and pollsters. I reiterate that my thesis is a small contribution in a relatively uncharted area in art history. There remains a plethora of visual material regarding Fascist propaganda, mass media imagery denigrating or praising migrants, uncovering discriminatory Italian artworks whether so-called classical pieces such as paintings and sculptures, or “unconventional” ones such as billboards and post cards, as well as contemporary artists working on issues of migrancy and xenophobia in Italy.

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