Being Eritrean in Milan
The Constitution of Identity

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Anthropology and Migration Studies.

By Anna Arnone

Supervisors: Jeffrey Pratt, James Fairhead

University of Sussex

May 2010

Contents

Abstract

The research concerns the Eritrean community resident in Milan where it originated around forty years ago. In this thesis I reflect on how people who migrated from Eritrea at different times, and young people who were born from Eritrean parents in Milan, perceive themselves as a community away from their native country; how they perceive the differences and similarities between each other and those considered to be outside this community; and how the memories of the past are perceived by people with different personal and social histories.

Since this research relates to the formation of identities and perceptions of the self among a migrant community, issues are analysed with the awareness that movement, dislocation, and re-location have great impact on the perceptions of home and of the self in cultural, historical and social terms.

Acknowledgements

Description of research topic

My work specifically follows the Eritrean case in the Milanese receiving society, looking at the way Eritreans have shaped their community and institutions through the Italian system, while the sending context was especially looked at from the Milanese location. The interest focuses on the dynamics occurring between immigrants and the receiving society in which they interact. Although important in my research, issues regarding the Italian response to the Eritrean community are more or less secondary. The relevant focus on the Eritrean case specifically aims at understanding Eritrean discourses and practices in the context of a large city such as Milan. Although there was an interest in understanding how and if the national and local authorities allow Eritreans to express their formation of identities, which are located "here and there", the question rather concerns how they use the structure for their collective and individual needs and thus to understand the latter in time through their narratives.

The aim of the research is to explain the formation of Eritrean identities in circumstances of movement, dislocation and re-location from Eritrea to Italy. It sets out to analyse the processual emergence of selfhood, critically presenting the dangers in simplistic notions of authenticity, and the relevancy of considering the contextual and historical complexities, which involve individuals in a creative process of maintaining continuity (Friedman 1997), and constant re-articulation of the self with reference to the future. The research constitutes part of a new generation of migration studies (see for instance Jackson 1983, 1986, 2008 and Kleist 2005, 2007, 2008 a, b), incorporating the focus on the politics of difference (Grillo and Pratt, 2002) and on transnationalism (Basch, Glick-Schiller and Szanton-Blanc 1994), but opening a further interest especially on the experiences of the migrants themselves.

Eritreans experience problems on different levels. First of all the critical economic situation at home, which is also the reason why many people moved to Italy during the sixties and seventies; secondly, the political situation, which is the main reason for the large number of Eritrean asylum seekers. Conflicts are the main cause of disruption. The struggle for independence started with conflicting views on the meanings of Eritrean identity and self-determination. The prolonged conflict between Eritrean peoples and, more violently, with Ethiopia meant that only in 1993 did Eritrea become a nation state under its own jurisdiction. Being one of the youngest nation states in the world, the memories of its struggle for independence are still fresh and alive. Perceptions of shared identity often shape conflicting views. The overlapping layers involved in the process of identity formation among Eritreans, at this specific time in history, require an anthropological analysis around the "perception of the self". Historical memory is one of the forces in the formation of identities and, in this specific case, it is also relevant to the fact that some Eritreans arrived in the sixties and seventies as labour migrants and others have come as asylum seekers in the last few years. The differences in memories confronting these people create different "communities of imagination" or "communities of memory" (Malkki 1995) and various political loyalties.

The focus on the Eritrean case in these terms is particularly relevant also because their history in Milan stretches across nearly half a century. Eritreans therefore are not only living the new political environment but some of them have encountered various periods of Italian political culture. They have been dealing with issues of citizenship and difference through time in different ways. The newly-arrived asylum seekers are negotiating with the system in yet another way (for example, in the study carried out in Bosnian and Eritrean refugee camps in Europe by Al-Ali, Black and Koser 2001).

Identity formation among Eritreans in Milan is thus particularly complicated since it entails an understanding of the processual features of memory of one of the oldest communities established and renewed through the arrival of refugees from the recent war with Ethiopia.

Moreover the local and transnational life of Eritreans in Milan highlights the ambivalences between discourses around the self and daily practices, and describes the multipositionality of identity. The local dimension of the Eritrean community in Milan, the national framework of Italian policies, European regulations, the global networks enabling movement, all feature in the articulation of Eritrean self representation. The research therefore proposes an analysis of the forces involved in the constitution of the self through a focus on the migrants' experiences and narratives.

The focus on movement, dislocation and transnationalism has further widened the gap between the essentialised understanding of identity as fixed and natural, and the multiple and processual features. This research looks into the strategies used by individual agents to manage lives "here and there" (Salih 2002, 2003 and Riccio 2000, 2002), focusing on the dynamics occurring between immigrants and the receiving society. In the individuals' negotiations with wider structural properties of society, identity does not only hold a shared dimension; it becomes a battlefield for contesting and interacting with the surrounding discourses and practices.

Studies of migration have emphasised the unique circumstances depending on the various local and national or international narratives and factors. After the general interest in the conceptualisation and politicisation of multiculturalism (Webner et al 1997), the team based in the University of Sussex studied Italian immigration by focusing on issues around the "politics of recognising difference" (in Grillo and Pratt, eds. 2002), leading to a debate specifically around "Multiculturalism Italian style". As pointed out by Favell (2002), the peculiarity that characterises the Italian situation is the economic sector and bureaucracy, which allows relatively easy initial and temporary access to resources, providing low wages in exchange for labour (also Salih 2003). The Italian process of categorising immigrants is important in this research, as it is a great force in the constitution of the Eritrean self. These issues on politics of difference together with those on transnationalism are incorporated and

articulated to specifically explain how they affect identity formation among this minority population.

Moreover, there has been little attention to how colonisation has affected the Italian perception of the "other", and what impact this past had on the formation of both Eritrean and Italian discourses and practices. The postcolonial debate has focused more on historical concerns but not much on its social implications today. Therefore "the lack of critical postcolonial reflection may be affecting the lack of reflection on political correctness of representation" (Riccio 2000, 2002). This can be seen, for example, in the type of inclusion allowed to Eritreans, especially women immigrants and asylum seekers: the economic sector to which they have been relegated is in fact mostly that of domestic service and prostitution (Sòrgoni 2002). Further de-personalisation and demonisation has been noticed by B. Riccio (2000) in the practices of Italian police agents searching Senegalese men as if they were alien bodies. The body and personhood of Eritreans continue to be imagined and portrayed using tropes from the colonial period. Among Italian civilians and politicians, the link between many types of immigration (as in the case of Eritreans and that of Albanians in Mai 2002), colonial or proto colonial past (Castles and Miller 1998) and the continuing uneven relationships between countries involved, is unrecognised. Therefore immigration in Italy needs to be studied also in unspoken mechanisms that deepen dependence, with urgent reflection on the structure of the global economic system which forces people to move from poor to rich areas, through national, international and intercontinental contexts.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Eritreans in the world and in Italy

In anthropology, by methodology we mean the whole bulk of epistemological questions that nourish the fieldwork and research. In this introduction I focus especially on the ways in which the questions and the frame of reference arose and developed. The primary concern is to contextualise the research in its wider domains, by focusing on the theoretical background on which the work was built and by describing the historical milieu surrounding the constitution of identity. I centre attention on the establishment of the field and the description of the collective spaces studied. The field is described in its multiplicity of layers and in its related multi-sited fieldwork, in order to understand the forces that shape identity.

Gramsci in his work (1929-35 edited in 1996) emphasises the role of intellectuals in building ideologies to be thereafter applied not only in the constitution of political parties but also to be incorporated in civil society as driving forces for political participation. Intellectuals have largely, though sometimes unwillingly, brought their influences to bear on issues of ethnicity and nationalism. The work of historical reconstruction certainly has had a great impact in Eritrean nation building and political activities. As argued by Gilkes (1991) a long time ago, the historiography of Eritrea still produces "polarised opinions", its outcome is thus highly politicised. I scrutinized history per se in relation to the construction of imagined communities yesterday and today in the MSc dissertation which acted as a PhD proposal (see Arnone 2001 and 2003). This thesis however does not concentrate on the analysis of identities in Eritrea through time; after thorough analysis it was clear that the effort to

expand on this particular reading would have undermined the significant and specific context-related memories set around being Milan after the 1998-2000 war. I thus privileged focusing on the currently-developed performance of the self in relation to the past that my informants themselves bestowed.

The brief historical overview presented in this introduction serves to facilitate the reader through particular narratives present in this thesis, where historical contingencies are connected to issues of memory and self-identity.

The history of Eritrea can be described as starting from Italian colonialism, which began in 1885, when the Italians occupied the port of Massawa and started to push inland, until they had to confront the Ethiopian Rases (Selassie 1980). An alliance was strengthened between Menelik II and Italy (Uccialli, May 1889), which allowed the Italians to officially occupy the whole of today's Eritrea territory in 1890. The further intent of the Italians was an expansion into Ethiopia. But when the troupes started to descend, Menelik's militia stopped them and they were defeated in Adwa (October 1896). This episode was a warning also for other European colonies since it was the first defeat of a colonial power in the African context. Although Italy lost many men[1], and some of its pride, it achieved a territorial division that defined the colony and the future Eritrean nation-state (Davidson, 1980). After the death of Menelik II, Ras Tafari was crowned emperor Haile Selassie in 1930. In the meantime Mussolini had been in charge of the Eritrean colony since the 1920s and was slowly preparing the ground for his conquest of Ethiopia. Until the final conquest of Ethiopia (1935/36), the battle of Adwa had been echoing in the Fascist memory as a defeat to be revenged. Eritrea was thus perceived by the Italians as the field that would allow a greater

---

[1] "[…] more Italians were killed in one day than in all the battles for the unification of Italy itself" (Davidson, 1980).

colonisation towards Ethiopia; railway and roads were thus constructed. Italians incorporated present day Ethiopia into the Italian colony between 1935 and '36 and maintained it together with Eritrea until 1942.

The Italian civilians in the Eritrean colony were very few especially in the early years and the colony never achieved the status of an economically successful investment. Nonetheless, although it failed to colonise in the same organised and economically effective way as other superpowers, it cannot be argued, as often happens among Italians, that its colonisation had no impact and therefore this particular historical memory can be dismissed simply with an embarrassed smile. These issues around the lack of post-colonial reflection will be discussed especially in the chapter six. The Italian colonial period had a huge impact in the constitution of racially defined identities. For instance, before the arrival of Fascism, the colonial regime had already fixed ideas of an Eritrean territory and its peoples not only with defined boundaries but also with internal differentiations and divisions, often in terms of "grades" of civilisation of the subjects. This first period's stance is identifiable with a patriotic Italian "civilising" mission towards the "primitive" Eritrean population. During the second period under Fascism, contact between the native population and Italians was not allowed by law. The previous interpretations of difference, which not only related to a biological definition but also to a social and historical understanding, disappeared. The civilising mission was over and replaced by a racial apartheid. Many researchers worked on this type of analysis (for instance Sòrgoni 2001, Barrera 2002, Locatelli 2005, 2008 and Poidimani 2009) The two colonial types of racial discriminations still echo today in the words and practices of both Italians and Eritreans.

After the Italian defeat in War World II and the following removal of the colonial apparatus (1942),there was a period of transition in which a British mandate was initially installed. It was during this period that Eritrean nationalism(s) started to develop against a political movement which strove for unification with Ethiopia. After ten transitory years, the League of Nations agreed on incorporating the Eritrean territory and its people as a federation in the

Ethiopian empire (1952). The subsequent unlawful annexation (1961) of Eritrea into Haile Selassie's empire brought about complex reactions ending in armed conflict against the Ethiopian regime. First there was an Islamic movement opposed to the Ethiopian imposition not only of Amharic[2] as the official language but most of all to the Orthodox Church as the national faith. In collusion with the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front), the EPLF (Eritrean People's Liberation Front) sprang out from the ELF in the later '60s; its ideology insisted on a pan religious and multiethnic Eritrean nation (for more insight on these issues of the ideologies of the liberation movements in Eritrea and their influences on today see Hepner and O'Kane 2008 and Hepner 2009). In the following years an organised guerrilla warfare was carried out between the two different factions and after some years the EPLF gained the consent of the majority of the Eritrean population. Between the seventies and the nineties Eritrea became the battlefield of a liberation war fought to achieve an Eritrean nation-state (officially crated in 1993) independent from the Ethiopian empire of Haile Selassie first and the Military Regime (Dergue) of Mengistu later. It was a destructive war which generated refugee flows, out-migration and displacement (see for instance Al Ali *et al* 2001 a, b, Arnone 2008, Hepner 2009, Kibreab 1995, 1999a,b, 2002, Koser 2003, Sorenson 1990)

As has been argued by Mesfin Araya (1997), before the EPLF supremacy achieved around 1974, the imagining of Eritrea was fragmented and contentious. The liberation movements had so many conflicting views and different political interests that they ended up in guerrilla warfare one against the other. From 1974 onwards the EPLF elaborated a nationalist movement which stirred civilians of both sexes (see Bernal 2001, 2000, Dore 2002, Kibreab 1995 and Williksen 2004) into the struggle for liberation. The liberation fight of the Hafash, the masses, against the Ethiopian oppression was the unifying ideology which constituted the national discourse of identity under the direction of the EPLF.

---

[2] Amharic is the official language in Ethiopia, in Eritrea the languages most used are Tigrigna and Arabic.

After thirty years of struggle, internal warfare and war against the Ethiopian occupation, the EPLF made liaisons with the liberation movements present in the Ethiopian territory, the OLF and the TPLF; they defeated the Dergue and in 1991 marched into Addis Ababa in triumph. The struggle is often portrayed (e.g. Connell 2003, 1993) as being carried out with surprising unity. The outcome of this victory was an agreement for the independence of Eritrea. In 1993 the UN approved the national referendum to determine the official validity of the Eritrean nation-state. After around 99% of the Eritrean population voted for independence, the PFDJ (People's Front for Democracy and Justice), presided by Isaias Afeworki, was placed as the transitional party which started the national government. The relation with the Ethiopian government FDRE (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) presided by Meles Zenawi, former TPLF (Tigrayan People's Liberation Front) leader, was of reciprocal trust and an informal economic exchange system was set up. Eritrea is thus a young, 15-year-old nation state.

The exhilaration for such a collective achievement and the honeymoon between Ethiopia and Eritrea did not last long; in 1998 another war broke out around a border dispute over Badme, a small town situated on the border between Eritrea and the Ethiopian region of Tigray. The latter war, lasting up until 2000, numbered around 20,000 casualties among the Eritreans and 80,000 among the Ethiopians and hundreds of thousands displaced people on both sides. In the Eritrea - Ethiopia Boundary Commission's Decision regarding Delimitation of the border between the State of Eritrea and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on the 13 April 2002 the UN (http://www.un.org/NewLinks/eebcarbitration) declared that Eritrea had started the war.

Between the seventies and the end of the war, by 1991 the number of Eritreans abroad amounted to one fourth of the total national population: 1 million Eritreans abroad against only 3 million in Eritrea (Koser 2003). Most of them left the country during the struggle for independence from Ethiopia, when the war became too violent to live safely in the country.

The exiles "fought" the liberation war from abroad; they created networks and political organisations, developed political, social and cultural frameworks, linked their fight to other world struggles and were widely recognised for their political presence. Moreover most Eritreans living outside the country made an effort to support the liberation movements by raising money to invest in Eritrea.

In Italy the network created to bring people of Eritrean origins together was first built up by religious institutions and Eritrean Christian priests. It then grew enormously, incorporating political ideologies and practices mostly linked to the Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) movement. The latter network based in Italy was again connected with others scattered in Europe and the rest of the world. Italy became internationally important after organising the Eritrean Festival in Bologna where people of Eritrean origin from all over the world came to celebrate a common dream of self determination from Ethiopia and from the super powers playing into the Cold War and intruding into the Horn of Africa's geo-political affairs.

Many Eritreans in the diaspora are now disenchanted with the politics of the PFDJ after it monopolised political power, excluding the participation of other political parties and any form of election; it engaged Eritrea in the recent conflict with Ethiopia, costing thousands of lives and great suffering, but also led the country to an economic situation even worse than the previous one (about issues of political consent and opposition among the diaspora see Al Ali et al 2001 a, b, Koser 2003 and Hepner 2009, 2008). The impact of recent events on the transnational practices of identity and linguistically developed self perceptions have been analysed throughout the thesis.

Eritreans in Milan

Eritrean discourses and practices were researched in Milan, a city that is developing and changing at a great pace, and therefore a very interesting milieu to examine. In the Italian

context, Milan is often portrayed as the most modern and Europeanised city, the most organised and best run; it is one of the richest centres in the country in terms of money flow with one of the highest costs of living. Many people choose Milan as the place to live or work because of its varied labour market, even though it is not developed enough to meet total demand. Although Milan is not a developed metropolis of the size of London or Paris, it nevertheless allows transnational social economic and symbolic activities and networks, producing practices of cultural negotiation and some forms of resistance to social and economic marginalisation and subjection.

As a receiving milieu, Milan has a long history with articulated conceptions of who is an "outsider". The most obvious example may be linked to the arrival of people from southern Italy throughout the twentieth century and before. In Milan, the southern migrant workers were previously branded as the "other", but this role has now shifted to the recent foreign arrivals, with the use of similar discourses of intrusion, invasion and criminalisation. The Milanese site is remarkable in its experiences of migration.

Specifically to the case study of the research, this field is important since it is one of the oldest Eritrean communities, beginning with the first arrival of immigrants from Eritrea in the late sixties. Because its history stretches across almost half a century, not only do Eritreans in Milan experience the present political environment but also some of them have encountered various periods of Italian political culture. They have dealt with issues of citizenship and difference through time and in different ways. The layers of Eritrean migration have developed interesting patterns describing both Eritrean and Italian history. In fact those who arrived in the seventies had to deal with the structures in one way, while the newly arrived asylum seekers are negotiating with the Italian system in yet another way.

The Eritrean community in Milan is more or less scattered in various districts. I therefore had to "map" the Eritrean community showing, for example, which people meet where. Beyond the geographical space of the city, the focus was on the political, economic, social, and religious affiliations and loyalties.

In the district around Porta Venezia, the Eritreans have developed a social area with Eritrean restaurants and clubs, the Eritrean Catholic Church and the consulate. In various other areas are located other religious communities, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Eritrean one and the Mosque. However, people often find accommodation far from these centres and organise other sorts of activities. Porta Venezia is thus the Eritrean socialising context but Eritreans do not actually live there; in fact, since housing is very expensive and difficult to find in this central area, people have spread into more peripheral districts. Until 1985 many Eritreans in Milan lived in squats in the areas around Porta Venezia (see Ambroso 1987). They thus used to be more centralised in the area for socialising, and also gathered there for political reasons since one of the restaurants was owned and run by the EPLF.

There are two Christian religious communities, the Eritrean Catholic Church and the Orthodox one. The first has been located in the area of Porta Venezia for a long time, and it is one of the first Eritrean socialising places; its founder Father Yohannes was a very important figure who led the Eritrean community as a whole to be both recognised by Italian institutions and to be successfully included in the labour market. The Eritrean Orthodox Church instead is situated in another area of the city. It is a fairly new space, founded in 1993 after the Orthodox Church of Eritrea separated from the Ethiopian one.

Eritreans have set up businesses and places to socialise in other areas. They therefore do not only use the facilities available in Porta Venezia, but also go to the Italian Catholic churches close to their homes, to bars and social centres in their local area and to phone shops there, too. The research field was thus spread over the whole city.

Porta Venezia

The area in Milan where the first Eritrean migrants centred their socialisation in the seventies is still the social area where most Eritrean restaurants, bars and clubs are located today. When the first Eritrean settlement began, Porta Venezia was not rich or central, but it

has now become an important, lively area of the city, hosting two important cinemas, a library in Liberty architectural style, many bookshops of specific interest, art galleries, and so on. In the same area different Milanese businesses may be noted, like old ironmonger shops, which have remained small and humble. Then, contrarily, other shops have followed the "ethnic" fashion, selling African objects and hand-made crafts sophisticatedly Europeanised and sold at high prices. Corso Buenos Aires – a sort of Oxford Street swarming with shops, commercial businesses and street sellers, some organised little market stalls – cuts through the middle of the "Eritrean" area. On both sides of Corso Buenos Aires the Eritrean community spread out and became the first African area of Milan. The Eritrean community was one of the first and only foreign migrant areas to form in Milan after the Chinese. Even now that Eritreans are a small minority among other migrants in Milan, they still retain a certain recognition for their history as a community and for their organisation.

In Porta Venezia there is one Eritrean bar, many restaurants and one club. The restaurants are normally run by Eritreans. Only one Eritrean restaurant is run by an Italian with Eritreans working for him. The bars in the area are instead mostly Ethiopian; there are also Italian ones, a Chinese and an Egyptian one. Phone shops and Internet cafes serve the purpose of continuing transnational ties; some are run by Bangladeshis, but only one is Eritrean. In all these shops, however, the phone tariffs to call Eritrea are low compared to other places in Milan and this signals the presence of Eritreans in a stronger way.

At first glance the area may seem to have become an "African" area, since not only Eritreans use its spaces, but also Ethiopians and people from other countries in Africa. In my MSc dissertation (2002) and its publication (Arnone 2003), I assumed that the direction the area was moving in was "African". Nevertheless, after thorough fieldwork I had to abandon this assumption. Since restaurants, hairdressers, travel agencies, shops and phone shops have names hinting at Africa like Afronine travel agency, Ristorante Africa and so on, Porta Venezia is nowadays an international milieu with some "Afro" sites, but this is only an aesthetic level of the area. It is not an aspect people from Eritrea may identify with, but is

mostly an echo of how Italians perceived it, especially in the past when the Eritrean community was the only African community in the city.

I mainly frequented two bars during my fieldwork: an Ethiopian bar and the Eritrean one. The Ethiopian bar portrays itself as mostly apolitical and welcomes all sorts of people: one can find Ethiopians, mostly from Tigray, the region that was in conflict with Eritrea; Eritreans attend the bar too, but other Africans, like Gambians, or Italians rarely do go there. The people that socialise there seem to be detached from nationalistic discourses of war and conflict but in reality it seems that this is the "code" of the place, to avoid conflict and welcome all types of customers. The images hanging on the walls are mostly of the *Habesha* cultural traditions. *Habesha,* Abyssinia, is a regional category, which includes Eritrean and Ethiopian highland traditional practices. The images include coffee making, eating '*ngera* (porous bread used to eat) and drinking *mies* (in Amharic, Ethiopia's most widely spoken language, they call it *taj*) a wine made of honey, the figure of the Orthodox priest and monk and so on, all to be included in the ideal *Habesha* culture.

The second bar where I carried out some of the fieldwork is only used by Eritreans and thus does not integrate any other social reality of Milan. Some Italian people living in that area told me how disappointing it is to feel unwelcome there and not to be able to mix. The images hanging on the walls are specifically Eritrean, and portray the nine Eritrean ethnic groups in their traditional clothes. In this bar images also show Orthodox monks and priests, and Tigrinya traditional practices like drinking coffee, but they are shown as Eritrean with Tigrinya names. The music is Eritrean, in Tigrinya and other national languages, and not Amharic like in the Ethiopian bar and all the various cultural traits describe the place in a univocal way as Eritrean.

I also used to frequent mainly two restaurants although I visited them all. Both served food to Italians and Eritreans but one was run by the same people managing the EPLF restaurant set up in the seventies, and the other was "multiethnic" in the sense that they served Eritrean, Italian and Brazilian food (although I had never seen anyone ordering either of the

latter two). The owners of the restaurant told me they chose to have a multiethnic menu because it was "in fashion". Even though this latter restaurant seemed to me less politically engaged, it still had the calendar, that I had also seen in the consulate, showing the President of Eritrea, Isayas Afewerki, with a lion behind him, as an allegory of his strength, and all around him hyenas symbolise enemy countries such as Ethiopia, the Sudan and Yemen. Eritreans not only go to eat in restaurants but they also go for a drink in the evenings. While in the former-EPLF restaurant the Eritrean guests are mostly linked together by political loyalties, the other one is mainly frequented for special occasions by well-dressed, middle-class Eritreans. Generally the restaurants differ from the bars: the latter are haunted by "desperates", as people call them, while the restaurants, being also more expensive, are frequented by the more settled.

Until 2006 the consulate was located in the Porta Venezia area after the liberation of Eritrea from Ethiopia in 1993. People went there to pay their taxes to the Eritrean state, send money home to their families, and get their passports, while Italians went to get visas to go to Eritrea. The location of the consulate right next the socialising area had great impact, creating political pressure. Until the early nineties, there was also a community centre (Ambroso 1987) in an area not too distant from Porta Venezia, where Eritreans used to have a bar, a space for both cultural and social public events, and at times they used the space also to host the newly arrived in cases of crisis, like those escaping from Lebanon and migrating to Milan (see chapters 2 and 4).

Porta Venezia is thus a highly politicised area where the internal differences of the community are visible. There are those loyal to the present government and those who are not; opinions are not so outspoken though and everything is said with suspicion about possible listeners. There I encountered people who had lived many years in Milan and were integrated and the "new ones" (this is what the people who had recently arrived by boat were called). In the past, I was told, if anyone arrived in Milan in such a situation, with no job, housing, or legal stay permit, they would find all types of support and comfort from the

community in Porta Venezia. But "now there are all these people of all races and colours and it's an ugly place where it's better not to go", one of my informants once said. The thesis closely looks at the differentiation between old times in Milan and new times, between new arrivals and previous ones, and the different political loyalties towards the government which do not specifically speak about a shared past in Eritrea but mostly a shared territory and history in Milan.

Orthodox Coptic Tewahedo Churches

The politico-religious background is here described in detail to better contextualise the research. The importance of the historical miilieu of the religious institutions in Abyssinia is related to the discourses of the self that often link identity to the origins of the religious and linguistic formations and other times are delimited by more recent contingencies such as Italian colonialism. Moreover in a geographical area such as the Horn of Africa, and in particular Eritrea, religious disputes are to be connected to the wider socio-political forces described here.

The Orthodox Coptic Church differs from the Roman one in its belief in Christ as an incarnation of God, Christ being only divine. It is thus also denominated Monophysite, *Tewahedo* in Ge'ez. The Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox *Tewahedo* Churches are Oriental Orthodox churches. The Ethiopian was part of the Coptic Orthodox Church until 1959 when the Coptic Orthodox Pope of Alexandria and the Patriarch of All Africa Cyril VI granted it its own Patriarch. The Eritrean Church was granted religious autocephaly later in 1993 after its political independence from Ethiopia. Orthodoxy derives from the split in 1054 when the east and west Church of Christ separated institutionally into Orthodox and Catholic. Coptic, instead, is an ancient term used even before this split and comes from a Greek word meaning Egyptian. Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians were traditionally referred to as Copts, though this denomination has fallen out of use since their *Tewahedo* Churches were

granted their own patriarchs: Eritreans and Ethiopians in Milan call themselves Orthodox, while Italians often still refer to them as Copts.

It is thought that, for a long time before the introduction of Christianity, beliefs were most probably linked to Judaism. There are many practices thought to derive from the Hebraic religion in today's Abyssinian patterns of belief: circumcision is widely practiced; many of its food prescriptions and honouring the Sabbath (Saturday) derive from the Old Testament. Aksum, the strong legendary empire in the present region of the Horn of Africa centuries before Christ, is the place where Ge'ez was spoken and where the Abyssinian Semitic peoples are thought to have their origins. According to the legend, Makeda (often identified as the Queen of Sheba from the Old Testament), Queen of Aksum, visited King Solomon, was converted to Judaism and bore him a son who was to become the important king Menelik I. Following this tradition, Abyssinians claim to be of the line of Solomon.

It is estimated that St. Frumentius and Edesius of Tyre introduced Christianity to Abyssinia in 330. In the 4th century a movement of Copts started to live in monasteries in the Egyptian desert; Pachomius was the first to found this monastic movement that stretched as far as Abyssinia. During the following period, Monophysites strengthened the Church in Abyssinia. Originally merchants arriving from Syria, they had fled from their own country after the Council of Chalcedon (451 AD). In the XVI century, with the civil war between Islamic and Christian believers there were major changes in the equilibrium in the region. The former were supported by the Ottoman Empire, while the Portuguese helped the latter. Christianity had the better of Islam, although both persisted. From that moment flows of Christian missionaries started to arrive from Europe. Nevertheless the relationship between political leaders and foreign missionaries depended on the kings' religious preferences and the association they saw between religious institutions and foreign countries (for such analysis see Del Boca 1986 and Dirar 2003). When Italians occupied today's Eritrean territory, their political stance of acceptance of other religions, as Del Boca (1986) argues, in practice applied only to those who were favourable to the empire. Once they conquered Ethiopia

(1935), the Muslims allied with the Italian empire; for them Mussolini built the biggest Mosque in Addis Ababa, a specific strategy against the Orthodox clergy to undermine its political importance. It was under the Italians that the Ethiopian Church started the process to reach its autocephaly, detaching from the Egyptian Church they were affiliated to. This religious intervention was part of a strategy to achieve more power in the region without the intrusion of other super powers, such as Great Britain, which at the time backed Egypt (ibid.).

Today Eritrea is composed of nine different groups of people speaking different languages and following diverse religions. Afar 4%, (Denkalia), Bilen 2% (Keren area), Hedareb 2% (Tessenei), Saho 3% (Red Sea coast dwellers) belong to the Kushitic linguistic group; Kunama 3% and Nara 2% (or Baria) (Western lowlands) to the Nilotic one; Tigre 35% (Sahel) and Tigrinya 48% (mainly in the highlands) to the Semitic; while the Rashaida 1% (near Massawa) are a group of Arab origin. The ethnic groups are not homogenous in terms of religion, and even amongst the Tigrinya group, which is one of the most homogenous in Eritrea, 10 per cent are Muslim. The geographical collocation of these groups adheres more or less to the Ethiopian and Eritrean ancient regional division following the 1700 civil war that left the Muslim population in the lowlands and the Abyssinian Orthodox one in the highlands. In Eritrea the population is equally divided into these two religions but there are also some other local religions. The different ethnic groups perform forms of worship of the two major religions in specific ways. The allegiances to one or the other often still carry political connotations especially concerning issues about independence and conflict with external factors (for example see Luissier 1997 on Kunama). The political implication of religious belief and vice-versa the religious allegation into particular political movements became especially marked during the liberation struggle, since the two main liberation fronts, the ELF and the EPLF, had different religious groups adhering. The ELF had the support of the lowland nomadic Muslim peoples in Eritrea, while the settled pastoralists of the Tigrinya ethnic group following the Orthodox religion mostly supported the EPLF. Nevertheless the

EPLF movement denied its ethnic and religious predominance and insisted on the concept of Eritrean people, *hafash*, instead. Regarding this latter issue, Ambroso (1987) argued that the importance given by the EPLF against religion stemmed from the need to distance themselves first of all from the Arab countries that supported the ELF, from religious conflict and interests and, last but not least, from the fact that it had a strong religiously homogenous ethnic affiliation.

The acceptance or expulsion of religious subjects and institutions and the politicians' approval or disapproval of religious practices and beliefs has often been a delicate issue in the region. Today Eritrea continues to be a site where cultural practices and religious beliefs come to terms with political ideologies and where individuals try to negotiate. The present People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) government shows particular anxiety over religious practices and the outcomes are mentioned in the many Eritrean and international information sources. The government has been accused of unjust expulsions and specific discriminations against some religious groups and there is a great deal of tension producing and re-producing strongly defined perceptions of identity. The thesis thus put special attention on discourses and practices of religious identity, which are influential enough to be transported overseas into the transnational communities such as the Milanese one.

The Abyssinian Christian Churches in Milan

The Eritreans in Milan the research concentrated on belong to the Tigrinya and Christian Orthodox group. I thus carried out fieldwork mostly in the Orthodox Church but I also followed some informants in their religious practices, thus finding the Eritrean Christian Catholic Church another revealing site. The interest in the Orthodox Church was initially set off by a need to balance the recent dominant focus by scholars studying immigration in Italy on Muslim communities (Arnone 2003), which are striking in their contrast within the Italian society and its stereotypes (for example Riccio 2000, 2002 and Salih 2002, 2003). The

Orthodox Church is Christian but dissimilar to the Italian Catholic Church and thus entailed another analysis around its relationship with the Italian religious institutions through time, and its recognition as a different but related faith (Ambroso 1987).

In the course of the entire fieldwork I met only one Eritrean Muslim and this encounter took place at the 2003 Festival. I did not encounter Eritrean Muslims also because they prefer to affiliate with the Muslim rather than Eritrean community (this has also been argued by Baumann 1996 regarding most "minority" groups in Southall). The reasons behind the lack of Eritrean Muslim presence and the different affiliations are essentially three. The first is that Italy is a Christian Catholic context where religion plays a dominant structural and ideological role. The second related issue is that Eritrean Muslim migrants prefer other Northern African or Middle Eastern countries, or more secular ones such as Northern European ones as their destination. The reason why Muslim people affiliate to religious institutions more than to ethnic or national ones in Milan is connected to the way resources are allocated according to religion.

In Milan I worked with Orthodox and Catholic worshippers. There are two Orthodox Habesha Churches in Milan. The one I mostly attended was obviously the Eritrean one located close to the area of the Navigli canals, where the majority of my informants either went regularly or at least for specific ceremonial occasions. The other is the Ethiopian Church located close to Parco Sempione in Piazza Aquileia, where I went only for a few celebrations when some of my informants took me. Both churches were originally small-size Italian Catholic Churches, in baroque architectural style, each one with a small courtyard for meeting after the service. In a very simple way, they were converted into Orthodox Churches.

Both the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches still keep most of the Mass in Ge'ez, the ancient Semitic language from which are derived the Abyssinian languages such as Tigrinya (language spoken in the north of Ethiopia by the Tigreans and now the official language in Eritrea) and Amharic (the official language in Ethiopia and native language of the Amhara group). Ge'ez is no longer spoken but used in religious ceremonies. Although the Bible has

been translated into almost all of the many languages of Ethiopia and Eritrea, Ge'ez is used as a ritual language for most passages of the liturgy. Only some parts of the mass are in the respective official languages.

Being a plural society, today Milan also provides space for the many Orthodox Churches such as the Egyptian Coptic Church, Russian Orthodox Church, and Rumanian Orthodox Community. Some of my informants, who were particularly devoted, attended events across communities even though different languages and liturgies are used.

The Eritrean Catholic Community is older than the other two *Habesha* ones which started only after 1993. Until recently the Eritrean Catholic community was built around and run by the charismatic figure of Padre Yohannes. Although it never had its own Church, a large Italian Catholic Church close to Porta Venezia had always hosted it. There they had the opportunity to hold their mass on Sunday afternoon and other days of the week. They also had the chance to use its spaces and resources, which included the office for the priest and his secretary, an "oratorio" youth centre, and the summer camps at the seaside.

> It is quite surprising that there is not an Ethiopic Orthodox church in Milan. There is however an Eritrean priest, Father Yohannes, who says mass in a Roman Catholic Church, although according to the Ethiopic Orthodox ritual. This is possible since in the 19th century the Roman Catholic Church established a "Catholic Church of Ethiopian rite" preserving much that is of particular significance or national pride in Abyssinian Christianity (Ullendorff 1973, p.110). […] Nevertheless most Abyssinians remained loyal to the Orthodox Church. (Ambroso 1987: 182)

The Mass mixes some aspects of Orthodox practices and Catholic ones, where the practices described above regarding the Orthodox Churches do not apply to the Eritrean Catholic Church; instead, the ceremonial clothes are the same, as are the drums and choirs during specific ceremonies such as baptisms and weddings. The mixture of practices brought into the Catholic Mass is interesting because it entails a "local" set of ancient Abyssinian Christian practices with the Italian Catholic ones.

> The functions are mostly in Tigrinya with a few formulas recited in Geez and some of the rituals, like carrying the cross around the church in the middle of the mass, which are Ethiopic Orthodox. Traditional psalms and songs, often accompanied by drums played by

the women, are sung. (Idib: 184)

It is also true that the hybrid nature of the Eritrean Catholic Mass, even though it can be traced back to the Italian occupation (as stated in Ambroso's work), seems misinterpreted if analysed in terms of syncretism. Regarding Islam in Bengal, Gardner (1993) argued that it becomes problematic to see it as a mixture of "pure" or "orthodox" practices "with indigenous culture". For Gardner the problem lies in the fact that Islam is everywhere "expressed and interpreted in different ways". In the case of Christianity too it is strange to assume that the Roman Catholic Church could be "contaminated" by a far more ancient form of Christianity such as the African Tewahedo Orthodox one. In many ways it is the *Habesha* practices which encompass ideas of syncretism since they absorb and develop related religious practices.

The main religious issue I researched focused on Eritrean Christianity and its divisions and unities echoing political anxieties. Eritrean Christianity in Milan is tied both to the dominant Catholic organisation in Italy and the *Habesha* cultural area. I was interested in understanding the patterns of attendance of my informants and their discourses around religious spaces and communities, which revealed a great deal in terms of belonging. The Church plays an organisational role: the outcome of migratory experiences often depends upon or is influenced by religious institutions in the receiving country. People's uses of resources also depend on the discourses surrounding each religious community. I thus looked at religious debates and communitarian practices analysed how individuals produce and re-produce discourses of the self by giving specific meanings to collective spaces such as churches and religious communities.

Living in Milan

Another milieu of the research is housing. In Milan housing is difficult to obtain and finding accommodation has become more and more connected to the social capital of individuals.

Housing thus shows the networks people develop in the city through time and space. Looking at the ways people live in a space, however, is not only related to the initial settlement. It also gives insights into patters of arrival of the national group, their different relation with institutional apparatuses and structures. Focusing on a specific area is furthermore very revealing for it shows the humanity of everyday life.

I worked as a volunteer for a period and then as an underpaid coordinator of the Comitato Inquilini Molise-Calvairate-Ponti, a voluntary association in a public housing estate with accommodation especially assigned to "problematic people". This is not a site that I would refer to as an Eritrean community but it is where many people of Eritrean origin live. Tosi (1998) argues that an institutional structure has been set up in Milan to avoid "ghetto" formation, thus preventing large numbers of immigrants with the same nationality from being housed in the same areas. Nevertheless Eritreans, who know how to juggle with the Milanese system better than other groups, have found ways (including squatting) to be allocated close to friends and relatives. This district is an example of the high demographic density of Eritreans in specific areas such as the housing estates in the San Siro neighbourhood. As a non profit-making association run by volunteers, the "Comitato Inquilini Molise-Calvairate-Ponti" is a site attracting university researchers and students, social operators including keen professionals. The association constituted dynamics not based on exclusive ethnic or national identity but on an idea of shared space for which to fight and in which to allow integration for all the marginalized people of the area. It is a bottom-up association which incourages people to change their lifestyle and defend their civil rights. Its president, Franca Caffa, is active in mediation, discussing and pointingout issues to the institutions and the press; she organises opportunities for the tenants to discuss their problems with experts who can provide specialized help in housing matters but also a direct link with institutional spokespeople. The committee holds an Italian-for-foreigners course and hosts another association which helps mature students gain middle-school diplomas. It provides English lessons for the inhabitants of the council estate and

organises a well-established after school club, where I went twice a week to help an Eritrean teenager with her homework. This "dopo scuola" also provides a space where children can make friends, find stimuli and interact, keeping them off the streets. I found it an interesting site to enter the world of the second generation; little by little I met the parents and the teachers not only of the girl I was helping, and was able to expand my acquaintance to quite a few families and schooling realities. From the more political activities of this association, I followed the dynamics of marginalisation and those of "identities and categories" within the institutions.

My position allowed me to look into the archives of the association working on the territory since the eighties, introducing me to all the cases of the tenants, their problems, the official letters of the institutions responsible for this so-called "crisis" area, and the events happening around it, like the committee's joint actions with the trade unions, the local parishes, other associations working on the territory and more local cultural, and socio-political events. Here I used to meet Italians, especially elderly and mentally sick people, and others of foreign descent mostly from Arab and African countries, especially Eritrea. People using the space have many cultural, class and religious backgrounds; I could thus look at how Milan is slowly becoming a plural society. By entering people's homes, finding out about family relations, friend networks, schooling and so on I was able to look into the daily lives of Eritrean people, their living conditions in Milan, a part from their spare time spent in bars and restaurants. From this site the first issue of divisions between new and old arrivals was looked at closely since it reveals different realities living side by side, and often the two generations of arrivals sharing the same flat. Identity thus became visible in people's day-to-day practices rather than only in its politically controlled rhetoric.

Identity into context

Some problems occur in trying to answer a question that focuses on identity, problems which are connected to the meaning of identity itself and how anthropologists have dealt with the issue. Identity is a slippery concept in academic debates and its use in individual and collective daily life is also fuzzy. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) examine the misuses of the term identity, advising scholars not to use it because it is too loaded for political purposes and too ambiguous when scholars attempt its deconstruction. They thus point out the difficulty a scholar encounters with the concept of identity and with its application, which they relate to the strong uses of it in politics.

> If it is fluid, how can we understand the ways in which self-understandings may harden, congeal, and crystallize? If it is constructed, how can we understand the sometimes coercive force of external identifications? If it is multiple, how do we understand the terrible singularity that is often striven for - and sometimes realized - by politicians seeking to transform mere categories into unitary and exclusive groups? How can we understand the power and pathos of identity politics? (ibid:1,2)

This specific research about the constitution of the self among Eritreans in Milan analyses the concept of identity. Issues of individual and collective discourses and practices, cohesions and divisions, experiences and memories of commonality, show that there is an urge to look into the slippery realm of forms of belonging, without falling into a clear-cut conceptualisation of it. Through an anthropological study based on participant observation and extensive fieldwork, the research seeks to show the uses and ambiguities of practices and discourses of identity put in context, and to answer the very questions that Brubaker and Cooper forwarded. This work argues against the impossibility of using the term. Brubaker and Cooper (2000) sustain that "Conceptualizing all affinities and affiliations, all forms of belonging, all experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, all self-understandings and self-identifications in the idiom of "identity" saddles us with a blunt, flat, undifferentiated vocabulary" (ibid: 2). Nevertheless alternative terms given by the authors such as "affinities and affiliations, forms of belonging, experiences of commonality, connectedness, and cohesion, self-understandings and self-identifications" should be researched inside the notion of identity itself where they all conflate. The two authors would

like to differentiate these aspects from the notion of identity; nevertheless by including them in the concept of identity the researcher may be able to give a wider analysis of processes of self-perception and practices of identification. For instance, affiliations are those practices and spaces that bring people together under some kind of umbrella of commonality, be it a common discourse or a common set of practices, or even a desire to negotiate for some common identification. The authors are right in stressing that forms of belonging are to be differentiated from other practices and discourses of identity, but they nevertheless are to be looked at for a better understanding of the slippery realms of self-perception itself. All the terms the authors give to differentiate, to divide, and stress the need for a linguistic specificity are soundly applicable to an analysis of the very processes of identity, which are in this way clarified in their variety and complexity. Moreover, I agree with the two authors about the lack of univocal reading, its ambiguity and its political uses and misuses, but I nonetheless argue that these are the reasons why the concept needs to be analysed by scholars in its context and social understanding.

After A. Cohen (1969) who focused on the instrumental use of identity in the formation of ethnicity in South Africa, and Barth (1969) on the social formation of boundaries and boundary maintenance, Epstein (1978) insisted on the need for an "anthropology of emotions" concerning the "situational" character of identity. He indeed started to think about the humanity of experiences by looking at a shared generational (grandparents-grandchild) relation. The stress on intra-generational emotional ties stemmed from his own personal experience thus leading to a reflexive scope and the emotional value of experiences of identity. The focus on identity thus developed questions such as "how the *sense* of collective identity is generated, transmitted, and perpetuated; how new social identities come to be formed […] the circumstances in which established identities are abandoned or simply disappear" (my emphasis: 5).

Today many anthropologists analyse the development of identity in bounded categories of the self through constructionist theories (e.g. Cowan 2000), emphasising its processes of

social construction and arguing "that identity and place are social constructions, 'the product of specific historical and geographical forces, rather than biologically given ideas whose meaning is dictated by nature' (Jackson and Pen-rose, 1993: 1)'" (A. Christou 2002: 6). Constructivism stands in opposition to essentialism; it stresses the *social construction of reality* (Berger and Luckmann, 1967) rather than a natural ontology. The outcome of this type of gaze is an attention to a certain fluidity, a processual character inside notions of culture, society, identity and so on. Constructionism often leads to a further scope in the "multidimensionality" of identity and in the "multiplicity" of identities, into the analysis of self perceptions in time and space, located in different contexts and compared to different structural apparatuses and social discourses.

Nevertheless social analysis had to face emic constructions of reality which permeated political domains as well as civic participation:

> Intriguingly, in the 1980s, at the very moment in which anthropologists were engaged in an intense and wide-ranging critique especially of the more essentialist interpretations of the [culture] concept, to the point of querying its usefulness at all, they found themselves witnessing, often during fieldwork, the increasing prevalence of 'culture' as a rhetorical object–often in a highly essentialized form–in contemporary political talk. (Cowan et al. 2001: 3)

Therefore, anthropologists had to start looking at identity as being "neither frozen nor in constant flux" (B. Riccio 2000: 245), thus including the daily practices of identity that are often contextual, ever-changing and fluid, and those discourses and practices that become fixed and frozen to sustain political and historical claims.

With the growing attention on the changes in global dynamics and networks (Appadurai 1990, Friedman 1990), there has thus been a tendency to look into the dynamic character of identity formation. The subsequent focus on movement, dislocation and transnationalism has further widened the gap between the essentialized understanding of identity as fixed and natural, and its multiple and processual features. But the distinction between the anthropologically analysed processual feature of self-perceptions and the cultural practices, based on a perception of emotionally charged unchanging nature of difference, has become

more and more problematic as social structures follow neat classifications of different clustered peoples.

Nowadays most inhabitants of the world refer to a self-identification which lies within the national discourse. The nation has been strongly incorporated into the self-imaginary of people to describe belonging. Social scientists have long been studying this process. To start with, researchers like Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983) and Hobsbawm (1983 and 1990) examined the nation as the "invented", produced category, stating that although it is abstract and based on ideologically loaded symbols, it reigns uncriticised and is spreading throughout the world as the only community which can incorporate people, politics, economics and all layers of society. Its basis is an obsession with history on the one hand, and cultural and linguistic homogenisation on the other. These layers of perceptions of a collective self allow the political discourse to sustain the nation-state and control citizens.

The latter analysis broadly shows how national imagined communities have spread to become dominant discourses of the self. Yet there needs to be an analysis to show how these self- perceptions and structural apparatuses involve emotional reactions and involvements. The analyses need to explain the humanity of experiences, which lead to people's involvement and participation in a set social construction of reality. This quest can be found in Anderson who invites social researchers to look at the reasons and the dynamics behind the scene, for instance to ask why people die for their imagined community.

Therefore when studying socially constructed ideas of the self one must go back to Epstein's advice and try to understand the experiential value and the emotional ties that reinforce identities. One cannot study nationalistic groups and conclude that their fight is founded on a socially constructed entity. If we want to go beyond the problem of emic and etic understanding of reality, we need to get closer to what we study rather than further from it. When confronted with issues of nationalism, for instance, we surely need to understand its slippery applications in the various contexts, the ways in which the perceived natural symbols change over time. Nevertheless in order to relax existing tensions rather than

exasperate differences and conflicts we need to look into the emotional realm without simply buying into the rhetoric that build them. Nationalism certainly is a sensitive domain, where social scientists need to know their role and the impact their social analysis have on political affairs and social understanding. When dealing with such issues we thus need to be aware and reflexive.

Many Ethiopianists argue that Eritrea had never existed before the liberation movement (1960s onwards). Semitic descent and the Tigrinya language are the bases for this argument following which the Tigrayans and Tigrinyas are the same people. This debate, spilling into academia as well as in Ethiopian civil society and among the Ethiopian migrants, develops around the idea that Eritreans will soon be asking to be part of Ethiopia again. In this way the struggle people have gone through to try to be an independent nation is nullified. The deconstruction of Eritrean identity annihilates Eritrea as a nation and Eritreans as a population. I do not desire to enter the debate, which was strong during the eighties (e.g. Lewis 1983), regarding the rights to self-determination, but now that Eritrea is a nation state it would be counterproductive to undermine its existence, and it surely produces tensions that go beyond simple day to day interactions but lead to wars and death.

The sole deconstruction of Eritrean identity could mean reproducing conflicting discourses. Instead it is extremely revealing to give close attention to how the nation is lived inside day-to-day life; how discourses of the self increase a sense of belonging to a common past; how the past becomes incorporated into emotionally charged collective memories. Fundamental questions involve a past that is strongly affecting the present and are thus to be contemplated, asking in which way the past becomes alive in the present and how it affects people in Milan. Dominant discourses are produced and re-produced in inclusion and exclusion strategies, almost as practices of collective survival; how is all this played and negotiated, while moving and dwelling, by different people "belonging" to the same group? And how does movement impinge on practices and discourses of the self?

Practice and discourse

Issues of interaction and integration first emerged in the sociological structuralist and functionalist analysis of the relationship between individuals and the structure of society. However these general interpretations of motivation and social roles (i.e. Parsons 1951) have not sufficed to explain the further complexities of agency and structure. Even those (e.g. Giddens 1984) who have attempted, through a post-structuralist approach, to explain the role of individual agents, have fallen into the loop of driving the individual into a false agency. They have described the individual as unconsciously reproducing the structural properties of society and interpreted culture only as a shared symbolic language. The initial aim of this research was to find a resolution to this problem through an anthropological study of a specific setting and thereby to go beyond the former holistic approach. The focus was thus cast on practices of negotiation rather than merely re-production. Individual agency has therefore been analysed in the wider political, institutional, historical and cultural context. In the individual's negotiations with wider structural properties of society, identity does not only contain a shared dimension: it becomes a battlefield for contesting and interacting with the surrounding discourses and practices (Baumann 1996).

The process of belonging to a variety of structures with which to come to terms has been described as "transnational lives" with the migrants being "plurinational subjects" (Salih 2003). The multiplicity of structures and the multipositionality of individuals allow this research to further develop the study of the processual formation of identities and the plurality of loyalties. Moreover the nuances and shades of individual engagement with dominant discourses and narratives and the various ways people play their politics of day-to-day life may only be understood through a close look into individual and collective practices and discourses.

Discourse and practice are at the heart of the anthropological question of this thesis. Discourse is in itself a multi-facet concept intrinsically linked with the linguistic formation

through which people explain their perception of reality. In recent debates, though, discourse has been conceptualised as the production and reproduction of social understandings. The Foucauldian analysis has been widely applied to streams of debates included in the post-modern turn. The ideological concern, prevalent in Marxist analysis, has been further developed through discourse analysis. Ideology with its (Marxist) implicit idea of alienation has been expanded in a theoretical appreciation of individual production and re-production of discourses. While Marxist and Marxian ideology sees some specific levels of society as agents of hierarchical social constructs and top-down power and knowledge relations, such as capitalists for Marx and intellectuals for Gramsci (1996); in Foucault knowledge is something which is produced and re-produced at every level of society and by every individual playing into institutions; Foucault gives simple examples of agents of discourse such as a prison guard. Foucault's analysis is not focused on a highly centralised idea of society but on a result of a set of practices looked from a bottom-up perspective.

Discourse is a concept used to explain those topical linguistic formations of reality in which every individual is involved. The formation of discursive explanations, though, is not constrained solely to a linguistic reality; in Foucault's analysis discourse is a regime of truth which pervades practice as well as language. In many ways discourse is like an ideology, but it is not produced by the powerful elite who alienates the working class to keep the means of production. Discourse is not something over which someone has the power of manipulation (Foucault 1980). Every individual is in fact subjected to it and at the same time empowers it by re-producing it. It is a snake with no head and no tail.

Practice has instead been the focus of the phenomenological trend (starting from Bourdieu 1977, and continuing through M. Jackson 1989, Moore 1999, and Taussig 1987, 2009), privileging an attention to performance rather than linguistic exegesis. In this approach there is a conceptualisation of praxis as something that comprehends the dialectics occurring between structure and agency, and between the material and symbolic domains, away from linguistic interpretations. Experience becomes the concern through which the relation

between the self and the other is understood. The attention to practical engagement moreover shifts the structuralist concern onto the individual's act of following predefined social rules and norms. The phenomenological and experiential focus also reduces the importance of the social structure by explaining symbolic and ritual practices as concrete bodily engagements rather than as abstractions depending on the social structures themselves.

In the same way as Foucauldian analyses do, phenomenological approaches have developed a theory in which the individual participates in social processes rather than being passively adapted to a-priori rules and meanings. What thus links the two trends is the fact that the individual is not a passive or alienated being who reproduces something while residing outside. Neither does the involvement of the individual imply that s/he is independent and therefore may completely detach her/himself from shared meanings. Moreover the concept that links but at the same time differentiates the two trends is that of embodiment. In Foucault's analysis of institutions such as the clinic (1973) and the prison (1977), language and categorisation shape the body of individuals. The gaze, through which discourse is imprinted, is an embodiment of the linguistic formation of reality; but at the same time, by applying categories on the body, it produces embodiment. There is therefore a relation between language and practice in Foucault but it is the former which shapes the latter. In the analysis by Bourdieu (1977) the experience of the body itself is the motor for embodiment. In his analysis, cognition is not a state of the mind, but a process occurring in the body; he is thus not talking about knowledge but about embodiment. Social incorporation is not simply a sterile reproduction of symbolic frameworks but a process of acquisition. Bourdieu identifies embodiment through communication; the learning of how to act is achieved through the body and it creates memory, posture and feelings. Thus social incorporation is achieved through experience. Most of the time linguistic exegesis does not achieve logical explanations of action; it is action itself that shows the meanings. Action therefore is the meaning itself. These two stances differ in their focuses. In the first, it is

discourse that produces and reproduces regimes of truth, and in the latter it is practice that shows social incorporations. The two stances leaning, one to language the other to practice, are asking different questions.

Foucauldian discourse analysis has in fact opened the path towards an understanding of the force that linguistic explanations have on reality. I apply this perspective to understand Italian and Eritrean policies and their discursive influence on people's ideas of the self and the other. Moreover, this view leads to questions on the implications of discursive formations on individuals. I thus looked for the ways in which the categories formed by the Italian and Eritrean mainstream affect the ways Eritreans act, embodying the gaze which is defining them. At the same time I am interested in the ways in which discourses of identity are produced and reproduced among the Eritrean communities in Milan. The work by Povrzanovic (2002) has shown how people may be reproducing symbologies and sharing unified ideologies, while in their day-to-day practices and in their dreams they interpret discourses in different ways through their personal experiences and their specific positions in society.

Practice and experience are very useful conceptual tools to understand what I call the "politics of little things". The phenomenological approach thus becomes a methodology for research itself. It is regarded as a methodological process in which the research brings into play a phenomenological "encounter" to enlighten the field. The experiential scope is needed to understand the field in its humanity, through the eyes of a human being. Moore (1999) and Jackson (1989) have explained that it is important to look not only into the particularities of the field of study and its local exegesis but also into the link that the peculiarities of every social field have with each other. The general focus on human experience is important to go beyond the relativistic approach which would arise out of the sole attention to specificity and difference. Nevertheless the phenomenological approach in this thesis does not lead into its theorisation; it does not follow through its analytical

implications. On the other hand, the existing Foucauldian discourses and power dynamics force the anthropological gaze to be aware of its impacts and interpretations.

Both approaches have therefore been useful for the research, for instance in finding distinctive categories based both on shared experiences and on dominant discourses (Baumann 1996). The exemplifier found throughout the thesis is that of generations of cohorts, where their differential abilities to create narratives represent their experiences. The first generation's response to the experiences of transit are either silent, as in the case of the young newly arrived, or silencing, as in that of those of the first arrived who settled and reproduce specific dominant discourses. These silences make the phenomenological analysis difficult to carry out, but highlight the necessity of finding their meanings through the approach itself. Those among the second generation of age, the young Eritrean-Milanese, are able to articulate representations of their personal experiences, an example which completes the phenomenological method of enquiry. The ability or inability to represent themselves in terms of shared experiences is thus manifest in the structure of the thesis. The differential modes of representation are drawn together and confronted, starting from their relative silence in Chapter two and concluded with verbatim and experiential representation in Chapter six which marks the greatest difference between the first and second generation.

Looking at the past in the present

The approach throughout the research was phenomenological, based on participation in people's lives. I always waited for information to come to me rather than deliberately asking for it, to the extent that one of the decans in the Orthodox Church asked me: "do you learn by experiencing our culture inside?" and touched his heart. At times, when confronted with issues regarding the war experience, the conflicts and related tensions within the community, I encountered a silence which I often left to express itself in its intrinsic

meanings. Very rarely did I record my meetings with a mini-disc recorder, which I nevertheless always had with me. Thus, even though I do look into narratives, they rarely follow the exact wording that my informants used to explain history or discourses. I did bear in mind key words that allowed me to better understand the narratives with their internal collective meanings and signifier. Narratives also came out from people's practices and from their contradictions, which I pointed out and asked them to clarify. Many of the issues touched would not have been dealt with if I had carried out a formal textual recording methodology, or they would have been more controlled by collective ideologies and discourses. The reason why the research was carried out in this way is linked to the sensitivity of the issues dealt with, which, loaded with tensions and political meanings, created problems for my informants in expressing their views and experiences. In order to appreciate the information that was coming to me, I had to have a sound background knowledge regarding both the Eritrean and the community's history, and the events that were happening in Eritrea and in Italy which had an impact on people's lives. Often people asked me for updates on the news and on the various legislations and regulations, questions which helped me understand views and experiences of the system and of life as a migrant in Milan. Props of this kind were to be always ready for new conversations and interesting insights into the constant remaking of identity. To better gather fresh and experiential data I always had to leave questions open and never arrive at a meeting with preconceived ideas of what to find out and of the material needed.

I came to this approach after continually finding no insight into the conversations I was having with my informants. They were always repeating the official reading of Eritrean history and telling me all about the "real" traits of Eritrean "traditions". At the beginning I found both issues dry and uninteresting and I used to tell my informants that I knew a great deal about that information and asked them to tell me more about other more hidden issues. I soon realised that those were the issues I had to understand: the ways people read their past was very interesting if analysed as collective narratives of identity. History was being built up as a fundamental token of identity; people were narrating it as if it was

constantly re-lived in their lives. Listening became a method: I thus listened again and again to the official history. In this way I started to understand the obscure aspects of these narratives, the extent to which people perceived history to be one of the most important aspects of identity construction in today's Eritrean national identity. The thesis had to incorporate an understanding of memory and narrative in a more complex way. In the hypothetical questions I had assumed enemies and categories to have always been perceived in the same way through time. I had to review my understanding of the construction of categories of the self and the other through symbols switching between ethnic, political, religious and cultural terms and meanings. The historical reconstruction by refugees and émigrés that I analysed was very forceful but not only in intellectual terms; it was not only the written history that was redeveloped through present interests of an elite. The actions and the discourses of all people reinforce historical revisions of the past through narratives of a golden age, the exclusion of certain people from present perceptions of the self by comparing them with idealised categories of past collective experiences and so on. Narratives are re-appropriations of the past, which include negotiation with certain set ideals changing over time. History is present in visions of today and tomorrow, reformulated to develop identity in different ways and pronounced only in its official version. People rarely actually spoke about themselves as actors in history; they only put themselves in the picture in relation to the glorious collective events to be referred to in the making of a collective memory. The idealisation of history was so strong that in official contexts some people whom I was interviewing were withdrawn from my questioning, and replaced by more "knowledgeable" people for a better explanation.

Transnational field through a localised research

Similarly to Malinowski's (1922), Whyte's field (1955), was situated in a unitary place, even though he was studying an Italian migrant's settlement. He was carrying out traditional fieldwork through participant observation and interviews, basing it in a specific place, and in

a recognised community, which was analysed as if completely detached from the rest of the adjacent society. In studies on migrant groups the need for a different kind of focus has only recently been spelled out. Whereas previously, the migrant community was studied regardless of the movements between the sending country and the receiving one and focusing instead on its settled dimension, recently there has been further attention on the transnational aspect of migration and its effects in shaping different identities, loyalties and affiliations.

Anthropologists studying migration have felt the need to follow up transnational networks through multi-sited research (see Marcus 1998; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Participant observation in their fieldwork has changed its meaning of sedentary life "among" the people researched. It has followed a line of extreme fluidity. On the one hand, the multi-sited nature of this type of fieldwork has led researchers to move with their informants or through their transnational networks. Further concerns have been approached by looking into the varieties of locations within and beyond nations with which migrants are in contact, and into the many ways in which these sites remain present in the migrants' daily lives through transnational networks. Some migration researchers have in fact articulated studies on migrants' lives *between two cultures*, or *here and there* (Riccio 2000, 2002, Salih 2002, 2003), or *betwixt and between* (Grillo 2007), sometimes focusing on the bounded nature of the nation state and the ways in which it interferes, through policies of integration or assimilation, in the lives of migrants (Però 2000, 2002, Carter 1991, Favell 2002), on their discourses and practices. On the other hand, there have been focuses on the multiple levels of interaction and production and re-production of knowledge and meanings, leading many anthropologists to look also into different strata of society (see for example Però 2000). Policy making, community organisations, political rhetoric, churches, housing associations, internet sites and web-based communities and so on have been studied to give a wider view of the interrelations and the politics of identity occurring on various levels in migratory processes.

Whereas many researchers on migration (for examples Riccio, 2000 and Salih 2003), recently tend to follow Grillo's advice (1998) to study both in the receiving society, in its institutions, and in the sending country, creating a "transnational field" (Basch et al. 1994 and Gupta and Ferguson 1997), my work specifically followed the Eritrean case in the Milanese receiving society, looking at the ways of shaping community (-ies) and institutions, "collective homes away from home" (Clifford 1994: 308), within the Italian system. The transnational nature of people's lives was observed not by travelling to Eritrea or other contexts which might have been relevant to the processes of identity formation, i.e. refugees camps (see for example Malkki 1995) in the Sudan, and so on. In this and many other ways, the transnational panorama of identity formation was looked at from the specific viewpoint of Milan. The sending context was looked at from the Milanese location. The research in fact concerned transnational networks and ties in a "localised field". Not only did this focus arise from the need to deepen the research into specific case studies, but it also stemmed from the way in which I wanted to understand Eritrean transnational networks from Milan, looking at memories, discourses and narratives of movement and stability. So rather than moving in space, I moved within ideas of space and time and the ways in which these create a blur between moving and freezing. Thus it can be stated that multi-sited does not only refer to a spatial but also to a conceptual connotation: one cannot study the Eritrean community without looking into the city that hosts it; the city cannot be understood without its bureaucratic and institutional apparatuses and structures, without the ways they are lived and perceived, the lives of the Eritrean migrants without their interaction with Italian and other citizens, and so on. The Eritrean Milanese context is extremely vast, and thus the multi-sited notion of fieldwork was applied by following the levels on which interactions were carried out rather than physically following up the migrants' being here and there.

Fieldwork was carried out by participating in different settings; the Coptic Church was a site but others were also relevant, such as interactive spaces, restaurants, clubs, cafés, spaces for transnational communications, internet cafés, low rate telephone shops; and public

transport was a great source of data; the more institutional sites, such as the consulate and the various festivals and commemorative events, were also important. Beyond public spaces, the research gained from private contexts, family reunions and celebrations, individual narratives, and so on. I looked into Italian forces that had impacts on Eritrean perceptions and practices of the self through working in the Comitato Inquilini public housing association and other cultural associations, but mostly from the day-to-day interaction with people and with friends and family. Following up the history of the linkages created through time by the "leaders" of the Eritrean community was very important in terms of understanding identity negotiations and strategies by the Eritrean "ethnic institutions" (Ambroso 1988, 1987) to create a good network to achieve wider inclusion in the Milanese society. Traditionally, anthropological fieldwork pays special attention to the cycles in which social activities and individual lives are positioned. I found this to be a very important methodology for the outcome of the research. I was on the field from September 2002 (although the first three months were designed for language training, they proved to be part of the most revealing period of research) up to May 2004, and this enabled me to look into the cyclical structure the community had set up to commemorate, meet and build a collective discourse and memory.

Searching into people's lives

In designing research in the context of migration, there could be several strategically important methods in the outcome of precise focuses. Research into migration often implies a multisided scope in addition to a precise set of questions. In the specific case of this research, issues of identity and ethnicity were not isolated from an understanding of norms, institutions, politics, and public perceptions of both the sending and the receiving society. Nor were the transnational fields and networks created in the processes and outcomes of migratory experiences dismissed. Furthermore, single lives and experiences of individuals

have been included both to provide useful information and to integrate their voices in the research.

Every site provides different information and every method a different scope. In the plurality of sites into which my research looked, the focus on life histories provided a great deal of stimuli and insight into human perceptions of the self and society, of time and space. Not only did life histories display information but they also played a part in the process of the research. They opened a door onto the significant aspects of individual perceptions of the self, giving access to issues to be further looked at through participant observation and other interviews. Hidden stories arose to better understand the untold dilemmas in which migrants live. The study of life histories has the strength to humanise the so-called human sciences (Plummer 2001). It implies a closer look into the practices in daily life and the impact of social change upon agents, the ways in which single individuals negotiate with society and time.

Since life histories gave a very intimate and meaningful access to the world of emotions, experiences and memories, I ended by finding their data difficult to generalise. I thus found it easier to look for patterns of experiences which create "communities of memory" (Malkki 1995) and generational collective memories (Connerton 1989). Thus, I approached similar and dissimilar cases through comparative analogies and differences in paths and histories. But I did not collect life histories in forms of histories of life. Neither did I analyse them only as a source of history itself. I mostly worked on memories and the individual and collective production and reproduction of discourses affecting the ways in which present experiences were lived and how identity was "actively" perceived and narrated. By being stories of who we are, life histories provide a study into "identity narratives" (Plummer 2001).

I interviewed individuals and their families; at times I also found more details through archives and other complementary sources; I looked for key words and conceptualisations of ideas through people's personal histories. Informants showed me pictures of themselves and of others close to them, letters from home, which enabled me to notice how they also

described their situations in general situations and to their families in Eritrea. It would have been interesting to have access to diaries or journals of the journey to Italy, data which would be available if the field had not been so politically tense. The collection of this type of intimate and personal data is tied to single individuals and their consensus and willingness to cooperate in the research, but also it relates to specific social discourses and tensions. Thus some data, such as on the specific topic of the recent journeys to Italy, are more difficult to reach.

Unlike other research methods, the act of collecting life histories proved to be more time consuming and emotionally charged. People's lives were lived rather than only recorded. I had to achieve a more informal, interactive and legitimate access to families, friends and to their community before being able to achieve the intimacy needed to gather this type of data. It was a long process which continued also while the data were being analysed and written. In the preliminary hypothesis I though that once the informant agreed to be a voice in the research there would be chances s/he would be participating in the creation of his/her life history, not only in "telling" but in providing insight for further analysis. But this did not happen, mostly because narratives were mostly perceived as "talks with a friend" rather than the collaboration in a research. Time was another restraint, since most of my informants did not have any spare time apart from the Sunday afternoon we often spent together after church or some evenings; in any case spare time was precious for them to be able to relax rather than to work on writing and researching their lives. I was instead informally invited into people's lives and pasts through some sort of friendship and pleasure in spending time together.

I believe that the way in which the material is collected and represented should be analysed in its dynamic and dialogic nature. While recording the histories I did not only listen to narratives but also to my own voice, often including myself as subject in the data. By following life histories as dialogical events, the information collected reaches a deeper representative value. The process of talking through and collecting memories of life is

interesting and needs to be included as data itself (see Caplan 1997: 9). To do so there was a thorough compilation of research diaries with a reflexive autobiographical account. Another outcome of this approach was that the data collected changed direction according to the contacts and the relations built; the data had the space to speak rather than being stagnant in the hypothesis.

The relationship between the researcher and the informants was often close and frequently ended in friendship. This intimate aspect of the relationship provides a human voice in the research but at the same time opened a wide range of issues regarding the safety of my informants and their families, and also my own. Migrants and refugees often live in a vulnerable position in both the receiving and the sending societies; therefore it was not only important for me to appreciate the emotional response of my informants when looking back at themselves and their histories, but also to realise that the impact of certain memories on people ended with me being sometimes forcedly incorporated into their lives. The duration of the research on life histories was not predictable but accordingly had to be flexible, sometimes lasting for the length of my fieldwork and at times falling into sudden silences either on my part or that of the informant.

Life history, after medical research, is one of the most sensitive areas of ethical concern. Since the process of collecting a life history induces an intimate insight into the individual, I had the duty to provide plenty of information to achieve a fully informed consent. I thus estimated the risks and outcomes of their participation in the research and reported them to my informants. Many of my informants told me their histories but did not want to have them included in this thesis: this obviously weakened the outcome of the ethnographic material but the stories I had found enriched my approach to the rest of the data. To ensure security to those who were in a critical position with the law or who would have been affected by the display of their case, I changed the names, unless they asked me not to, and omitted some recognisable data.

Although in my preliminary hypothesis (Arnone 2003) I thought that legal status would become an ethical and safety issue, it is recognition inside the community itself that becomes a concern. Some of the cases that I write about are known to all the community and they are the ones that led me to an understanding of the tensions among Eritreans in Milan. I changed names but I am afraid they will be nevertheless recognisable. The displayed data were in any case part of public knowledge, and I did not go and search for further insights to find out whether the narratives collected were true, also because in anthropology it has been long assumed that telling the truth is not our responsibility (see for instance Clifford 1986 and Taussig 1987). This thesis might end by concealing or fuelling already present tensions among the community or it might pass unnoticed. It might foment tensions, but they are already present in Milan and this is why I think it is important to speak about them. I also came to the conclusion that the display of my ideas on specific events and situations is part of the dialogue that I built up among my informants, never hiding my biases and personal opinions. While informing, I also provided a description of the benefits of their participation in my research, such as it being able to stimulate a wider reflection on migratory experiences in Italian society and to give voice to situations and issues that are not spoken about in civil society and in political debates.

The large number of issues had to be dealt with through considerations on the micro dynamics occurring between people. It gave me insights into the different collective perceptions of individual experiences. Narratives became clear in their collective construction and practices showed their inconsistencies and contradictions. The emotional side of identity construction was visible, and people sometimes put the ideological discourse before personal lives and vice versa; at times they covered up their personal practices through set collective discourses to be able to fit into the maze of the rules of how to be and what to say. It was by living other's lives that I noticed role games, the performances people enacted in different contexts.

Chapter 2

Journeys to exile[3]

The Eritrean diaspora accounts for one quarter of the entire Eritrean population: 1 million Eritreans live abroad, only 3 million in Eritrea (Koser 2003). Most of them left the country during the struggle for independence from Ethiopia and a subsequent conflict with their Ethiopian neighbour. The focus of the present chapter is on Eritrean "travelling cultures" (Clifford 1992; see also Friedman 2002), on the initial physical movement through borders and states and its embodiment in Eritrean identity in the Italian city of Milan. Many studies of migrants' journeys focus on their identity as being either "here and there" (Basch *et al*. 1994; Riccio 2000; Vertovec 1999), or "betwixt and between" (Grillo 2007). Thus movement from one place to another implies dwelling within two cultures, and being subjected to two systems (Salih 2003). In the case of Eritrean exiles in Milan, however, the formative experiences involved in migration are not only those that occur after the arrival in the city, and in a context of networks developed through time. Before starting to move in the transnational and diasporic network, the journey itself consolidates a certain type of identity. Migration can thus be analysed through the experiences lived "*from* there *to* here" which mark the way migrants dwell "here and there". Eritrean narratives and experiences of journeys thus reveal how the migrants' identity is formed through trajectories, and systems of movement, in time and space.

Being "between here and there", during the journey and thereafter before achieving an Italian official stay permit as a worker and being integrated into the Eritrean Community, has

---

3 Two articles were published with the material of this chapter, see Arnone 2005 and 2008.

been spoken with terms which echo the state of liminality in rituals. The latter analysis was forwarded by the Eritreans who had arrived before but it was moreover reinforced by the historian Triulzi in his Aegis 2009 presentation where he also showed "Come un uomo sulla terra", a documentary on the crossing of those seeking asylum in Europe or work in Libya, through the desert, from the Sudanese border to Libya and towards Italy. The journey unfortunately it is not a straight path, it is a constant struggle where international structures of detention and more hidden treaties between governments and human trafficking organisations tie the migrants into a deathly net (see also Trulzi 2009). In his presentation Triulzi showed how crossing the desert is such a hard and dangerous task that it could be one of the many "rites of passage" of the young African to the age of adulthood, a modern version of a rite of initiation. Both, the emic description of the journey to Italy as a ritual leading to a new personhood and the one described by Triulzi, triggered the analysis on the difficult movement across borders as a sort of liminality in the present meanings of world structures and discourses of legal and illegal movement.

Various terms might be used to describe such flights; "journey" has been chosen to describe Eritrean experiences. "Journey" suggests the experience of movement through places and hints at how identity is shaped through movement. Spatial journeys are also identity ones, and journeys are perceived as rituals leading to different statuses in the diaspora. "Journey" is also a term reflecting the way experiences are transformed, as they become narratives. Those Eritreans in Milan who arrived during the liberation war have elaborated meaningful narratives of journeys which build an "exile" identity. These narratives, which consolidate various experiences, have become part of a dominant discourse among the Eritrean community in Milan.

Generations of arrival

An analysis of the relationship between specific disruptive experiences and the different age groups (Loizos 2007) has been included to better explain fractured and continuative identities and communities. Since "generations are not natural, they are produced through common experience and through discourse about it (Yurchak 2006: 30 in ibid: 200)" there is the need to spell the formative experiences and the discourses building them. The term generation (see Kertzer 1983 in ibid: 195) has been used to explain cohorts inside "processes of demographic metabolism" (Ryder 1965: 843 in ibid: 199), or the "waves", specific experiences of historical contingencies. In this chapter the latter definition has been adopted since individuals included in generations of arrival appear as "waves" separated in time, implying a shared historical moment rather than a kin relationship. A few cases were encountered during the research where the parents arrived with the first generation, while their children came later with yet another generation of arrivals. The focus on the double significance of generational relationships showed the difficulty encountered by the migrants when relating across communities of memory.

Generations of arrival differ from each other in shared experience of the past: the new ones directly lived the war as children, and again ran away from the second one as teenagers; the first generation lived a political exile based on an unlived war fomented and thought about; only a few, like Fzum, my informant from the consulate, lived the war; nevertheless warriors are so few that they barely compose a community of memory in Milan. About different collective memories Connerton argues that: "the effect is seen perhaps most obviously when communication across generations is impeded by different sets of memories" and their "background narratives"(1989: 3).

In 1961, the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie annexed Eritrea to his empire. The annexation was perceived as unlawful and a struggle for liberation ensued and continued for thirty

years. The generation of Eritreans who left in that period[4] were escaping from the war and looking for security for their families and themselves. Some say they were hoping to fund the liberation struggle, or to earn enough money to go back and fight; others say they came to Italy with the dream of studying and returning with a qualification which would be of use in the liberation movement; others again stated they wanted to give voice to the Eritrean cause, even if, like the country at war, exiles were split between two sharply conflicting nationalist movements, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the EPLF. Although some arrived alone, the members of this generation often reached Italy with families and children. Their passage was frequently supported by others already in Italy and by priests or Christian associations such as that of Padre Yohannes in Milan. Some arrived by plane, others by boat through the Suez Canal; many had to go to Arab or Eastern European countries; some even arrived in northern countries like the UK before finding their way to Italy. There was a highly organised network of reciprocal help throughout Europe (mostly EPLF activists) and the Middle East (mostly ELF), and the Eritreans in Italy formed a substantial, structured community. Italy was chosen as the country of arrival by this generation, both because of this diasporic network and because of perceived ties resulting from colonialism, including knowledge of the language and culture, and religious affinity through common adherence to the Christian faith (see Melotti *et al*. 1985).

During the 1990s, after Eritrea had won independence from Ethiopia (through the liberation movement in 1991 but officially through the referentdum in 1993), the flow of migrants slowed. Those who arrived during this period frequently started their journey from Arab countries or more often from Ethiopia and the Sudan. It was also in this period that Eritreans in the diaspora began increasingly to go back home to visit the family and for holidays. Moreover the conflict between the rival political views was put on hold, since the goal of

4 There was a previous generation of Eritreans who came to Italy in limited numbers during the 1960s or earlier (Galeazzo 1994; Melotti et al. 1985). Although interesting for the study of post-colonial relations, their situation was very different from that of those who came later and consequently they are omitted from consideration in this research.

independence had been achieved. In fact, political activists of both liberation movements were present at the liberation festival in Asmara.

The honeymoon between Ethiopia and Eritrea did not last long, and another war soon broke out. This conflict was different. No longer a liberation struggle, it was a border dispute, perceived as a war to keep the *Wayane* (Ethiopian/Tigrayan government) out of Eritrean territory. From 1998, throughout the second conflict, many youngsters fled to escape the war. They walked through Eritrea and contacted illegal traders who drove them over the borders with the Sudan and across the desert to Libya. Then, through other contacts, they crossed the Mediterranean by boat. Some of those arriving after 1998 started their journey from Ethiopia where they had long been resident, in some cases for decades. In 1998, the EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) government expelled all Eritreans living and working in Ethiopia. Some were adults who found themselves in Eritrea with no means but, having a family to feed, they therefore decided to leave to find a job elsewhere and maintain the family from abroad. Others, who were in the right age group to be enrolled in the army, escaped from military service. Among this generation there were and are different political voices, the loudest of which is opposed to the present government. Political positions held by the youngsters are, however, not always explicitly articulated, but sometimes fuelled by Eritrean opposition movements and Italian left-wing political activists.

Although in the 1970s Eritrean migrants often chose to live in Italy, many of those who came later sought simply to traverse Italy for destinations in Northern and Western Europe where they perceived greater possibilities for a better life. Among those who stayed, many found it the easiest place to gain access after crossing the Sudan and Libya, where they did not feel at ease because of religious differences. Official figures estimate that there are currently some 6,000 Eritreans in Italy, of whom around 1,600 are in Milan. Many Eritreans in fact have identity documents which give their nationality as Ethiopian, and others do not appear in national statistics because of their uncertain status, and their numbers cannot be accurately

ascertained. Since the 1990s Italy has been receiving record numbers of immigrants, but migration laws introduced by the centre-right Berlusconi government have focused on their exclusion and offered precarious rights of sojourn (see also the papers by Arnone, Kaag and Riccio in JEMS 2008).

Italy's political history during these decades shifted between different political trends and government positions in world alliances. Although each government was not stable there were long periods of political hegemony held by strong parties. The first period, in which the first generation of arrival is positioned, was characterised by the Italian political parties' juggling inside the delicate world's balance of the cold war. Italy's post war close relations with the USA allowed the Christian Democratic Party to win consent over the Communist Party. The central governmental power was held by the Christian Democrats for more or less all the years between the seventies and the mid eighties, after which the Socialist Party achieved power. The second "generation of migrants" arrived at the end of the '90s and the beginning of the 21st century are living a political environment which can be described as far more right wing and conservative and is leading the country to anti-migration discourses and practices of racism. Berlusconi, the media tycoon and millionaire real-estate investor, obtained the mandate of prime minister in the XII legislation (1994), and two consecutive ones in the XIV (2001-2005 e 2005-2006) and finally in the present XVI one (2008).

During the period under the Christian Democrats no attention was given to structure migration in any sort, no enactment was shaped. Migrants before 1986 were invisibly living their lives on the edge of society, as servants in rich people's homes or as street corner sellers. The "Legge Foschi" Law number 943/86 issued in 1986, broke the silence surrounding foreigners in Italy but it concentrated only on their workers status and on their access into the state-run health system. With the Foschi Law migrants could enter only if possessing a work permit issued beforehand through the consulates. This law introduced the first in a long series of amnesties through which illegal migrants were legalised. In 1990 the "Legge Martelli", number 39/90, elaborated regulations and norms regarding asylum and

refugees (article 1) and programmed the yearly quota of incoming migrant workers. The following legislation took more to be elaborated for the political shifts that were taking place, which were increasing the country's instability; the 1998 "Legge Turco-Napolitano" (286/98) regulated the stay of illegal migrants through the constitution of Centri di Permanenza Temporanea (CPT) which were temporary detention centres for those who did not have legal access to the country. The "Turco-Napolitano" Law also introduced the first integration policies, family reunification, compulsory education even for irregular migrants, intercultural education in the schools, equal health services and access to temporary housing. Another positive side of this enactment was the possibility of legal access for those migrants who had "sponsors", i.e. those who had someone already residing in Italy who acted as reference and granted economic support in case the migrant could not support him/herself. The latest legislation has certainly constituted a regression: through the Bossi Fini Law (189/02) the migrant's rights of sojourn has diminished since work permits have to be updated every two years; entry to the country is illegal if a work permit has not been issued beforehand; the strongest part of the law is the reinforcement of the sense of insecurity of the migrants with an accentuation on the expulsions of illegal migrants or of those who cannot renew their former work permit. The precarious daily life of the foreign worker in Italy is also amplified by the difficulty of achieving a residence permit only after six years of stable life in the country, and the loss of the work permit only after six months of lack of regular work. The discourse over the illegality of migration has become the centre of the government's approach to all the issues regarding foreigners in Italy.

Journeys to Milan

I come from such a very little country in Africa[5], that during the period of my immigration alone has already had two wars with the same country [Ethiopia], two or three attempts at aggression from bordering countries [Yemen and the Sudan]. I leave you to imagine the fate

[5] This expression is significant because it reflects the perception of Eritrea as a country under attack for being a small state.

of a country with three and a half, four million inhabitants, residents, which does not have any particular attractive resources, but is a strategic point in the Horn of Africa. A drama of this kind brings about a cascade of life choices which then determine our existence.

I am the daughter of migrants, I have been thirty years in this country, which means I arrived when I was not even 15 years old, I was only 14 and a half. Now I have reached the third generation just to escape from war [...].

When I arrived in this country, I did not even know where Italy was, nor was I interested in knowing. I say this to explain the condition where a person is catapulted into a reality greater than his/herself, because the adults decided on my emigration. People who migrate at a particular age have not worked out the means of immigration, or even planned it, with a decision to improve their lives [...]. Like many like me, I did not have this type of transition. So immigration was experienced with violence, almost inflicted, and it becomes the anguish of your life. This is what has accompanied my existence over the years. I have experienced the condition of being a political exile, a refugee [a status not officially recognised by the Italian state], rejecting this condition which I did not choose. It is as if you were forced to wear a dress that didn't belong to you. You invent a new role: forced to get to know a new environment, adapting to the climate, adapting to the food, to people's customs, to their look of approval or disapproval, to their amazement.

I am talking about the 1970s and 1980s, difficult years, when it wasn't as if there were no immigrants, but they were 'confined' to doing a certain kind of work, where going out on Thursdays or Sundays was a constant struggle. Existence becomes a 'non-life' at the beginning [...] I was born and grew up in Asmara. Compared with many cities in Africa and other capital cities, Asmara is quite a dignified city, not to say beautiful because then I would be biased, of course. I had a limited life, in my district, like many of my age, a life composed of school, friendships, a distinct district. So I did not even know my country, but only my city. I had no desire to discover another world or to find myself in another guise, in another role, another world. So I see my immigration as this kind of leap almost into the void [...].

War, but also the economic crisis and that of a certain type of political system, which is the result of a given system,[6] has created, over the years, thousands and thousands of people who have fled [...] and people are so exasperated that this leap becomes almost necessary. [...] *Our people arrived along accidental routes, creating ways for flight.* It was either a study visa for Albania which then turned into political asylum, or the route through Egypt… They were all *routes* which became *consolidated and made by immigrants over the years*, because, as you know, Italy is not a country open to immigration, it wasn't yesterday and it isn't today. It is not a country which lets people in legally and regularly. All the immigration which has accumulated over the years—apart from those who were the first domestic helps who, through the church channels, and therefore with well-off families, were sent to be live-in domestics with families—90, 95 per cent came by forced ways, a false visa for tourism or an illegal entry.

6 She reproduces a perception that the annexation by Ethiopia was supported by world powers and imposed on the Eritrean population, thus was not the outcome of a democratic choice.

This is an extract from a presentation by Mebrat Alem in a meeting organised in Milan for Italian language students in October 2003. Mebrat explained the trauma of moving and not being able to return in this way: "I escaped from a country called Ethiopia and I wanted to go back to a country called Eritrea". She added that after all these years, now that Eritrea is an independent state, it is impossible to think of going back to live there. All the reference points have disappeared and people have constructed another life.

Many Eritreans who arrived in Milan before the 1990s intended to earn money to go back and fight for the liberation of Eritrea. Lettebrahan, for example, who has lived in Milan for the last thirty years, wanted to study medicine and go back as a nurse or doctor. She did not succeed in achieving her goals because, once in Italy, she was absorbed in the routine of working to earn money to survive, to send money home and pay taxes both to the Italian state and to the EPLF, and later the Eritrean government. Many like her had planned a return journey, but the prospect of returning vanished with the war in Eritrea and with the construction of a life in Milan.

Among this generation of Eritrean migrants in Milan, the identity of an exile is shaped in the first place by the common experience of dislocation, but is then strengthened through the permanent impossibility of going home. From Mebrat's presentation it is also evident that there was a political culture around Italian affairs. The exiled identity was thus coupled with that of being refugee, a status not recognised but longed for by many migrants during the period of the arrival of the first wave and now by the newcomers. This claim for refugee status was backed by Italian left-wing groups which first supported the EPLF and now criticise the present Eritrean government.

Exile becomes the space in which to elaborate political discourses to be applied both in Milan (especially in the past) and in Eritrea. Most political movements in Africa were inspired by exiles abroad who had power to influence the development of their countries' histories (see also Triulzi 1999 and Bisharat 1997, Saad 1998 etc). This is the case of the liberation movements in Eritrea and the various liberation ideals developed from exile. Kibreab (1995)

described the activism that women showed in the participation of Eritrean liberation political movements and the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) in the Sudan. He analysed how Eritrean women in Khartoum demonstrated adaptive capabilities changing their previous experiences and becoming the economic base of the family (for similar accounts on Somali women reshaping family structures and patterns from exile see Farah 2000), and of the Nation, by participating in the struggle as former ELF supporters or members of the EPLF among which gender issues were very important. Kibreab (1999a), moreover, made the first step in an important debate (Stepputat 1999, Turton 1999, Warner 1999, Kibreab 1999b) on place and movement by arguing that "The assumption that identities are deterritorialized and state territories are readily there for the taking, regardless of place or national origin, has no objective existence outside the minds of its proponents" (Ibid: 385). Kibreab had a specific intention of moving the debate on deterritorialised people from the "fluid" approach that was being built to a more practical and less idealistic approach. Turton (1999) thus differentiated between people who "enjoy" being at home in the world and people who are "forced" to live away from home and he moreover insisted on the contextual constitutions of narratives which at times underline that home can be built anywhere and at times nowhere. His account (2005) of how the Mursi were incorporated into the Ethiopian national discourse on space and movement following specific historical contingencies shows the complexity of discourses of belonging, tied to a multiplicity of levels in which the subjects are agents and subjects.

In the case of Eritreans in Milan, home is Eritrea, a place which did not exist in the official domain until 1993, longed for in such a strong way that it shaped people's dwelling in Milan as temporary and precarious. Milan in the minds of the generation arriving during the struggle had not become "home" but "exile". Thus the national discourse became so strong that it undermined any other types of dwelling.

Movement and Identity

It is often argued that national identity becomes consolidated through migration. Pratt (2002a) records that it was Italian migrants in the USA who constituted Italianness. Stevenson (1988) says the same about Yemenite migrants and Saad (1998) about Egyptians in Iraq who returned with cosmopolitan experiences enabling them to make comparisons with other nationalities but also with fellow countrymen. Shared national identity was reinforced, adding the national to the previous peasant/local/ethnic affiliation. Ferme (2004) shows how movement from Sierra Leone, with all the identification documents needed to pass through various states on the way to Egypt, facilitated the formation of a national identity. Van Aken (2005) highlights both the journey of Egyptian migrants across borders on the way to Jordan, and their relation with Jordanians, in the formation of a stronger national identity. Moreover their stay in a transcultural environment and the exchange with people coming from the same country create more links with the national identity than to the localised one of the village.

Eritreans who have experienced journeys across borders requiring the specification of identity have continued to reflect on their national historical and political milieu and become increasingly aware of it. Experience of other migratory contexts in Milan and the constitution of an Eritrean community have further developed their Eritrean affiliation, moving from a localised, ethnic and religious identity to a national one. Sometimes they fix it with rules of "how to be Eritrean", and at other times they follow the flow of modernity and social change. The narratives about Eritrean-ness in Milan are especially constructed through the journey to exile and the struggle for remaining active in the social, economic and political affairs of their nation. The idea of their community in Milan is filled with notions of journeys and narratives of journey describing this process.

Saad (1998) contrasts the migratory experience with the experience of a war: the first is described as an individual pursuit, the second as a national project. Unlike the Egyptian migrants discussed by Saad, however, Eritrean exiles articulate a discourse in which even

migration is a national project, one through which they contributed economically and ideologically to the liberation struggle. Their different migratory experiences are linked to their reasons for leaving their country, with the various conflicts and the political, economic and security issues at stake. Leaving the home country may have begun as an individual stratagem in reaction to war and poverty, as described in Mebrat's speech, but has become a collective strategy shared by one quarter of the population in support of a devastated country as well as their personal lives. Even today Eritrea survives thanks to taxes and the remittances from the diaspora which constitute some 80 per cent of the country's income (Al-Ali *et al*. 2001a).

Among Eritreans in Milan, Eritreanness is strengthened through the journey that led them to Italy. The different experiences of that journey have shaped the different generations themselves. With this background narrative, Eritreans in the diaspora provided a nucleus of socialisation, thus integrating the new arrivals into the existing community. In forming a community, people constituted themselves through narratives based on the experience of dislocation. These narratives of journeys are thereafter relevant when describing their collective identities.

The dominant voice in this narrative has been developed through time by those of the first generation of arrival, who generalised first of all on a shared experience of journeys to exile among all Eritreans in Milan. Collective memories among Eritreans in Milan stress the unity of the community through the experience of exile, while tending to divide the community into generations of arrival, with narratives arguing that different generations had different journey experiences which then became makers of the different generations themselves. Differences normally follow Eritrean internal political tensions and divisions in the past and in the present. These differences in the past were not overtly attributed to these political divisions by my informants, who instead spoke as if journeys had an effect on the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in the community in Milan. They mostly spoke vaguely about "the liberation struggle", omitting which side they supported, as if "unity" had always been

voiced by one front. During the course of the journey, and the subsequent formation of narratives around it, Eritreans have given a specific, and uniform, political meaning to their flight, which reflects present tensions and does not portray past ones. Therefore, although the first generation of migrants portrays Eritrean nationalism as a single phenomenon, there have in fact been many nationalist movements in Eritrea and abroad.

Trajectories echo the latter statement. Although differences exist, the generalised journey to exile is included in this idealised collective unity: everybody is Eritrean because they share the experience of a journey to exile. In this narrative the journey is some kind of ritual, often frightening and painful, through which one becomes part of the Eritrean diaspora and, in this specific case, an Eritrean in Milan. The worldwide Eritrean diaspora recognises itself in their shared movement from their troubled nation to other places in the world. Their nation is a constant thought and terrain for a shared identity, but is lived through the exiled identity which is perceived differently from the Eritrean identity of those who "stayed back home".

Journeys as a transnational ritual

Stevenson (1988) described the experience of Yemeni migrants as a ritual of passage, on the basis of Van Gennep (1909) and Victor Turner (1967 and 1969) conceptual tools. He included the departure and the time spent for the journey's preparation as "separation"; the stay in another country (often Saudi Arabia or the Persian Gulf) is described as "transition", with the related inequalities the migrant suffers in his ambiguous position; and return ceremonies as "incorporation". Each individual goes through the migration experience (ritual) to redefine his relationship in society. I follow the way in which Van Aken (2005) analyses the Egyptian migration process to Jordan, using Stevenson's argument in connection to migration but changing the strength of comparison with "as if it were a ritual" instead of assuming it is one. The ritual of passage is analysed on the one hand as a part of the emic interpretation of the

Eritrean migration process, on the other as an academic concept used to understand the change in individual and collective identity through the journey.

Both Stevenson and Van Aken worked on men migrating to earn enough to pay their dowry, celebrate their marriage and finally return to their home country with a redefined status. The ritual is here assumed as the whole process of migrating and returning; it is the migration experience in all its phases to build up new social statuses at home. The case of people like the Eritreans is different. For people we can define as exiles or diasporic, it is the journey in itself that we may refer to as some kind of ritual, redefining the status of the individual both at home and abroad. In the light of the ritual literature (Bell 1992, Bloch 1992, Bourdieu 1990, Dirks 1991, Gellner D. 1999, Mills 2003, Turner V. 1967, 1969, Van Gennep 1909, Whitehouse 1996 etc), the journey becomes a maker of a different type of identity, with the departure from the home country as the "separation", the encountered borders as "liminal space" or transition phase and the final integration in the diaspora and the community in Milan as "incorporation".

The analogy of the rite of passage starts with comparing the migrant's imagery, while preparing the journey, as part of the separation phase. In this phase, the person starts leaving behind his or her present status by imagining the future. Saad (1998) forwards an interesting issue in relation to time and place. She argues that the perception of the self in relation to the real and imagined world changes in the migrant's mind. Migration (labour migration) stretches across time to depart from the present and to focus on the future. In the migrant's time chart, the past coincides with the familiar and the controlled environment which is often related to a feeling of suffocation and lack of hope; the latter is completely distinct from the vision of the future as the outside world, which is instead related to an imaginary of the unknown, full of promise and apprehension.

Those Eritreans in Milan who arrived before the nineties told me that they came here with the intent of earning enough money to go back and fight for liberation. Many who have been here since the seventies say the journey had not been imagined as one-way. Most people

had the intention of returning but the historical circumstances[7], the unforeseen difficulties they found abroad and the building of a life here, constituted them as exiles and they became part of the one million Eritreans in the world-wide scattered diaspora. The preconceptions of wealth and security abroad, and the desire to go and come back with another status, or simply another wealth, exist in people's minds, so that disappointment is incorporated in the individual's opinion of the self and others as failure or incapability. On the one hand, the pre-conception about the Eritrean diaspora, as the wealthy and free "other", and on the other hand, the collective imaginary of a promising future are part of the migrant's separation phase; these pre-conceptions and imageries of time and space never completely leave the migrant identity, but build up throughout the passage to finally become part of the narrative of the self in Milan and when returning to Eritrea to visit family and friends.

The transition phase includes the encountered borders and the continuous change of status while finding visa permits. This limbo stage of the journey may be shorter or longer depending on the journey itself and on the speed in which one may seek and achieve integration into the existing community. For example, the newcomers are described as still in this stage of the passage to exile. Until people are integrated in the community and have shown to be capable of supporting themselves and their families, and maybe going back home to visit with tokens showing their new status, they continue to be referred to as being in this liminal stage. They are neither "at home", nor "exiled".

The ceremonies marking the shift and inclusion are, in Milan and among the diaspora, celebrations like the Eritrean Festival, the National Day of Liberation, political demonstrations, religious ceremonies and national festivities. They are not ceremonies celebrating the inclusion of individuals, but keep the community united. The Eritrean newcomers who are not included in the community do attend these events, but they are

---

7 The liberation war lasted longer than expected and the second conflict broke out.

never actively participating or interacting with the previous generations of arrival. They are still in the shadow, not celebrating the community but hanging out among themselves.

When people go back home and then return to Milan, all the people closest to them expect them to prepare a feast with all the goods brought back from Eritrea and this is part of what may be defined as incorporation ceremonies. Even these more individualistic feasts on return are ceremonies releasing the tensions of social change, and celebrating collective incorporation into a diaspora which is constantly looking at and keeping alive the Eritrean nation and tradition.

Stevenson argues that the individual experience of migration can no longer remain in the private domain when shared by two thirds of the population. Migration, thus, becomes incorporated in the structure of society. The migration ritual, for Stevenson, not only changes the people that undergo it, but the whole society. To support his argument, he includes examples like the migrant's detachment from the extended family, the shared identity of the returnees who during the stay abroad cease to be 'Amran peasants and become Yemenis. Stevenson, thus, reinforces the concept of ritual as a mechanism facilitating social change and the related ceremonies releasing tensions. His description of the structural transformation brought by the migrants' change of status in Yemeni society, can also apply to the Eritrean exiles. One fourth of the Eritrean population is abroad. The structure of the nation, therefore, had to change accordingly.

Transnational identities: the "Lebanese" and the "Libyans"

As I was talking with the Eritrean Orthodox priest in English, Tesfay arrived. "Did you know Tesfay is Sudanese? He speaks English and Arabic very well!" the priest said, warning me the chorister would understand our conversation. Tesfay smiled. The joke was about him being a member of the Orthodox Church and the Sudan an Islamic country. The "Sudanese" label was connected to a childhood entangled between the Sudan and Eritrea; it reflected the

importance of places in that symbols attached to them intersect or stand out from the meanings of Eritrean identity. During a celebration of the Orthodox Church a woman was described by Fzum, a consulate official, as "Arabian" because she had lived in Saudi Arabia, but also because she was selling gold and lottery tickets. Both definitions play on the past link of the ELF in Islamic countries and the latter underlines the economic dependency that the ELF had with such countries. Eritreans also define their identity according to where they lived before arriving in Milan, as if their identity absorbs places. Carter's (2003) example of the Dinka man who called his son "Khartoum" after his experience of imprisonment in the capital shows exactly this kind of thought where an experience becomes the maker of an identity, in this case so strong that the son was named after it. Places, for Eritreans, are many things: they signify individual lives and history in becoming narratives of the self. Places are meaningful because, being connected to individual and collective experiences, they make history and identity. Different trajectories lead to exile, but the journey is not narrated as a neutral experience; on the contrary it is cited to judge ways of being Eritrean.

The journey shapes a status among Eritreans through an implicit perception of generations of arrival and their different trajectories. Journeys are personal experiences, but they cannot avoid being intertwined with Eritrean, Italian and world history. They are personal and historical experiences, but they are also political in that they are decisions linked with the political situation in Eritrea and in the world. The mode of undertaking the journey adds ideas of status to this puzzle. Everyone is recognised through his or her journey: the year, trajectory, duration, reasons for leaving and arriving, and the means used to conclude the journey.

The "Lebanese" provide an emblematic case in Milan. These Eritreans reached Italy in the late 1980s while there was a civil war in Lebanon.

> The Lebanese arrived for the Bologna Festival with a tourist visa. The community helped them integrate in Milan. We helped them by giving them a place to sleep, which at the beginning was the community hall itself, organised so that they could have a provisional accommodation. Then we further helped them find better locations and jobs. (fieldnotes:

informal interview with Dawit)

The journey of these Lebanese was well organised. Everyone is proud of this story and the Lebanese are a generation that makes Eritreans feel collectively a community. It is a memory of the golden age when Eritreans around the world were united by a dream of liberty and unity, supporting the EPLF liberation movement. It portrays Eritreans in Milan as a generous and welcoming community. After twenty years, those fifty Eritreans are still called "the Lebanese" in the narratives and memories of the generation that lived through that period of exile. Through this memory and narrative, the Lebanese remain heroes who crossed the Mediterranean, fooled the Italian government with a tourist visa, chose to stay in Milan and were integrated into the existing community. The community, for its part, by accepting them, created a record of dynamic Eritreanness, open to the Mediterranean and the world, and kept alive its close link with the liberation movement. Their journey is closely connected to the Eritrean festival, organised by the EPLF activists and held in Bologna until 1991. The festival still sustains meanings linked to the EPLF exiles' efforts to sponsor the liberation.

In these narratives Milan has become the Eritrean centre of hospitality and organisation, one of the most active political centres for the EPLF, and a major sponsor in terms of collecting money to send to Eritrea. Not only individuals but also bars and restaurants were closely linked with the movement: one restaurant and bar was owned by the EPLF and its income was sent to support the cause. The memories of this period do not necessarily recall the Eritrean bureaucratic and political apparatus, but the popular, or more precisely populist, spirit which brings together past and present through narratives. The narrative of the golden age is celebrated through the individual actions and heroic performances that form the community, and it perpetuates the memory of the struggle. The case of the Lebanese is an iconic example, as are the descriptions of those people who dedicated their life to the liberation narrated by Agostino Tabacco (2001) in his book *Bologna: per non dimenticare* (*Bologna: Not to Forget*).

Narratives of group experiences of journeys are again in play with the story of the "Libyans" who escaped from the recent war (1998–2000). These youngsters have various definitions within the community, but their identities are formulated by reference to movement. They are the "Libyans", so called because they often stayed in Libya for a period before arriving in Milan. They are denominated "new ones" or "boat people" following Italian definitions of illegal migrants, or "Asmarini" (from Asmara) by the second generation. Being a Libyan entails reasons for leaving which are connected to the recent conflict with Ethiopia. Their departure is perceived as a flight from the Eritrean government, and they are seen as deserters from a war for the survival of the nation. I asked Fzum, one of the few *Shaebia* (warriors) in Milan, about the difference between the flight of the previous generation and that of the most recent one. He said:

> The first fled from the Ethiopian domination, the second from the Eritrean government. The first were refugees, these are deserters, and deserters are criminals for all nations. So were those in Italy during the war. (May 2003)

For Fzum, who had fought with the EPLF in the liberation war since he was 13 years old, their flight is a negation of the collective effort of the Front: "What did I risk my life for, if they do not even want to fight for the endurance of Eritrean freedom?" Moreover the new generation of deserters is unacceptable to most of those who, from exile, paid for the liberation.

The Italian media and the political rhetoric that criminalises movement from south or east of "Fortress Europe" influence the narrative around their journey. Their journey is thus also interpreted as illegal. The boats on which Eritreans of this generation arrived departed from Libya and landed in Sicily and the nearby islands; my informants used the same boats that were cited in the media. The denomination "Libyans" underlines how earlier generations connect the opinion of the newly arrived to this specific passage to Italy. Amin, one of the community "leaders", active in the consulate and in Eritrean political affairs, hinted at why the Libyans have an outcast status: "The Eritrean community always helps Eritrean newcomers or those who are in need, except for these". In reply to the question "These

who?" he explained: "Them, the Libyans, the newcomers. They haven't been helped because even we don't like how they arrive and why". He added that not only did the new ones desert the army, but they also chose the wrong trajectory and arrived at a moment when Italy was experiencing high unemployment and closure towards new migrants. Their journey was thus "badly organised".

The Libyans' journey has thus become a narrative related to a generation of deserters rather than exiles. Their experiences have been excluded from the collective memory of the community in Milan and especially from an ontological discourse about the Eritrean diaspora. In the community's narratives, the Libyans are not heroes nor do they embed a positive presence in the community and the Italian system. When, in different contexts, I asked for clarification about these new arrivals, their experiences were dismissed. For example, the numbers asking for asylum were played down, and claims about abuse of their human rights were dismissed. During the preparation for the Marian celebration of the Orthodox Church, Rahel even said "these new ones are not Eritreans!" The exclusion of the Libyans was perceptible within the community. These youngsters used to hang around at the corners of the streets in Porta Venezia (the "Eritrean" area in Milan), sitting at separate tables in Eritrean bars, or going to Ethiopian, Italian, Egyptian and Chinese bars to avoid the judgement of their fellow countrymen and women. Their visible exclusion reveals a sensitive issue for the community.

The narrative around them is opposite to that concerning the Lebanese; their presence underlines political fragmentation and confusion in the community. Through the presence of the new Eritrean asylum-seekers the community is confronted with questions about the social and political implications of being Eritrean in the world and in Milan. Before the arrival of these newcomers, being Eritrean in Milan was linked to strength, unity and perseverance, and was recognised as such in Italian civil society. Left-wing movements, squatters and municipal councils like that of Bologna, supported their socialist struggle. Now the presence of people asking for asylum from the Eritrean government, formed by former EPLF leaders,

has implications for the collective Eritrean identity: the Eritrean government is often criticised by the Italian left-wing media for its disregard for human rights and involvement in the recent war but supported by the then right-wing Berlusconi government**.** All this is jeopardising the meaning of Eritrean history and the present political situation[8]. It is also casting light on the change in the political views of the Eritrean community as a whole, regarding Italian affairs.

Shared Bodily Experiences

Journeys entail discourses on the self as individuals and as a community; their narrations distinguish groups of arrival and departure, and among the community they describe its history and its divisions. Journeys are also shared bodily experiences, creating communities of memory among Eritreans in Milan. For instance, the Libyans have attached a community discursive description to their journey. These newly arrived Eritreans also share a common path through memories of their unforgettable rough experiences which unifies them. But the collective description of them, among Eritreans in Milan, is very different from the narratives one hears from the new ones themselves. Theirs are lived experiences, their explanations for leaving the country are not so ideological as the collective descriptions, but are more down to earth, entangled with life matters, like the boundaries between life and death, and the outcome of survival (see Jackson 2008). Their memories are trenched with verbally unexplained strong feelings like fear, hope, confusion, rage and discomfort. Their journey towards exile is still lived. It is part of their ongoing experience and thus not discursively shaped (also Williksen 2004). They forward personal descriptions of why they left and what they wanted, but not about the politics of the journey and its implications for their present status.

8 For more insight into Eritrean transnational politics see Ali et al 2001a and Koser 2003.

These feelings are rarely explained, not only because there are no places where this type of description is welcomed or understood, but also because these young asylum seekers find it difficult to forward them to anyone and to themselves[9]. When I asked them to tell me their life history or to explain all the various phases of their journey, most of them refused. Tesfay said, "I'll tell you when I'm sorted"; another young man told me he had a diary of his experience but did not want to make his experiences public yet, because he was dealing with some issues with the consulate and did not want to have problems with the Eritrean government. Their status as deserters, among the community in Milan and in Eritrea, and their other statuses as asylum seekers, clandestine immigrants and boat people in Italy, certainly enhance their feelings of insecurity and their lack of discursive explanation for their journey, life history and their present situation. The liminal phase seems to be demonstrated in this almost polluted status, which shapes their Milanese experience and their relationship with the established community in negative terms. Their liminality may be a reason why they are not attempting to discursively shape their past and present. Are they thus awaiting to overcome the phase and enter the further one of "incorporation" in the existing community with the new status of insiders? If the incorporation of the new ones takes place, will that be the moment when Tesfay will be "sorted" and the other young man have social, economic and political stability and be able to make his diary of the journey public?

Even though their present political persona was not discursively shaped, some insights came out of day-to-day interaction and informal conversations, which often contained details of the past and the journey. It was through some of my closer informants that I became aware of the world of Eritrean asylum seekers. They justified their flight by reference to the war and rarely openly through a political critique of Eritrean affairs. Tedros fled when he found out that a friend of his had died in the war not long after recruitment, and another who had refused to join the army had disappeared. He left during the night, without the knowledge of

9 The voice of the new ones is not silent anymore in Milan and there are interesting ways of resisting the lacking welfare state and its misbehaviour, also in Rome see Triulzi's new work (2005) groups of mostly Habesha and other African refugees seekers are (being) active.

his family and friends, so that he could not be traced. "I didn't want to die", he told me. Solomon fled because he said he would have been forced to join the army although he was a Jehovah's Witness. Jordanos, expelled from Ethiopia with her family, fled from Eritrea because she was expected to enrol in a war against the country where she had lived all her life.

Tesfay said he wanted to study and not to fight. He deserted the army and fled with some of his companions through Eritrean territory all the way to the Sudan, where he had family members who helped him get to Libya with his sister. In Libya he called another sister living in the USA who was supporting him economically. She had already told him not to move from the Sudan because she was trying to get him a visa for Italy or the USA. When she understood that they were proposing to attempt to go by boat, she tried to stop them saying she would no longer support their journey. She was scared they would die at sea, as many do. Tesfay was sure God was on their side and in under two days they had found a boat and left for Italy.

The strategy his sister wanted them to follow shows the different trajectories of journeys between the previous generations and the more recent one. Previous migrants would arrive in the Sudan or other accessible countries, where they would find more or less legal visas, following the rules of the movement system of that time.[10] Eritreans who migrate today find the rules far more restrictive and are often forced to risk their lives on the sea or in the desert. These Eritreans follow a dangerous route. It is an exhausting and very expensive experience. Sometimes the journey to Italy is made in weeks, but more often it takes months or years. Tesfay was helped financially by his diasporic family, his was an "easy" journey lasting less than three weeks. Tedros, who often had to stop and find the money to continue the journey, spent three years trying to get to Italy. They both succeeded, though others did

10 Border practices through time are analysed by Ferme (2004). Handlin (1973) is also interesting for an understanding of systems of movement through time and their effects.

not. For example, the son of my informant Haddas, who had spent 2,000 Euros for him to come to Italy to help her maintain the family, was sent back to Eritrea by the Maltese government after his boat landed on the wrong shore.

Once in Milan, Tesfay found himself a niche in the Orthodox Church where he won people's affection. He accentuated the religious character of his identity. Among the newly arrived, Tesfay's experience was based on his religious belief and he was therefore more accepted, at least by the Orthodox Church community. In Milan Tesfay lived with the older sister with whom he had completed the previous journey and was in a more stable and safer situation than others like Tedros, who slept in hostels for the homeless and hung around in the streets and bars during the day. Tesfay did not, however, want to live on his family, and after waiting a year he departed for London to start a foundation course and continue the university curriculum he had had to interrupt in Asmara due to the outbreak of the war. Tedros, however, after three years in Italy, managed to receive a stay-permit for "humanitarian reasons" (*aiuti umanitari*), which he would have to change into a work permit after one year. But to receive a work permit one needs to find a job and pay taxes to the Italian state.

Tedros and Tesfay, like many others, experienced different journeys which nevertheless connect in a "community of memory" (Malkki 1995). The new arrivals know each other, but most of all they recognise their shared trajectories and stories. Although they hang around together as an Eritrean group, each of them knows people from other African countries whom they met on the way, as in this case:

> I offered Tedros an ice-cream in Sesto, where I lived. [...] While enjoying the refreshment on this boiling hot summer evening, he saw a man and asked me to wait there because he thought he knew him. He went up to him and they started speaking Arabic. The man didn't recognise Tedros at the beginning, but then I saw his face light up when he realised where they had met. He was with another person and the three of them were introducing each other and talking. Tedros was pleased about the encounter and came back to me saying that he had crossed the Mediterranean with him. They had been on the same boat all the way from Libya to Sicily. He asked me to find somewhere to sit so that he could tell me about his

experience. He was adamant about telling me straight away all he could remember because just then he had fresh memories.[11] [...] He told me about his fear of dying and his desire to survive. It was a tense journey all the way through. He remembered those who helped and those who were violent. He remembered the fear of the sea that made him wet himself and he was sick all the way. The food got wet from sea water and he didn't have anything to eat for days and days. His description then turned back to the desert. He said there is nothing more frightening than the sea and the desert. "If something goes wrong, you are dead and nobody will come to save you". (fieldnotes, August 2003)

All the new ones knew each other in the same way, as every Eritrean of the first generations knows each other. They know the trajectories and past stories which they compare and share. Although the new ones hang around together as an Eritrean group, each one of them knows other people from other African countries whom they met on the way, like in the case of Teodros meeting the Egyptian young man in Sesto. With Tesfay and others, we often happened to meet people who were not Eritrean, and when I asked them how they knew the people they were greeting, the answer was nearly always "from the journey we made together". Thus, this community of memory often includes other people whom they met during the journey, who are not always Eritrean; it also includes the people with whom they share certain types of memory, even with those who arrived before or after them. They share the knowledge of people who have lived in Libya. The system they followed was the same, with the same organisations of human smugglers[12].

11 Teodros and I had a close friendship but it took him a whole year to find words to describe his journey experience. Yet it was not only intimacy, but the chance encounter with the man who was on the boat with him which wakened his memory of the journey and opened his world of movement to my sight.

12 Many refugees seekers are now getting active together and their togetherness is connected to their shared experience of the journey and the following sense of affinity. The present activism is based on this community of memory shaped first in a subtle way and then like a loud scream.

Narratives and experiences of journeys

Journalists of every political stance spoke about "Genny the racket queen", a 25-year-old Eritrean woman, leader of the human smugglers in Libya. In an article by A. Bolzoni the newspaper *La Repubblica* (24 October 2003) came up with this title: "In trappola Madame Genny la negriera del Mediterraneo" ("Madame Genny the slave merchant of the Mediterranean caught in a trap"). It was a piece of news that 'exoticised' the African woman as beautiful and dangerous. The newspaper *Il Manifesto* (25 October 2003) was more focused on the international structures (Centri Permanenza Temporanea) wanted by the Italian government in Libya, which would develop from already set surveillance apparatuses, such as the Italian investigators who had reported "Madame Genny" to the Tripoli police by whom she was arrested.

The first generation was disappointed that an Eritrean woman could be involved in criminal activities of such kind and be front-page news. The Eritrean consulate and embassy got involved: it was bad news for the Eritrean image in Italy and in the world at large. The government of Eritrea, together with the diaspora's political activists, felt the need to demonstrate that they were part of the cooperation against illegal migration.

The new arrivals thought the way this story was portrayed was ridiculous. Many of them personally knew Genny and said she was a really nice young woman, a naïve person who had not thought of the consequences of working for an illegal activity involved in smuggling. She was not the "boss", but worked as the contact between Eritreans, who wanted to go to Italy, and the Libyan organisation. For the new ones, this was not a bad story because of the opinion that people might have about Eritreans and the community; for them it was bad news because Genny was part of their memories and experiences; they were upset that she was imprisoned. They had used the same system that the Eritrean, Italian and Libyan authorities, the Eritrean community and the media were condemning. Tedros told me that he himself was nearly involved in this activity since he could not find any other type of job in Libya and needed the money to get to Italy. Even on the border between Eritrea and the

Sudan, in order to obtain a lift on a four-wheel-drive to Khartoum, he was offered an exchange by some smugglers: if he found ten people who needed the lift, he would not have to pay. Tedros accepted, and this is how he got to Khartoum, where he stayed for nearly a year. All the young Eritreans who have recently arrived in Milan share this type of experience in one way or another.

The illegal status of movement and the closure of the borders between the various states affects migrants who end up by putting their lives at risk. Mebrat Alem argued that Italy, after all these years, is still a country closed to immigration. Legal and regular access is impossible; people have to enter through dangerous routes. This lack of safety and recognition "is politically played out in a mortifying way". She stressed that it is a luxury but also a right to be able to live in one's own country, as it is a right to be able to travel and migrate. This is how Mebrat described these recent journeys:

> We arrived at a second war in 1998, after 30 years of liberation war, […] and the youngsters flee in order to avoid becoming cannon fodder, and having a predefined destiny: not to aspire to study and create a family, to grow up in a context of normality, that we rarely know in our continent, but to grow up knowing that our destiny is to embrace a shotgun and to garrison some border. It seems something from another world!

Every life is connected among the various communities of memory. But they are also separated, since the first generation does not know what the new ones know, and vice versa. Different groups of arrivals have different discourses running, and among the first generation emotions have become more discursive and ideological. Therefore, although they could be shared in terms of their similarity of exile experiences, they are not completely recognised as such. There are major political implications and ideological community discourses that stop the memory from being shared among different arrivals. Journeys to exile might be shared experiences of flight, but nevertheless are partially recognised as such only by those, like Mebrat, who have kept alive their former left-wing political affiliation. Even among those who recognise the right to migrate, the tensions arising around questions of political opposition create discourses of exclusion towards the newly arrived. The cases of the Libyans and Lebanese demonstrate that there are major political implications and

ideological community discourses preventing memories being shared among different arrivals. That the new ones have asked for political asylum increases the tension between those who fought to build the present Eritrean independent state and those who fled from it and officially condemned it by asking the Italian state for refuge. This moral judgement annihilates their flight experience and hardship. Narratives of previous generations are incorporated into nationalistic political discourses that often exclude the experiences of the new arrivals and their claims for migrants' rights in Italy.

Conclusions

At the end of each journey people gain experiences that constitute strata of themselves, changing or adding elements of previous formations. The experiences of displacement and the attached feelings alternate and change but yet remain as memories and narratives which constitute identities through time and space, even when the journey is over. The implications journeys have for Eritrean identity formation in Milan do not converge in one single manifestation. Nevertheless there are two elements that create a totalising type of identity, where it is easy for Eritreans of the first generation of arrival to generalise on their different migratory experiences. The first meaning of the journey is that Eritreans in Milan perceive themselves as exiles and are therefore united by a shared experience of dislocation that essentially starts with a journey and is consolidated through the impossibility of returning to Eritrea. The second meaning is that the collective experience of the journey towards exile is the fundamental matrix through which their "Eritreanness" is strengthened. Exile is thus the first all-encompassing level of identity; the second is formed through previous exile experiences, shaped through previous sojourns, previous journeys to somewhere else, adding another layer to one's identity once arriving in Milan. Once the experience is overcome, it conceals the individual in his/her becoming Eritrean in the world. One becomes, on the one hand, one of the million Eritreans scattered around the globe and, on the other hand, one of the few thousand Eritreans living in Milan.

Nevertheless depending on generations and on trajectories, political identities become evident within a set of narratives shaped by the first generation of arrival. If the journey does not convey its original meaning, these totalising classifications break off, flake, mutate and become more complicated. Some journeys are heroic and others are cowardly, some are pious and others sinful. If the journeys involve some "negative" variation on the theme of exile, as in the case of the Libyans, then it is considered by the "community" almost as a sin, a trait through which one may be considered a "bad Eritrean" and sometimes "no longer Eritrean". In Milan, narratives shaped around journeys entail distinctions dividing the Eritrean community and shaping the statuses of individuals and groups. The shared experiences of journeys create nuclei of socialisation and actual generations of Eritreans in Milan, some kind of communities of memory. Performances and narratives reveal unities and divisions and bring to light conflicting social and political identities within the community and in a transnational context.

Not only do these stories speak about journeys and create categories of those who have accomplished them, they also describe the Eritrean community, in its elaboration of the past in the present, its fears and its hopes for the future. Narratives of journeys also interpret the history of the diaspora and the Eritrean liberation movement and reproduce Italian discourses on illegal movement. Narratives have shown dynamics of collective identities and memories, of what the community needs to remember and what to forget, thus shaping the identity with particular symbols and motivations at different times (see Connerton 1989; Pratt 2002b). The examples in this chapter have shown how similar experiences of flight could converge in the same collective memory, but do not. They could unify the experiences of the previous generation of exiles fighting in Italian society for their rights as refugees with the present one struggling for what the previous one did not achieve. The focus on Eritrean national issues and the development of an exiled/diasporic identity also reduces possibilities of claims on a broader scale, such as rights to migrate, or to receive asylum from difficult situations.

The exclusion of the newly arrived from the collective Eritrean identity shows how the political tensions in Eritrea are transferred to Milan. After 30 years of fighting for independence, the present President of Eritrea is accused of denying freedom of speech and human and democratic rights; journalists and experts on the history of Eritrea speak about dictatorship. The exiles find it difficult to respond to these accusations and, in reaction, they elaborate on a past which legitimates the present situation and even the last war. The victimisation of Eritrea as a small young state that all the other bordering countries want to occupy, becomes a context to define allies and enemies even among the Eritreans in Milan.

In an interview with Fzum, I asked him how the newcomers' situation might change. He answered "when they are able to pay their taxes and be useful to themselves and others, they will become like all the others". Following this narrative, the incorporation phase of the transnational ritual of journeys includes paying taxes and being independent, useful to oneself and to others, especially those back home. Moreover Fzum's statement also implies accepting the present state of affairs and the establishment discourses. It seems that by sharing the exiled identity and its narratives the new ones could overcome their liminal phase and become integrated in the community. The dominant narrative underlines the liminality of the new generations, as if it could be overcome.

If we were to accept the ritual metaphor, which the first generation often forwards and that other migrationists have pointed out for other cases, it would surely be meaningful to understand their experience of this ritual as part of a conflict against a fixed way of being Eritrean and of being Eritrean in Milan through their very passage to exile. Thus their silence over their political situation could be analysed as a way of overthrowing the dominant paradigms reproduced. Because this passage is taking many years of the youth's lives, an argument could be developed saying that their ritual is taking longer to be fulfilled because they are actually overthrowing the set rules and meanings behind it. If so, their silence and ambiguity over the present state of things both here and in Eritrea would be analysed as part of a resistance to the constituted paradigms.

The real problem lies inside the notion of liminality itself, since it presuppose the new ones' exclusion from the community as part of a rite of passage to become Eritreans in Milan. By assuming they are going through a process of change of status, the dominant narrative annihilates their experiences which are real and grounded in a world structure of movement and control. Ritual in this very case is a metaphor undermining experiences that go well beyond a change of status; the experience of awaiting stay permits is not to be simply understood as a liminal aspect of the route to integration. The fact that the experiences of negotiation with the world structure denying movement across borders are not shared as common experiences by all generations of arrival on the bases of human rights and equality, diminishes the metaphor of ritual and undermines the ritual process of social change. To analyse journeys as transnational rituals would thus reproduce a metaphor which, in reality, is undermining the experiences and the structural violence affecting migrants. The newcomers are not going through a liminal phase which will bring them to an integration both into the former Eritrean community and in Italian society, but they are experiencing the constraints of a structure that denies such access, negotiating with its reproduction in the Italian and Eritrean dominant discourses. This latter approach leads the analysis more towards dynamics between the "established and the outsiders" in Elias and Scotson's (1965) terms rather than some sort of continuum of narratives as the first generation would like to believe, by placing the newcomers in a ritual phase.

Chapter 3

The festival in the time-warp

What is history? In people's imaginary history is often something one finds in books, or hears from the elderly. It is referred to a distant past disconnected from the present. Nevertheless the present is often peceived as genealogical and continuative from the past. My informants showed how the narratives of the past, historical accounts, need a careful anthropological gaze. This chapter intends to forward a study of history seen from today, from the role it has in people's lives, to reconnect the past to the present and vice-versa. So the history of Eritrea is analysed in the way people speak about the milestones of a collective past portrayed especially by the first generation of arrival. The oral history side by side with written history and practices of commoration show how alliances have changed and how this affected the memories of past collective socio-cultural and political activities in Milan. The analysis on what is important today about the past continues by looking at the official subjects of history and the diasporic one. To show how changes are three-dimensional I also felt it important to speak about the Italian-Eritrean intellectual and political relations, which drastically changed in the last decade.

The first question about history relates to the subjects. Who started the discourses that lie beneath the present Eritrean identity? Who produced and who re-produces them? The pronoun "we" describes the subjects of the political history of Eritrea, relates to the Foucauldian and Marxian debate on the subjects of dominant linguistic formations and practices. Within the Eritrean liberation movement, which today is often portrayed as unified and harmonious, there were a few groups in conflict, all of which were thought and fomented by an "elite" of exiles. In fact the findings among the Eritrean community

contradict Clifford's (1994) argument that diasporas do not work on nation building. Instead, as Bisharat (1997) argues on Palestinian exiles there is the tendency to build narratives of exile and home which are more or less ideological depending on the circumstances. Making sense of exile, in the Eritrean case, ended up in a strong form of nation-building from abroad.

It is therefore clear that the exiles had a leading position in the liberation struggle, but in this chapter I analyse how this affects the present of those who did not return. I thus end asking if it is true that today the Eritrean government "*is* the diaspora" and is formed by people who were part of the exiled EPLF activists, who thought about the nation from abroad, who made it economically possible.

> Extended periods of resistance in exile (or in the maquis) result in the construction of new identities revolving around a 'lost' or 'betrayed' nation. The task of producing the body of knowledge that serves as markers for diasporic states begins with the formalisation of mythical prophecies or oral histories handed down by previous generations (Mertus 1999). A significant feature is the vision of the 'return', replete with narratives of the collective response to victimisation by those exercising hegemonic power (Conaway 1998). The quest for a nation of one's own and the reappropriation of one's physical locus is formulated as the right of a people to struggle for self-determination and protection from future victimisation. Though diasporic states have occasionally come and gone throughout history, during the twentieth century this unusual type of state emerged most clearly in the Middle East and Africa. (Iyob 2000: 661-662)

During fieldwork I noticed how collective memories were "performed" not only in private lives but also in specific commemorative events such as the Eritrean festival. The Eritrean "community" in Milan has a series of cyclical commemorative events happening either around politics or around religion. The Orthodox Church celebrates Christmas, the New Year, the holy cross and the Virgin Mary. Other types of events are also organised around life cycles such as baptisms, weddings and funerals and are normally celebrated in the religious sphere. Every year there is also a celebration of the liberation of Eritrea and a festival. The festival is a case that gives a multilayered example of how narratives are reproduced and negotiated during and through commemorative events. It shows the perception of past identities in relation to the present and vice versa and how national identity is experienced

now. I produce an analysis of their discourses and practices inside the time-warp case study of the festival in order to point to the exiles as important subjects in the history and to ask if they are active agents of the present of the Eritrean nation state.

Memory: History of Eritrea from people's views

This is an extract from one of the interviews carried out during the 2003 Festival with two key people: the author Agostino Tabacco and Abraham, a man in his seventies, and one of the pillars of the Eritrean political community in Milan. The interview starts with a toast with *Mies*, a *Habesha* alcoholic drink made of honey (in Amharic it is called *Taj*), which the women had made in Milan to be sold during the event. Besides Abraham and Agostino Tabacco, my partner Sabino, who was also making a video recording of the festival, was present.

> Agostino: here's health!
> Sabino: to the new generations then!
> Abraham: to our health! And the rest of the world be damned! The world is worn out by the damned war: war here and war there. We Eritreans looked for it and we fought it, the war. We defended our borders. They[13] accused us of being invaders. In Africa the borders have been traced by colonialism. It is not like here in Europe where it was through internal contrasts. In our continent, English, Italian and German colonialism arrived: the Berlin treaty 1885. We were separated from Ethiopia, we were occupied by Italy from then. For the first time we were formed as a nation: 124 thousand square kilometres, 3 million inhabitants, a central government, administered by Italians. After that we started to recognise each other, those who live down in the lowland and those who live in the highland. All this thanks to Italian colonialism. But it was not only in our case, also in the whole of Africa the borders were traced by colonialism, in our country precisely from 1890. We were born as a nation under the Italian nation up until 1941. After the Second World War, the winners, the British, the Americans, the so-called allies, the British fought the battle of Benevento and they defeated General Lorenzini and occupied Eritrea. Thus the United Nations left us to be administered by the British until '52. After 52, our future came under discussion before the

13 They: the Ethiopians or Wayane

United Nations. Then, at that time, America had already grown as a super power, thus a political philosophy had begun that first of all follows the interest of the nations, more precisely of the nation, then comes the interest of the people. So there discussion arose about contrasts, the first contrast: on the one hand Italy, Czechoslovakia, Russia, China, at the time, of De Gaspari; on the other hand America and the others. Some said, let's annex it to Ethiopia, others said let's leave it as a federation with Ethiopia for ten years[14]. In the end they followed the will of the Americans and we were forced to make a federation with Ethiopia, for ten years. Thus, before these ten years expired, the emperor annexed us through force and cancelled Resolution 350. So in 1961 we started the armed struggle. Sabino: the thirty-year war.

Abraham: 1st of September 1961, after thirty years of fighting, we won militarily, we were exalted, we got drunk and we said: "now, even if we have won over our enemies, we nevertheless have to let the Eritrean people decide for their own destiny. Let's have a referendum, for the sake of the sovereignty of a population[15]!" The United Nations agreed and the international observers arrived. 1993, April '93, 99 % of the population chose liberation. Then this war arrived, but this is not war, it's a suicidal war: it is not a war between two nations.[…] It comes from a profound hatred. They excluded 75 thousand Eritreans[16], they invaded us, they raped our women, destroyed our churches, the mosques; they destroyed the cemeteries of our martyrs[17], hatred …

Agostino: in comparison with the thirty-year-long war, the last two-year war, between 1998 and 2000, in proportion was much bloodier, regarding the deaths and about the meanness, if we want to say that. There was hatred also on an ethnic level, it became an ethnic issue, since it was not Ethiopia per se, since, OK, Meles is the president but in the end it was the Tigrayan people that attacked us, and then, on behalf of the nation, he covered up the issue like a smokescreen. In the end he was putting in the military and picking them from areas like, apart from the ones from Tigray, from Manahalaw, etcetera, Oromo, and he sent them directly to fight, without any training. They lost more than 120,000 of theirs…

Abraham: this is what they say, but there it is more than that. Our government announced last week: twenty thousand (Eritreans) dead, thirty thousand wounded. And do you know who are the ones that died? These ones, look these here, they are eighteen years old, like

14 This description of the debates around Eritrea's political destiny by external powers is one of the fundamental tokens in the government's arguments. It is an argument against external intrusion in Eritrean affairs that goes as far as shutting out every type of aid activity by international bodies such as the Red Cross and the UN. It is a reflex of the dynamics that the EPLF had set up against intrusion, especially Arab.

15 "Hafash" is the term for "people", a key concept during the liberation movement which continues to be present in the current Government slogans.

16 Before and during the recent war, the Ethiopian government expelled Eritreans living in Ethiopia. In this thesis there are several cases of people who had this fate and ended up in Milan (see Abbink 1998 on an analysis of the recent war).

17 The term martyrs refers to those who died in the wars (both wars) as fighters; those fighters who fought in the first liberation war are called Shaebia, a term which in turn denominates those of the EPLF liberation movement and the members of the present EPDJF government.

these also those who died, even in Milan there are many parents. Today, go and interview all these women: there is nobody that has not lost a family member. We did not want it, we had not wanted it. They forced us. Our president said, with pain, that we lost twenty thousand youths of ours, but we were forced for our survival, in the struggle for survival. In those areas, in the Horn of Africa, the logic of the force reigns, the biggest swallows the smallest. Djibuti is small but defended by France. Yemen, southern Yemen tried to invade us, the Sudan, and then Ethiopia, now, you were here yesterday, the representative of the government said: this is not a border dispute, careful, it is not a border dispute. It is a fight for survival, our enemies will not leave us in peace until they annex us, is there any justice in this world? No, there is no justice.

This interview really shows "the problem of history" and it points to how it becomes so emotionally charged. This is "the history of pain" through which Abraham, as many others did during fieldwork, describes all the various stages of the constitution of the Eritrean identity. He is sound in pointing out to the collective historical accounts of the development of the Eritrean identity. He recalls three very important points: colonialism, subjection to the Ethiopian dictatorship and the struggle for independence, and finally independence. The recent war is also included.

First of all, Abraham cites colonialism as the moment from which to begin recounting Eritrean identity, which is widely perceived as the starting point. He describes the Italian presence in Eritrea almost as the beginning of a new identity. This Eritrean perception of Italian colonialism is not due to a positive and effective Italian rule, but it is linked to the fact that Italian colonials drew the borders of what is now Eritrea. They are the same borderlines that were a great cause of dispute during the recent war with Ethiopia (1998-2001) and which the Italian government did not even bring to the peace table. Italian colonialism marks the birth of the Eritrean identity as Abraham puts it "…we started to recognise each other, those who live down in the lowland and those who live in the highland. All this thanks to Italian colonialism." The starting point is the arrival of the Italians that shaped the national identity by unifying the territory in one colony.

The period from the Italian conquest of Eritrea up to liberation is perceived as an illegitimate pregnancy, an inner development, carried out without consent. When "remembering" the

liberation war, Eritreans of the first generation, also with regards to age but mostly to arrival[18], see themselves as being part of it, part of the liberation movement. They refer to themselves as the subjects of it, as we can see from Abraham's words: "we" is both the exiles and the EPLF. They include the liberation movement as a part of their identity. This self-perception of the exiles is built around a social movement of the past and it is part of the narrated course of their history. It is a narrative continuum; the shift that the community is experiencing is still not included[19].

The second milestone in Eritrean history is the actual birth of the nation-state in 1991, officially registered in 1993 when the referendum was carried out, and the UN officially announced Eritrea as an independent nation-state. Interestingly, as Connerton argues, there must be a recollected beginning especially when a group, like the Eritreans, needs to shape identity "with a wholly new start" and "inaugurating a new calendar" (idib: 6). Eritreans literally changed their calendar from the Justinian one followed by the Ethiopians to the western Gregorian one. The birth of an independent Eritrea is perceived as the achieved goal of a people who had longed for it for thirty years. It is a democratic start, where "*hafash*", the people, decided to cluster themselves into a group (Eritrea), and out of another (Ethiopia). The recent war is included as the continuation of external intrusion into the country's affairs. It is alleged as the Ethiopian plan to invade, hurt, and violate Eritrea and its people. Eritreans are thus pictured as the victims of external powers: constantly challenged to face new conflicts. They see themselves as continuously struggling for the independence and survival of a small nation that bordering countries want to absorb.

---

18 Also see Arnone 2008 and the previous chapter.

19 This has been shown in the narratives in chapter 2.

Civic and ethnic nationalism

Even though today Eritrean history is narrated as a continuum in the memory of the exiles, in terms of an analysis of the constitution of identity the two wars had two completely opposite outcomes in terms of identity (and nation) building. The first war was a socialist struggle, a fight of some segments of the population, such as the organised networks of exiles, against the power not only of the Ethiopian military dictatorship, and before that of Haile Selassie's empire, but also against the subjection of the superpowers playing in the Cold War among themselves, increasingly "heating up" the wars in Africa. Although it is today spoken of as if it were, it was not a war "against Ethiopia"; the "enemy" was not so much the Ethiopian, and certainly not the Tigrayan population, but the uneven and subjugating power of the dictatorship (clearly seen in Sorenson 1990 on Eritreans in Canada). In fact liberation was achieved together with the other liberation movements in Ethiopia, such as the Oromo and the Tigrayans, all going against the Dergue; they thus all marched on Addis Ababa and tore apart the military regime. The last war instead increased an ethnic and national hatred which was less pronounced during the previous war. From Ambroso's thesis (1987), one can notice that in the past people attended each other's activities, in Italy and in Milan, while they would never do so today. Nowadays people divorce because of ethnicity; families collapse following the rhetoric of hatred brought in by the recent war.

Ignatieff (1994) argues there is a great difference between civil and ethnic nationalism. The first develops around ideals of society and produces politics of identity, which are interested in "civitas" and citizenship inside a common imagined community, the nation. In this case the nation is the terrain around which "the people" develop their belonging to a civic society. On the contrary, ethnic nationalism, as Ignatieff states, is based on ideas of difference and politics of identity focusing on origins and on blood and ethnic categories strengthening the idea of "a people". The Eritrean case of nation-building went through the first civic nationalism, while fighting for independence, to then fall into the latter during the

last decade while consolidating the nation. Nevertheless the Eritrean case is different from many other ethnic nationalisms because its leaders manage to conceal an ethnic supremacy and an ethnic conflict behind complex discourses of identity.

The use of the terms ethnic and civic nationalism is part of a heuristic approach to unfold the shifts found in Eritrean national identity the Milanese context, which are different to the examples given by Ignatieff himself. I am thus not referring to the classic reading of the terms as used to distinguish French republicanism from German *Volkreich* although the great resonance it gives allowed me to make use of it. Rather the distinction is between a form of international anti-colonial socialism on the one hand, and a particular understanding of nationalism Eritrean-style, which had deep rooted ideology of national solidarity but shifted after ethnic conflict broke out. Moreover with the 1998-2000 war, the Eritrean pluri-religious and pluri-ethnic nation-state demonstrated how the differences and tensions between Eritrean Tigrinya and the Ethiopian Tigrayan ethnic identities had become central to the identity of the nation itself. The government failed to deal with a small border contention in a peaceful way but started off a war which was not only experienced through the actual armed fight but resulted in a language of hatred towards the Northern Ethiopian ethnic group of the Tigrayans first and developed into a anti-Ethiopian feeling after.

In the new nationalist discourse, as noticed in Abraham's interview earlier in the chapter, the territorial imperative is the historical justification to the sacrifice of lives (Turton 1997); sovereignty is the political call; democratic regimes are not always the outcome of all nationalist movements even though they are often denominated as such. In German romantic nationalism "What gave unity to the nation, what made it a home, a place of passionate attachment, was not the cold contrivance of shared rights, but the people's pre-existing ethnic characteristics, their language, religion, customs and traditions" (Ignatieff 1994: 4). This statement coincides with how the present Eritrean nationalism is being shaped and may be compared with a past where "shared rights" was the slogan which brought the people, "*hafash*", together. Nevertheless, as Ignatieff stresses, common ethnicity does not

always create social cohesion or community, so national regimes that do not manage to create hegemony, using the Gramscian terminology, need to use force. In the Eritrean case and other cases such as the Ethiopian one, the government had to start an ethnic war to strengthen the nation. In this way the nation is built with bloodshed and with "hatred for the Ethiopian enemy and love for Eritrean similarities[20]" (Arnone 2003: 28). It can be stated that the first war was more of a war against the oppressive empire, a socialist fight for an independent state rather than simply a nation: it was for political, cultural and economic independence (clearly stated in the pamphlet by the Patrioti Eritrei in Italy 1976). The second was to build and maintain the national identity through fear. Politics is now reinforcing the idea of being a nation and fighting to keep that entity alive.

To do so, the produced and reproduced political discourse is focused on an "ethnic" problem, touching on an emotional tie, which has become historically very strong. The last war was between the Tigrayans and Tigrinyans, as Tekeste Negash and Tronvoll Kjetil (2000) discussed in the book "Brothers at War" which shows the close ties of the enemies. The words of hatred mostly refer to the ethnic enemy: *Agame* and *Wayane*. *Agame*[21] is the derogative Tigrinya word to underline the Tigrayans' lower social class, their connection to the soil, to dirt. In a private conversation, Ambroso said it is the equivalent of "terrone" the derogative word used by northern Italians for the southerners that were tied to the earth, "terra", the peasants. *Wayane* instead is the political word that describes those in power: the Tigrayans in power, the Ethiopian President Meles and his ministers, but also anybody who follows them, who has any type of connection to the government.

Thus the word Wayane was applied to every Ethiopian in Milan: "if they are here, they must be *Wayane*!" Fzum, my informant working in the consulate, said. "They would not be able to

---

[20] To stress similarities, Eritrean people emphasise on one ethnic group often referring to it as the "Eritrean" population. Nevertheless, in the narratives of who "we" are, there are eight ethnic groups.

[21] Agame is actually a small poor region of Tigray.

get here otherwise, they have to have good relations with the Ethiopian government otherwise they would not be here". The *Wayane-Agame* are often referred to as traitors: they changed position from brothers (even though always of a lower status) united against the oppressor, to traitors thus raising strong emotional feelings: "they betrayed 'us' after 'we' helped them to get into power" are words I heard from many people in Milan. This strong ethnic category becomes national when put into international debates and those debates that touch Eritreans as a whole. Since *Wayane* is a definition now referring to the present Ethiopian government as a whole, the "enemy" has become Ethiopia and it is imagined as an "historical" enemy. This then re-shifts the history of pain through a dichotomy that is "newly" built but meaningful and perceived in a continuum.

The discourses arising during and after the recent war have also reinterpreted the liberation struggle as exclusively national and independentist. On the subject of nationalism, Pratt (2002b) argues that its founders chose a set of differences which had not previously shaped neat dichotomies before; he reinforces this argument on identity and political shifts by analysing how, in the course of the development of nationalism, the differences between "us and them" have varied over time. The same can be said for the Eritrean nationalist political thoughts. If we were to go back to analyse the history of political thoughts during the liberation war up to today, there would be a wide variety of set ideals. Nevertheless, continuity is shaped in order to perceive collective identity as coherent and long lasting.

Nation-building from exile

Eritrean people who lived the political culture of nation building make sense of their lives abroad through an exile identity filled with heroic notions which makes them feel there is a scope to their lives. For instance, the author Agostino Tabacco told me that Eritrean identity saved him from depression. After feeling like a foreigner everywhere he went, from Paris to Brighton and finally to Milan, he found a real sense of belonging inside the Eritrean

liberation movement and the community in Milan. He thus desired to remember the organisation and its outcomes, and therefore entitled the book: "Bologna: testimonianze di lotta degli eritrei esuli in Europa. *Per non dimenticare*"[22].

This is a part of the interview carried out during the 2003 festival in Milan:

> Tabacco: The book "Bologna" is a historical testimony, in the sense that it is really dedicated to the youth who have not personally experienced the history of their parents. I would like to give them the knowledge of what their involvement as exiles was. Yesterday we talked about Nakfa[23], which is a symbol of the fight of the warriors in the liberated areas, during the 30-years war. This book instead starts from the early '70s, from the moment when the movement started both in the West and in the rest of the world[24]. It begins from the first congress in Germany[25] thus from the first young intellectual exiles in Europe. The armed fighting started in '61, but abroad it started from the early '70s with the first students enrolled in the various universities in Europe and in the Middle East. The message to the youngsters now is to start from the youngsters of that time, who departed to form a political, cultural and social conscience and strengthen the opinion of Eritreans abroad, and to try to organise at the level of "c'enfer" (sections) [...] All the various experiences abroad were reported in Bologna, where we tried to mature and improve every time around the needs which the Front or the revolution rightly had. We, those who were abroad, tried to fulfil all those needs.
> Anna: thus material, economic, and political.
> Tabacco: exactly, everything, especially economic. Let's say that Bologna contributed mostly in terms of economic help, but also of raising awareness in support of the warriors in Eritrea. In my mind, not to be able to pass on what had been a great experience was hard to bear, at least the way I felt about this participation of all Eritreans who met together in Bologna in August. For this occasion, no country was absent: Italy, Sweden, Germany, etc, then from the Middle East[26], Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and so on. [...] In the various seminars and debates everyone contributed with their experiences. From this experience every time we managed to grow. [...] At the beginning there were just over 300 of us. In '91, the last festival we did in Bologna, we counted 10.000 people, to show how this unique experience, at the level of exiles in Europe, developed. This demonstrates how keen everyone was regarding the cause in which indistinctively we all believed. We still believe in

22 Bologna: testimonies of the fight of the exiles in Europe. Not to forget.

23 1966, it is the first liberated part of Eritrea.

24 The movements that took place from the 1968 onwards had a great impact on the rest of the world. There was large support on issues of self-determination. Tabacco's book contains interesting quotes from the letters of the supporters both from other exiled communities and from left wing political organisations in Italy and the world.

25 The congress in Germany continued its activities autonomously since it was held in support of the ELF. In 1992, in Eritrea both sides were present at the festival celebrating liberation. But already in 1993 the German congress continued alongside the other one but supporting the ELF.

26 From the Middle East they organised on the ELF line, there was in fact a secession during the seventies. But in 1975 (see Tabacco 2001: 53-55) the congress was held by both Fronts.

it, but at that time it was so strongly felt that as soon the 10-day festival or the congress ended [...] everyone left so full of enthusiasm that we were already thinking about the year to come. The book explains it, […] it was exhilarating. This is why this book is dedicated especially to the youth: as a witness of what was the hard, exhausting history of their mothers, fathers and all the relatives who lived in Italy and in the rest of Europe, and who have never ceased to believe in the struggle for their country's freedom.

Tabacco's work is based on a lived experience, which he wanted to remember and narrate to other generations within the diaspora who did not experience such collective moments. It is in many ways autobiographical, although he does not directly speak about himself in the book. It is different to the other types of historical books written by exiles also because of the personal experience that lies behind it. In many cases the writer did not take part in the liberation war described; like the book written by the Eritrean woman who admits to not having taken part in the liberation struggle but feeling the urge to write a book on the involvement by Eritrean women fighters after her daughter's description of her fight in the liberation war (Wilson 1991).

Tabacco describes the history of the Eritrean nation building in which he was involved. Eritreans scattered around the world during the seventies and eighties had a very large network of students', women's and workers' groups, each developing political ideas on which to base the liberation movement and strategies to achieve the means for military and economic power against the Ethiopian regime. There were groups of this kind across Arab[27] and European countries, and those in the USA, which could not effectively be in such close contact with the former. There were meetings between the cells, the local Eritrean organisations, then the various leaders of the cells would meet together once a year or so to unify the various thoughts scattered across classes, genders, and nations. The places where this happened were the festivals, where there were also political meetings[28] (congressi) in which the cells would compare ideas and the *shaebia* would list their victories and losses in Eritrea. During the festivals there were *bahalì* (parties) where people could enjoy Eritrean

---

27 The Eritrean student exiles in the Middle East were the first ones to organise congresses and often supported the ELF.

28 Especially the latter were more organised and linked directly with the EPLF.

food, theatre, music and dance. In 1989, for the first time, the "Cultural Troupe" (see Tabacco 2001: 259) came to the Bologna festival from Eritrea. Its actors, singers and dancers are said to have been warriors themselves, women and men, who through entertainment informed and involved the diaspora[29].

Past-present collective loyalties and political cultures

Every year since independence in 1991, the festivals have been organised by the Eritrean government. In 1992 it was held in Asmara and most of the members of the diaspora were there to attend. The government wanted it to be completely transferred to Asmara (see also Galeazzo 1994 and Andall 2002). Since then there has been a festival in Eritrea and its organisers are called the "Bologna committee"[30]. Since 1995, the government has also organised a festival tour for the rest of the world that passes through most of the countries where there are Eritrean communities, ending in Eritrea where the largest one completes the tour of musicians and actors. It is organised jointly with the consulates and embassies in the various countries. In 2002 and 2003 and the following two years, the festival in Italy was organised in Milan. While on fieldwork, I went there every day for the duration of the 2003 festival which started on Friday and finished on Sunday.

To understand how the community enacts an Eritrean identity in relation to the past I report what people told me are the differences between the Bologna festival and the 2003 one in Milan. I thus focus on the narratives of those who were active in Eritrean nation-building from exile in the '70s and '80s. Everyone I spoke to emphasised an exile identity built to a large extent on the memories of the organisation of the liberation movement from abroad where the narrative about the Bologna festival is always very rich.

29 Also in Eritrea it was a strategy to strengthen a pan-Eritrean identity, as Dore 2002 argues.

30 In Germany there were festivals organised independently before and after '92.

Like this man from Naples, sitting with his friend at a table at the stand selling western food and drinks, many told me the festival is now held "in memory of Bologna"; it has become a commemorative event:

An: Have you arrived from Naples? Great!
Man: yes I arrived from Naples.
An: great, did you come by car?
Man: no, by train.
An: didn't they organise a bus this year?
Man: no, it's not like before. Before, 100, 150 people would come. Today I'm the only one.[…]
An: could you explain to me the meaning of this festival?
Man: this festival is in memory of Bologna; […] the festival of Bologna was in general for all the Eritreans that lived in Italy, Germany, France, England, in the whole of Europe. Some even arrived from America, some also from Saudi Arabia, from the Middle East. […] In memory of Bologna today we go to Asmara, every August […]: the Bologna Festival of Eritrea. Then in Italy we go only to the Italian one, always in memory of Bologna; maybe this is the third time we have done it in Milan. Once it was in Florence, and only once in Rome. Every year we do this *in remembrance*.[…]
An: and what difference do you feel there is between the Bologna festival and now?
Man: well, I really feel it, yes, because there was everybody's determination, we weren't free, we were at war, we weren't independent, so it was very different. We all arrived full of determination, from far away. But now not everyone participates and even in the city of Milan, in the very city where the festival is held, they haven't all attended. […] Even last year it was like this, fewer people. They should come from the whole of Italy, from south to north!
An: I saw two cars from Germany. […]
Man: yes, they have come from Germany, they are few though. Before instead by bus, two or three buses used to arrive, sometimes even four buses from Germany, then others from France; […] and from the south of Italy, everyone from Messina to Milan.

Many like him complained to me that people do not travel anymore to attend. "The spirit has changed", some people said, "people are not involved anymore". Whereas everyone told me that during the Bologna festival the sense of unity grew stronger as time went by; the festival had such a charismatic impact that today it still acts as a reminder of the struggle of the diaspora and its unity. Today it is not highly attended. A woman went as far as to say that it was better before when there was a shared dream and unity among Eritreans (and war against the Ethiopian regime) and now it is sad to see the direction the community is going in.

People do not follow the festival around but they go to their national one and then if they can they also go to the one in Asmara. This lack of participation has strengthened the exiled identity from a pan Eritreanness fighting for the same cause to a nationally (locally) based one on stability and integration in the country of stay.

Anna: What was the Bologna Festival like?
Woman: the Festival of Bologna, more than anything else people arrived from all over the world, it was different. All Eritreans scattered in the entire world, we all met there once a year. This is why it was different for us, Bologna was a miracle, something longed for which fell from the sky.
An: here instead, is it only the community of Milan which attends?
Woman: here only Italy now, because every European has its place, the Americans too.
An: and the musicians tour the whole world?
Woman: the musicians tour, yes. Some have their own but these ones tour, the government sends them over for us *to refresh our memories*.

As a social event, people remember the festival especially because it was "international". They told me how incredible it was to meet Eritreans living in different places gathering together every year. It was a space where identity shaped around being abroad, being a diaspora. Many have insisted on this point as the strength and the beauty of the event.

Now that the festival is no longer just in one place as it was previous to 1991, new forms of definitions and practices of the self have developed. Every "national" community has a festival in the country of immigration and the strength of the affiliation to a "national" community is demonstrated by specific symbols. For example, this poster advertised on Biddho, a government-run website, shows the dates of the Eritrean festivals around the world. It also shows the importance given to the Eritrean nation though the insistence on the Eritrean flag. The poster is in English because it is the lingua franca of the world, but it again insists on the Eritrean identity through the writing in Tigrinya.

The internet web page showing the dates of the festival around the world.

There were small paper flags distributed on the venue: with the Eritrean flag printed on one side and the Italian on the other. These are to demonstrate that the location where the festival is held has to be remembered and is today part of the exile identity. Moreover the festival has always had sports competitions, especially football matches. During the Bologna festival the football teams were based on the nation they were coming from; during the recent national festivals the football teams have been city-based. So while before there were the Italian, the German, and the Swedish team, in 2003 there was Milan, Florence, Bologna and so on. The fact that the festivals are organised by both the government and the embassies as separate events is noticeable from this example of the football teams that are

no longer formed in the name of the nation of dwelling and are not touring as the musicians are.

I also found an Internet site featuring the 2003 Melbourne Eritrean festival. It was a multi-ethnic event hosted by the Eritrean community in Australia. Since it was not sponsored and organised by the government or by the embassies and consulates, it was not shown in the poster attached above that listed all the 2003 Eritrean festivals in the world. In the past the Eritrean festival in Bologna was not multi-cultural in its performances, but was plural in its attendance: people of African backgrounds, such as Somalis and Ethiopians, and Italians were included in the audience and in participation. Today this is no longer the case. The omission of the Melbourne festival also signifies this shift.

As for many Eritrean events such as concerts, church and political celebrations, festival adverts in Milan were all in Tigrinya with no translation in Italian, or in other languages. In general it may be said that this emphasises the closure of the ethnic-national bond, but in the specific case of the festival it is connected to the determination of the consulates and embassy to bond the Eritreans to an only-Eritrean identity. Since the advert for the festival is only in Tigrinya I felt Italians were not invited. There was a man married to an Eritrean woman who was wearing a big silver orthodox cross on his neck. There also was another man who had some business set up in Eritrea. Then there was my partner and I. Not many Italians were present, considering that the festival is held in Italy. Many informants told me that when the festival was held in Bologna, many Italians used to come and the festival was linked with political organisations and parties who supported it. At the Bologna festival letters of sympathy and support used to arrive from all over the world and also from exile communities in Milan. The organisers of the Bologna festival used to be linked with other migrant and political movements and thus had widespread recognition and attendance by people who were not Eritrean.

There is an example of a Somali woman who started talking about the Bologna festival saying that she always used to attend as long as she was living in central Italy; she then

moved to Milan and could not find the time to go. She said how amazing it was; she felt it was important also as an "African" event. A few Ethiopian people I met used to go as well when they were young because their parents had Eritrean friends, and they too enjoyed this event. Today there are many tensions against Ethiopians and they are no longer welcomed. Other people, like the Somali woman, do not even know it is still running because there is no information flow and the language closure of the fliers shows "others" are not invited.

My closest young informant, Natzennat, saw me and told Gennet that I was there. Gennet, whom I used to help study at the after school club answered, "e che cavolo ci fa qui Anna?" (what on earth is Anna doing here?). She said Italians should not come to the Eritrean festival. Gennet saw the Eritrean festival as something that was only "theirs" and where Italians were intruders. Natzennat thought it was important that Italians got "interested in Eritreans and their case" as the first generation used to say. In fact Ambroso (1987) argued inclusion into the Eritrean community was possible when people from other backgrounds recognised the Eritrean cause. He also described the "ad honorem" membership to the community, which meant people would be welcomed in their activities if they showed special attention to "their case".

Eritrean political activists have often given me a list of Italian intellectuals who were "friends of Eritrea". This included people like: Massimo Alberizzi, correspondent on African affairs for the newspaper "Il Corriere della Sera"; the historian Giorgio Rochat who extensively wrote on Italian colonialism (1967, 1971, 1973), and sympathised with the Eritrean case during the seventies and eighties; Dario Miedico, an activist in Medicina Democratica; the ANSA journalist Stefano Poscia who also wrote a book (1989) on the Eritrean situation at the time, and Daniele Farina, former left wing activist in the Centro Sociale Leoncavallo and MP in the Rifondazione Comunista political party at the time of the research. It was mostly Italian communists or the "Radicali" who supported the Eritrean struggle. It was not the central PCI (Partito dei Comunisti Italiani) party, but some town councils, such as in Bologna and in Pavia, the active squats (centri sociali) in Milan, the left wing intellectuals and activist

groups. Dario Fo, for example, was running a theatre and cultural organisation in a Liberty building inside the Largo Marinai d'Italia park in Milan and used to host Eritrean activities such as cultural or political events; he also organised a concert in support of the Eritrean liberation fight and many other activities were hosted or organised by other Italian associations such as the one thoroughly described by Ambroso (1987).

> An: what difference do you feel between the Bologna Festival of say 15 years ago and this year's?
> woman: this year, what I've heard from my people, they said that Lombardy has given this place for free[31], I thank them mostly because, after all these years without this possibility, at least now they are helping us.
> Anna: even Bologna was free, wasn't it?
> Woman: Bologna was great, Bologna is our home, our second home[32]. We will never forget the Bolognese! Now even Milan, better late than never!

This woman recalls the special affiliation there had been with the Bologna city council but she stresses the "practical" support it gave the Eritrean community, and disregards the political implications. "Now even Milan, better than never" she says, but there is a great difference between the support provided to "the Eritrean people and their cause" by the network of left wing political activists and that of a right wing Italian government supporting the Eritrean government's activity for very different liaisons.

Until the '90s, Eritrean activists were aware of the various struggles in the world and the various movements were linked. It was the period of the Cold War. When it finally ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, all the world political divisions fell apart, and the super powers no longer had any interest in supporting the Leninist military regime of the Derg, which was thus weakened from the lack of arms supply. It was then that the EPLF managed to win the war (1991). After the liberation the political support to Eritrea as a young nation-state slowly changed. Today the same names that feature in the description of

---

31 The Regione Lombardia provided the space without payment in solidarity with the Eritrean government which was on very good terms with the current Italian one (Italy was increasing business with Eritrea and the Premier Berlusconi hosted the Eritrean president Ysaias in his Sardinian villa) and with the Regione Lombardia. Its vice-president, Prosperini, was the Italian spokesman in Eritrea.

32 The first is Eritrea.

the "friends of Eritrea" are active in criticising the present state of affairs in Eritrea. Alberizzi was even imprisoned in Eritrea for two days following his outspoken newspaper articles in opposition to the present Eritrean government's policy (*Corriere della Sera* 09/2000). Even though former Italian political supporters are still focusing on the area, their interest in Eritrea collides with the dominant discourse. Some Italian "friends of Eritrea" have made liaisons with Eritrean opposition groups and are organising events, seminars and forums on Internet sites. This latter shift in participation includes some of the Eritreans in Milan who were not present in the festival. Even though those absentees interviewed said it was lack of time which prevented people's participation in the Eritrean community activities, there was definitely a silent (at least in my presence) detachment from the core Eritrean political situation[33] which was also linked to sorrow regarding the recent war and the losses of lives.

Shadows of the martyrs: clash of two commemorative events

Many told me there were not many people at the festival because those were the days in which the government had officially announced the numbers of casualties of the 1998-2000 war and many were mourning their family members and friends at home or in Eritrea. Many said people should have come anyway because it was important to mourn together; others who did not attend criticised the consulate for allowing such an event a few days after martyrs' day. This man interviewed during the festival supported the first view:

> An: but what are the implications of the Eritrean mourning for the war casualties?
> Man: yes, the list of casualties and martyrs. We received the news four or five days ago.
> Everyone has one or two martyrs. OK, even for this reason there are fewer people.
> An: are you mourning?
> Man: yes, not… [for someone in particular] everyone belongs to us, we make no difference,
> your son or daughter is my son or daughter. This sorrow belongs to everyone.
> An: but the celebration has to be made anyway?
> Man: yes, the celebration has to be made anyway. With high spirit, with courage we have to
> do it always, always.

---

33 Koser found outspoken criticism in his research among Eritreans in Germany (2003 and in Ali et al 2001b).

From this interview one can notice that the communitarian ideas of sorrow, the brotherhood and blood relation felt with fellow Eritreans go beyond individual feelings of loss. They are united in one and thus sorrow is to be shared as such. Similarly in the following interview the woman emphasises the martyrdom of the deaths, where the youth's sacrifice was for everyone.

> An: many say there aren't many people this year.
> Woman2: well, yes, a bit less, a bit less. There are fewer people also because of the sorrow for the many Eritrean casualties.
> An: many are at home mourning.
> Woman2: yes, I'm also sad but we cannot miss out this celebration. We need to be here, we need to be together. For all those who died, they didn't die only for some, but for everyone. Everyone has relatives and we all have sorrow for these youngsters who have died.

In Italy and Saudi Arabia the festival started under a week after martyrs' day, it then moved around the world. During the festival people made a three-minute silence in remembrance of the dead. People told me the organisers in Italy wanted to delay or skip the festival but then the Lombardy Region provided a free space, so it was a pity not to accept this precious offer. They had applied for the region's funds and permits; it was thus their choice to organise the event in any case.

The festival was a space where Eritreans saw themselves in relation to both their country and their being in Milan. With the issue of the martyrs this was stronger; one could notice the division between feeling the need to show cohesion in terms of Milanese/Italian diaspora and empathy with the sorrow of the war disasters at home. In some ways this created a split between those who followed the traditional mourning by staying at home for 40 days and having people come to visit everyday[34], thus not celebrating the festival, and those who felt that cohesion was more important: showing presence in collective spaces for the latter was an essential demonstration of Eritreanness even when united in sorrow.

---

34 Other aspects of the mourning practice are described in chapter six.

The following image, which I found on the Internet, shows the polemic arising around the issue of the martyrs. 20th of June, martyrs day. The image depicts people partying while the dead are waiting to be buried. The author of this cartoon is criticising the present government for allowing events during the mourning and the exiles for having *bahalì* (party, celebration) while the dead still need to be buried. The mourning of the casualties of the recent war brings tradition and politics face to face, creating tensions about how to be Eritrean in this particular historical contingency.

Comic picturing the festival celebration during martyrs day

Martyrdom is tied to religious practices of identity but it also generally defines the acts of those who have offered their lives to demonstrate their commitment to their culture or society. A person may become a martyr after having acted as a testimony (this is the original meaning from the ancient Greek word) of his her beliefs be them religious or social, often through death. It is thus a strong ideology to assume priority over individual physical survival

affirming the priority of culture over nature and self-interest. Frontline soldiers become martyrs when sacrificing their lives for a common cause. The positive impact of martyrdom on a minority community is due in part to its formulation as a sacrificial act in which the martyr is viewed as the "pure" lamb sacrificed against an oppressor. A soldier becomes a martyr by taking part of the struggle carried out by the weaker and more truthful of the antagonists. This is the rhetoric beneath the establishment of "martyrs day" to commemorate the casualties of the soldiers who died or who were injured at war against the oppressor. During the latter war, conscription to become a soldier was not voluntary[35], nevertheless the martyr appellative was kept to increase the victimisation of Eritrea opposed to the Ethiopian oppressor.

> June 20 is Martyrs Day in Eritrea. Ever since Eritrea re-claimed its rightful national independence in 1991, June 20 has been set and declared national holiday for one and the sole purpose of respecting and paying tribute to all those who paid the ultimate price, life, in the great 30-year war to re-claim national independence and liberation of the country and people of Eritrea.
>
> I am also including those who lost their lives in yet another heroic war against Abyssinia's (Ethiopia) renewed attempt to re-invade, re-conquer, and reverse the so attained national independence under the lame pretext of "border dispute" between 1998-2000.
>
> […]
>
> On June 20, we commemorate the sacrifice of Eritrean war veterans, including those disabled during the struggle.
>
> Our Martyrs gave us the republic that we all so proudly call home today; Eritrea. It is now up to all of us and we are all indebted to our Martyrs to keep it the only way they wished it to be: An Eritrea of all, by all, and for all.
>
> Today Our Martyrs would be moving in their tombs if they knew that Eritrea has become a private estate of one-party and the people of Eritrea have been subjected to one-man, one-party dictatorial rule by the barrel of the gun in betrayal of the precious sacrifice they paid by their life to the contrary.
>
> Eternal glory and fame to all Eritrea Martyrs,
>
> Long live all Eritrea war veterans,
>
> Long live and viva Eritrea, vive l'Érythrée.

---

35 As noticed in chapter 2 through the descriptions of flight from military service by the newcomers

From the above article (2007) found on the Internet[36], it is clear that even those who are in opposition to the present government and its actions do not question the definition of martyrdom of the soldiers who died at war in the recent conflict and they thus do not question the participation of Eritrea in the war itself.

I did not hear anyone argue against the celebration of Martyrs Day and an opposing view was instead set against the government's organisation and its intrusion into the people's "national" affairs. This discourse nevertheless does not undermine the ideology beneath the 20th of June. The government supporters, who attended the festival, and the opposing ones, who did not, joined in the return to Eritrea for the summer to mourn with relatives and to be able "to see what was happening" as the woman says in the following interview.

> An: did you call home to find out if you have someone missing?
> Woman2: yes, some of my relatives died. Everyone, even my neighbours.
> An: how awful. Are you going to Eritrea in July then?
> Woman2: yes, I'll go in August.
> An: everyone is going this year.
> Woman2: because we are all going to see what happened, we want to know, our relatives…
> we need to spend some time together with them, we want to see what there is… is ever so
> horrible, horrible, a great pain, for these youngsters, these very young ones.

Conclusion

Commemorative events are analysed as spaces where the whole collectivity of Eritreans in Milan cyclically meets. They are spaces functioning both as community and identity builders, but also provide terrain for conflict and negotiation of practices of identity. The reasons why I chose the 2003 festival in Milan as a case study is that it functioned as a bridge between past and present. It allowed an analysis of the way Eritreans in Milan build their identity and their narratives around repetitive practices that nevertheless change in time and space. The festival began as a participatory sphere that all migrants involved in the EPLF attended. It is

36 http://www.eitreadaily.net/News0307/article0607191.htm

now perceived by the Eritreans in Milan as a commemoration of the participation of the "exiles" in Italy.

There is a memory which describes difference and division between "who we were and who we are" and the direction in which the community is going; in the festival's time-loop describing the development of political identity, the past of the community is narrated in its unity, while the present is perceived in its divisions, lack of collective practices, thus showing a perceived fragmentation in the community in Milan and the birth and scale of a diasporic dimension. The case of the martyrs nevertheless shows how some of the discourses built around the existence and persistence of "great subjects" (Connerton 1989) do not disappear even when in visible contrast with the practical reality of the present. Even if the "great subjects" no longer exist in practice, they have neverthess "continuing unconscious effectiveness as ways of thinking about and acting in our contemporary situation: their persistence, in other words, as unconscious collective memories"(ibid: 1). The *shaebia* fighters of the liberation front and the exiled "fighters" continue to exist through the memory of great events and their commemorations.

Whereas governmental organisations and decisions may be criticised and negotiated through lack of participation in the festival, or in any other government-organised event, discourses that touch on the national identity and on the various discourses built on Eritrea as a victim state, like the one which emphasises the rightfulness and thus justifies the recent war through the appellative of martyrs for the young Eritreans forced to "become cannon fodder"[37] are never torn apart.

---

37 Mebrat Alem argued this in her speech in chapter 2.

Chapter 4

The soul of the community

The Eritreans in Milan the research concentrated on are mostly followers of the Eritrean Orthodox Church. Nevertheless consideration was given to the fact that many of my informants also worship in the Eritrean Catholic Church or the local Italian Catholic ones. Thus what came out from the fieldwork was a more general view of Eritrean Christianity and not only of the Orthodox Church, and what followed was a scope on its divisions and unities, connected to wider Eritrean discourses of the self and the collective. This focus led to an understanding of the Eritrean transnational structures and discourses linking to the community and of their Italian context to complex identity negotiations.

In this chapter the religious communities are analysed through the case of a sharp change in religious (and political) leadership among the Eritrean Christian community, brought by an episode of "violence". As in Quarles Van Ufford's article (2002) "Murder in the cathedral", religious violence is looked at from a crisis event, a peak standing out from the ordinary levels of tension in the community. The concept of violence is handled in Quarles Van Ufford's key:

> Violence and the administrative and religious routines in the churches [are considered] as not separated but interrelated practices. The violent nature of the events is not an aberration, a metastasis of the peaceful ways in which the daily life of the churches is handled and in which conflicts are normally settled. Violence is always there. However, it comes to the fore when the daily practices of dealing with it crumble. Thus coping with violence is the 'normal' everyday dimension of religious and political routines and the settlement of conflicts. Violence may manifest itself if the core of processes of identity construction, getting to know who 'we' are as opposed to 'them', and going about daily institutional routines (2002:86).

To explain this sudden outburst through contextual dynamics of exclusion, the chapter starts by describing the case study of an Eritrean Catholic religious leader. These data are strengthened by the PhD thesis by Ambroso who in 1987 completed a thorough analysis of the Eritrean community in Milan, comparing it with the Egyptian one. He devoted special attention to the case of Father Yohannes, an Eritrean Catholic priest who played an important role as "ethnic broker" in the community in Milan at the time of his research. The historical information gives an angle to the following debate on the case of a collective practice of exclusion of this very priest from his leading position. This chapter uses the Catholic Eritrean priest's case as a vehicle to speak about the power relations created among Eritreans in Milan, the changes occurring in the field while I was carrying out the research. The episode of crisis, sharp breakdown of the previous collective equilibrium brings in the focus on "religious routines" and the "settlement of conflict".

According to Quarles Van Ufford, the investigation around the "social" murder of a Javanese priest can focus either on the murderers, which for him would be a biased analysis, or on the historical contingencies and unforeseen events. I here follow this type of reasoning, allowing the analysis to touch on issues of agency and social change.

Padre Yohannes

The story of Padre Yohannes must start from 1979 when he had been asked by the Capuchin Order to come to run an existing small Eritrean community and an assistance centre for Eritreans in Milan (Ambroso 1987: 184). In a short time Padre Yohannes achieved a great amount of power in the Eritrean community: not only did he become the leading figure in this Christian Catholic religious association for people from the Horn of Africa; but, as read in the legal "attestato" of the Eritrean community, his was one of the founding signatures of the "Eritrean community" itself. The Via Friuli community started in 1984 and was based in a large location where people had their political meetings, and social and cultural activities.

His power was thus not connected only to his charisma over his "sheep" in the Christian sense, but he was also an influential person, able to juggle with the Italian bureaucratic and institutional system and the Catholic and Christian funding boards.

> Father Yohannes offers several facilities: mass in a spacious church every Sunday and on the major festivities of the Ethiopic calendar. In the back, in a nearby hall festivals with ethnic food and music are organised after these festivities. Here there is also the "Ethiopian-Eritrean Solidarity Centre" where he advises people not only on religious and family questions but also for employment, housing, sojourn permits and visas for which he acts as a guarantor. He runs religion and school revision classes and a youth centre. (Ibid: 184)

He also provided summer camps for the youth, spaces for traditional *Habesha* celebrations, weddings, baptisms, funerals and so on. When I started my fieldwork everybody admired the priest also as a member of the clergy; in Milan he baptised nearly all the newly born children and married all their parents. He was also recognised as having the right connections to help everyone in the community. He provided all the networks with the Italian Catholic Church that the community needed at the time and was a reference point for anyone who needed support. Ambrosos's thesis contains quotes of Eritrean women saying: "he's a great man" and "he's our greatest help" (Ibid: 191). When I started planning fieldwork in 2001 and was looking for the key questions of the research, everybody I spoke to advised me to go to Padre Yohannes for help. Italian institutions like the Catholic Caritas organisation, Eritreans I knew and those I met, all told me how important Padre Yohannes was and that he was the key person to start from, because "he knows everything about the community and everybody within it".

> Although Father Yohannes recognized that the vast majority of "Abyssinians" (which he thought was the most appropriate term defining the semitic language-speaking highlanders) follow the Ethiopic Orthodox Church, he tried to "play down" the differences with Catholicism and said that Eritreans primarily identify as Christians. Therefore Father Yohannes is one of the most charismatic leaders of the Eritrean community, but also, [...] a powerful "ethnic broker" (Ambroso 1987: 185).

The Abyssinian Christian identity played by Padre Yohannes was seen also during the few weeks of preliminary research in 2001, when I went to his office in the Porta Venezia area.

Since he was not available I stopped to talk to his secretary. I told her I did not exactly know what I was going to look at regarding the community and asked for some insight to start from. So she talked about who they were and what they did. I vividly recall the conversation because it threw me into the heat of the disputes and divisions of the community, which soon became the focus of my work. She said they had been working as an Ethiopian-Eritrean-Somali Christian association for many years. When the 1998-2001 war started, many Eritreans had turned up saying it was wrong to have a community together with the "enemy" and demanded to take out the Ethiopian affiliation. Padre Yohannes refused and decided to keep it as it had always been: an association for people from the Horn of Africa and their children, a *Habesha* space. The secretary told me all these events with pride. She explained his resolution, saying they wanted to treat everybody in the same way and not to buy into the rhetoric of hatred that the war aroused. The followers of both groups (and Somalis, although few were Christians) were thus welcomed at the time. I did not see this as an issue to focus on for the research, but just thought the peaceful worshippers would continue to go to Padre Yohannes's Church, while the others would slowly come to terms with his position or just break off.

These data from Ambroso's research and from my early fieldnotes was the perception that Padre Yohannes was a *Habesha* religious leader and at the same time he acted as an Eritrean community "broker". Moreover it became clear that not only did he work inside the religious sphere but also in the political, social and economic one; he really did give the Church an organisational role. As Riccio (2001) argued, the outcome of migratory experiences often depends upon or is influenced by a religious institution in the receiving country.

His partecipation in wider issues, which often touched upon political situations, is clear from his early life in Asmara:

> Father Yohannes was born in Asmara 35 years ago from a Catholic family, even if from a Tigrinya-speaking area. In his early twenties he entered the order of the Cappuccini friars and was sent to a church in a village near Asmara, with some Italian friars. In 1975, after Haile Selassie's overthrow and the worsening of the Ethiopian-Eritrean struggle, many

wounded people among whom were some guerrilla fighters came to seek refuge at the church and Father Yohannes, as an Eritrean, supportive of the nationalist struggle even if against violence, did not deny them assistance. He was denounced to the Ethiopian military authorities and soldiers came to look for him. Luckily he was advised of this beforehand and managed to escape to the Sudan where he stayed for two years in a refugee camp. (Ambroso 1987: 184)

His activism was again visible in Milan in the mid eighties when he gave support to the incoming Abyssinian migrants and allowing the Eritrean exiles to have a social, cultural and political community. Again, it was during the very first visit to the *Habesha* Christian community that Padre Yohannes's secretary told me they were having a lot of work to do since a great number of young Eritreans had arrived by boat to escape from the war, and needed shelter. The association was trying to provide some help but it was extremely difficult, since their numbers were so high. It soon became obvious how central this issue was in understanding the Eritrean community and its present. The effects of the presence of the newly arrived became one of my focuses[38].

At a later stage, while on fieldwork, I was coming back from a demonstration against the war[39], when I noticed that Padre Yohannes's old office was closed and that he had a new one closer to the affiliated Italian Catholic Church of the Cappuccini branch. On the door a newspaper article was affixed with the title in Italian "a priest against all dictators". It was the article Padre Yohannes had written and published in the "Times of Malta". I later looked for information and in my following Internet search I found the original letter the priest had written to the newspaper where he asked the Maltese government first and then the UN, or whoever could intervene, to stop the young Eritrean asylum seekers being sent back to their home country. They had arrived on two boats that had mistakenly landed on the Maltese

38 As may be read in chapter two on the journeys to exile.

39 In this demonstration there were no Eritreans I knew marching, apart from Mebrat Alem, the left wing activist quoted in chapter 2, who was always active in this type of protest. This issue links to that of the Eritrean change in political culture in Milan that has been addressed in the previous chapter.

coasts instead of in Italy[40]. Padre Yohannes accused the Eritrean government of being an oppressive dictatorship and stated that if these people asking for refuge were sent back to Eritrea they would be incarcerated, tortured or killed, and nobody would ever know their fate. However, the Maltese government sent them back by plane and the UN officially followed their paths for some time before what he had foreseen happened: they were lost in the maze of the government's detention structures. From the latter findings it seemed that he still held a powerful political voice, which was nevertheless not enough to influence the strong migration enactments and structures of movement. I was impressed with Padre Yohannes's charisma and leading position, able to shelter the weak and criticise the powerful. During the first period of fieldwork, his political activism was also appreciated by the community that recognised his importance in the liberation process. However this was the situation noticed before this latter action taken by him against the PFDJ Eritrean government.

Murder in the Cathedral?

In my last few months of fieldwork I had an appointment with Yemane, an important exponent of that "community" built around the leading Eritrean political party. Since I was early I had a stroll around Porta Venezia, more specifically around the area of the consulate where we had the meeting. I went to see if Padre Yohannes's office was open, but it was closed. When I got to my meeting I asked Yemane about the priest, he told me that he was ill and had to leave the post to someone else.

I started to ask around about the current situation of Padre Yohannes. Among the various members of the Eritrean community in Milan, there was a set of explanations for his illness and disappearance. Fzum, my informant from the consulate, was the first to tell me that the priest had been put in a psychiatric hospital. In his view, his illness was related to what he

40 Chapter 2 mentions the case of the son of one of my closest informants who was sent back to Eritrea among all the other youngsters.

had done to make money. The priest's illness was described as some kind of "moral disease", rather than a breakdown, which psychologists and psychiatrists would interpret and label as depression or a nervous breakdown. His opinion needed some backup since, by being a newcomer directly from Eritrea, he was not seen as an "insider" in the Milanese community, but more a "government" officer put there by the central state of Eritrea. So I asked my friend Dawit if he knew anything about this story; he also said that the priest had been making money from people's problems. This is what he argued about all the "famous" opponents of the Eritrean government in Milan. So, when I suggested that the community was cutting the priest out for his political ideas, Dawit got angry and suggested that I dropped my interest in this case if I did not want to have further problems. His reaction was obviously linked to Fzum's explanation. I was surprised that Dawit could ask me to "silence" a piece of data "in my best interest".

The discourse must have been very forceful and grounded to be re-produced in this way by Dawit, who was a leftist political activist, especially during the liberation struggle and also in global political affairs. I realised that these two were not the only informants with this opinion, and it soon became clear that many Eritreans in Milan were of the idea that the priest was justifiably hated. During a chat with a few second-generation Eritrean girls at the afterschool club, I asked what they thought about the priest and one of them answered: "we Eritreans all hate him". Hearing the girls talking about Padre Yohannes in this way, I imagined the confusion that must have resulted for the young people who had been brought up with and by the priest, and had now been led to "hate" him. On what grounds could that be justified? What was the basis for the collective "we all hate him" cry?

The accusation of "theft" Fzum and Dawit were re-producing was able to silence and dominate any other existing among the members of the community in Milan. It remained the only one to be commented upon with little or no criticism. For example, Natzennat's mother told me that there were insinuating rumours about the priest: "they say he has gone over *to the other side* [the *Wayane's* side]!" She added "but I don't listen to them: I want to

remember him for all the good things he did for my family, my friends and me". Interestingly, she was contesting a moral judgement about the priest but was not proposing a counter discourse about the issues leading to the judgement itself. She wanted to keep on thinking that Padre Yohannes was an upright person and wanted to be loyal to him after all he had done to help her and all those around her. Nevertheless, she did not attempt to oppose the collective judgement against the priest's position regarding the Eritrean political situation. On the contrary she had decided "not to listen to what others say".

During my first encounter with Padre Yohannes's association, after the secretary introduced me to their activities and problems, people started to arrive at the association's offices. First a very elegant Eritrean man came to greet the secretary; then an elderly Orthodox woman entered through the back door of the courtyard to ask the secretary for help in finding a job. The secretary first told her she did not have a job for her and then jokingly asked the old woman "why don't you go to your own community?" meaning the Orthodox Church. After the secretary had told me about the conflicting views on their community stand, the fact that the old Orthodox woman went to them for help was very meaningful, first of all regarding the fact that the "accusation" was not so strong as to stop people from using the facility. It was not the divisions between the Churches which changed the way people used the resources and the spaces. Moreover, when the Orthodox Church was created everyone had the choice to follow either, both or neither of the two Churches. Nevertheless, until Padre Yohannes fell ill and "disappeared", many continued to use his association as social capital and protection from the problems of life. When the Priest went beyond just keeping the association as *Habesha* instead of Eritrean, when he wrote the letter to the Times of Malta and started open opposition to the Eritrean Government, it was then that the labelling process became too strong for people to ignore and he was abandoned[41]. He was thus

---

41 From recent insights I did find out that Padre Yohannes is working in a periphery in Milan and that people still go to see him "in private" to get support for their personal problems.

labelled as a thief and "businessman", profiting from the misfortunes of the Eritreans and who had "gone over to the other side".

The priest's clearly appears as a case mirroring the community's state. The drastic social change, that took place during the period before and after priest's downfall, and the sudden silences regarding his past presence underlined the levels of violence the community was going through. The *Habesha* community as such stopped existing, the Christian one was separated. Padre Yohannes was thus no longer considered to be the ethnic broker, nor the religious leader people wanted.

One may ask whether the discourses themselves are to be blamed on the priest's illness or whether the illness was something people picked on, after which the blaming discourse increased. The community could have ostracised the priest after his political involvement or his psychological weakness could have led to the breakdown of people's image of him as a leading figure. The two options have very different outcomes for the understanding of the community and its involvement; they lead to two different hypotheses regarding the priest's illness and disappearance. Quarles Van Ufford (2002) used this stratagem in describing the "Murder in the cathedral" surely with Eliot's play (1938) about the Archbishop of Canterbury in mind. Eliot looked at the violent action involved in the murder of the Archbishop and identified two hypotheses, one with a victim and the other with a martyr, the former as a murder, the latter as a suicide. Quarles Van Ufford compared two analytic stands, focusing on the two hypothetical agents of change: the subjects around the priest as "murderers", or on the contrary the priest as a "suicide".

Looking at the case from the agency of the priest, Padre Yohannes could be seen as an individual seeking a revolutionary path, wanting to lead the community to change: a martyr in Eliot's terms. If we centre attention on the collectivity of the community, the discourses found could be analysed as a reaction to the fact that he was re-producing an agency voice which was possible in the past, but which had been silenced by the present political situation both in Italy and in Eritrea. Padre Yohannes could then be understood as a reformist, an

anachronistic reactionary wanting to bring back a socialist ideology to a community that had already become part of a different society. In this light he had kept alive categories, like the all encompassing *Habesha* and the general Christian one, which had broken down; he had continued to preach for an identity which no longer existed, and had shown an activism that was no longer appreciated, bringing to light lacerations which had been silenced[42]. In the latter analysis, forms of silencing were part of a collective discourse leading to a collective reaction: either you are with us (i.e. with everything we stand for, like our nation state) or you are against us (i.e. with the *Wayane*). But Padre Yohannes did not bend and was thus labelled as "an enemy" to be hated, abandoned and silenced through discourses of rage.

Religious affairs

Quarles Van Ufford gave a multilayered explaination of the murder accusation made by the Indonesian protestant priest's daughter during his funeral. At first Quarles Van Ufford looked for clues to support the daughter's accusation of the religious community's leaders. Then he also managed to use his findings to support the hypothesis of the priest's "suicide". Nevertheless, the agency focus was conclusively dropped, for it was understood to be too biased to analyse this case of violence. He concluded that this specific case must be included in a wider structural system where history, with its "unforeseen events", plays a major role.

Seen from Quarles Van Ufford analytical point of view, the Eritrean change in political ideology could be understood as an unforeseen event. Nevertheless, this specific Eritrean-Milanese context tells other stories, even though touching on similar issues; it thus needs a different take. The path towards the creation of new set of collective discourses has been described throughout this thesis and especially in the previous chapter. The process of

---

42 This would add to the other example of silencing to hide the community's inner lacerations, resulting in narratives against the newcomers described in chapter 2.

production of such forceful political discourses on Eritrean national identity is the greatest mystery of Padre Yohannes's case.

The community enacted an expulsion of a leading figure by reproducing discourses of rage and by accepting the shift of leadership. This could not have been possible if Eritrea and Italy were two separated locations (as for Quarles Van Ufford Indonesia and Holland were during the separation of the two Churches). Eritreans in the diaspora carried out Eritrean nation building from abroad and thereafter adhered to its discourses and re-articulated them inside the community in Milan. The story of Padre Yohannes casts light on the existence of agents and their productions and reproductions of annihilating and silencing discourses.

Therefore there is no desire to understand whether or not this is the "truth", as if the Eritrean Catholic priest had been murdered (Clifford 1986 and Taussig 1987). On the contrary, the discourses re-produced in this particular circumstance show a great insight into the discourses within the Eritrean "community". The priest's disappearance is part of the collective story of the community showing how people together or separately create a common discourse. We are looking at how this case came about and was developed through discourses and practices of exclusion.

However, structural change and its dealing with conflict must be taken into consideration as they show the stage of the play. By describing the relationship politics and religion recently have, one can understand the dominant national discourse in which the Milanese community acted.

Even if all the tensions seem to have begun after the beginning of the recent war with Ethiopia, there have been reports of an attempt to nationalise the Catholic hospitals and schools in Eritrea before that time. In the debates around the present situation it is said that the government places significant limitations on the exercise of religion. It recognises only four officially sanctioned religions: Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Roman Catholicism, and the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. Nevertheless even these appear to be subject to restrictions

imposed by the government. In 2005, the Eritrean government allegedly dismissed the leader of the Orthodox Church, Patriach Abune Antonios from his position, although a government spokesman denied this action had been taken. Reports suggested that he had objected to government interference in the Church and the arrest of three priests. Different reports, also by Amnesty International and many other web-based religious and non-religious activist groups, state that religious persecution of minority Christian faiths has escalated in recent years, particularly against Jehovah's Witnesses, Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches. One of my newcomer informants told me he had run away from the government's mistreatment of Jehovah's Witnesses. The various Internet sources argue that members of other minority Churches have been jailed and tortured or ill-treated to make them abandon their faith. Muslims have been targeted too, some held in secret incommunicado detention for years on suspicion of links with an Islamist armed opposition group operating from the Sudan.

From the interviews carried out with Fzum, my informant operating in the Eritreans consulate, the problems the government has with the religious groups coming from outside the country are connected to uncontrolled money flows, which are perceived to be bringing inequalities into Eritrean society. This economic issue is widely applied in Eritrean affairs as has been noticed in the previous chapters. Whether true or false, the tensions here reported reach Italy and echo in the religious communities where conflicting dynamics are affecting the use of spaces for worship, attendance at one or the other church, and the discourses around the various priests. The case of Padre Yohannes is an episode of crisis, which brings about the difficult relation between religion and politics.

In November 2002, during that intermediate period when some people were still following Padre Yohannes's mass and his Church, but which was nevertheless the beginning of the discourse against him and his position, I went to have lunch with Fzum. I started to understand how loaded all the information about the priest was, when I naively asked about the youngsters arriving from Libya. He first said there were not many of them. I told him that

Padre Yohannes had previously (November 2001) told me there were around 500 of them in under a year. He laughed and said that the priest was exaggerating their numbers in order to receive more money from Caritas and other Catholic charities, from which he received funds to help the newly arrived. In his opinion the priest used this money for his own purposes. I was surprised by the answer and continued in my candid concern about the issue. He insisted that Padre Yohannes was a businessman who had achieved great wealth through the Italian Catholic Church. He also added that the Catholic Church funded the Catholic Churches in Eritrea so that its priests were much better off than, say, the Orthodox ones. I was puzzled by the whole economic concern, but this was only a tiny aspect of the complexity lying behind Fzum's opinions[43]. In actual fact, the case of Padre Yohannes encompasses a broad discourse which may be connected to the recent political trends in Eritrea, but which also needs to be seen in its reflections in Milan.

The political concern over the money flow in religious institutions is the verbally expressed discourse that came out from the interviews. The people who "believe" in this present government add the economic token to the criticism of those who are perceived to be leaving the religious space and illegitimately entering the political one. However people also argued that the Orthodox Church in the Horn of Africa has often been a site for religious and political tensions and contentions. These tensions are perceived to be due to its geographical position on the Red Sea and on the gateways to the African continent, and to its small and vulnerable size.

---

43 The business issue also came up in the second chapter on journeys to exile, regarding the "Arab" woman who sold gold and lottery tickets, and there were many other examples throughout the fieldwork. I also met a young woman who, others told me, migrated after her father had been jailed for excessive gains from investments in Eritrea. In an Internet forum I read a comment on the fact that "the Eritrean government jails business people for being successful in their own country". The "business people" label echoes the socialist idea that people should be investing in building society rather than constructing their own future and wealth.

The result of the fear of being colonised in any way even religious can be seen in the effort the government and its followers put into excluding religious institutions from any of the nation-state's affairs. At the moment the government does not appreciate any type of political interest by church members, and this was clear in the dismissal of the Patriarch Antonios in 2005. One of the political leaders in Milan once asked me "are you interested in religion or politics?" signifying how the two fields must be separated as different fields of interest. I also noticed an Internet blog where a group of Italians and Eritreans had organised a discussion after a series of conferences held on the theme of Eritrea. There was some criticism raised about the doings of the Eritrean government by the former director of the journal *Nigrizia*, Alex Zanotelli, an internationally recognised Combonian[44] priest who had been politically active in Italy and in countries in Africa such as Kenya, as may be noted in his books *Korogocho* (2003) and *Leggere l'impero* (1996). On the blog I found a comment against Zanotelli, where the blogger argued that no Italian ought to comment on Eritrean affairs before solving the Italian Mafia problems and that a priest should not intrude in political affairs. Moreover he advised Father Zanotelli: "not to make the same mistake Padre Johannes made!"[45].

The recent separation of the Eritrean Orthodox Church from the Ethiopian one connects politics to religion. While previously it was a division into different "Semitic" Churches, the division since independence has entailed a further identity fragmentation and the constitution of a "national" and, more precisely, "ethnic" enemy. Before Eritrea's independence, the EPLF liberation movement was in close contact with the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) of Tigray, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and all three of

---

44 A Catholic missionary order.

45 I recently found out (Albanese in Avvenire 11/11/2007) that a number of Combodian priests were expelled from Eritrea after Zanotelli's intervention Also web sites: http://afriche.blogspot.com/2007/11/eritrea-espulsi-14-missionari.html,

http://www.korazym.org/news1.asp?Id=26148, http://habeshia.blogspot.com, http://it.ismico.org/content/view/2771/27/

them formed a front against the Dergue military regime and marched on Addis Ababa in 1991 to liberate Ethiopia and Eritrea from this military oppression[46]. Until this moment and further on into the subsequent conflict, *Habesha* identity was strong and not perceived as problematic even in terms of a common Orthodox Church, which is in many ways one of the core ingredients for this very identity. Today, with the division of the two Churches, *Habesha* identity is not perceived as problematic to the point of disappearing from daily practices and categorisations, as one may notice from the interviews throughout the thesis, but it no longer has spaces where it can be shared without tensions. In some contexts where *Habesha* identity is still shared like the Orthodox Churches and the Catholic one, Amharic language may be heard, as when in Church feasts and ceremonies here in Milan I noticed songs in Amharic. Nevertheless, expressions of "Ethiopianisation" are sanctioned. I was surprised to note that a consulate official once told off a young newcomer for singing in Amharic at a wedding celebration and I soon discovered that the Eritrean Government had forbidden every form of Amharic music in Eritrea.

On the one hand, the identity shift taking place in the political reign and affecting the religious domain runs along wider strategies to bring all the issues to a national level. The Eritrean government's intention is to bring identities from whatever type of wider or smaller categories they were or may still be, into the Eritrean one. But beneath this "cultural" and "social" identity there is a precise political strategy to bring all the economic, cultural, religious and social levels of society under the strict supervision of a strong, and thus politically run state[47]. It was thus appreciated when the priests of the Orthodox Church went to Strasbourg in 2004 with the entire Milanese-Eritrean community and other diasporic communities to demonstrate against the Ethiopian refusal to sign the peace treaty. It was

46 This shift has already been argued in chapter 3, where the political identities during the liberation war and the recent one are seen to have changed.

47 As noted in the previous chapters.

less appreciated when the same priests were involved in peace proceedings with Ethiopian priests and other peace commissioners from Norway in 2001.

The strength of the Eritrean Churches in Milan cannot be totally inscribed in the power dynamics occurring in Eritrea. There is another set of dominant discourses and structural institutions which have a great importance. In Milan the Orthodox Tewaheldo Church was separated into Ethiopian and Eritrean. This secession occurred after 1993 when the Eritrean Church officially achieved autocephaly in the Horn of Africa. However, the creation of two *Habesha* Orthodox Churches in Milan, the Ethiopian and the Eritrean, also followed the trend in Milan in which many communities started their own Church, re-consecreting Italian Churches which had been deconsecrated due to the drastic fall in number of Italian worshippers attending the Italian Catholic mass. One lucky community was the South American one, which was allocated a beautiful, large XVI century church in the centre of the city. The allocation of churches and other spaces to be used by communities for celebrations caused conflicts. Opinions by the members of the Eritrean Orthodox community focused on the Catholic preference to allocate resources to foreign Catholic communities rather than to Orthodox ones. The new Eritrean and Ethiopian Tewaheldo Churches were given tiny premises, with room only for a small number of worshippers. My informants said they had to pay to rent larger spaces when celebrating a special event, since the churches allocated to them did not have any halls or other types of socialising spaces[48]. The Eritrean Orthodox Church Community used to rent spaces even to prepare the meals for the celebration feasts, as I noticed for the Marian festival preparation in which I participated, peeling onions and cutting meat and talking to the women who worked for two days in a Catholic church cellar in order to have the traditional *Habesha* food ready.

---

48 In 2007 the Orthodox Eritrean community was granted by the Province of Milan a new space in Affori which is very spacious but also very distant for anyone to attend.

This issue of religious structures and spaces links with how Padre Yohannes used to "play" with identity, and the outcome of his "ethnic" strategy was that the Eritrean community was classified as "Christian" and its space sprang from Catholic resources. Ambroso's earlier findings and my own show that Padre Yohannes managed to play with several general cathegories of ethnicity and religion and reached a more integrated status of the community in the Milanese society, thus receiving more (Ambroso 1988, 1987). Baumann (1996) argued that it is common to find that people who need to form a "community" end up playing with the dominant discourses in order to achieve more from the system in which they are inscribed. Nevertheless, before 2001 the general *Habesha* and Christian identities that were played out were able to coexist with two "dominant discourses". The national Eritrean one was not endangered by the *Habesha* identity but reinforced in its "civic" form (see Ignatieff 1994), open to the Horn of Africa and unified against the domination by external imperialistic powers. On the other hand, the Italian Catholic Christian discourse, which was dominant in Milan at the time, was incorporated into the Christian identity played by Padre Yohannes and enacted by using the Catholic Cappuccini spaces and resources. The "communitarian" practices against the Ethiopian (Leninist) oppressive apparatus were also welcomed by both dominant political discourses. The separation of the two *Habesha* churches in 1993 had a direct effect on Milan, where an Ethiopian Orthodox Church was created, then followed by the Eritrean one. Even if namely and spacially divided, their similarities are still attested by the same religious practices[49]. Although everyone continues to call them the *Habesha* churches, they are nationalised into Eritrean and Ethiopian ones. The Eritrean Cappuccini Catholic Church, which continued to play on the broad *Habesha* and Christian identities, lost a large number of followers due precisely to their obeying both the previous Italian and Eritrean dominant "ethnic" discourses.

Moreover it was not just Padre Yohannes who lost power in Milan, it was the religious sphere as a whole. One day I was looking through the Yellow Pages and found the phone

---

49 See introduction for more information.

number of the Eritrean Youth centre. Certain it was the number for the former *Habesha* youth centre, and interested in knowing who was running it, now that Padre Yohannes was no longer in charge, I called. I recognised the voice I heard on the other end: it was my informant working in the financial office in the consulate. I laughed and asked: "what are you doing? Running the youth centre?" Fzum said "Yes, the facility is run by *us* now". Whereas the youth community was once run by Padre Yohannes[50], there is now another run by the consulate itself. The organisational role once played by Padre Yohannes was now diverted to the consulate itself in the same way that the festivals organisation, from being the exiles' participative context, was run by the Eritrean Government's institutions.

Divided we fall

I was once with my Sunday friend who, after the morning Orthodox mass, asked me to go to the Italian Church that was also used by Padre Yohannes for the afternoon mass in Tigrinya, to light some candles for her family in Eritrea. We therefore went expecting to find the mass in Italian. Instead, on entering, we noticed many well-dressed Eritreans, and Haddas said it had to be a wedding, and we asked one another if we could attend even if we had not been invited. We decided the Church was everybody's so we entered. The celebration started and the Eritrean priest was not Padre Yohannes, but another Eritrean Catholic. The bride and groom were dressed in the same ceremonial clothing as in the Orthodox Church. At a later stage the two Orthodox priests arrived dressed in white with white hats (the outfits they use when they are not preaching but just attending ceremonies, or other events where they show their status). I asked Haddas why she thought the two Orthodox priests had come, but she did not know. I asked if this type of communion event ever happened in Eritrea or Ethiopia and she said it did not.

50 Even though Sister Cesira and the new priest still continue the activities in the Catholic Church.

After some weeks I was invited to the flat of one of the two Orthodox priests and asked him what that marriage was about and why he and his fellow priest were performing mass with the Catholic priest in a Catholic Church. He said that the woman was a family friend down in Asmara and had asked him to lend her and her husband the clothes and to marry her together with the other Catholic priest. Then, when I said I was surprised because I thought the two churches were completely divided, he said that Eritreans are so few in number they cannot argue or be divided. I asked if he was talking about Eritreans in Milan. He said "I'm talking about Eritreans everywhere".

The priest's words were reflecting two important issues. The first relates to the way people think that Eritreans should stay together and never divide because there are "few of us", despite different religious beliefs and cultural differences. The unity issue shows the existence of various "communities" of Eritreans in Milan, conflating in one all-encompassing Eritrean "community". So whatever criticism may be thought, the political issue is always obscured and silenced by the quasi-compulsory unity, which always stands out as the most important one, no matter how Eritreans are united. The Orthodox priest also had a precise Ecumenical mission in mind and was attending many meeting organised by the Curia, so the fact that he went to a Catholic church did not surprise me after knowing his desire for a unified "Christianity" under the love of one God. Padre Yohannes was following the same quest before the Orthodox Church opened its doors.

On the other hand, the celebration of the wedding was also significant because it was a silent incorporation of the community's exclusion of Padre Yohannes, who would have normally been the priest marrying the couple in that specific church. The hidden meaning of the event was the consolidation of the violence that had occurred and the celebration of the resolution which moreover was the priest's exclusion and the communion between the two churches. The priest became an independent subject, whereas the Eritrean Catholic Church and the Orthodox one washed their hands to continue their religious life cycles.

Another example of this quest for religious continuity was found when I was looking for Padre Yohannes. When I found out that he was ill I thought I would go and speak to him and thus called the religious institution where he used to preach. The secretary said he was not working at the moment and gave me the telephone of the new Eritrean Catholic priest who was performing the mass in his place, and the number of the Italian nun who had always been close to him and whom many people often mentioned when talking about Padre Yohannes and his past doings, as Ambroso did (1987: 185). I thus called her to ask for an appointment; I explained that I was doing research on the Eritrean community and had heard a lot about the association she and Padre Yohannes ran. She asked me brutally, "who spoke to you about Padre Yohannes?" I said it was "everybody", and that I had heard about all the activities they used to do especially for the Eritrean children and the community. Annoyed by my use of the past tense she said "and that we still do". Her tone was detached and angry. In her statement she stressed the continuity of the association's activities and wanted me to go beyond the priest's situation. The continuum form also implied a "with or without" Padre Yohannes statement. This incorporation echoes the issues resulting from the phone conversation with the nun working for Padre Yohannes' association, which brought to light the religious need to underline an institutional continuation of the religious practices going beyond the singular individual who, in this case, was the founder of the association itself, but nonetheless had to be overcome and overshadowed as the community wanted in order to continue. The Church's interest is to continue its doings. The Orthodox priest once told me "it is not the priest you believe in, it is the Church, the house of God". It is God one believes in, not those who perform in his name.

Padre Yohannes's case shows a great deal about how the "daily life of the Church is handled and in which conflicts are normally settled" and how violence, nevertheless, "comes to the fore when the daily practices of dealing with it crumble" (Quarles Van Ufford 2001: 86). Continuation becomes the final goal for the various members of the religious institutions in spite of the strong shifts and ruptures that take place. A way to find coherences through

time has to be found to give stability to the religious institutions despite individuals and crisis events In her article about travel and transformation among the Sylhetis, Gardner wrote that "the legitimacy of a pir[51] is always of course a social construct" (Gardner 1993: 214) and how the criteria for legitimacy change, since "there is therefore a growing polarisation between purist activities and belief, and what is increasingly being interpreted by the economically and politically powerful as 'incorrect' religious behaviour" (ibid: 215). Similarly to her argument, the priest's case shows how the discourse of legitimacy over religious power has changed depending on the dominant discourse forwarded by an elite which, in this case, is not specifically based on wealth and status, although through further research into the issue this might even be found to be the case, but more on political power. Thus the question turns again to who gives legitimacy to the behaviour of a priest.

Eritreans once had a place where to share all sorts of collective practices. In their collective memories it is still part of their identity: the former community in Via Friuli founded by padre Yohannes still incorporates who they were and who they would like to be. There used to be a socialising space where there was also a bar, used to host people with housing problems like the "Lebanese-Eritreans"[52]. The community was actually shut down after it hosted those fifty Eritreans from Lebanon and the neighbours complained about the noise and the coming and going of people. In this community they also organised cultural events like slide shows of pictures of Ethiopia and Eritrea brought by Agostino Tabacco; these events were regarded as *Habesha* since they were attended also by the Ethiopian residents in Milan. Nevertheless, even though people have often pointed out to their officials their desire to acquire a

---

[51] A religious leader who, in her case, was residing in Bangladesh whereas the devotees were in Britain.

52 Described in chapter two.

collective space, founded by a "community" unity regardless of religion and politics, while this research was running this had never been found[53].

The Eritrean social, political and religious spaces in Milan while carrying out fieldwork were separated but linked by very intense collective discourses (Baumann 1996) which permeated and controlled the ways people moved in the Eritrean community. As described in chapter one, Porta Venezia is where restaurants and bars still provide Habesha cultural tokens and collective spaces among Eritreans and Ethiopians (Ambroso 1987 called these "informal institutions"). Here it was a more male dominated environment and each place had its peculiar take on practices, as people moved from one place to another according to who they were meeting and what they wanted to discuss or do. As one of my new-ones informants pointed out, the vicinity of the consulate to the socialising area of Porta Venezia surely increases certain types of tensions and discourses on inclusion and exclusion. The Via Friuli space was described as a unifying[54], genderless place and this is what the women say they miss about their social lives in Milan. One woman said they are waiting for a "community". I said "but there is the "circolino" (social club) close by" she replied that that is for Eritreans in that area (Molise-Calvairate-Ponti) but "we need a community for everybody".

Churches are other socialising contexts for women but fragmentation is occurring as where to go to worship. One woman told me: "I go to the Church close to my house, rarely to the Eritrean one: it is God I go to meet, nobody else! God is everywhere!" Many like her attend Italian masses and the Eritrean Christian worshippers are found spread across the city. This is not only due to the issues raised in the latter part of this chapter, but to the style of life people are acquiring: they often do not want to go all the way to Porta Venezia to buy *'ngera* if they can find it close by, or to call Eritrea from the phone shops there if they can find good

---

53 In 2005, the consulate moved to a location where they have a large hall they now call the community but from the recently gathered information it does not seem to have had the expected outcome.

54 A question that comes to mind is whether or not ELF activists attended the Eritrean community in Via Friuli.

deals locally. People organise themselves into areas and thus this is strongly affecting the way the collective is perceived. For the men, for example, the bars in public housing areas are becoming more and more scattered, rather than unifying collective spaces. The segmentation of Milan's Eritrean spaces on the one hand is following the metropolitan life where the city is enlarging, and mobility is becoming more and more time consuming also due to traffic. On the other hand it is also resulting from how some people try to juggle with the centralised Eritrean and Italian political control.

Although Eritrean people at the time of my research no longer had "community spaces" and the private domain was becoming the only socialising context for women, and the bars and restaurants for the men, there were people like one of the Orthodox priests who, in a different way from Padre Yohannes, was still trying to maintain a community feeling, especially among believers and with those worshippers he thought ought to be saved. Moreover, the Orthodox priest followed the "Abyssinian tradition" (Ambroso's words) in which the priest acts as some kind of social worker, helping the poor or those who feel lost. The priest added that he tried to give support especially to the unmarried women who had suffered from the war and from being away from the home country; not having reached a married life, he argued, they suffered from mental illness.

Nevertheless, people were visibly not strictly belonging either to the religious community (Orthodox) or to a political or a socialising one, as was instead the case during Ambroso's research in 1987. There was fragmentation on the various levels and people felt the community was crumbling because there were no spaces to perform, share moments of pain and joy; the lack of a collective "space" was what people felt most. Even regarding a religious space a woman told me "why did they divide our church? We wouldn't hurt anybody!" Not only did the priest's story show the transnational political tensions in Milan but it also reflected on the social situation of the Eritreans there. As noticed in the previous chapter, Eritreans in Milan often speak about divisions and lack of participation in collective affairs.

Although they are described by Italians as the "community" par excellence, the internal tensions show that this identity is difficult to maintain.

Along with spatial fragmentation, this chapter shows the ways in which the Eritrean population in Milan unifies under one "community". This cohesion follows a collective dominant discourse; it is a bond of collective memories rather than shared daily practices. It is enacted during commemorative events and traditional liturgies. It is perceived as a collective shelter under one umbrella. I spoke to a second-generation young man attending an engineering course at the State University in Milan. He classifies himself as a bad Eritrean and mostly as an Italian. Nonetheless he gave me all sorts of insights into the community, with examples from his childhood and his parents' networks of friends. I asked him if he knew the priest and he said that he used to go on holiday with his organisation during the summer. He did not know anything about the priest's disappearance or about his illness. I told him what I knew and asked him to help me understand this case. He thought that if this form of ganging against the priest was happening and if it was connected to political issues, then it was understandable that people would not speak aloud in favour of the priest although they used to admire him and regard him as the spiritual leader, "because they only have the community and each other; they cannot detach themselves from the unity that forms. If they act in that way they don't have any other kind of support from elsewhere. For us second generation it is different, we are not dependent on the rest of the Eritreans and on the nation itself. We have our own networks".

Chapter 5

Diasporic journeys: places and identities

John Campbell's LSE working paper starts:

> This paper looks at the hemorrhaging of people out from Ethiopia and Eritrea, their movement out of the Horn, and at the long term consequences this population movement has for development in the Horn where, in the face of declining official aid flows, remittances from the Diaspora are likely to become increasingly important. Within this context, I examine the strategies – of appeasement and authoritarian control – used by the Eritrean and Ethiopian governments towards their Diaspora population and ask how such strategies affect the level and type of remittances sent back to the Horn by the Diaspora. The extent to which government efforts to encourage the Diaspora to invest in their homelands hinges on numerous factors not the least being the prospect of long term political stability and substantial movement away from autocratic governance. (Campbell 2009)

In this paper Campbell analysed the Eritrean Government's strong hold over the diaspora and clearly explained how the forms of "forced remittancies" (Al-Ali et al. 2001a,b) have recently disempowered Eritreans abroad who become subjected to "authoritarian control". However, in this chapter, I argue that even though the Eritrean structural apparatus is forceful (in a Gramscian reading of hegemony versus force), one needs to understand the discourses and practices of negotiation the diaspora develops around the structure. The scope of the chapter is thus to understand other types of "investment", which may not only concern money, the diaspora is engaged with in Eritrea. Diasporic tourism is a lively example of how the diaspora is not only victim of the nation state. On the contrary it plays a great role in wider transnational Eritrean identity strategies. To achieve this goal, I include analysis of Italian-style summer holidays with their social meanings and look at how these discourses and practices are re-enacted by the diaspora. The tourist quest and Eritrea in the mind of the

diaspora has also been looked to understand how Eritrea as a social space may be shaped by the gaze of the summer returnees.

Milan during the summer holidays

I spent summer 2003 in Milan doing fieldwork. Milan was not as empty as it used to be when I was a child, yet it was bare. Till recently during the peak season around 15th August if one met another person it seemed to be a vision out of the blue. During the visibly quiet summer, I followed my field as I had done during the rest of my research. I went to meet all my informants as usual, even though there were not so many Eritreans in the city. I had already almost stopped going to the bars, especially on my own, but I attended the mass in the Orthodox Church every Sunday. The church was significantly empty like the rest of the city. There were so few of us attending that there were empty seats and we were all able to comfortably follow the mass in the front rows. It was very hot and the women were fanning themselves. The fans were passed on to the neighbouring women if they did not have one. Things were smoothly warm in all senses.

I was mostly going out with Berhti, one of my closest informants with whom I used to spend my Sunday going to church and to her friends' houses. She had arrived in Italy a few years before but had lived for two years in the lake district and during my fieldwork she was a live-in "badante" (carer for the elderly) who had had little social life in Milan. We thus used to go around together, learning how the Eritrean community worked. She was also getting used to public transport and to Milan, so with curiosity she often asked for information from the Eritrean and Habesha people she met in the streets and in church.

On Sunday 17th August 2003, Berhti and I were on an empty tram coming back from the Orthodox mass, going towards P.ta Venezia, and Berhti commented to an Eritrean woman sitting next to us that the city was very empty. The woman told her that everyone leaves the city for Ferragosto (15th August); they go to the countryside, to the sea, or abroad: they all leave. I realised how outstanding this Milanese practice was: the inhabitants of this city

traditionally leave their urban setting to become tourists somewhere else, leaving the city to its own destiny of emptiness.

In church the women kept on asking me why I had not left for my holidays, making me reflect once again on my being for the second summer in a row in the empty city, on my lack of money, and my diversity from friends and family. After a few comments on my presence, I felt it was unfair to make me feel different: they too were in Milan in the summer, what were they doing? Why were they not on holiday? They had to be part of the Milanese population that the woman on the tram was describing to Berhti; they too were part of the holiday discourse. I started to ask them the same question they were posing me. I thus found out that they consciously shared my same feelings and commented on my questions in the same way as all Milanese-summer-residents would. There is a common desire not to be in Milan for the summer, even though one may enjoy the freedom of the streets, the strangely clean air, the silence, and the vision of a new face of Milan. The Eritrean-summer-residents were desiring to be in Eritrea or elsewhere in the world "like everyone else", and had similar excuses to mine for not being there. Our presence and thus our reciprocal not abiding the Milanese summer-holiday trend opened interesting sets of conversations.

One woman told me she did not go "per colpa dell'Euro" (because of the Euro). She was sound in her description of the economic crisis that most people living in Italy with a low-to-average wage were going through. By emphasising this structural problem she was certainly commenting on the Italian situation, on the Italian economic crisis, the European currency and the lack of consumer protection and its outcome. At the same time she was generalising on her own hardship, that was nevertheless recognisable from the very fact that she was in Milan and not elsewhere.

The tendency to leave the city during the summer clearly showed how the space of the city became "empty". This emptiness showed the city in its fractured space; the inequalities in terms of wealth became evident also from my informants' descriptions of their lives in Milan during the summer, and the reasons why they had not managed to leave were linked to

economic and social class distinctions. These issues were easily connected to widely perceived ideas of holidays and leisure and tied to wealth and class.

Social and economic analysis came out of another conversation. In the public housing area, where I was working, the summer was not pleasant. The forgotten poor people in Milan are even more forgotten during the summer heat. I was going to work in the Comitato Inquilini one afternoon when, on the bus, I met Negisti, an Eritrean woman living on an estate there. I thought she had gone to Eritrea and asked her what had happened. Since her 26-year-old daughter had no holidays to spend that summer and was thus going to be working, not only did Negisti prefer to delay her trip and go later with her daughter, but also she did not want to leave her behind, in the flat by herself. The year before, in her building, a young mentally ill man had attempted suicide with gas, putting himself and his neighbours at high risk. He was still living in the flat below theirs. Neglected by the social services and a psychiatrist he was still psychically very unstable. In the same building another woman, a drug addict and also mentally ill, was throwing objects from her window and again being dangerous to herself and to others. The hardship around in the council estate and in her own neighbourhood was producing a high anxiety on risk. Negisti said that her Italian neighbours had told her they would all stay in Milan, so she decided not to leave and keep her daughter company. But then they had all left as soon as the August heat arrived, and she felt abandoned in this situation of fear. I knew the situation she was describing since these were the kind of issues the Comitato Inquilini was working on. Obviously Negisti and her daughter were affected by this social exclusion from the welfare state as all the other tenants were, but maybe more so because they had not left the city and would not be able to go anywhere refreshing even close by, as the Milanese population tries to do. But Negisti planned to go with her daughter to Eritrea in September. Like many others, she told me it was also the best moment to go, not only for the weather, which was better once the rainy season was over, and it was quieter and a more suitable moment to enjoy the family, away from the dispora tourists that swamped the country during the summer.

Holiday making as a contradictory status symbol

Some people told me they had gone to Eritrea the year before and were used to going once every two years. Some others, like Berhti, worked for the summer and most of the "badanti" for old people accompanied their elderly on holiday or stayed in Milan with their employer. Haddas, a "cousin" (friend) of Berhti, went to the mountains with a group of elderly people from the institution she worked for. She said she went away with them and joked on the fact that she was going on holiday. When I asked if she enjoyed it, she said it was extremely tiring. I prodded her and she added that scenery was beautiful but "it obviously wasn't a holiday: I was working". The concept was clear: leisure is not found in working time. I thus started to analyse the concepts of time and space involved in this type of perception.

Until recently, Eritreans who worked in Milan for rich families as live-in housekeepers used to be taken with their employers to VIP resorts like Cortina D'Ampezzo to serve the family in their three-month holidays away from the city. The Eritrean women who worked in Italy in high class contexts know the Italian practice of holidays with a very high standard of life.

> And then the summer holidays came round, and for three months [Eritrean domenstic servants] were sent with parcels. If talk to a certain kind old servant, they know everything about Cortina, holiday resorts which are inaccessible to ordinary people who live on their income, but they were the status symbol of respectable families, of rich families, Milanese countesses, or rich people who had two or three servants available to go…

There are still some examples of this kind of work relation. For example, I met an elderly Eritrean woman who worked for a family running a business in Eritrea, with one house there, another similar setting in Milan, and yet another one in Berlin. She followed the family around in their movements, for holidays or for work. I met her at a Berlin airport in November 2003 as she was returning from a few months there. She was on my cheap air flight to Milan, but once at the airport, while I was getting back home by coach, she was going to be picked up by her family's chauffeur. She did not like Berlin, mostly because she did not know Eritreans there. She said that, when the family moves elsewhere she can go to meet family members or friends on her day off, or she can go to the Orthodox Church on

Sundays if there is one. This was nevertheless seen only as some time off from work. She thus proudly told me about going to Eritrea the following summer, a holiday to her home country arranged with care and trepidation. She was looking forward to relaxing and seeing friends and family. Going with the employer family would have meant working, and she thus refused to go to serve them on their holiday in Eritrea. Thus the self perception of being taken around by her employers as a "status symbol" of their Italian high class, transnational elite position, wealth and power, was clear from her desire to break off from this pattern at least "at home" where she wanted her time and pride back.

The experience of being the "status symbol" of rich families was absorbed and re-produced. The descriptions by Eritreans of their summers in Eritrea reflect their desire to have their own status symbols to be portrayed while on holiday in Eritrea. It comes into play as a social process of absorption of Italian practices of status. Their quest for high status was reflected in the fact that delivering an image of modernity and Italian-ness had become central to the way Eritreans abroad made their return home for holidays. People planning their summer spoke about their departure for months before going, and some might have not even managed to go that year but were already thinking of the following one. The preparation for the holiday was time consuming. People bought presents for their relatives, usually objects that could not be found in Eritrea. One woman who was returning for Christmas 2003 told me that, over a long period of time, she had brought the whole Christmas setting with the plastic tree, balls and all the decorations needed to complete the Christmas celebration "in an Italian way", as she put it. When I met her she had just bought the star to put at the top of the tree and she was very proud of herself thinking of the happiness of her nephews and nieces in topping the tree and eating the "panettone[55]" she was bringing back. She said she celebrates an Italian Christmas even regarding the date. The Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches follow a different calendar to the western one. The Orthodox Christmas

55 Panettone is a Christmas cake which originated in Milan but which has become the classic pudding consumed during the Christmas period in the whole of Italy.

(following the Justinian calendar) falls in on 6th January (Gregorian calendar). She instead stressed the fact that she celebrated it on 25th December even when in Eritrea[56].

Another elderly woman bought an aluminium oil holder, which particularly recalled Italian old times, both in its shape and the use of aluminium. During the embargo on the Fascist regime (1936), aluminium was the only metal Italy could produce for cooking utensils. Interestingly enough, this type of aluminium holder was brought to Eritrea by the Italians during the same period. Thus, this object attracted her also in its subliminal connection to her "Italian" childhood reflecting on the birth of Eritrean identity, with the Italians dividing Eritrea from Ethiopia[57]. This object was very Italian also for its specific use to serve oil, a substance that has a strong token of Italianness.

Most people also prepared trunks containing goods they regularly take to Eritrea. Inside these trunks they bring food, mostly Italian, and other goods. When I asked if it was for their families, most replied "and for ourselves! We bring it for us and then we leave the remainder for our relatives". The second generation youngsters told me they especially took pasta, which one can also buy in Eritrea but it is "not as good", because, as other adults explained, it is not made of wheat flour but of another type of grain flour (*t'ef*) grown in Eritrea and Ethiopia, the basic ingredient for making the *Habesha* bread, '*ngera*, on which they eat[58]. They also took all the ingredients needed to cook other Italian meals "which we are now used to eating, and we miss Italian food once in Eritrea".

Italianness was brought to Eritrea through objects and food, but also through the underlined importance of clothes and elegance. For example, I went with Natzennat to the market in the council estate area. I needed a "Moka" coffee machine to make my summer work in Milan more pleasant and she was looking for clothes "to wear in Massawa". She told me she

---

56 The new calendar is also discussed in chapter 3 in relation to the official birth of the Eritrean nation state and national identity.

57 As argued in Chapter Three

58 On the topic of bread see article by Lyons and D'Andrea 2003.

had already prepared "the ones for Asmara". She was going to be in Massawa for four days or so and wanted four different outfits. She found only one, saying it was for the beach and that she would find the ones for the evening elsewhere in shops. She told me her mother had allowed her to go and buy clothes to wear with the little money she earned as house-cleaner. This latter statement by Natzennat relates to the need of most Eritreans to go to Eritrea performing a migrant status and bringing wealth to show and distribute.

Lula, a 28-year-old Eritrean informant who had arrived in Italy in the early nineties after the liberation war, showed me pictures and a video of her recent holiday in Eritrea. In this video I noticed that during a wedding she had changed her clothes three times and I thus asked her if the video had been taken over several days. When she said it was a one-day celebration, I could not help remarking that she had changed so many times. She replied "I felt like it, to be more relaxed".

The diaspora's practices involved in preparing to go to Eritrea were thus mostly focused on shopping and finding objects that would reinforce their diasporic identity when returning to Eritrea. Literature on the subject of shopping (Campbell and Falk 1997, Miller, D 1998, Miller, D. et al 1998, also in Belk, R. 1999) analyses the practices of consumption and shows analytic frameworks to contextualise its social significance. The Eritrean practice of shopping and consuming to convey Italianness, to perform status though the disposal of wealth and modernity is to be added to other examples where migrants (Caspari 1986) bring gifts and objects of "modern" or "technological" consumption to create a specific power relation with those back home and produce a different identity and status, which has been elsewhere analysed as a dynamic that has the outcome of reinforcing the culture of e-migration (Cohen, R. 1997).

Those who leave Eritrea to move and stay in another place change status and become exiles. Many verbally differentiate themselves from those who stayed back home, by often speaking of them as narrow-minded, ignorant and conservative. In comparison, many see themselves as modern and open-minded, more experienced, hard working and in many

ways subjugated to the poverty left behind. In other words, they spoke about the Eritrean society's dependence on them in every economic and cultural aspect. One informant told me, as many others did in other words, that:

> Those who stayed back home have no idea of what we experience every day. They just think we owe them because we are rich, and it's true that we earn more. But we are paying more to live, it's expensive here, and we are paying taxes in Italy and in Eritrea.

Even the youngsters of the second generation speak about these differences as a problem. Natzennat, who at the time of my fieldwork was eighteen years old, told me about the stress caused by the family in Eritrea who expect too much from her mother.

> It's true that when we go there we spend on things like going out, drinking, and leisure. But what do they expect? After working hard all year round one deserves a rest. Instead they think we live that way all the time.

The exhibition of wealth had thus conflicting outcomes; perceived by the diaspora as misunderstood and by the local population as a sign of extravagance, it nevertheless often appears as a fundamental aspect of returning from abroad. The newly arrived Eritreans in Milan, for example, said they would not return even if they could because "they aren't ready to", not until they have a job and some stability and earnings to show. Their impossibility of returning until "sorted" echoes the perceived "limbo" of those who have just arrived in Milan who cannot perform such status.

The Eritrean diaspora on holiday feel they are misunderstood by the population there, but nevertheless they do not do much to change this. There are discourses reinforced by collective practices. These practices reproduce Italian discourses of the status of holidays and retreats but are perceived as being in contrast with standards of life in Eritrea and with its history.

The conflict between those who stayed back home and those who left is based on issues of loyalty to the family and to the nation. The discourses shaped around this show an intrinsic

frustration on the part of those who left because they feel their status is misunderstood; but nevertheless they never explain it. Natzennat told me that:

> When someone says that s/he works in a school, in an office, in a hospital, it means that they do the cleaning in that place.

Another woman told me that she would never say that she is working as a cleaner in an office:

> When my son and daughter at home ask me what I do here in Milan, I answer that I work in an office: I could never tell them that I do the cleaning there, it would be shameful.

The work experience, closely lived in relation to a high class inside the Italian society, was embodied in many ways, including ideas of time and leisure but also on the uses of the social structure in Milan. The use of resources echoed that middle to high class level of society where Eritreans in Milan work; the example of holidays is one, but one might point out that other reflections were found in the use of private medical services, such as opticians and clinics, instead of the use of the state apparatus; or in daily practices such as the use of carrier bags from designer or jewellery shops instead of plastic shopping bags. The Italian discourses and practices of class differentiation were reproduced to acquire higher status in Eritrea.

Diasporic tourism in Eritrea

My informants returned to Milan with amazing descriptions of the places they had visited in Eritrea, the trips they had made, the cars they had bought or rented to go to visit cultural, ethnic sites, theme parks and to go around the country to visit relatives. They had videos supporting their narratives to show once back in Milan, and pictures of themselves dressed with elegance, wearing fancy sun glasses, leaning on a shiny car and so on. They returned with souvenirs for themselves and for their Eritrean and Italian friends. All the narratives

heard around returning to Eritrea during the summer are to be connected to tourism and holidaymaking.

Tourism has been analysed as an anthropological subject since the late seventies (see Nash 1981). It obviously followed the mainstream tourism boom, which highlighted the tourists as modern people (MacConnell 1976 in Nash: 462), and leisure as unique to modern society (Dumazedier, 1967 in ibid). Nash argues that its importance is due to the interlinked transformation that tourism brings and shows. Concerning tourism in Eritrea, Schmidt (2003) in fact argues that the Eritrean government should not only focus on the positive economic factors coming from the development of the tourist industry but also advises wariness of the influences and unknown outcomes, often negative, that this particular sector often brings to fragile countries like Eritrea. This is thus the conservative focus that Schmidt forwards, but the changes that the tourist industry shows are often not only linked to the influence that this sector brings into a society but are the mirror through which anthropologists have noticed social change.

M. Kahn (2000) shows how the tourist industry in Tahiti had changed the imaginary of the place over time, starting from its depiction as a heaven and home of beautiful amorous girls by writers and artists from the eighteenth century and onwards, like Gauguin. Tahiti is analysed in its history of tourism and French nuclear testing (which she argues increased at the same time so that the former could hide the latter), as a third space[60] "equally real and imagined, immediate and mediated"(ibid: 7), a social and lived space that changes according to collective action and politics. Babb (2004) argues that the Sandinistas revolution in Nicaragua was hidden from the eyes of tourists at first to portray security, to then become the trope for another specific type of tourism. The tourist gaze has recently become passionate about "humanitarian" issues, "danger" and places of revolutionary history. Thus the country of Nicaragua had to change and emphasise portrayals of Sandino as the

---

60 Referring to Soya's (1996) concept.

revolutionary combatant, and t-shirts, postcards and various other objects for consumer tourism had to change according to what the tourist was seeking. The tourist and the industry are therefore linked to wider forces including world political powers (Kahn 2000) and global discourses of movement, culture, history and place (Babb 2004).

"Tourism requires the construction of an object, an itinerary, a commentary" (Nash 1981: 94). She further argues that the "objectifiers" are not only the capitalists controlling the industry, but also the local people caught up in complex relations with the industry, the tourists, and the transformations taking place. The identity quest by the Eritrean diaspora becomes part of the tropes for entertainment following which even the Eritrean society structure has been attempting to change to encourage tourism (see Schmidt 2003) In the Eritrean case the capitalists were also the migrants investing in Eritrea. I heard émigrés in Milan speaking about personal and group investments in the Dahlak islands on the Red Sea, such as organising guided tours with transport to and back from the islands, camping and so on, thus making an entry into the tourist industry from abroad. They had thought about setting up the business from the Milanese site once its profitability had been assessed, focusing both on Italians but most of all on Eritreans living in Italy and abroad returning for holiday making as potential customers.

Schmidt's argument around the development of tourism in Eritrea has the weakness of omitting who the tourists are and who the industry seeks as future guests, which greatly influences the way the industry may be set up. The arguments outlined at the beginning of the study on tourism imagined the tourist as a "novelty seeker" (Cohen 1974 in Nash 1981) who goes outside his or her home country. Surely Schmidt is speaking about this kind of impersonal guest coming from wealthy countries to visit Eritrea in search of novelty and leisure. Now these definitions become very interesting if we imagine the returning migrant as the main tourist in Eritrea during the summer, who goes back with such a different persona as to be "nearly" a foreigner. Surely the desire to be perceived as modern is a prerogative of the Eritrean migrant who returns for the summer holidays. The quest for

leisure is another aspect that allows the labelling of the members of the diaspora returning home during the summer as tourists: "tourists… are free of primary obligation, while their hosts, having to serve them are not" (Nash 1981: 462). This lack of primary obligations is evident in the diaspora's description of leisure in Eritrea. Often there is a novelty quest, a desire to visit cultural, historical sites which are always spoken about but experienced only under the precise circumstances of holiday.

The returnee becomes a tourist and his/her holiday is lived as a space that hard-working people deserve, with a concept of time and space that creates further divisions between those who live in Eritrea and those who visit. The concept of time and space is different among the diaspora compared with those back home and also refers to a difference of perception of place and space. In fact in the minds of Eritreans in Milan, Eritrea is becoming a place where certain types of status symbols related to wealth are shown off, such as having a maid at home in Eritrea, attending bars in Asmara and ordering "Beyles with ice", and showing the sort of Italianness described in relation to objects, food, and fashion. When in Eritrea, the Eritrean diaspora also follows the form of tourism analysed by Craik (1997) as a turn towards a "cultural" interest. Eritrea is the place where one rides camels and captures the moment to show the pictures in Italy, rents a Land-Rover and goes to visit cultural sites, goes to Massawa and instead of staying at family homes, prefers to go to a hotel "with air conditioning and away from head-lice". They are in search of the diverse "ethnic cultures", the "beautiful countryside", but also of the sites where the liberation struggle left marks. Many go to visit the places in Eritrea that symbolise the liberation struggle and the achievement of freedom from Ethiopia. For example, one of my informants returning after a trip to Eritrea in 2002 had pictures of the trenches, the fortresses of the "*Shaebia*" warriors. He also had pictures of a general's son who was born in these trenches and thus pictured next to his place of birth. So, similarly to the Nicaraguan tourist industry (Babb 2004), the Eritrean one is also using the tourist's interest in history to create "an object, an itinerary, a commentary" (Nash 1981) which is imagined by the returnees as a part of their "memories"

of the collective past, in the process of being constructed as a tourist object by themselves and those in charge of the Eritrean ministry of tourism.

Referring to Clifford (1988: 196), Volkman writes that "'Collection' -in the form of souvenirs, postcards, artefacts, tales, experiences, or memories- presupposes processes of objectification that extend, in the case of ethnic tourism, to 'culture' itself" (1990: 91). "Tourism implies a distinctive sort of gaze" so that objects "can be consumed: purchased, photographed, even eaten, but above all, narrated, understood" (ibid: 91). To give an example of how the tourist gaze is embodied by the summer returnees, I was once at Hiwot's house and her husband had just returned from a holiday there and brought back a pair of trainers for his ten-year-old son, which Hiwot thought were of bad quality, and some necklaces "the ones the Kunama or the Barca ethnic people wear". The husband's intention was to bring tokens of Eritrean culture: the shoes because he wanted to emphasise the development taking place in Eritrea, and the necklaces because they showed Eritrean folk cultures. Culture becomes objectified and ready to be invested in or taken back, in one form or another, to where one lives his or her daily life. Dawit, for example, who used to go back to Eritrea at least every other year, is now in such poor health that he may never return. He set out a *Habesha*-style coffee service, and some other "cultural" objects "to remind me of my country" on a small table in the entry of his flat. Volkman (1990: 95) made a similar statement about Toraja where "most of the houses [called *tongkonan* and objectified as tourist items "typical" of the area] are purchased by Indonesian tourists, including many Toraja who now live outside the highlands. In Jakarta, one Toraja executive has five handsome *tongkonan* models on his grand piano, the only reminder of the highlands in his luxurious modern home."

The "commentary" that Nash (1981) refers to and the "imaginary" space in Kahn (2000) go hand in hand in the construction of Eritrea as a space in mind for the returnees and its translation into tourist itineraries. History is part of the tropes on which this kind of tourism is built and following which it becomes a sort of "pilgrimage", using Ebron's (2000) definition

of the Black American diaspora visiting Ghana and Senegal, and as their "return home", quoting Bruner's (1996) analysis of the representation of slavery as part of the Black Diaspora's heritage. The Eritrean pilgrimage and their return home in search of signs of a common history is built by and for a generation of migrants who "fought from abroad" for their country.

Confronting the war, visiting Eritreans

Reem Saad (1998) explains the issue of distinction between those who moved and those who did not with these words:

> Like war and pilgrimage, labour migration is a journey that involves the crossing of boundaries, the assertion of identity through an encounter with an "other", and the possession of an experience which is a factor of establishing distinction with one's original community. (1998: 36)

What she describes, although applied to Egyptians, is generally true of every person that moves and, through movement, experiences something different from everyone else at home. This is a great token of difference and becomes especially consolidated when the migration experience is long-lasting.

War and migration, for Saad, are both experiences that include the nation in the village. In different ways, two generations with experiences of movement and dislocation constitute narratives of the self, prominent topics of conversation in the village, in relation with the nation. Her informants who fought the 1973 war talk about their experience through memories of the past to make a point about the present. Recent migration is instead a narrative related to the future, to working, adjusting in society as independent adults. People who lived war or migration are connected through an "experience of living and working abroad as a separate phase in life marked by very specific temporal and spatial boundaries" (ibid: 37). Both are experiences of vulnerability but, whereas war includes the

exposure to risk as narratives of heroism, in narratives of migration it is described in terms of fear, weakness, humiliation, loss and failure, all feelings that are contrary to the peasant culture. War is nationalistic in that it is described as a total dedication to the nation: "we wanted nothing for ourselves" (ibid: 31), although enriched with descriptions of individual initiatives and heroism. Migration, on the contrary, is individualistic. It is a pursuit of material success, which in the village is looked down upon; it is not a noble cause, but is often described as an individual defeat. The nation, though, is central even in these migration narratives, since the migrant asserts Egyptian identity after having encountered the "other". "In the migration narratives, the peasant identity and the village boundaries subside giving way to a reinforcement of national boundaries and Egyptian identity" (ibid: 42).

For Eritreans, moving during the liberation struggle ('70s and '80s) asserted national identity in a stronger way, but it is different to the Egyptian case quoted above, first of all because not many Eritreans have returned to live in Eritrea after fleeing, and second because often war and migration coincided in time. Those who left did so while the country was at war and often because of it. The difference from the experience described by Saad is also connected with the fact that war is "at home". Both of the wars were fought in Eritrea, not abroad, even though some marched on Addis Ababa (1991) together with the Tigrayan and Oromo Ethiopian warriors to defeat the Derg and Mengistu. The narratives thus intertwine the issue of war and nation. One woman told me that:

> Those at home think we (those who left) are morally loose, they think that once we leave we become rich and spend time with different men, losing all the Eritrean religious and moral principles, while they (even the women) were there at war, fighting for the country.

The same woman had a counter-discourse:

> Instead, we came here to support them, to secure the family. Eritrea wouldn't be free if we hadn't done what we did from here. We work hard and have no free time to spend in the way they imagine, and what do they know about the difficulties one finds in another country?

The individualistic pursuit which Saad analyses in the case of returning Egyptians, in the Eritrean case is often then turned into a national issue, in that most Eritreans in Milan of the

first generation of arrival describe their experience of migration as dedicated to securing all the national rights for their home country. In this way the diaspora managed to transform the journey to exile from an individual stratagem into a collective Eritrean strategy for national survival and sovereignty. Nevertheless, the discourse about the past, carefully constructed by the returnees, hides the present individualistic shift towards the quest for status, wealth and the performance of a different identity, which sets them well apart from those back home.

Delaney offers an analysis regarding returning Turks (1990: 525), which opens the argument about differentiation between those who stayed and those who left. In Delaney's case the latter are perceived as weakly buying into the sins of consumption as those who return nevertheless want to offer gifts showing status and wealth. In the narratives of my informants returning from their holidays or speaking about past ones, I did notice that there was the perception of this type of gaze on them, a perception which seemed to be added to an underlying feeling of guilt hidden by grand memories of past exiles' participation in civil nationalism and nation building. The relation built between those who stayed and those who left during the war is thus circled by an unsaid but noticeable sense of remorse and the recognition of a sharp difference in lifestyle, in historical experiences and of what Fisiy (1998) calls the "memory bank" built up during and after the war. The tension is nevertheless not as strong as that found in Rwanda, also because there are no such civil or ethnic scars as those built during the Rwandan genocide. Among the Eritrean diaspora the stress on a heroic past of nation-building from abroad highlights, by contrast, the individualistic shift recently taking place.

The war is something Eritreans in Milan relate to as a component of their identity. As noticed in the analysis of the journeys to exile and engagement in the festival, those who have lived in Milan and escaped from the war during the seventies and eighties see themselves as fighters, as women and men who supported liberation with such determination that it often disrupted their private lives. Nevertheless, when confronted with the reality of those who

have undergone the difficulties of actually living in a state of war and emergency, there is a sense of discomfort.

The findings regarding the relation built by the diaspora with those at home is in clear contrast with Kibreab's findings (2002) about the refugees' return home in post-conflict Eritrea where the relation between stayees and returnees is positively constructive and not conflictual. My findings are different to Kibreab's because the exile identity and that of the diaspora may clearly be differentiated. Those who returned to stay did so with a totally different intention to the diaspora. Moreover, the diaspora has a different perception of time and space where the space of Eritrea and its wars are part of an idealised past of struggles from abroad and imagining how Eritrea should become. For the diaspora the war is part of a collective memory, part of "the history of pain", whereas for those in Eritrea the country is part of ongoing hardship in war, where they experienced "the pain of history" not idealised but experienced. The past and present of Eritrea is thus lived in different ways by the diaspora and by those back home.

Conclusions: Eritrea, the mother of all narratives

The Bologna Festival united the exiles before independence, but now holidaymaking in Eritrea unifies the diaspora. There are places which become spaces of the diaspora, spaces where the diaspora meets, recognises itself in the shared movement, and shared experiences of exile. Bologna used to fulfil this role of exilic space, but now it is mostly Eritrea which presents itself as such. The Eritrean visitors are no longer exiles because they are actually back, but they are not returnees for they do not live in Eritrea. The exiles have become a diaspora who return for holidays. From the narratives of their summer holidays it is clear that in Eritrea people have wanted to emphasise this shift of "spaces" and "meanings" from exile back to Eritrea; thus the desire to call a square in Asmara after Bologna was a way to remember an important event which helped the country achieve

independence. But it also meant the end of the exiles' activity and the reunification of the diaspora back in Eritrea. The meanings of the collective diasporic spaces in Eritrea are far different from the previous. Now the need to show their activism as a collectivity of exiles has been bypassed by the desire of the Eritreans visiting home to represent themselves as a group of people living abroad. Eritreans in Eritrea tend to differentiate themselves from the locals and get together with the rest of the members of the world's diaspora. But it is also true that the shared dream of liberation among exiles has shifted, together with the switch to a fragmented vision of the role of the diaspora. The present economic and political situation in Eritrea and the stability reached in Milan has diminished the probabilities of returning to Eritrea to live or to fight, but Eritreanness is far from lost. People still build or buy houses in Eritrea, leaving their properties to be managed by family members and keeping the last possibility of returning open. Most Eritreans in Milan try to return as much as possible with their families. They experience return as a holiday away from stress and a regular reunification with both Eritrean friends and family members at home or from abroad. It is difficult for Eritreans in Milan to foresee a future stability back in Eritrea and they thus build regularity by returning for holidays as a way to be there without being there, to reinforce an identity based on living abroad and being Eritrean there, to build a diasporic identity. Therefore the diaspora lives the summer in Eritrea as the space where they display their status symbols, spend some leisure time, have fun and see the family. Eritrea is the place where they overcome the hardship undergone in Italy and build up a worldly identity. It is the place where they find the right space to show the constitution of another collective self: the Eritrean diaspora.

This chapter focused on concepts of time and space through the analysis of practices and narratives of Eritreans in Milan. It looked at how the concept of working time and leisure developed among the middle and upper classes in Italy has poured into the practices of holidaymaking, shaping other types of identity constructions among and between Eritreans. The chapter thus gave examples of Eritrean preparations for their summer holidays in Eritrea

and their narratives about differences between them and those remaining in Eritrea, shaping strong notions of what being a diaspora means when put into a broader context. Here Eritrea as a place, a physical place, lived and experienced by those who did not leave, becomes a place in mind for the members of the diaspora who return for tourism and holidaymaking, underlying their narratives about past heroism. Nevertheless, the individualism shown in their leisure practices clashes with the daily experiences of Eritreans at home, bringing out an uneasy sense of guilt on the diaspora's part. The unease is though bypassed by re-inforcing the narratives of past heroism in the sponsoring of the liberation movement.

Chapter 6

Talking about identity

To define the subjects of this chapter I use the world youth, young people, Milanese-Eritreans, but at times I also use Andall's (2002) definition of second generation, which includes those who arrived before the age of 6 or were born in Italy. I nevertheless feel uncomfortable with the latter definition which describes these young people as encapsulated not only into their parents' lives but also tied into the in-between-ness that they are struggling to overcome (see Baumann 1996).

The chapter looks into the way the youth speaks about their identity as a group in relation to being Eritrean in Milan. Their voice is analysed in comparison to the findings of Andall's research (2002) on "second generation Africans in Milan" and Cologna's comparative research (2003) on the "offsprings of immigration". Andall's analysis mostly focuses on being African and black in Milan and the youth's experiences of systemic closure, while Cologna's scope is more on they way the second generations deal with their particular cultural background and their permanence in Milan. Both researchers are intrinsically asking how the youth is experiencing being "here and there".

Natzennat told me about a school essay she had written when she was seven years old. The title was "narrate your journey to Italy". It was an essay specifically chosen for young foreigners living in Milan. Natzennat, however, was born in Milan and had not made a journey to Italy. She chose that title because she included herself in the foreigners' category and juggled with it by writing about her first journey to Eritrea when she was six years old. The essay signified her status of being in between and her first journey to Eritrea reinforced her Eritreanness but also her Italianness: an initiation in becoming an Eritrean in Milan and

an Italian in Eritrea. The idea of foreign-ness applied even to the second generation is common among Italian discourses; as a child she was already negotiating with pre-defined ideas of being a foreigner, particularly slippery when applied to second generation children and teenagers. "The terminology utilised to describe their experiences tends to endorse a prevailing view of them as young immigrants rather as young Italians" (Andall 2002: 393). Nevertheless the problem of how to define second generations is not only present in Italy. In the British case, Baumann (1996) in fact argued that there is the tendency to differentiate second generation youth as 'other' forgetting that they go to the same school as British children and adolescents, they watch the same television programmes, thus live in the same environment which, I would add, creates a common community of memory and generational relation rather than cultural difference.

This chapter presents a group interview with four second-generation Eritrean-Milanese youths. Natzennat was my main young informant helping me throughout the fieldwork and I gave her English lessons in exchange; I knew Elena because she is the sister of Gennet whom I helped with her studies twice a week, and I thus had access to her family history; I knew Michael from the After-school club of the Comitato Inquilini but mostly from the Eritrean celebrations which we both always attended; about Valentino, I just knew what the others had told me: that he was "Italian".

The interview had to be cut and accommodated for reasons of space, meanwhile losing some of its freshness; I had to omit interruptions, like mobiles ringing, SMS-message reading, comments on TV-programmes and some youth jokes revealing their in-between-ness and beyond. The words of the young people, in their flow of thoughts where they found space to share similarities and differences of life experiences, touch on the various topics encountered throughout the thesis. The interview is vibrant and thus brings the topic of identity into a lively contextualisation; it is hereby presented with the sole addition of notes explaining the meaning of words and practices if not described by the interviewees themselves. After the "raw" speech, I add an analysis incorporating the issues linked to what

the young people hint at. I chose to work on this interview instead of other fieldnotes because the topic is more expressive and complete in all the shades of identity formation. Through the flow of descriptions of narratives and practices, identity is contextualised in yet another angle, from the youths' point of view.

Michael: *Pizzas* and *focacce*[61]? When?
Natzennat: On Monday? Didn't you come? Someone who comes to the doposcuola (after-school club), his dad has a baker's shop, brought us the pizza and foccacce…
Elena: Is he Egyptian[62]?
Natzennat: Yes
Elena: Every time we go to his baker's shop, he treats us to pizza!
Anna: Who is this guy?
Natzennat: He's the father of a primary-school boy, Sarah [an Egyptian girl in the after-school club] usually goes there.
Elena: I always go with her
Michael: Don't count me [for the cake]! I'm really full.
Natzennat: Did you eat '*ngera*?
Michael: As soon as I get home I eat something.
Elena: But do you always eat '*ngera*?
Michael: No, now I ate *mortadella*, *salame*[63], pasta.
Elena: '*Ngera* is very filling

[…] Mic: I have to go back.
Nat: This summer? And what are you going for?
El: Well, your sister has had a baby.
Mic: My brother has a girlfriend he's going to marry.
El: Is that your brother who's here[64]?
Michael giggling: This one? I don't think so!
Va: He's *unlucky*!
Mic: Yes, because he's staying here, he can't go.
El: Because of the papers…
Mic: I'm going to stay there and see the wedding… But I can't understand anything… you go there, and you can't say anything in Eritrean, what can I understand?
El: You don't understand Tigrino?
Mic: Well, I only understand a little!
Va: But when we go to your house to get '*ngera* we always speak Eritrean[65]!
El: All our mothers speak Tigrigno.
Mic: Well, if I was pretending, it wouldn't be so hard to talk to my brother!
Nat: But aren't you glad to go to see the *merah*?

61 Focaccia is an Italian sort of plain pizza with salt and olive oil.

62 In Milan there are many bakeries run by Egyptians, who started their businesses in the eighties; many are very successful.

63 Like salame, mortadella is pork meat similar to a cooked sausage.

64 This brother of his is a newcomer.

65 Michael's mother cooks 'ngera at home and has this small business activity.

El: Meraht

Nat: Merah, without the 't'.

El: But there is a 't' somewhere.

Mic: What's merah?

Nat: Wedding!

Mic: I'm not interested

Nat: What do you mean, you're not interested! It's lovely! It lasts three days

El: Longer! Three days, then there's a sort of break, then another party. […] Like they did for my aunt, one week before her wedding, all the old women came to prepare the food which takes a week, then there was her wedding, then they rested a week, then afterwards they had another party.

Nat: But it had lasted three days, because the first day is dedicated to taking photos. The second day there is the ceremony… it starts at 5 in the morning, then maybe the third there is, I don't know… *it depends how they want to do it* […]

El: In Milan it's much shorter than in Asmara.

Nat: Musie's started at six in the morning... they did the shortened service…

El: But in Asmara they even start at four…

Nat: Anna, I come at three o'clock [In the afternoon]! But it starts at five [in the morning], *it depends on who wants to and who doesn't*.

[...] An: Gosh, this summer I'll try to go to a wedding.

El: Are you going to Asmara this summer? See how lucky you are! If they don't give me a stay permit, I can't go!

An: Sorry, but haven't you got Italian citizenship?

El: When I'm eighteen!

An: That means you have to keep on renewing your stay permit?

El: When it expires.

Nat: Every two years, maybe, right?

El: Well, it depends. Honestly, *I've never understood this thing*[66].

[…] An: Why don't you like it in Eritrea?

Mic: It's too much, if you can't understand anything. No, really Natzennat! You either go where there are slot machines or around on your bike. If you don't know the language how can you talk to *the people*?

Nat: Look, you're in another dimension! This year I went to Asmara, there were fifteen of *us*. No, make it twenty.

Mic: Were they speaking Italian or Eritrean?

Nat: Italian kids

Mic: So you were with *them* […] What's that got to do with it? We're talking about Eritrea!

Elena and Nat laugh

Nat: But Elena! Help me! In Asmara there are also Eritreans who come from Holland, from England…

El: But then if you have problems with the language you go to the Casa degli Italiani, there are *Habesha*, people who live there… and they also speak Italian! Or where there are people of your age. Go to the bowling.

Nat: To the Top Five.

El: There's a play station! […]

---

66 The regulations on migration are being changed by the various governments; the recent tightening on the rights of migrants increased the bureaucratic iter to renew the stay permit.

I asked to briefly tell me their life history
Nat: Well, I was born here in Milan, eighteen years ago.
An: Here in this district?
Nat: Ah, no. I lived in the Sempione area.
El: Tell her the road!
Nat: Via Cagnola.
El: And explain!
Nat: No, because Via Cagnola has a story all of its own. We practically lived in Corso Sempione. There were two or three buildings in this street, where there were only Eritreans. They were "case di ringhiera"[67].
Elena laughs
Nat: […] Then from there they put us into a council flat, because they had to do up the buildings. They gave everyone a flat. Anyway, we were there for four or five years, maybe even more because that flat was my aunt's. Then she went to America and it was left to my Mum.
An: But it had been assigned to your aunt.
Nat: No, I think they broke in (she laughs).
[...] Nat: The first time I went to Asmara, was when I was six. Just after my father died my Mum said, let's go, so you can learn to have some relations with your country. I went there, and I remember I had fun as a little girl. All the kids around, lots of noise, because the houses were real houses, a little garden, like a courtyard, there weren't big buildings like now. Now there are flats at Korea. […] Where I live! They are all structured houses, built properly. They are big [...]

El: I'm Elena, I was born in '87 in Milan, but not in Via Cagnola.
An: Natzennat you were born in '86?
Mic: Now you can get Italian citizenship.
Nat: I've already got it!
Mic: How can you have it already, you have to be eighteen to have it.
Nat: Because my father had Italian citizenship and so I got it when I was born!
Va: I've got it too
Nat: You, OK, you're Italian. Elena is *illegal*!
El: I'm an *extracomunitaria* (non-European). Soon I'll be taking the oath too.
Nat: But they also make you do a culture test like in America?
El: I'm scared, (but) what *culture*! *I don't know anything about culture*! What do they have to ask me?
Nat: If you don't pass that exam, they don't give you the citizenship?
An: Do your parents have Italian citizenship?
El: No, otherwise I would have got it too.
Nat: Refugees!
An: So, they have to renew it as well?
El: That'll teach them! My father has been here for twenty-five years but didn't want to get the citizenship. Because, he says, I am Eritrean and must be Eritrean. He has such a limited mentality that for him only Eritrea exists. So you can't tell him anything. My mother has got

---

67 Typical old Milanese houses, mostly of the first three decades of the 20th century, where all the small apartments connected with a passage way outside, shared an outside toilet, and looked onto a courtyard.

angry about this story. Because *with an Eritrean citizenship you can't do anything. You can only move from here to Asmara and Germany and that's all.*
Nat: you remain with your *closed mentality* and you stay there. [...]

Va: I'm Valentino, I'll be fifteen in two months. I was born in Milan.
El: But you lived in Eritrea, didn't you?
Va: [...] Well, I did the first primary class here when I was six. Then in the summer I went there with my Mum, and my mother left us, and came back here…
Natzennat: With your grandmother
Va: With her mother, she came here to work while I did the second and the third grades. [...] My sister was three, she was at playschool.
El: Is there a playschool? What a playschool, I can imagine!
Nat joking: With a lady in her house, who looked after ten children of neighbours.
They all laugh
Va: First we lived at *Gejeret* and then my Mum came and she found another house at *Cahauta*, where the houses are big... but the streets…
El: Well, there aren't any roads in all of Asmara
Nat: Oh, only in my district! […]
Va: Then came my grandmother's sister, the sister of my father's mother.
Nat: Your aunt.
Va: No, she is my aunt, but…
El: Your father's aunt.
Nat: Your great-aunt, your grandmother's sister.
Va: There's my grandmother on my mother's side and grandmother on my father's.
An: Your great-aunt on your father's side. But is your dad Italian or Eritrean?
Nat: Italian.
Va: Yes, he is more Italian but also a bit Eritrean.
Nat laughs: What does that mean?
Va: Basically, my father's mother is Eritrean, his father is Italian.
El: Why couldn't you just say he's *mulatto* (half cast)?
Va: But both his grandfathers were Italian.
Nat: But why does this boy have to complicate our lives?
[…] El: Sometimes on the bus, when my mother talks to me in Tigrinya there's a lady who starts talking about her life in Tigrinya!
Va: Yes, there's an old man who is always here, with a moustache.
El: He used to ask 'are you Asmarina?' "Asmarina" he says!
Nat: Call yourself "Asmarina"! I'm Eritrean!
They all laugh […]

[...] An: Michael, were you born here or in Eritrea?
Mic: In Asmara
Va: Were you born in a manger?
Mic: I don't want to answer! In '86 and I stayed till I was three, then I came here and went to *boarding school.*
Natz: Oh, it's true, I went to boarding school too.
Va: I've been to boarding school too.
[…] An: But did your mother have a live-in job?
Mic: Yes, when I was in boarding school, she had a live-in job
An: Did your mother also have a live-in job?
Nat nods: But when [Eritrean women] come here, the only job they find is live-in jobs. So,

how do they manage? They put you in boarding school, they see you on Saturday and Sunday and they live in on their jobs.
Va: But when you left boarding school, did your mother have a house?
Mic: Yes, we were at *Marasepe.*
Va: But where is it?
Mic: *Maresep*, here, the Eritrean bar.
An: Sure, the community! Did you live in the community?
Nat: I remember that my father always used to go there.
An: And so, how long was your father here?
Mic: He was still here, in fact I stayed with him and my mother went to work[68]. […] Until he had to go down; then we went to live with a friend of my Mum's, in the end we came here.

[...] An: What do you do when you are in this district?
El: Here there's not much to do, there's nothing!
Nat: So, in the last few years this district has become… Porta Venezia is nothing in comparison with this district. The number of Eritreans who live here increased, in the last three years.
El: Do you know why? Because of these new ones who came by boat!
Nat: The boat people! At least my mother came in luxury by plane. My mother is a *luxury illegal immigrant*. But anyway I don't go around in this area, I live here, that's all.
An: Sorry, but don't you go to your cousin's house and the neighbour who is a dressmaker?
Nat: Of course! But they are all *Habesha*!
They all laugh.
An: But they live here in this district, don't they?
El: Are you asking about hanging out with Eritreans in the district?
An: I want to know what you do in the area.
Nat: I come to the doposcuola.
El: And that's all.
Nat: In the district, I know nobody apart from Elena, or Miriam.
An: You don't go to the circolino (social club)?
They all laugh and repeat "il circolino".
El: Ah, but that becomes only Eritrean. The morning for Italians, the evening only for Eritreans.
An: Do you go?
Nat: Of course not!!!
The girls in chorus: They are all men!
Nat: Because once the Eritreans start going to a place, for the bar it's OK because every day about fifty people come and drink. It's good money. […] Because after work they go straight to the bar.
[...] An: Valentino, what do you do when you are around here?
Va: When I'm around, I walk the dog, or I stay at home playing with the Play Station, or I go to Largo Marinai [a park nearby] with my friends.
An: And are your friends Italians, Eritreans, mixed or…?
Va: Italians, Moroccans…
They all laugh

---

68 The feeling of impotence that their dependence on working women gave them was one of the causes of alcoholism among Eritrean men (also see Farrah 2000 on Somali migrants' gender relations).

An: And you, Elena, who are your friends?

El: Italians. I haven't got that many Eritrean friends, well, Nat lives here, so of course, but with the others no, I have a girlfriend in Corvetto.

An: And how do you meet these kids, at school, in the district…

El: I have Italian friends. I meet them at school, outside. Nat only wants to go around with *Habeshas*!

Nat: It's not true, me, yes, I have Eritrean friends, but I also have Italian friends, for example, Samoa is Italian and she is a great friend of mine. Anyway, do you know where you meet Eritreans? You either meet them at Eritrean schools, or you meet them…

Va: Yes, there is an Eritrean school here in Milan.

El: No, there isn't any more. They closed it![69]

[…] Nat: I met Eritreans at community parties. When I was little my Mum took me to New Year parties, to the Liberation parties, the Festival, so you meet up again. Then I started to go out with them, I get on with them.

An: But you others, didn't you go to the parties?

Va: Eritreans have lots of them, every now and then I go to weddings.

Mic: I've never missed an Eritrean party.

Va: Then there's a lot of *Sua*[70].

Mic: *Sua* is good.

An: Valentino, do you know people in the Eritrean community, Eritrean kids.

Va: Only in this area.

An: In this area? What about you, Mic?

Mic: I have a friend, only one Eritrean friend. [...]

An: Now something which is maybe a bit more complicated: if you were to describe what it means to be Eritrean, how would you describe it? Being or not being Eritrean.

Mic: To be or not to be.

El: Difficult…

Mic: Can I say I pass?

An: You pass? But before you said that that you're not interested in Eritrea, that you get bored there, that here you don't have Eritrean friends, that you don't want to speak Tigrinya, does this mean that you aren't Eritrean?

Mic: I am Eritrean, but I don't feel very Eritrean. If I felt Eritrean, I would have fun with Eritreans.

Nat and El angrily: But what's that got to do with it!!!

An: OK, he said I am Eritrean but I don't feel Eritrean. How can you be Eritrean and not feel Eritrean?

Mic: With the Eritreans… I don't feel at all at my ease.

Nat: It doesn't mean that you aren't Eritrean!

An: Well, wait, and with the Italians?

Mic: It's the same!

El: So, how do you feel, an alien?

Mic: I don't know! I'm normal.

El: But, you do feel a bit Eritrean.

Mic: Of course, I am Eritrean!

69 The Tigrinya language school was shut down with many of the Eritrean community's structures after liberation.

70 Sua is the Eritrean (or lets call it Habesha) beer made of barley which people manage to make even here in Milan.

El: If I don't go around with Eritreans it doesn't mean I don't feel Eritrean. […] I feel Eritrean anyway since my parents are Eritreans, and I like being in Eritrea.
An: But when you go to Eritrea do you see Eritrean-Eritreans or Italian-Eritreans?
El: Both. This year I only met one Italian-Eritrean and then (low voice), I'll tell you what: the Dutch-Eritreans are gorgeous.
Nat: She's thinking about the Dutch, I'm thinking about the Germans
El: Yes, but because anyway I knew some of them.
An: And where had you met them?
El: On the plane, because it was full of Dutch-Eritreans, I mean Dutch people from Eritrea.
Nat: Eritreans coming from Holland.
An: Are you Italian then?
El: Italian-Eritrean? I feel a bit of both, naturally more Eritrean, but sometimes when people discriminate against me and they call me "negretta" (little negro-girl), for example, I get angry. Maybe just for a joke, but I resent it a bit.
Nat: Well, I feel 100% Eritrean, but there is also a bit of Italian in me, because anyway we grew up here, we don't have the Eritrean mentality. Our *mentality* is Italian, because we are very open, then from another point of view I am "closed" in inverted commas, because I always go out with Eritreans, my gang is Eritrean and maybe people say but this girl really doesn't feel Italian. In the end, I don't feel Italian until other people consider me Italian, that's what I always tell you, isn't it? You will never feel Italian unless a person makes you feel it, if an Italian person doesn't make you feel Italian.
El: Oh, it's true, I agree with her.
An: What do you think?
Va: I'm listening.
El: But you have to feel a bit of both, in the end.
Va: A bit of both (under his breath).
El and Nat: But a bit more Eritrean?
El: Eritrean, it's normal, because in any case you are growing up in an Eritrean environment, it's natural, even if you don't want to, you still feel Eritrean.
Va: Eritrean environment, yes…(he grins)
Mic: In Milan! An Eritrean environment! (he grins too)
El: All the *Habesha*, for instance if you see my mother, she's been in Italy for twenty years, and she can't say anything in Italian, you have to make an effort to understand her.
Va: And my Mum, when she writes in Italian…

[...] An: Feeling Eritrean is also due to the fact that Italians make you feel a foreigner. A foreigner or Eritrean?
Nat: A foreigner, because for them its all the same, Moroccans, Eritreans, Africans, blacks, it includes everyone. But it's like saying European! They don't care about where in Africa! But Africa is like saying Europe, French isn't the same as English, English the same as Italian. No, but the Italians generalise, those who are ignorant! They generalise, they say "negro", African, but you don't understand that for me Africa for me is a bit… but if you say Eritrea, maybe I'm a bit more… [71]
An: How do you others feel about being called African?
El: But yes, but African, in the end you feel African, because anyway Eritrean...
Nat: Because you are black.

---

71 She is reproducing the narrative by which Africa is a bit more "savage" and Eritrea a bit more "developed".

Va: They call you African because the Africans are a bit more backward! [72]
Nat: If we were white, we have Italian features, the only thing…
El and Va laugh
Nat: It's true, what are you saying. Because you don't see Senegalese with a nose like...
Uuhh… [Monkeys]
El: But what's that got to do with it?
Nat: You wouldn't find an Eritrean with a big nose like that or who (deep voice) is dark black.
El: Well, some are like that…
Nat: But… ehrm... those with the necklaces[73]. But *we* [*Habesha*] have many features a bit like Italians, in fact the Italians always, when they see a pretty girl with fine features, you know. Not hum hum… the ones with a big nose, thick lips, the 'gurgu'.
El: But the girl you said was *Habesha*, but it seemed she came from there?
Nat: The Italians always say, Eritrea, ah, you can tell, because they say that the Eritrean women are the most beautiful girls in Africa. In fact many Italian men marry Eritrean women.
An: In what situation would you feel African?
El: When they discriminate.
An: When, for example they call you black, then you think, oh, so I am African.
Mic and Nat: Nooo!
Va: Maybe when you see that they call an African boy a negro, then you feel involved.
Nat and el: Bravo, of course.
Va: They are offending someone who is any case is close to me
An: Is it a question of skin?
El and Nat: Right.
[…] El: The old people, I mean the oldest Italians, I don't know how to explain it to you. They are more sympathetic to us.
An: Here in Italy?
El: Yes, yes. Anyway maybe because they *experienced* the history of Italy and Eritrea. Maybe that's why. But if you see these stupid young spoilt kids. They are *ignorant*.
[…] Nat: I think it's better to say that I'm Eritrean rather than African, it seems S*avage*! Being Eritrean also, but...
El: Some people are stupid, some say: "where is Eritrea?" […] They say: "what are the houses like, are they huts, do you live in the treas?" What the shit is this? Look, *Eritrea is a country*!
Nat: Yes, but when we go to Eritrea, I mean, we say country, but we say, let's take everything with us from Italy, because we're going to the Third World. And I mean, when we came back to Malpensa airport. We said: guys, welcome back to civilisation! We joke about it, but its true. The Third World is the Third World, but it's not like people imagine life there. We are the first to pack up boxes to take there, because we are spoilt and have to take Italian food.
An: Do you too Elena?
El: Yes, for goodness sake!
[…] Va: And then I don't like eating there because... OK, sometimes it's good, but sometimes it isn't.
Nat: Let's hear the theory!

72 Valentino jokes on her dark skin colour since he is light.

73 She is reporting a discourse about the peoples of Eritrea, other to the Tigrinyas, who are "more African".

Va: Because when we eat there, basically there are enormous plates where everyone eats together.

Nat: Shahanì[74].

[...] Nat: Wait, when I eat there in Asmara, I always ask them to give me a separate plate, always. But here we are more… here I eat on my mother's side.

Va: But I think eating with the old ladies is disgusting. OK here in Milan, it depends. But I always eat on my own!

Nat: They are getting a bit *more civilised*. Anyway I also eat on my own. [...] E mamma mia oh! At weddings they eat then maybe they go dancing… lalalala, they sweat, then they go back to eating.

[They all laugh].

[...] An: So, being Eritrean also means eating '*ngera*? If an Eritrean doesn't like it…

Va: It's not true, my sister, for example, she's Eritrean, but she doesn't like *zighinì*[75]. S*hirò*, she likes that[76]. I like *dulot*.

Nat: Good! You know that those are animals' innards?

Va: […] My Mum doesn't make it like the others do. Because other women put in a lot of liver and other things, but my mother…

El: I only like it if my mother makes it.

Nat: But I like it, I love it.

Va: My mother puts in tripe, minced meat, garlic, chillies and *berberè*.[77]

Nat: Well, you don't have to give us the recipes!

El laughs and says: we know it too!

An: So you don't have to eat 'ngera to be Eritrean.

Nat: No, because I have a friend who… but I think this is a torture, being Eritrean and being allergic to spicy food. This friend of mine is allergic to chillies; he lives in Milan. But yes, we already get used to eating '*ngera* when we are children.

An: But, sorry, at parties I noticed that, at a wedding, there is 'ngera for the adults and Italian food for the children.

Nat: Yes, because the children prefer…

Mic: Pasta, lasagne, baked vegetables.

Nat: Because children, of course they may prefer to eat lasagne, but when their mother is eating '*ngera*, they have to take two or three mouthfuls, always, right? [...]

An: Now there isn't the community any more where do people meet?

El: What do you mean there's not a community?

An: The former community in via Friuli.

El: Oh, no, of course not, but now there's the bar.

Nat. Yes, but for the men, the women have to stay at home!

El: But the women, yes, they have parties amongst themselves.

Va: They go to other people's houses.

Nat: There's *o'cup*.

El: When someone dies, they have to go, for forty days, they have to go to that person's

---

74 Shashanì means eating together on the same plate.

75 Zighinì is one of the most common Habesha dishes, made with onions fried in butter with Berberè, a spicy mixture with chillies; then there is meat, usually lamb, and tomato sauce.

76 Shirò is another dish made in a similar way but instead of meat it has chick pea flour.

77 A spicy mixture, mostly chilly based.

house.

An: Every day?

Nat: Hasen[78].

El: Of course, but they do if it's a close relative. Twice, and they have to bring food. It's heavy going, and...

Nat: You cry for two hours, don't you? You cry for a couple of hours, my cousin is very clever at imitating them, then they[79] stop, we eat, we drink, and then we meet again the next day to cry, eat and drink.

El: It's true, but you feel sadder, at least you help them to forget. Every day new people and that person has to be always there.

Nat: For forty days it's a torture, right!

El: I mean, after a while, it even gets heavy for the person who's relative has died.

An: If they work, for example, don't they go to work? For a month?

El and Nat: No, *they* don't go to work! For forty days.

An: But even… I don't know, if you can't support yourself?

Nat: No, well, you ask for time off.

El: You get your relations to work in your place. They'd rather leave their job, but they have to do this thing.

Va: But I won't do it.

Nat: My Mum, for example, for her mother, last year she didn't do it, because she didn't feel like seeing people for such a long time, she only told her close relations.

El: But when my grandmother died, at my house there were… It's absurd, it's worse in Eritrea, here it's less, but in Eritrea, Madonna!

[…] Va: Then in Eritrean houses there's a terrible stink. It's disgusting!

They all laugh

An: Where? Here in Milan?

Va: Yes, because they put this fucking thing to burn…

El: When they make the coffee, I hate the stink! I think this is one of the causes of Eritreans' dying, because the old women sit round it in Asmara.

Nat: Then they go like this: *IIIIII*,[80] they take it like that, ah, ah, ah, fuck; it kills you stone dead. It really does!

El: It's basically charcoal, hey: it's bad for your lungs! […]

An: Don't you like it?

El: No, because the stink remains for a week!

Nat: Yes, and it gets into all your clothes.

An: But it's a very nice practice, kids, be a bit romantic!

Mic: What do you mean, romantic? If I invited a girl home, she would run away!

El: It's not romantic at all

[...] Va: I have one in my house to make coffee

Nat: We all have them.

Mic: If you go to an Eritrean's house, you'll see there's one.

Va: But mine is kept in the dresser. [Mum] doesn't use it.

Nat: It's to look good, me too, we have three or four in the dresser.

78 Hasen is the morning ritual.

79 The shift between "we" and "they" is significant since it marks the youths' fuzzy belonging.

80 This type of hymn is practiced in church or in any situation where one is thanking God for something.

An: But don't you ever make coffee[81]?

Nat: Yes, when people come.

Mic: When there's a party, something important.

Nat: But in Asmara they make it every day, every morning.

[…] An: Are you all going back to Eritrea when you grow up?

Everybody loudly: No

El: But you must be joking! To live?

Nat: You know, after you get your pension…everybody goes back to the nest.

El and Nat: No, not me.

Nat: Not me.

El: It's nice for the holidays, but no.

An: Doesn't your mother want to go back?

Mic: I don't know what she wants, but I'm not changing my mind. If she goes I'll wait till I'm 18 then I'll go away.

Va: Maybe I'll go back before I die, or I'll go on a trip, I'll spend millions and millions. I'll go to Hawaii, in the sun.

Nat: No, but I think I would like to die in Eritrea.

Mic: Oh, me too.

Va: No one will come to visit you from Italy.

Mic: My [deceased part of the] family, practically all of them are [buried] in Eritrea.

Nat: My Dad too. You know, all the Eritreans who die, even if they die here in Italy, are taken to Asmara.

El: But it's horrible, but you know where I saw them? They put the coffins where they put the luggage.

Mic: I don't want to die like that!

El: But the thing is that you have to pay for that coffin as if it were a living person.

Nat: No, but wait a minute. When a person dies, they start making collections among all the Eritreans. It's not that you have to pay.[82]

El: Yes, but maybe more than anything else this is for people who don't have relatives here. Then there's a gate at Asmara airport, I remember this scene really clearly, there's a little gate…

Nat: If you die and don't have relatives, the Eritreans take you there.

Va: But I'm going to make a will that I want to be buried here! At least they'll come and visit

---

81 To make coffee in Habesha style one should light some charcoal in a small stove. Once it is properly lit, everyone sits around and a woman performs a set of ritualised actions. First of all raw coffee is burned and brought around to be smelled, the women go llll thanking God. While the coffee is ground (in Italy most people used electrical grinding machines for this end), some chickpeas, barley and pop corn are toasted on the stove. The ground coffee is put in a jebenà coffee pot with water. While the coffee is on the stove for the first round, incense mixed with sandalwood and other spices is burned. When the coffee starts boiling, and spills out from the jebenà, it is poured into the fenjals which are small cups used for drinking bun, coffee, exalted in their Habesha typical object but in actual facts Chinese sake cups. This practice is repeated three times with the same coffee, which becomes weaker and weaker. On the third round spices are burned again. There are numerous images in people's homes or in the bars offering this traditional practice. It is often depicted with romantic emphasis, with grass and flowers spread on the floor around the stove and a woman dressed in traditional white netzalà shawl and zurià dress.

82 This is another example of idealisation of the former community, the golden past.

me, I mean here not in Eritrea!

Nat: Listen, my father died here in Italy but he was taken to Asmara, and when we go on holiday we go and visit him.

Va: Hey, when you go on holiday?!

[…] An: Who would you marry?

El: I know already! His name's Fiftihi

An: The Dutch guy?

El: Madonna mia, I saw him once and I said: you are mine. He's tall and good-looking! He looked like a basketball player.

Nat: When I finish studying, I would like to go and live in America, in San Diego, to be exact. Because my aunt is there, and there's my cousin's husband who is gorgeous, and there's my cousin who must have gorgeous friends too.

They all laugh

Nat: So on the one hand I say either Afro-American, or Eritrean, but Eritreans second-generation, because the first generation means a life of hardship for me.

[…] El: I would like to live in London.

An: why, have you got some relatives in London?

El: Yes! My little cousins, Natzennat. You've seen my little cousins.

Nat: Oh yes, but I thought they came from Germany.

El: But I have relatives in Germany, in England, in America, I mean everywhere, see, but not in Holland.

An: How about you Va? Where do you want to live?

Va: I want to live around the world. I'm not going to Asia or Africa.

El: Are you discriminating against the Third World countries?

Nat: But if we went to those countries, they wouldn't be Third World any more, but Second World.

El: Because Africa has natural resources which still…

Nat: But as long as they steal them from us…

[…] Va: But what job do you want to do?

El: To be successful. I don't know, now I'm sixteen and I still don't know what I want to do.

Nat: I want to be a businesswoman.

Va: When I grow up I want to be an accountant.

Mic: When I grow up I want to be an airplane pilot.

Nat: But wouldn't it have been better to do aeronautical school?

Mic: Well, I can't do it here, I have to learn Eritrean first, right Nat. I can't do it here because I haven't Italian citizenship yet; people who haven't got Italian citizenship can't. I will take Italian citizenship and see what I can do. […]

Va: Elena a hostess.

El: But not flight, a ground-hostess, I would hate to be an air-hostess.

An: Do you want to work for Eritrean Airlines[83]?

El: With their uniforms? But they make you laugh! Every time I've seen them I laughed in their faces.

Nat: Poor Eritrean Airlines: it's only got two planes and it bought them second hand!

They all laugh

---

83 The newly opened government-run airline which started in 2003.

El: But now Eritrea is recovering.
Va: It'll only take a couple of centuries.

Tokens of identity

Throughout the conversation, the teenagers described their Eritrean identity intertwined between "ways of doing" traditional practices and abilities to perform them. Traditional practices were clearly described in their "pure" application by the Eritreans in Eritrea, and at times by the first generation among whom they included their parents. Their identity was described in the way they personally negotiate, refuse or comply. The second generation proved to identify as a collective group different to Eritreans of other generations and collocations. Even though their "group" was then fragmented by their different opinions on Eritrean belonging, future and origins, they had noticeably shared experiences of childhood and growing up in Milan among the Eritrean community, journeys to and from Eritrea, diasporic networks and transcultural personal relations in their day-to-day life at school and in the housing estate.

Eritrean identity emerged as a set of meaningful tokens put down almost as a list. Kinship and blood were referred to as the basis for their Eritrean identity, which granted it through origin. Language proved to be one of the most important skills through which to perform identity. To language skills they added the knowledge of traditional celebrations and life-course rituals, and practices, such as eating Habesha food and making coffee; nevertheless the world "culture" was never referred to eccept about the "culture test" the Italian government set people asking for Italian citizenship.

Culture as such was however implicitly included both in the ways of doing and the set practices and discourses in the Eritrean context and in the Italian one. They went beyond explicitly speaking about these but spoke about their negotiations. For instance, in their description of coffee making, the traditional practice itself was omitted. The young people did not refer to the romanticised aspect of the practice but only to the burning charcoal, a

very animated issue present not only in their description. Many informants, who invited me for *bun* coffee on Sunday, told me about their Italian neighbours' complaints about the smell of burning charcoal[84]. In Milan some women even prepared coffee in the *jebenà* and burned incense in aluminium foil, both placed on the gas cooker. There are many ways in which the first generation comes to terms with their lack of time and with health problems related to burning charcoal in a closed environment. The youth argue that in Milan this type of traditional practice does not persist as a daily routine, as in Eritrea, but has become a social event marking particular celebrations or special days. They thus speak about these stoves left in their cupboards, Natzennat even says she has many, insisting on the ownership of this object as a token of Eritreanness.

The conversation started off mostly focusing on food and identity and these themes continued throughout the conversation. As food was constantly referred to, I prodded them by asking if it was a token of Eritrean identity and although the answer was no, it was followed by a list of exceptions confirming the rule, descriptions of favourite food and recipes, and the initiation of Eritrean kids in Milan to Habesha food. Even though the knowledge of Eritrean traditional food in general and eating '*ngera* seemed to be a factor underlying Eritreanness, the youth argued that traditional food, '*ngera*, is too heavy to be consumed regularly. These comments are linked to their opinion of not abiding to the rule but only playing into it and negotiating.

The young people try to persuade me of the persistence of "pure" Eritrean traditions by describing ceremonies such as the mourning which "goes on for forty days" with repetitive ritualised practices. They also describe the power of tradition, bringing the entire community together in financially helping to perform funerals. Nevertheless they end by showing practices of social change and individual negotiations in Milan. For instance Natzennat described her mother's choice to keep a low profile after the death of her own mother to

---

84 Similar issues on Italian opinions around traditional eating and cooking practices have been described by Maritano 2003.

avoid traditional mourning. The description of their traditional ceremonial practices are often mixed with the idea of choice, differentiated between the flexible application by people in Milan, especially themselves, and the fixity of those back home. The youth forwards a perception by which "Eritrean" ceremonies and events, organised in Eritrea in a regulated way, are accommodated in Milan to another lifestyle and "mentality".

Call yourself Asmarina! I'm Eritrean!

The journeys and time spent to keep family links alive are surely a personal emotional experience, but are connected both to the discourse on holidays and to a worldly Eritrean identity. I often heard people speaking about journeys, like going to Greece to meet a daughter studying there, or to Florence for Christmas to visit an Eritrean friend. I followed the newcomers round when they went to Bologna to meet friends and spend some time "in a house", eating *'ngera* and drinking *bun* (coffee), after having to sleep in hostels for the homeless in Milan. They had a network of newly-arrived fellow Eritreans to meet in different locations around Italy, or, if they managed to, even around Europe. In all these cases, it often was a well-pondered choice made from the many opportunities to visit people abroad; many said it was a cheap way of travelling. A woman going to the USA said she was not going to Eritrea because "I know everything about my own country, I want to see places I don't know!" The narratives built on individual experiences shape perceptions of the ways of being Eritrean, which are not limited to initial journeys but continue to build on places, diasporas and movement after dispersal. The choice of further movement is linked to perceptions of other places. Valentino in the group interview set the terrain for this kind of commenting on places:

> Va: you know where I'm going to live? In Amsterdam
> Mic: eh… women…
> Nat: drugs?
> Va: when I'm eighteen, me and my friends, ten or fifteen of us, have planned
> to make a trip to Amsterdam straight away…
> Mic: yes, and how many women will you be looking at?

(extracted from the interview)

The comments on Amsterdam clearly show how journeys were set off by discourses about places. In another interview, Alem, "a young Eritrean" who arrived as a child in the early eighties, said he went to see the Eritrean festival in Germany but added "I don't like Germans: they are too serious and rigid". He was referring to the Eritreans there; their category was connected to his perception of German people. "Eritreans in Germany absorb the way German people live", he said. In another interview Natzennat described American Eritreans and said:

> In the USA one becomes a black American, my cousin married one of them. He is cool but doesn't know anything about Eritrea, so she doesn't go back that much and has friends that are black but not only Eritrean; her son and daughter don't speak Tigrinya because they don't need to.

Her vision of the US identity followed ideas of "the melting pot" on which she had conflicting ideas, sometimes arguing it was better because it made her feel free, but other times she felt there was a "cultural" loss involved in that kind of life.

National identities are nowadays highlighted on the nation of dwelling: if one is called Dutch, it means that person lives in Holland and is part of that "stable" community with specific types of connotations. Even though this used to happen, especially in connection to the festival in Bologna, it has increased also with the presence of the second generation who link identity to birth and stability more than the former, whose rhetoric links place to movement and thus identity to space. The members of the second generation call the newly arrived Eritreans the "Asmarini", inhabitants of Asmara, linking their identity more in terms of birth than in terms of recent experiences. It is in contrast with the discourse of the first generations who significantly call them the "Libyans" underlying their trajectory towards Italy, a category based on previous journeys. These descriptions do not occur among the second generation who have not followed the Middle Eastern diaspora and physically migrated. The young Milanese-Eritreans do not perceive movement with the same strength

as the first generation. Experiences of dwelling mark a shift from meaningful places of passage to places of birth, stability and integration, which become hyphenated "national" identities shaped in a similar way to Italian categories (Maritano 2002, 2003, Riccio 2000, Salih 2003). These new categories show that the first generation of Eritreans have an idea of identity based on mobility and history of exile, while the second generation lacks this experience and does not include it in linguistic formation, which is instead based on experiences of integration, stable lives, citizenship, nationality and often place of birth.

The "good" relation one has with Eritrea is portrayed as a token of identity in this group interview. While Michael says he does not feel Eritrean because he does not enjoy being with Eritreans and going to Eritrea, where he gets bored and cannot properly relate with people there, Elena and Netzennat instead argued that they are Eritrean also because they enjoy their Eritrean summer holidays. The relationship the youth has with Eritrea connects to the type of identity played there. Michael related to "pure" categories and emphasised fluent communication between people, hinting at the lack of a higher level of reciprocal understanding, which also includes cultural codes. His communication problems go beyond the literary sense of language; his drama relates to the misinterpretations occurring between people with different lives who are nonetheless family members, like his older brother recently arrived from Asmara, or other family members in Eritrea: "if I knew the language I would not have difficulty in understanding my brother". Through the course of the interview, one understands that Michael is linked to a notion of "the Eritrean" people that the others do not share since they differentiate between being Eritrean abroad and in Eritrea.

The girls instead referred to their enjoyment of Eritrea in terms of being a member of the Eritrean diaspora, which was explicitly expressed in terms of provenience: "the Italians", "the Dutch", "the Germans" and so on, and placed in relation to Eritreans from Eritrea. The latter were imagined as different and thus rarely included in the descriptions of their holiday making. Andall (2002: 402) reports that when they "travelled to Asmara on holiday they

mainly socialised with the returning diaspora". The girls do not care much about the problematic relation with Eritreans in Eritrea because they are "other" to the diasporic identity they tend to identify with. For them what matters is an idea of Eritrea as modern and attractive to tourists; the best part about it is going to fancy bars, swimming pools, gyms, sunny beaches, and the existence of a Play Station.

Eritrea is the place where they show off their diasporic status and enjoy leisure and tourism; it is the land of freedom not only because they are on holiday there, but also because they are relatively richer and have a higher status than in Milan. Each of them showed how important their status in Eritrea is to them, as individuals but also as members of transnational families, through descriptions of family property in newly developed districts or in central areas of Asmara.

Throughout the interview, Valentino hints at Eritrea as being "primitive" and backward. He is nevertheless not the only one, since even the girls, who kept on stressing the modern aspects of the country, refer to the local structures, such as nursery schools, as underdeveloped. For them Eritrea is "uncivilised" and Italy "civilised"; they state that people may become more civilised by living in Italy. One of the key words used to measure civilisation is mentality. It refers to openness and closeness in terms of ideas, which in Italy are perceived as open. The argument about mentality is connected to the first generation's perceptions about the differences between those who left and those who stayed[85]. Natzennat feels it is not nice to be called "Asmarina": "call yourself Asmarina! I'm Eritrean!" She insists on the different types of identity that the young people in Milan perceive: Eritreans in Eritrea called by the city of origin and Eritreans abroad. The youth also includes the first generation in the category of closed-minded Eritreans. Whereas Eritreans in Eritrea, and to lesser extent also their parents, are perceived as "closed", they themselves feel "open".

---

85 See also chapters 2 and 5.

This is the general "grading" of civilisation and "mentality"; within the notions there are also shades of practices and discourses that may be labelled more or less open. Natzennat hints at herself being closed because she goes out mostly with "*Habeshas*". In the same key the girls mocked Michael by teasing him for always eating '*ngera*, while he insisted on his adherence to non-Orthodox food like pork and to his Italian eating habits. However, these were comments on his family social network, which was primarily *Habesha*, since at home his mother sold '*ngera* to Eritrean people. The closure of "mentality", their own and the general Eritrean one, also refers to spending too much time among the Eritrean community. This was further brought out by the statement "we live in an Eritrean environment", which was anyhow laughed about, releasing the contradiction intrinsic in the statement and in their lives. After the laughter this issue was emphasised by noticing the low level of Italian language skills of their parents, the high attendance of young people at ethnic events, and the relations with Eritrean groups of friends. "Closed" was thus understood as not integrating in the Italian context or being led by ideological principles. They spoke about Elena's family history and about the restrictions caused by her father's nationalistic choices. They thus argued that being a nationalist and "too Eritrean" implies a lack of movement and fixity; Elena felt her father's nationalism has also involved difficulty for her and her siblings who, after his "family decision", are constrained into a sole Eritrean nationality preventing movement.

Dwelling

The setting of this interview was the kitchen of the "Comitato Inquilini" association active in three public housing areas in Milan[86]. The area, although situated five minutes away from the city centre, is run down and neglected by the council, police, and all the institutions, responsible for its upkeep and safety. In each building, where the Eritrean-Milanese youth

---

86 See also chapters 1 and 5.

live with their parents, up to 10% of the tenants are affected by mental illness; elderly people and other socially disadvantaged categories live there with disorganised and disconnected social services (comitato pamphlet). The "Comitato Inquilini" actively combats the absence of the state and its institutions, enhances tenants' participation, and proposes various activities including the after-school club which my four informants attended to find support, stimulus and meet friends. There they found a space away from family problems, the lack of space at home, the streets and the gangs of youths roaming the area as petty criminals.

Milan is a space filled with narratives of collective experiences: the youth easily shared their problematic childhood because "every Eritrean knows" how it is; as soon as one of these experiences was mentioned there was a chorus of voices saying "me too". Living both in squats (Ambroso 1987, Galeazzo 1994, Tosi 1998) and boarding schools was caused by structural problems in the city and the way the collectivity of Eritreans organised to find solutions. Milan in fact did not provide any state-managed housing facilities and the private sector was far too expensive or unwelcoming (see Ambroso 1987 and Tosi 1998). Eritrean families thus organised their lives through institutions linked to Padre Yohannes' association and the religious networks he had in the city. Many also were helped by the trade unions like SICET, the CISL branch dealing with housing. From 1985 the public housing flats started to be allocated also to foreigners with particularly difficult situations. Evicted from their squats, Eritreans found the entry key to public housing (Ambroso 1987, Galeazzo 1994, Tosi 1998). Today most Eritreans, especially the first generation of arrivals and their offspring, live in these flats. Their dwelling strategies inside the city have always been so strong that they formed visible "Eritrean islands" such as those in "Via Cagnola" that the young people mention, or Porta Venezia, or even this same estate where the young people live. I would thus argue that Eritreans in Milan have always created either dwelling or socialising environments and formed visible ethnically based areas. This latter statement is in contrast with Tosi's (1998) argument that there are no visible ethnic areas in Milan. Even in the

Molise-Calvairate area where this interview is carried out, businesses and social activities are set up consolidating local Eritrean solidarity and cohesion, such as the business run by Michael's mother where everyone who lives in the area goes on Sunday morning or on other special occasions to buy home made '*ngera* and meet each other. An Eritrean phone shop is also present in the area. Then there is the local Italian *circolino* (the social club), where Eritrean men go for a drink after work.

As I brought the conversation round to dwelling in the public housing area, there was no straightforward criticism of the area itself. Through their insistence on their life in the private domain, they were actually emphasising the lack of facilities in the area apart from the *doposcuola* where they built a trans-cultural network of friends. Their Italian friends are linked to attending institutional contexts such as school, while the Eritreans are connected to "formal and informal ethnic institutions" (Ambroso 1987). For example, the Bologna festival was a major collective space where people brought their sons and daughters to "understand their culture and meet other Eritreans", to socialise with Eritrean children of the diaspora. The youngsters speak about the Eritrean celebrations as places to build Eritrean-ness, since through these collective events they started to relate to each other in terms of shared experiences. Like Ambroso (1987), Andall (2002: 397) argued that the latter community activities increased "in-group" behaviour, and decreased their "hyphenated sense of belonging". She also added that the political activities followed during their childhood, such as the ones held at the former Leoncavallo squat, developed a community identity stronger than that of other second-generation youth in Milan. Cologna *et al.* (2003) instead argued that because of the politicised environment they were living Eritrean kids had a stronger sense of citizenship and were more active compared to the other second generations in Milan. Both these arguments can be found among the Eritrean-Milanese youth, since on the one hand they closely follow their "ethnic institutions" (Ambroso 1988, 1987) and, on the other they are acting as the first "involuntary pioneer" second generation

(Andall 2002) in Milan and have been able to create links with Italians and inside the various contexts n the city.

Black? African?

The young people recognise that, when confronted with discrimination towards themselves and others of their skin colour, blackness becomes meaningful. They perceive their blackness as an obstacle to feeling Italian since it is seen as the reason for discrimination and exclusion; they thus do not feel they belong to an "Italian identity", until they are accepted. Andall's research on second-generation "Africans[87]" in Milan stresses this dichotomy, where "being black and being Italian are seen as mutually exclusive categories" (2002: 389) and this exclusion on the basis of skin colour, she stresses, increases the youth's black identity. Similarly Ambroso (1987) hypothesised that the Eritrean youth would pick up a Rastafarian identity, which he probably identified more in terms of black culture rather than particularly connected to the religious philosophical origins[88] of that demotic culture, aesthetically expressed through dreadlocks and culturally performed through listening to the Reggae music of Bob Marley and other musicians of Jamaican origins. Both authors focused on the widely studied British, Caribbean, or even American "black" culture (see for example Hall 1992) related to some sort of collective African diasporic consciousness which unifies every people with African descent through shared blackness, whether they be Caribbean, Londoners, or North American. The pan-African identity nevertheless is to be questioned in the Italian case, and I would argue that even blackness in terms of shared identity is not so present.

---

87 The definition of second-generation "Africans" has to be understood as an etic category in which Andall found useful to group the youth, but from the interview presented in this chapter and elsewhere, it is clear that it cannot be understood as an emic self-definition.

88 Rastafarian religious philosophy, directly connected to the history of the empire of Ethiopia, in the Eritrean collective memory is read as a colonial expansion of Haile Selassie in Eritrea. The absorption of a Rastafarian philosophy in this literary sense is unlikely.

Natzennat used to go to concerts, especially of Hip Hop and "Black American" contemporary music, and during the 2003 Eritrean festival in Milan the young second generation kids convinced the organisers to play R&B and Hip Hop music. There is thus an inclination towards alternative cultures, which the youth in this interview omitted, conscious of the fact that the research I was carrying out was on "Eritreans in Milan". I thus agree with Andall and Ambroso when they speak about a youth culture shared among teenagers and young people of various backgrounds which focuses on certain styles of clothing and music. As I did, Cologna et al. (2001) noticed that the Eritrean Milanese youth spent some free time in "Afro" environments where mostly Black-American music is played[89].

The youth argued that Italians do not distinguish between foreigners and do not classify them as Eritreans. For Italians, they are African, but the youngsters say this has "no meaning" as a category, firstly because being part of a continent is far too general and secondly because they know what being African implies in Italian stereotypes: backwardness and specific physical connotations. The Italian definition of being broadly African was reproduced by the first generation of arrival. I remember a woman in a restaurant in Porta Venezia once asking me "are you learning African?" In a private conversation, Natzennat argued that this Eritrean woman used the word "African" because she thought that "like every other Italian, you did not know the difference"[90]. The reproduction of this broad identity is not grounded in experiences of shared identity. I once asked Natzennat if there were a collective African identity and she answered: "the only African thing that exists in Milan is the Afro hair style".

89 Further research should look more thoroughly into black youth culture in Milan and might conclude with similar statements to those found in Grillo (2005) where even though black youth culture might appear controversial and anti-mainstream it often reproduces macho discourses and similar symbolic violences which one would not expect from the youth.

90 This reproduction forwarded to Italians was seen also in chapter one regarding the names of the shops and restaurants as an aesthetic formation of identity, a contextual reproduction of a dominant Italian discourse.

Neither here nor there

Italian citizenship is very difficult to obtain and so is the residence permit (granted only after six years of regular sojourn in the country). The Italian ministry[91] of the interiors states that to achieve Italian citizenship one needs either:

> To have been born in Italy and have had legal residence for at least 3 years (art.9, c.1, lett.a); to be the son or the grandchild of Italian citizens by birth, and to have legally lived in Italy for at least three years (art.9, c.1, lett.a); to have reached 18 years of age, be adopted by an Italian citizen, and have legally lived in Italy for at least 5 years after adoption (art.9, c.1, lett.b); to have worked for the Italian State, even abroad, for at least five years (art.9, c.1, lett.c); to be a U.E. citizen and to have legally lived in Italy for at least four years (art.9, c.1, lett.d); to be a refugee and to have legally lived in Italy for at least five years (art.9, c.1, lett.e); to be a foreign citizen and to have legally lived in Italy for at least 10 years (art.9, c.1, lett.f).

The regulation is then concluded with a note saying that the law attributes a discretion in evaluating the elements possessed by the Administration. Refusal can be motivated, apart from reasons directly inherent to the Republic's security, also by the lack of legal residence, insufficient economic income in the family nucleus, the presence of a criminal record, insufficient levels of integration and poor knowledge of the Italian language.

The latter "discretions" make it very difficult for a migrant to achieve Italian citizenship, and leave people in a state of uncertainty. Even those who have lived in Italy for most of their life find themselves unable to fulfil their rights and duties as citizens, and they hand on this civic uncertainty to their offspring. The constant necessity to renew permits affects all family members, and adds up to a collective anxiety regarding transnational movement and belonging to Italian society. "Formal citizenship is an important aspect of citizenship, given that it demarcates the state's power to include or exclude" (Andall 2002: 393). They showed how they are trying to follow the system step by step, ending with the final achievement of

---

91Translated directly from the internet page of the Italian Minitry of Interiors see:

http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/cittadinanza/sottotema002.html

Italian citizenship, which might include a "culture" test, where culture becomes a very abstract notion, to be feared as if it were a maths school examination. Moreover they showed how this very system restrains them from fulfilling their dreams, as in Michael's case of being unable to enrol in the aeronautical course he wanted to follow for his college curriculum.

Nevertheless, they recognised a historical amnesia, a perception which Ambroso found present also among the Eritreans in Milan during the eighties. The Italian historical amnesia is discussed with a description of how people, especially "the young spoilt kids", in Italy do not "remember" Italian colonialism in Eritrea: "they are ignorant". The only Italians who "remember" are the old generations who "are more sympathetic". After building an identity originating with Italian colonialism, not to receive the right recognition in terms of special laws for Eritreans is felt as an injustice. Although some ad hoc legislation exists, such as that giving Italian citizenship to those with Italian backgrounds like people who had Italian grandfathers (Legge 194, 2004), and another that gives pensions to the Ascari who fought for the Italian army during colonialism (Legge 1117, 1955), they are perceived as insufficient. Many newcomers argued they should be eligible for stay permits because of the historical link between Eritrea and Italy, and they refer to other former colonialist countries such the UK, which did.

Italian-belonging is difficult not only because of processes of stereotyping and discrimination found in daily encounters with Italians, but also because there is a high level of instability created by the structural apparatus which only gives them formal Italian citizenship based on birth when they reach the age of 18. Michael spoke about the movements of a family scattered between Eritrea and Italy. He talked about going to the wedding of a brother and the baptism of the sister's son, organised in the same period to allow the family abroad to attend both events. Moreover he spoke of a brother living with him: having just arrived in Milan he was included in the category of the new ones escaping from the war and in Italy awaiting refugee status. He is "unlucky", still tied to the uncertain status of the asylum

seeker, awaiting transformation. Thus the family members show they have distinct statuses and locations through ideas of degrees of integration collectively built by the Eritreans in Milan and echoing Italian structures and discourses on migration. Italian discourses on illegality of movement and residence are reproduced by the youth. Natzennat calls Elena "illegal" and "extracomunitaria" reflecting on how people without stay permits are labelled in Italian discourses. They emphasise the lower status of the Asmarini, the newly arrived Eritreans, who have been stereotyped and excluded by the Eritrean community. Natzennat even jokes on the status of her mother's journey as a "luxury illegal migrant" compared to those the new ones have undergone.

Mebrat Alem, like many other first generation Eritreans, explained the problems arising from the other side of the youth's double exclusion, by giving an example of her daughter's experience of Eritrea:

> This year my daughter didn't want to come to Eritrea with me, because she said, why should I go there, there they treat you as a foreigner, there are children who throw stones at you. I feel I am a foreigner there too! What should you take me there for? I hope the country will change, and in the future maybe I will go back, but for the next 4-5 years I don't want to see it, she said to me, after last year's experience. So you have to cope with the things you didn't expect, your expectations.

Some second-generation teenagers suffer from the conflicting relationship with people in Eritrea and many choose not to return because they are treated as foreigners even in the place their parents have so often emphasised as the homeland. The failure to enjoy the journey to Eritrea is common among the second generation. For some it is a dreadful moment in which milestones that were solidly built by the adults fade away, leaving their life in Milan as the only tangible reality to trust. Many start imagining forthcoming journeys elsewhere as options for the future. Michael in this interview expressed a lack of a "national feeling" which, he argued, follows "not feeling at ease" in nationally based events. I heard similar expressions arguing that neither "nationality", Eritrean and Italian, completely accepts and incorporates the second-generation youth. What he is trying to forward is that the lack of belonging reflects the lack of acceptance. "It is difficult to be a foreigner wherever

one goes", the young people often told me and in many ways it is the underscored issue of the essay Natzennat wrote as a child. But the difficult identity the second generation comes to terms with, reflecting the conflicting realities lived through by having family members scattered in the world, has outcomes that embody both "spaces" of the self in an interesting way in which a particular diasporic identity starts to be developed to overcome the inbetweenness that people take for granted. The collocation "neither here nor there" develops a desire to find other spaces of identity, different from the previous ones but connected with people's narratives. In this way they are more able to launch themselves towards other migrations and to "immigration shop" (Andall 1999, 2002) without unreal dreams of return. Cologna *et al.* (2001) argued that the diasporic network around the world provides more chances of future projects for the Eritrean youth compared to the other young people in Milan.

Futures are still vague, as one might imagine since they are very young and tied to a structure, which does not give them full access to resources. Nevertheless one can notice that movement is intrinsic in every aspect of possible futures, from marriage to jobs and locations. The youth speak about death as the ultimate token of identity. It is the end of one's life. It is central to identity: it marks one's belonging (see Gardner 2002 and Mazzuccato 2008). Thus they imagine dying in Eritrea or having their coffins sent to be buried there. Although it shows a high level of abstraction and contradiction, since they assert and at the same time deny this dream of theirs, it is part of their difficult dwelling in the world; their lack of belonging is thus reproduced in this conversation about the ultimate moment of life where Eritrea never disappears from their sight even if it remains only an ideal place for burial.

They are living some sort of "hybridity" as their lives are entangled between Eritrea and Italy, but hyphenated definitions of the self, although present on the diasporic and international level, are difficult to develop in the Italian context. The case of Valentino is a clear example. The young people first describe him as Italian since his mother spoke excellent Italian and

the father seemed Italian, but once they listened to his life history and childhood experiences interlinked between Eritrea and Italy, the girls defined him as Eritrean. His kin descriptions followed the Eritrean way of posing the linkages, giving relevance to the maternal or paternal side of the family. The rest of the teenagers were impressed and joked about the complicated nature of Valentino's life. The complexity is due to the fact that there is no straightforward Italian/Eritrean distinction, since his life really embodies the whole history of Eritrea and its relation to Italy. The embodiment of history is revealed through his family's relation to Eritrea entangled with Italian colonialism, through his grandparents' relationships, and his own growing up between two countries.

The youth found their metissage difficult to define unless in terms of people who are "mulatti" with mixed blood (Mixity I in Grillo 2005) thus visible on their skin. Grillo's mixity II, developing through the mixture and meeting of more than one culture, trans-cultural relations, seems to have no space for existence in their linguistic analysis, but is nevertheless incorporated in some kind of youth culture, daily practices, undefined friendships, and a general unrecognised cosmopolitan city environment. The city was briefly described by the young informants as being a multi-spaced, trans-cultural location where Egyptian bakeries sell Italian food eaten by people from many places in the world. Relationships and friendships seem to be based on daily life, set apart from community and family life, relating to a Milanese setting, which is becoming cosmopolitan. In this interview Natzennat and Elena do not mention it because they are too focused on this Eritrean-Italian differentiation, but they had an Egyptian second-generation common friend (the girl they talk about at the beginning of the interview) and spent time together with other second-generations from other countries. However this subject was never fully discussed by the youth even when prodded.

Discrimination on the basis of skin colour and general "foreignness" excludes the youth from becoming Italian; stay permits create an insecurity which marks how they live in Italy without having formal citizenship; nationalist practices add to the "closure" of opportunities

in Italy. The three factors end by constraining the performance of their hyphenated identity, so much played out in their international and diasporic spaces, which risks losing its meaning in the Italian context. "Hyphenated senses of belonging are not fully articulated in Italy" but they find a multi-positionality within diasporic spaces. As Baumann argued (1996) it is different to speak about Chinese-American and about Chinese in America, but the exclusionary terrain the Eritrean youth finds in Italy makes their self-definition contextual so that it is possible to be Italian-Eritrean among the diaspora, but in Milan they still have to define themselves as Eritreans in Italy. Their difficulty in experiencing a "hyphenated identity" (Andall 2002) is also underlined by their talking about other second generation Eritreans as Eritrean-Dutch or just Dutch, but finding it impossible to do so about themselves.

The young people undermine blackness, but incorporate it in their clothing, music, clubbing and so on. Nevertheless, they do not work on new definitions of who one can be according to the occurring trans-cultural social change. They instead racialise, classify and rank peoples, re-producing stereotypes in their discourses, at times going all the way back to colonial racial language, or as close as the recent migration enactments. For instance Natzennat says Africans are ugly and mimes monkeys when speaking about them. For her it is more "savage" to be African than to be Eritrean. In this interview, Natzennat compared Eritreans and Africans and said that Italians think Eritrean women are the most beautiful in Africa as their features resemble those of Italians. This latter statement echoes the theories around race that were forwarded by Biasutti (1941) during colonialism before Mussolini allied with Hitler. The theory was that the people of the Horn of Africa were of the Mediterranean race and thus less inferior than other Africans. Then when Fascism embraced the Aryan theory they were de-classed. I often heard the self-description of *Habeshas* as the "whites" of Africa, and in Ethiopia there were many jokes about this latter identification of the Semitic *Habesha* peoples among the Oromo. These identity discourses remain unquestioned and often reproduced by the youth. These are examples of the lack of post-

colonial reflection present in Italian society (see also Arnone 2005, and Riccio 2000), which soak into the language of the youth. Reproduction of racist language is also noticeable from their use of the term "mulatto", here translated as "half cast", describing hybridity through the metaphor of the mule, a sterile animal born through the meeting of two different species.

In this chapter the "second-generation Eritreans in Milan" (aged 14-18) spoke about themselves, about their experiences in Milan, between squats and boarding schools, and from there looking out to Eritrea and the world. Their common ground is the public housing area, where they are confronted with low standards of living, exclusion from the city and its institutions, the estate's visible decadence, rising petty crime, etc.

Their identities are described and compared with those of their parents, their relatives and friends, in Milan and Eritrea, their Italian and other second-generation mates at school and in the estate. Concepts of Italianness, Eritreanness, Africanness, modernity and tradition, "open" or "closed" mentality, are raised, touching on sensitive issues such as race, culture and hybridity. Their definitions have a lot to do with Italian mainstream discourses, which they criticise, demonstrating their different practices compared to their Italian companions. Nevertheless they are not following their parents' routes, they are on the contrary challenging many "traditional Eritrean ways".

Diasporic identities, and experiences with relatives in the world, show how they detach themselves when face to face with the first generation, the population in Eritrea and Italian citizens. Their future scopes are inclined towards resisting the present situations. Travelling, working for airlines, marrying people of the diaspora or of the "black-American" community, are all imagined futures which show how they are holding onto ideas of movement in reaction to the fixity in which they are confined today.

Even if they seem to be "neither here nor there", this chapter shows that they are however encapsulated in discourses of progress that positions them in a system of grades where they are moving. Ideas of progress are so embedded in their discourses that sink into every aspect of their conversation, overcoming everything else and omitting even the concept of culture, which becomes irrelevant. Mentality, openness and closure give a strong sense of progress, whereas concepts such as civilised or uncivilised are linked to previous colonial categories and discourses. The young people switch between these two visions, in both cases not fixed but ranked into a progressive change.

They thus are not breaking free from the Italian discourses on race and culture, nor going beyond their parents' nationalisms. They are juggling with all the discourses surrounding them, and reproducing particular narratives that undermine their civic belonging and subscribe them to a quasi-ethnic, sometimes-Eritrean, however-in-Italy sort of identity.

Chapter 7

From exile to transnational diaspora: concluding remarks

Although diaspora is a contested conceptual tool (see for instance Shnapper 1999), both in general terms and in terms of those of its application to an all-encompassing African identity from abroad, I found it to be the only one that describes the development of a collective Eritrean identity abroad to include its practices and discourses. Diaspora has often been referred to people involved in a strong emotional tie to a shared past which often victimises its subjects. The term diaspora is more introspective than that of transnationalism, it "looks in" (Grillo 1998) towards the perceptions of the collective self creating a continuous ever lasting liaison. It is thus a concept used to strengthen the politics of identity emphasising on (forced) dispersal, whether it corcern Armenians, Jews, Africans in the USA or Eritreans in the world. It is a claim for recognition. Koser in his introduction to the book he edited on "New African Diasporas" argues that:

> Diaspora is becoming a "buzzword" rather like globalisation, and for some communities appears to have connotations with which they are keen to be associated … for at least some communities, there is a sense that their experiences in some way compare with those of the original diasporas - that they too are victims, just as were dispersed Jews and African slaves. (2003: 4)

The term diaspora reflects on an emic necessity of recognition not on an analytic tool; the emic discourses on the self were thus taken into consideration to show "how" people live their identity rather than de-construct it.

Recently the discourse on diasporas has expanded to include practically every type of migration (Cohen 1997, Koser 2003) which forms either historical collectivists (as Schnapper 1999 called the ethnic affiliation), or religious affiliations, or both together. Inside these

analyses there is an attempt to differentiate diasporas into different types, as Cohen (1997) did. Apart from that already included into the concept of victims (like the Jews and the Armenians), he acknowledged the existence of economic (or trade) diasporas. I regard the switch from research focused on transnationalism to an interest in diasporas as mostly connected to a focus on migration with outcomes that are not always as "fluid" as argued in transnational studies, such as Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Bash *et al* 1994, etc. The use of the term diaspora is nevertheless overworked, as the term refers to a strong emotional link, and it is to be used carefully in order to avoid falling into a void of meanings. I would argue that diaspora is an emic concept often used to call upon rights of a "minority" group in the country of stay, but it is also a concept that stresses a past which led that minority to be dispersed. In this research the focus on collective discourses of the self through time and space has led to the analysis of the shifts that have been taking place. They have bee seen as producing different Eritrean identities through time, both regarding a perception of the general meaning of "being Eritrean", noticed in their different tokens among the Eritreans in Milan, and regarding the perception of "being Eritrean in the world". This latter focus brought about issues about diaspora and transnationalism.

In these concluding remarks I argue that the two concepts of transnationalism and diaspora cannot be intertwined as if they were two faces of the same coin. First of all I argue that not all transnational communities develop a diasporic discourse and, vice versa, not all diasporas practise forms of transnational movement. The intent to do research on movement through the concept of transnationalism and movement of people, goods, ideas and so on, across nations and to study communities abroad as diasporas is justified by this latter statement. The two trends, the transnational one more focused on being "on the move", the other diasporic one "building communities", narratives and stability abroad, can be identified in the same national or religious group in different moments or in different factions. Tölölian (1996) analysed the Armenian collective community in the world as sometimes moving

towards a transnational organisation and other times organising as a diasporic network; the recent changes among the Eritrean community in Milan are analysed in a similar way.

Although words such as diaspora have not been adopted by Eritreans in Milan, the latter are however struggling for the recognition of their specific history and identity. In actual fact, the Eritrean community portrays its members as refugees and victims of emergency situations linked to a very complex history first of Italian colonialism, then of British rule and finally of Ethiopian imperialism. They have strong narratives supporting their past exile identity. The dominant discourse of Eritreans in Milan, which is reproduced mostly by the first generation of arrival, stresses an identity based on past activities and past histories. This has been thus passed on to the second-generation youth who is also developing a wider notion of the self in regards to a global Eritrean identity. Throughout the thesis, it is this type of identity that I often call diasporic, since it entails the set of discourses produced by the first generation of arrival; but it also includes the more independent ones, which I found on Internet sites from elsewhere in the world. The young people have been building up a diasporic identity through their collective experiences in contact with other groups of Eritreans from other parts of the world, which started during the past events of the festival of Bologna and continues now with holidaymaking in Eritrea and the world. Since the collective experiences of the youth are close to their parents', the diasporic turn is being embodied even by the first generation, who have added on to the previous one this global notion based on stable communities abroad and on transnational networks with family and friends. So the Eritrean exile identity in Milan is building towards a transnational diasporic one.

During the research on Eritreans in Milan, recent concepts around migration puzzled me with questions on classification. Is the Eritrean community in Milan part of the Eritrean diaspora? Is it a transnational community? Or could it just be seen as exiled national group? Time and space have both made me think that one cannot define this community as one or the other in simple terms. Changes have occurred from the first flow of arrivals to the last

one. The situation might be more easily seen as divided into different sets and stages of the Eritrean identity in Milan, where part of the more politically loyal diaspora is in actual fact "transnationalist", with the "ist" underlining the political motivations in identity building; while others are "transnational" in regards to movement across nations and of living "betwixt and between"; and yet others keep the diasporic identity and "stay" in an exiled stage, building ideas of stability and origins of "community" in the country of arrival. The three identities are not fixed; nor are they to be seen as phases in development where one is more advanced than others. The Eritreans studied in this research reflect on their histories of movement and create descriptions of who one is and who one may become, following the various routes, movement or the lack of it. So we can analyse how the differences perceived among Eritreans, both at home and abroad are built and reproduced in a set of narratives, which relate to collective discourses on the past and on the future, differentiating the various experiences into categories of Eritreans.

One could see some kind of "collective stages" in which identity develops. There seemed to be a perception of a sort of pattern through which one becomes a proper Eritrean in Milan and practices allowing the individual to continue to be perceived as such. The first stage is connected to the success of the journey and the outcome of integration in the community's narratives as has been noticed in chapter two. The second stage is shifting the individual from being part of an exiled group to being transnationalist, as noticed in chapters three and four. In a further stage, the narratives constructed by the community and individuals through time, become journeys inside a diasporic space. This phase, as noticed in chapters five and six, leads individuals to move from Milan to other significant places of which Eritrea is the most important, but not the only one. This route is in simple terms what is perceived as the right way of building an Eritrean identity abroad and inside these defining perceptions one may negotiate, resist or play by the rules. This perception of the self in relation to movement and to the attachment to the motherland shapes the self in relation to categories of transnationalism and diaspora. The application of the concepts thus does not depend on

the levels of movement but on the discourses about ideal types of migration and practices of belonging.

Eritreans abroad had a network that developed especially abroad, linked to the fact that one could not easily go back to Eritrea, because the war had penetrated every level of Eritrean society. Thus discourses developed around perceptions of being exiles. The festival in Bologna played a huge role in creating bonds outside the home country, but in relation to the collective activism towards its liberation from the Ethiopian regime. Now that people can freely move to Eritrea, it is no longer the festival which unites the diaspora but the going home, and this becomes the factor that linked the second and first generations of Eritreans in Milan in a collective diasporic transnational identity. They now meet the rest of the diaspora in Eritrea and identify with another way of being Eritrean. Their way of perceiving themselves is detached from a dream of going back to live and is marked by a clear desire to differentiate themselves from those back home. In 1991 the main festival was moved to Eritrea and smaller festivals are in each Eritrean diasporic country strengthening the link to the host country. When people meet in Eritrea during the holidays they define themselves more and more according to where they live; moreover the second generation identifies with the language they speak better and the place where they were brought up and where most have citizenship and residence. This discourse on movement and identity is tied to an idea of progress, well explained by the words of the young people (chapter 6) who emphasise degreses of civilisation, and openness and closure of mentality, similarly to the Futurists. Those who stayed are thus intrinsically backward in the perceptions of the Eritreans in Milan.

Identity through discourses of time and space

The formation and transformation of Eritrean identities has been discussed throughout the thesis through a careful attention to the implication of movement, and how people perceive

themselves as a collectivity (as people in exile first or as a diaspora after). Finally it focuses on how the latter two are enhanced through the use of mnemonic tokens which reflect the past in the present, but also the present in the way the past is perceived, "remembered", experienced and thus transformed into a meaningful token of the present identity.

The first generation of arrival built a collective exiled identity through narratives reinforcing the importance of the journeys to Italy and the impossibility of returning home, through historical reconstructions and commemorative events. Nevertheless neither the newly arrived nor the second-generation youth are included in this type of perception of the self. The newly arrived are still building an identity, which for now focuses on the experience of the journey to Italy and a collective memory built around this experience, thus allowing them to meet their shared experiences in a community of memory. The young people who did not undergo a journey to Italy, a flight from war or a collective nation-building from abroad, have nevertheless been able to play with an identity whose outcomes negotiate with the parent's one. They yearn for an identity where one can be and not be, enjoy it or not, re-produce traditions or follow them as desired; they juggle with a transnational space which is the production of exile but has ceased to be only that. At the same time, though, they are still tied to definitions and notions of Eritreans identity, linked both to the community's narratives and practices of identity based on nationality in its more recent "ethnic" connotations rather than the previous "civic" one and to the definitions and stereotypes found in Italian discourses of the past colonial period and the recent legislations against migration.

If someone were to ask an Eritrean in Milan, but probably all around the world, what it means to be Eritrean, the representation of the Eritrean individual and collective self would certainly begin from this "history" or "memory". These "collective memories" (Connerton 1989) become fundamental in talking about Eritrean identities and echo, in different ways depending on the context, the voices and their application to specific events, spaces and places, present or past and sometimes even future. The analysis of the role of the past in the

Eritrean formation of identities is highly important. Collective memories do not appear only as narratives of the past, as histories of pain; on the contrary they are manifested through silences, or can be obsessive repetitive statements; they are also productions of visions of the past applied to new identity formations and vice-versa re-productions of significant narratives of the self.

There are several ways through which a researcher may observe history in the present. The first approach is to actually study the past in the present, a strong example of which can clearly be found in Sòrgoni's book (2001) on the life of a colonial official. It shows how Italian colonialism is a past that permeates and spreads into the present. Sòrgoni reached this objective by searching for details of his life today, meeting his living relatives and reading his diaries. The second way to relate to the past through the present is by studying those generations who have not experienced past events, but have been affected both through a certain reproduction of narratives on identity and through the ways their life experiences have developed together with family strategies, following historical events. In my research, for example, the words of the young people (in chapter 6) enable us to understand how far the past echoes in people's lives and in their discourses, in a linguistic but also a bodily way. For instance, one of the young Milanese-Eritreans I interviewed incorporated the history of Eritrea starting from (in his recounting) colonialism with his two Italian colonial grandfathers, from where all the history of the country can be narrated through family experiences.

In my hypothesis (Arnone 2003), the past was in the past: I did not foresee such an impact of history on the present and vice-versa the present constructing the past. I included the history of Eritrea with its submission first to Italian colonisation, then to the British protectorate and finally to the Ethiopian Empire, the liberation movements and struggles and so on up until the liberation. I somehow separated the present from the past, looking at the present as a paradigm, a new genealogy springing from the struggle but now independent. I assumed that for the past to be connected to the present the issues around mnemonics, linguistic heritage and identity conceptions had to be raised. I considered it to

be found in possible narratives, however difficult they might prove to narrate. But I had not taken into consideration one other aspect of the past in the present and its most vivid manifestation: incorporation, not only in the sense of Bourdieau's *habitus* (1977), but in its literal meaning of carrying history in the body, of *being the history*. Thus not only is a mixed Italian-Eritrean 60-year-old man telling the history of colonialism through his skin and body features, as is its most expressive and manifest example, but so is a twenty-year-old man embodying the recent 1998-2001 war between Eritrea and Ethiopia through his presence in Milan. This has been understood as the pain of history, as in the "experiences" and the "bodily incorporations" of the past in the present. Thus another strategy to look into the past through the present is by studying the ways in which people actually use, and thus shape, the system through their knowledge of its weaknesses and strengths in time. For example, Eritrean people of mixed backgrounds with, for instance, an Italian father, have carved the system in such a way that even today people try to juggle with the bureaucracy through the same route: they find an Italian who reports to be their father and thus receive Italian citizenship. Some pay Italian men to do so. Others say their ancestor was an Ascaro who fought for the Italians and try to achieve a pension in this way, by using history today (Law 194 of the year 2004 and 1117 of 1955). In all these and many other ways we can see how the past affects the present and see the past through the present.

However there is another history which is a reappropriation of the past in the present: the history of pain, the linguistic narratives of the past in the present. Skultans argues that "Language absorbs and reflects history and social structure. Individual narrators draw in varying degrees upon conceptual structures derived from history and literature in order to rearrange disrupted lives into a meaningful pattern" (1998: 24). This certainly is the case when speaking about the recent development of a historical literature and its reflection into a collective discourse. Nevertheless, in the Eritrean case another dynamic has developed and it resembles the religious conversion described by Harding (2001) who analyses the link between linguistic reproductions of religious discourses and the way the latter creates a

dynamic of conversion. He talks about the process by which speaking is believing: it is through speech that one is converted and converts; it is a complex language code that allows such dynamics to occur. Nationalism speaks a similar language: one who "believes" in "history", when speaking, produces arguments that set in motion a "conversion" into becoming "a friend of Eritrea" and warding off the possibility of becoming an "enemy". The process of listening leads into some paradigms of reality that convert the idea of historical contingencies around the Horn of Africa into an ongoing plot against the small nation state of Eritrea. It is through the process of listing to the injustices, which the "nation" has undergone, that this linguistic process takes place among Eritreans in Milan. The listener is thus brought to believe in a plot of a worldly structure against a small victim state[92].

Historical accounts that are today being forwarded by Eritrean intellectuals come after the EPLF liberation movement's collective action had taken place and succeeded in its mission. Today the historical process of reconstruction of the past and commenting on the present are part of the latter process of conversion. Thus the "intellectual" and literary development of written material is part of a re-production process, but it is not constructing a collective memory from scratch or creating the bases for an understanding of the past.

To explain who they are, all the generations of Eritreans in Milan would not only describe their country's struggle, but also their cultural tradition. Shared collective memory and cultural traits built on their perception of belonging stretched across time and space through narratives and certain commemorative practices, for a sense of continuity. Nevertheless, people's lives included other types of experience and daily practices; rarely had they actually fought in person in the war, nor did they follow the tradition in the way they described it. The outspoken ethnic and national categories are incorporated in the body through ritualised and repetitive set practices, so that history is not only linguistically spoken about but is experienced through the body; it is shown, consumed through objects, remembered

92 See also in chapter 2 in Mebrat's presentation.

with the Orthodox cross tattooed on the women's foreheads, and in images. In people's homes I often noticed they all had mementos of the war; all had the Eritrean flag, pictures of the *Shaebia* warriors and other more folk symbols such as *fenjals*, coffee cups, *jebenà*, the coffee machine, the little stove and many others.

One woman had a famous poster of a smiling Tigre boy on her kitchen wall. The picture has been used by the Ethiopian ministry of tourism to show the Ethiopian ethnic groups since before the liberation of Eritrea. However, today the Tigre are one of the 9 ethnic groups that are part of Eritrea. She had thus brutally erased the word Ethiopia with brown adhesive tape. Another woman had a large poster showing a cat running after a mouse, in cartoon style. When I asked why she had such image in her house, she said the cat was Ethiopia and the mouse was Eritrea "because Eritrea is small and Ethiopia is always trying to get Eritrea" and she laughed.

Natzennat, one of my second generation informants, during geography revision at the after school club of the Comitato Inquilini, marked the lines of the borders of Eritrea with a black pen on an old world-map which included the small young nation state inside Ethiopia. People had videos of the history of Eritrea and also of traditional celebrations; they used to put them on while serving coffee and talking with their guests. One day I asked Hywot, one of my informants, to lend me her videos. There were recordings of the past festivals of Bologna and other "cultural" performances, but there also was one video which truly sickened me. It was a documentary of "the 30-year war" and showed the filming of the war in the trenches, with people actually fighting, killing and dying, in front of the video camera. It was so shocking I could not believe one could have such material at home to view during coffee.

For long I wondered how to distinguish the history of pain from the pain of history. I assume it is a slippery distinction, which I have however spelled out through the various cases of this research. It is a relevant definition to distinguish between discourses and experiences. The experiences of life and the embodiment of the past build up the pain of history, while the

narratives of the past are part of the history of pain reproduced through a collective memory not always lived in person, but emotionally charged. In the latter we may find relevant silences, secrets, obsessions, incorporations, discourses and reproductions. My informant from the consulate, who had fought the liberation war in person, once told me: "you now know more than 60% of the history of Eritrea." And I thought to myself: "and where does the other 40% lie?" Now I think the rest is the unsaid pain of history, the experiences of war, the secrets that people keep inside. When talking about the issue of war and silence, someone once said: "In war nobody is innocent…" Silences, however, are not only an individual reflection of guilt, they are also reformulations of the past through the present. There are certain issues to be obscured or emphasised depending on the reading one wants to give about an identity through time. Through narratives such as the one reproduced in the extensive interview in chapter 3, history is almost visually described as if it were experienced and lived; it thus becomes alive and permeates the present, constructing identities and categories.

The identity of Eritreans in Milan showed how time and space are fundamental terrains of change but which nevertheless end up into some sort of freezing of narratives and practices of the self as if placed in a continuum. Change is seen in a progressive development and "origins" are thus placed into an ideal past, which gave birth to who Eritreans are today. In contradiction to a self perception placed in a continuum, the findings show how different temporal and circumstantial periods differ from each other as divided into sets of discourses and practices of the self which shift rather that develop one from the other.

References

Abbink, J. (1998) "Briefing: The Eritrean-Ethiopian Border Dispute" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 389 :551-565.

Al-Ali, N., Black, R. and Koser, K. (2001a). "Refugees and transnationalism: the experience of Bosnians and Eritreans in Europe". In *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Vol. 27. No.4: 615-634

Al-Ali, N., Black, R. and Koser, K. (2001b) "Limits to "transnationalism": Bosnian and Eritrean refugees in Europe as emerging transnational communities", in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *24*(4): 578–600.

Albanese, G. (11-11-2007) "L'Eritrea espelle i missionari" in A*vvenire*

Alberizzi, M. (2005) "La pace fredda: Etiopia/Eritrea" *Aspenia* Vol - Num.: n.29 :208-214

Ambroso, G. (1988) "Gli Eritrei e gli Egiziani a Milano: due casi di «etnicità urbana»" - in *Terzo Mondo*, n° 57-58, Milano

Ambroso, G. (1987) *Urban Ethnicity: Culture and Politics among Eritreans and Egyptian Migrants in Milan, Italy.* Ph.D. thesis, University of London (unpublished)

Andall, J. (2002) "Secon-generation attitude? African-Italians in Milan" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* vol 28 (3): 389-407

Andall, J. (1999) "Cape Verdean women on the move: 'immigration shopping' in Italy and Europe" in *Modern Italy*, 4(2): 241-257.

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso

Appadurai, A (1990) "Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy" In *Theory, Culture and Society* V7, 2-3: 295-310

Arnone, A. (2008) "Journeys to Exile: The Constitution of Eritrean Identity Through Narratives and Experiences" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* vol 34 :2 pp 325-340

Arnone, A. (2005) "I viaggi verso l'esilio: l'elaborazione dell'identità eritrea tra esperienza e narrazione" in *Africa e Orienti* vol 3

Arnone, A. (2003) "Being Eritrean in Milan" in *Alternate Routes* vol 19: 20-57

Arnone, A. (2002) *Being Eritrean in Milan: the Constitution of the Self: A preliminary reflexive scope*. MSc in Social Research Methods (Social Anthropology), Sussex University

Babb, F. E. (2004) "Recycled *Sandalistas*: from Revolution to Resorts in the New Nicaragua" in *American Anthropologist* vol 106, 3: 541-555

Barrera, G. (2002) "Patrilinearità, razza e identità: l'educazione degli italo-eritrei durante il colonialismo italiano (1885-1934)" in *Quaderni Storici* Vol 1: 21-54

Barth F. (1969) *Ethnic groups and boundaries: the social organization of culture difference* London: Allen & Unwin

Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N., and Szanton-Blanc, C. (1994) *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicament, and Deterritorialized Nation-States.* Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach.

Baumann, G. (1996) *Contesting culture: discourses of identity in multi-ethnic London* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Belk, R. (1999) "I Shop Therefore I Am" Book Review Essays in *American Anthropologist* vol 101. no. 1.

Berger, P. and Luckmann, T. (1967) *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise its the Sociology of Knowledge.* New York: Anchor Books

Bernal, V. (2001) "From Warriors to Wives: Contradictions of Liberation and Development in Eritrea." *Northeast African Studies* 8(3):129-154.

Bernal, V. (2000) "Equality to Die For?: Women Guerilla Fighters and Eritreas Cultural Revolution." *Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 23(2):61-76.

Biadene, R., Segre, A. Dagmawi Yimer, filmakers (2009) *Come un uomo sulla terra* Anmesty International, Roma

Biasutti, R. (1941) *Le Razze e I Popoli della Terra*. Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese

Bisharat, G. E. (1997) "Exile to compatriot: transformation in the social identity of Palestinian refugees in the West Bank" in Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. eds *Culture/Power/Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. Durham NC: Duke University Press

Block, M. (1992) *Prey into Hunter: the Politics of Religious Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bolzoni, A. (2003)"In trappola madame Jenny la regina del racket" in *LaRepubblica* 24 October

Bourdieu, P. (1990) "Belief and the body" in Bourdieu *The logic of practice* Cambridge: Polity Press, pp 66-79.

Bourdieu, P. (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Brubaker, R. and Cooper, F. (2000) "Beyond identity" in *Theory and Society* 29: *1-47*

Bruner, E.M. (1996) "Tourism in Ghana: the Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora" in *American Anthropologist* vol 98, 2: 290-304

Campbell, C. and Falk, P. eds (1997) *The shopping experience* London: Sage

Campbell, J. (2009) "Caught between the ideology and realities of development: Transiting from the Horn of Africa to Europe" LSE *Migration Studies Unit Working Papers,* No. 2009/01

Caplan, P. (1997) "Introduction. Anthropology and personal narratives" in Caplan, P. *African Voices, African lives. Personal narratives from a Swahili village* London: Routledge: 6-22.

Carter, D.M (2003) "Preface" in Koser, K. (ed.) *The new African Diasporas* London: Routledge.

Carter, D.M (1991) *States of grace: Senegalese in Italy and the new European immigration.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Caspari, A. (1986) *Intending to Return: Portuguese migrants in France. A case study from Grenoble.* DPhil Thesis, Sussex University (unpublished)

Castles, S. Miller, M. J. (1998) *The Age of Migration*, London: Macmillan (2nd edition).

Christou, A. (2002) "Geographies of place, culture and identity in narratives of second generation Greek-American returning home", *working paper no. 6*, Sussex centre for migration research, University of sussex, UK.

Clifford, J. (1994) "Diasporas". In *Cultural Anthropology*, vol 9, 3: 302-338

Clifford, J. (1992) "Travelling cultures" in Grossberg, L., Nelson, G. and Treichler, P. (eds) *Cultural Studies*. New York: Routledge: 96–116.

Clifford, J. (1988) *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art.* Cambridge, Harvard University Press

Clifford (1986) 'Introduction: Partial truths' in Clifford, J. and Marcus, G. (eds.) *Writing culture: poetics and politics of ethnography.* University of California Press, Berkeley

Cohen A. (1969) *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: a Study of Hausa Migrants in Yoruba Town.* London: Routledge

Cohen, R. (1997) *Comparing Diasporas*. London: UCL Press

Cologna, D. et al eds. (2003) *I figli dell'immigrazione. Ricerca sull'integrazione dei giovani immigrati a Milano*. Milano: Franco Angeli

Connell, D. (2003) *Taking on the Superpowers: Collected Articles on the Eritrean Revolution, 1976-1983.* Trenton, NJ: Red Sea Press

Connell, D. (1993) *Against All Odds: A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution.* Trenton, NJ: RedSeaPress.

Connerton, P. (1989) *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Corriere della Sera (2000) "Alberizzi in prigione in Eritrea" 09-09-2000

Cowan, J., Dembour, M. and Wilson, R. (eds) (2001) *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge press

Cowan, J. ed (2000) *Macedonia : the politics of identity and difference.* London: Pluto

Craik, J. (1997) "The Culture of Tourism" in Rojek, C. ed. *Touring cultures: transformations of travel and theory* pp113-136, London: Routledge

Davidson (1980) "A Historical Note" In Basil Davidson ed. *Behind the War in Eritrea* Spokesman, Nottingham

Delaney, C. (1990) "The "hajj": Sacred and Secular." in *American Ethnologist* vol. 17, No3: 513-530

Del Boca, A. (1986) *Gli Italiani in Africa Orientale. La caduta dell'impero.* Roma: LaTerza

Dirar, U. (2003) "Church-state relations in colonial Eritrea: missionaries and the development of colonial strategies (1869-1911)" in *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, Volume 8, Issue 3: 391–410

Dirks, N.B. (1991) "Ritual and resistance: subversion as a social fact" in D. Haynes, G. Prakash (Eds) *Contesting Power: resistance and everyday social relations in South Asia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 483-503.

Dore, G. (2002) "Donne del Fronte eritreo: sessualità e gestione del corpo dalla guerra al rientro nella società civile" in *La Ricerca Folklorica*, No. 46: 73-82.

Dumazedier, J. (1967) *Towards a Society of Leisure.* London: Collier Macmillan

Ebron, P. A. (2000) "Tourists as Pilgrims: commercial fashioning of transatlantic politics" in *American Ethnologist* 26(4): 910-932

Elias, N. and Scotson, J (1965) *The Established and the Outsiders. A Sociological Enquiry into Community Problems*. London: Frank Cass & Co.

Eliot, T. S. (1938) *Murder in the Cathedral.* London: Faber & Faber

Epstein A. L.(1978) *Ethos and identity : three studies in ethnicity.* London: Tavistock

Farah, N. (2000) *Yesterday, tomorrow: voices from the Somali diaspora.* London: Cassell

Favaro, G. (1986) *Donne Migranti. Eritree a Milano: una storia per immagini e parole.* Milano: Mazzotta Fotografia

Favell, A. (2002). "Italy as a Comparative Study". In Grillo R. and Pratt J. eds. *The Politics of Recognizing Difference: Multiculturalism Italian Style* Adershot: Ashgate

Ferme, M. (2004) "Deterritorialised citizenship and the resonances of the Sierra Leonean state", in Das, V. and Poole, D. (eds) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press: 81–115

Fisiy, C. (1998) "Of journeys and border crossings: return of refugees, identity, and reconstruction in Rwanda" in *African Study Review*, vol. 41, No. 1: 17-28

Friedman, J. (2002) "From roots to routes" in *Anthropological Theory*, *2*(1): 21–36.

Friedman, J. (1997) "Global crises, the struggle for cultural identity and intellectual porkbarelling" in Werbner, P. and Modood, T. (eds.) *Debating cultural hybridity: multi-cultural identities and the politics of anti-racism.* London: Zed Books

Friedman, J. (1990) "Being in the world: globalization and localization" in *Theory, culture and society*. V7: 311-338

Foucault, M. (1973) *The birth of the clinic: an archaeology of medical perception.* London: Tavistok

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison.* London: Allen Lane

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power-Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977.* London: Harvester

Galeazzo, P. (1994) "La nuova immigrazione a Milano. Il caso dell'Eritrea", in Barile, G., Dal Lago, A., Marchetti, A. and Galeazzo, P. (eds) *Tra le due rive. La nuova immigrazione a Milano*. Milan: Franco Angeli, 367–412.

Gardner, K. (2002) *Age, Narrative and Migration: The Life Course and Life Histories amongst Bengali Elders in London* Oxford: Berg

Gardner, K. (1993) "Mullahs, migrants, miracles: travel and transformation in Sylhet" in *Contributions to Indian sociology* 27, 2: 213-235

Gellner, D. (1999) "Religion, politics, an ritual. Remarks on Geertz and Bloch" in *Social Anthropology*, 7, 2: 135-253

Gellner, E. (1983) *Nations and Nationalism* Oxford: Blackwell

Giddens, A. (1984) *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Gilkes, P. (1991) "Review: Historiography and Mythology" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 90, No 361: 623-628

Gramsci, A (1996) *Prison Letters*. Edited by Hamish Hendserson. London: Pluto

Grillo, R.D. (2007) "Betwixt and between: trajectories and projects of transmigration", in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *33*(2): 199-207

Grillo, R.D. (2005) "Mixity and Contemporary European Cities", in M. Callari Galli, D. Londei & A.S. Fratta (eds.) *Il Meticciato Culturale: Luogo di Creazione, di Nuove Identità, o di Conflitto?* Bologna: Clueb: 183-204*.*

Grillo, R.D. (1998) "Transnational (see also postnational)?" seminar paper *University of Sussex*, 1 October (unpublished)

Grillo, R. D. and Pratt, J. eds. (2002). *The Politics of Recognising Difference*. Adershot: Ashgate

Gupta and Ferguson eds. (1997) *Anthropological Locations: boundaries and grounds of a field of science* Berkeley: University of California Press

Handlin, O. (1973) *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People.* Atlantic: Little Brown (originally published 1951).

Hall, S. (1992) "The question of cultural identity". In Hall, S. Held, D. and McGrew, T. eds *Modernity and its Futures*. Cambridge: Blackwell: 273-325

Harding, S.F. (2000) "Speaking is believing" in Harding, S.F. *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* Princeton: Princeton University Press

Hepner, T. R. (2009) *Soldiers, Martyrs, Traitors and Exiles: Political Conflict in Eritrea and the Diaspora.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hepner, T.R. and O'Kane, D. eds. (2009) *Biopolitics, Militarism and Development: Eritrea in the 21 st Century.* New York: Berghahn Books.

Hepner, T.R. (2009) "Seeking Asylum in a Transnational Social Field: New Refugees and Struggles for Autonomy and Human Rights". In O'Kane and Hepner, eds. *Biopolitics, Militarism, and Development: Eritrea in the 21st Century*. New York: Berghahn Books. pp.183-206.

Hepner, T.R. (2008) "Transnational Governance and the Centralization of State Power in Eritrea and Exile". *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 31: 3: 476-502.

Hobsbawm, E.J. (1990) *Nations and Nationalism sice 1780: programme, Myth and reality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Hobsbawm E.J. and Ranger T.O. eds. (1983) *The invention of tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

http://afriche.blogspot.com/2007/11/eritrea-espulsi-14-missionari.html

http://www.eritreadaily.net/News0307/article0607191.htm

http://www.korazym.org/news1.asp?Id=26148

http://habeshia.blogspot.com

http://it.ismico.org/content/view/2771/27/

Ignatieff (1994) *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism.* London: BBC books

IlManifesto (2003) "L'Italia vuole aprire un CPT in Libia" 25-10-2003

Iyob, R. (2000) "The Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict: diasporic vs. hegemonic states in the Horn of Africa, 1997-2000" *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38: 659-682

Jackson, M. (2008) "The shock of the New: On Migrant Imaginaries and Critical Transitions" in *Ethnos*, vol 73,1: 57-72

Jackson, M. (1989) "Introduction" in Jackson, M. *Paths Towards a Clearing: radical empiricism and ethnographic enquiry* Bloomington: Indiana University Press

Jackson, M. (1983) "The knowledge of the body" in *MAN* vol 18. 2: 327-345

Jackson, P. and Penrose, J.M. (1993) *Constructions of Race, Place and Nation*, London: UCL Press

Kaag, M. (2008) "Mouride Transnational Livelihoods at the Margins of a European Society: The Case of Residence Prealpino, Brescia, Italy" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol 34, 2: 271-285

Kertzer, D. I. (1984) "Anthropology and Family History" In *Journal of Family History* Vol. 9, No. 3: 201-216

Kahn, M. (2000) "Tahiti Intertwined: Ancestral Land, Tourist Postcard, and Nuclear Test Site" in *American Anthropologist* vol 102, 1: 7-26

Kibreab, G. (2002) "When refugees come home: the relationship between stayees and returnees in post-conflict Eritrea" in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 20, 1: 53-80

Kibreab, G (1999b) "rejoinder to the replies by Danile Warner, Finn Stepputat and David Turton" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 12, 4: 422-429

Kibreab, G. (1999a) "Revisiting the debate on people, place, identity and displacement" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 12, 4: 385-410

Kibreab, G. (1995) "Eritrean Women refugees in Khartoum, Sudan 1970-1990" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 8, 1: 1-25

Kleist, N. (2008a) "In the name of the Diaspora: between struggles for recognition and political aspirations" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34, 7: 127-143

Kleist, N. (2008b) "Agents of development and change: the Somali diaspora at work" in Bardouille, Ndulo and Grieco (eds) *Africa's finances: the contribution of remittances.* Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Kleist, N. (2007) "A heart made of *habhab* but with Danish manners" in *Kvinder and Forskning* nr 2: 3-20

Koser, K. (2003) *New African Diasporas*. London: Routledge.

Legge 194 (2004) http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/leggi/04194l.htm

Legge 1117 (1955) http://www.italgiure.giustizia.it/nir/1955/lexs_34457.html

Lewis, I. M. (1983) *Nationalism and self determination in the Horn of Africa.* London: Ithaca Press

Locatelli, F. (2008) "La comunità italiana di Asmara negli anni Trenta tra propaganda, leggi razziali e realtà sociale", in Riccardo Bottoni (ed.), *L'Italia e l'Etiopia 1935 - 1941. A settant 'anni dall 'Impero fascista.* Bologna: Il Mulino

Locatelli, F. (2005) "Ordine coloniale e disordine sociale. Asmara durante il colonialismo italiano (1890-1941)" in *Zapruder*, 8: 9-22.

Loizos, P. (2007) "'Generations' in forced migration: Towards greater clarity" in *Journal of refugee studies*, 20 (2): 193-209

Luissier, D. (1997) "Local prohibitions, memory and political judgement among the Kunama" in *Ethiopia in broader perspective: papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*. Vol. 2, Kyoto: Shokado Book Sellers: 441-455

Lyons, D. and D'Andrea A. C. (2003) "Griddles, Ovens, and Agricultural Origins: an ethnoarchaeological study of bread making in highland Ethiopia" in *American Anthropologist* 105(3): 515-530

Mac Connell, D. (1976) *Tourist a new theory of the leisure class.* New York: Schoken,

Mai, N. (2002), "Myths and moral panics: Italian identity and the media representations of Albanian immigration" in Grillo, R. D. and Pratt, J. eds. *The Politics of Recognising Difference*. Adershot: Ashgate

Malinowski, B. (1922) *Argonauts and the Western Pacific: an account of native enterprise and adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul

Malkki, L. (1995) *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Marcus, G. E. (1998) "Ethnography in/of the World System: the Emergence of Multi-sited ethnography" in Marcus G. E. ed. *Ethnography through thick and thin* Princeton, N.Y: Princeton University Press

Maritano, L. (2003) *Contesting "racism": everyday representations of migrants in Turin (Italy): an anthropological perspective* PhD thesis Sussex University (Unpublished)

Maritano, L. (2002) "An obsession with cultural difference: representations of immigration in Turin" in Grillo, R. D. and Pratt, J. eds. (2002) *The Politics of Recognising Difference*. Adershot: Ashgate

Marx, K. (1971) *Capital: Vol. 1 A Critical analysis of capitalist production* Moscow: Progress Publishers (Original Publication, 1887)

Mazzucato, V. (2008) "The double engagement: Transnationalism and integration – Ghanaian migrants' lives between Ghana and the Netherlands". *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 34 (2): 199-216

Melotti, U., Aimi, A. and Ziglio, L. (1985) *La nuova immigrazione a Milano.* Milan: Edizioni Mazzetta

Mesfin Araya, (1997) "Issues of Hegemony in Post-Independent Eritrea" in K. Fukui, E. Kurimoto, M. Shigeta eds. *Ethiopia in Broader Perspective: Papers of the XIIIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Shokado Book Sellers, Kyoto

Miller, D. (1998) *A Theory of Shopping* Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Miller, D Jackson P., Thrift N., Holbrook B., and Rowlands M. (1998) *Shopping, Place and Identity* London: Routledge

Mills, M. (2003) *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* London: Routledge

Ministero degli Interni (visited 20/4/2010)
http://www.interno.it/mininterno/export/sites/default/it/temi/cittadinanza/sottotema002.html

Moore, H. (1999) "Gender, Symbolism and Praxis: Theoretical Approaches" In Moore H., Sanders, T. and Kaare, B. eds. *Those who Play with Fire* London: The Athlone Press

Nash, D. (1981) "Tourism as an Anthropological Subject" in *Current Anthropology*, vol 22. no 5: 461-468

Negash, T. and Kjetil, T. (2000) *Brothers at war.* Oxford: James Currey

Parsons, T. (1951) *The Social System* NY: The Free Press

Patrioti Eritrei in Italia Eritrea (1976) *Fronte egemonico contro URSS e USA per l'indipendenza effettiva* (Unpublished panphlet)

Però, D. (2002) "The left and the political participation of immigrants in Italy: the case of the *Forum* of Bologna" in Grillo, R. D. and Pratt, J. eds. *The Politics of Recognising Difference* Adershot: Ashgate

Però, D. (2000) *The politics of identity in left-wing Bologna: an ethnographic study of the discourses and practices of the Italian Left in the context of migration* PhD Thesis, Sussex University (Unpublished)

Plummer, K. (2001) *Documents of Life: an invitation to a critical humanism.* London: Sage

Poidimani, N. (2009) *Difendere la 'Razza' Identità razziale e politiche sessuali nel progetto imperiale di Mussolini*. Roma: Sensibili alle Foglie

Povzanovic Frykman, M. (2002) "Homeland Lost and Gained: Croatian Diaspora and Refugees in Sweden" in Al-Ali, Nadje Kosher, Khalid Koser eds. *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational communities and the transformation of home* London*:* Routledge

Poscia, S. (1989) *Eritrea, colonia tradita* Roma: Edizioni Associate

Pratt, J. (2002a) "Italy: political unity and cultural diversity", in Grillo, R. and Pratt, J. (eds) *The Politics of Recognising Difference* Aldershot: Ashgate: 25–39

Pratt, J. (2002b) *Class, Nation and Identity* London: Pluto Press

Quarles Van Ufford, P. (2002) "Murder in the cathedral - Disrupted time, broken space: violence in the regional history of an Indonesian Church" in Schlee, G. (ed.) *Imagined differences.Hatred and the constitution of identity* Hamburg: LIT

Riccio, B. (2008) "West African Transnationalisms Compared: Ghanaians and Senegalese in Italy" in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol 34, 2: 217 - 234

Riccio, B. (2002) "*Toubab* and *Vu Cumprà*. Italian perceptions of Senegalese transmigrants and the Senegalese Afro-Muslim critique of Italian society" in Grillo, R. and Pratt, J. (eds) *The Politics of Recognising Difference* Aldershot: Ashgate

Riccio, B. (2000) *Senegalese Transmigrants and the Construction of Immigration in Emilia-Romagna (Italy).* University of Sussex, DPhil thesis (unpublished)

Rochat, G. (1967) *L'esercito italiano da Vittorio Veneto a Mussolini 1919-1925.* Bari: LaTerza

Rochat, G. (1973) *Il colonialismo italiano. Documenti* Torino: Loescher

Rochat, G. (1971) *Militari e politici nella preparazione della campagna d'Etiopia 1932-36.* Milano: Franco Angeli

Ryder, N. B. (1965) "The cohort as a concept in the study of social change" *American Sociological Review* 30: 843-869

Saad, R. (1998) "The nation in the village: war and migration in narratives of Egyptian peasants" in *Cairo Papers in Social Science*, *21*(4).

Salih, R. (2003) *Gender in Transnationalism: Home, Longing and Belonging among Moroccan Migrant Women.* London: Routledge

Salih, R. (2002) "Recognizing difference, reinforcing exclusion: a "family planning centre for migrant women and their children" in Emilia-Romagna" in Grillo, R. and Pratt, J. (eds) *The Politics of Recognising Difference* Aldershot: Ashgate

Schmidt, P. (2003) "Heritage and Tourism in Eritrea: issues and alternative directions" in *Journal of Eritrean studies* 2, 1-2: 59-76.

Schnapper, D. (1999) "From the Nation-State to the Transnational World: On the Meaning and Usefulness of Diaspora as a Concept" in *Diaspora* Vol. 8, 3

Selassie B. H. (1980) *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa* Monthly Review Press, London

Sironi, B. (1987) *L'Eritrea è...* - Comitato Solidarietà Popolo Eritreo, Busto Arsizio (unpublished)

Sironi, B. (1988) "La comunità eritrea in Lombardia" in *Terzo Mondo* n° 57-58, Milano

Skultans, V. (1998) *The Testimony of Lives: narratives and memory in post-Soviet Latvia.* London: Routledge

Sorenson, J. (1990) "Opposition, Exile and Identity: the Eritrean case" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* Vol 3 (4): 298-319

Sòrgoni, B. (2002). "Racist Discourses and Practices in the Italian Empire under Fascism" in Grillo R.G. and Pratt J. eds. *The Politics of Recognizing Difference: Multiculturalism Italian Style* Adershot: Ashgate

Sòrgoni, B. (2001) *Etnografia e Colonialismo L'Eritrea e l'Etiopia di Alberto Pollera 1873-1939.* Torino: Bollati Boringhieri

Soya, E. (1996) *Third Space*, Oxford: Blackwell

Stepputat, F. (1999) "Dead Horses?" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 12.4: 416-419

Stevenson, T. (1988) "Migration as a rite of passage in a highland Yemeni town", in Friedlander, J. (ed.) *Sojourners and Settlers: The Yemeni Immigrant Experience* Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press: 33–47

Tabacco, A. (2001) *Bologna–Testimonianze di lotta degli eritrei esuli in Europa: per non dimenticare.* Milan: Edizioni Punto Rosso

Taussig, M. (2009) *What colour is the sacred?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Taussig, M. (1987) *Schamanism, Colonialism and the Wildman* University of Chicago Press, Chicago

Tölöian, K. (1996) "Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment" in *Diaspora* 5 (1): 3-35

Tosi, A. (1998) "Lo spazio urbano dell'immigrazione" in *Urbanistica* vol 111: 3-10

Triulzi, A. (2009) "Oralità e voci narranti e rifugiati dal Corno d'Africa, appunti di una ricerca" in P. Bacchetti and V. Beltrami eds *Afriche. Scritti in onore di Bernardo Bernardi* Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, Roma

Truilzi, A (2009) "From Ethiopia to Lampedusa" *AEGIS paper*, Leipzig (unpublished)

Triulzi, A. (2005) *Dopo la violenza. Costruzioni di memoria nel mondo contemporaneo.* Napoli: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo

Triulzi, A. (1999) "Della vecchia giumenta e altri esili. Alcune riflessioni su memoria e esilio", *Afriche e Orienti*, *1*(1): 5–8

Turner, V. (1969) *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure* Ithaca: Cornell university Press

Turner, V. (1967) *The forests and symbols: aspects of Ndembu Ritual* Ithaca: Cornell university Press

Turton, D. (2005) "The meaning of place in a world of movement: lessons from long-term filed research in Southern Ethiopia" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 18. 3: 258-280

Turton, D. (1999) "Response to Kibreab" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 12.4: 419-422

Turton, D. (ed.) (1997) *War and ethnicity: global connections and local violence.* Woolbridge: Boydel & Brewer

Ullendorff, E. (1973) *The Ethiopians. An introduction to country and people* London: Oxford Paperback

UN org (viewed 15/04/2010) http://www.un.org/NewLinks/eebcarbitration

Van Aken, M. (2005) "The hierarchy and experience of migration: Egyptian labourers in the Jordan Valley" in Métral, F, and Jaber, H. (eds) *Politiques migratoires, filiéres et communautés au Moyen Orient, 1991–2003*: 221–41

Van Gennep, A. (1909) *The rites of Passage*. London: Routledge

Vertovec, S. (1999) "Conceiving and researching transnationalism" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *22*(2): 447–62.

Volkman T. A. (1990) "Visions and Revisions: Toraja Culture and the Tourist Gaze" in *American Ethnologist* vol 17,1: 91-110

Warner, D. (1999) "Deterritorialization and the meaning of space: a reply to Gaim Kibreab" in *Journal of Refugee Studies* vol 12(4): 411-416

Werbner, P. and Tariq Modood (1997) *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Community, Identity, Racism*. London: Zed Books

Whitehouse, H. (1996) "Rites of terror: emotion and memory in Melanesian initiation cults" in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 2, No 4: 703-715

Whyte, W.F. (1955) *Street corner society: The social structure of an Italian slum.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Williksen, S. (2004) "On the Run: The Narrative of an Asysum Seeker" in *Anthropology and Humanism* vol 29, 2: 117-132

Wilson, A. (1991) *The challenge road: women and the Eritrean revolution* London: Earthscan

Yurchak, A. (2006) *Everything was forever, until it was no more: the last Soviet generation.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Zanotelli, A. (2003) *Korogocho. Alla scuola dei poveri*. Milano: Feltrinelli

Zanotelli, A. (1996) *Leggere l'impero. Il potere tra l'Apocalisse e l'Esodo*. Bari: La meridiana