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Abstract: *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011) and *La nemesi della rossa* (2012) constitute the sequential memoirs of Carla Macoggi, Ethiopian-Italian author and attorney. They recount the case of an adoption of a *meticcia*/mixed-race Ethiopian-Italian child by a white Italian businesswoman in the 1970s in Addis Abeba and their subsequent migration to Italy. This analysis situates race and gender at the intersection of Critical Adoption Studies and Postcolonial Theory to reveal the persistence of the colonial practices of *madamato* marital arrangements and the disenfranchisement of the *meticci* children of Italian men and indigenous women in the former colonies which culminates in the transracial, transnational adoption of the child protagonist by her mother's employer: the Ethiopian mother's socio-economic and political vulnerability, rooted in racial, gender-based, economic, and geographical inequalities, is determinate in the fragile parental rights of the woman, rendering her daughter "adoptable" and "transferable" (John McLeod). Moreover, the adoptive mother-daughter relationship reproduces an anachronistic colonial power dynamic—white master-black slave—which permits the Italian woman to exploit, abuse, and abandon the child and escape both legal and social sanctions. In a consideration of literary genre, Macoggi's memoirs are framed as "semi-autobiography" (Michelle Wright) given their emblematic treatment of entrenched and enduring colonial hierarchies which manifest in the diminished human rights of certain vulnerable mothers and children and can result in the reconfiguration of families, a generative line of inquiry to be explored in other works of Italian postcolonial literature.

Keywords: transracial and transnational adoption, *meticcia, madamato*, Italian postcolonial literature, Carla Macoggi, semi-autobiography

Colonial Legacies in Family-Making and Family-Breaking: Carla Macoggi's Memoirs as Semi-Autobiography

CARLA CORNETTE

"Chi, senza amore, si mette al posto della madre vera è come si mettesse al posto di Dio."[1]
"L'assenza della madre non si può colmare."[2]

Introduction

In the last fifteen years or so, scholarship has burgeoned in Italian Postcolonial Studies, an interdisciplinary field which consists of and employs literary criticism, critical race theorization, cultural analysis, gender studies, and historiography, among others. The discipline has given rise to a re-examination and a critical analysis of Italy's relatively brief colonial history (1882-1943) to consider the significant, persistent, yet widely unacknowledged ways in which that period continues to condition social relations, politics, citizenship law, and national identity in contemporary Italy.[3] The field has included new voices and new narratives in the Italian literary canon, leading to a renewal of the canon itself to reflect the heterogeneous reality of a nation which has always been a crossroads in the Mediterranean with peoples of divergent ethnicities, cultures, and languages. A recurrent *topos* of Italian postcolonial literature and of scholars contributing to the discipline is the lingering ghosts of Italy's colonial past in its present.[4] An aborted decolonization process in Italy can be attributed in part to the sealing of historical archives immediately after its ignominious defeat in the Horn of Africa and later in Libya, the absence of an official, public reckoning of its colonial period as occurred with the Nuremberg trials in Germany, and has been exacerbated by the academy's initial disinterest in the era and in the corpus of literature that arose in the 1990s from writers with ties to the former colonies.[5] These factors, along with others, have resulted in a collective amnesia of Italy's colonial history or, alternatively, a distorted beneficent mythologization of it, the *Italiani brava gente* (the Italians, good people-colonizers) imaginary, and have impeded a critical consideration of the colonial period's enduring consequences in the present.[6] Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo outline the scope and concerns of Italian Postcolonial Theory in their *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (2012): the discipline "examines the relationships of power created by colonialism and

[1] "Whosoever, without love, puts herself in the place of the real mother, it's as if she puts herself in the place of God." Macoggi, *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia,* 67. The quote is a liberal citation of a poem by Alda Merini. All translations from Italian to English are my own.

[2] "One can never fill the absence of one's mother." Macoggi, "Carla Macoggi su *Kkeywa* e *La nemesi della rossa*."

[3] Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana,* 8.

[4] The first use of the term "Italian postcolonial literature" can be attributed to Sandra Ponzanesi in her *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture* (2004) and to a 2004 special issue of *Quaderni del '900* dedicated to "La letteratura postcoloniale italiana." In the latter issue, an essay by Sandra Ponzenesi distinguishes between *letteratura della migrazione* (migration literature), *letteratura transnazionale* (transnational literature), *letteratura afro-italiana* (African-Italian literature), and *letteratura postcoloniale* (postcolonial literature) in the Italian context. In her monograph, Ponzanesi defines Italian postcolonial literature as the "writings of African writers in Italian coming from the former Italian colonial territories in the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia." Ponzanesi, *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture: Contemporary Women Writers of the Indian and Afro-Italian Diaspora.* For an exhaustive differentiation between Italian migration literature and Italian postcolonial literature as well as a periodization of the genre(s), see Romeo, "Italian Postcolonial Literature," also her *Riscrivere la nazione: La letteratura italiana postcoloniale*, especially the Introduction and first chapter.

[5] For an explication of the manifold origins of the failed decolonization process in Italy, see Ponzanesi, "The Postcolonial Turn in Italian Studies: European Perspectives."

[6] See Romeo, "Italian Postcolonial Literature," 3, 16. Also: Comberiati, *La quarta sponda*, 14-17; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity,* 7-8; and Romeo, *Riscrivere la nazione,* Introduction.

reproduced and reinforced in contemporary postcolonial societies" by interrogating "the processes of racialization, gendering, and cultural transformations engendered within contemporary Italy by the legacy of colonialism, emigration, and global migrations."[7] An important consideration in this study will be the "processes of racialization" referred to by Lombardi-Diop and Romeo: the construction of dichotomous, ethnically homogeneous, blood-based races, an essential enterprise of the entire colonial period that intensified and amplified during the fascist era.[8] The codification of Italian identity/*italianità* as "Aryan"/white/akin to other European "races" was part of an effort to shore up the fragile construct of the Italian nation itself with its abject position in relation to other more prosperous, unified, and hegemonic Western European nations, and to establish and justify colonial relations of domination. The racializing of Italian as homogeneous and necessarily white was accomplished by a multi-pronged approach that included political discourse, legislation, propaganda, and pseudoscience, thereby reifying "white" as the default, racially unmarked identity which endures in the public imaginary today. The foundations of racial (and other) inequalities laid down during the colonial era eventually fossilized and manifest in current-day Italy by influencing and determining citizenship law, cultural sentiment, political ideology, and differential human rights.

Grounded in prior scholarship in Italian postcolonial studies that seeks to render explicit the historical, political, and cultural origins of the hierarchical ordering of human beings in contemporary society, this study enlists a focus and employs a methodology that has been little considered by prior analyses: attention is aimed specifically at adoption narratives within Italian postcolonial literature which are read with a critical lens that intersects discourses articulated by Italian Postcolonial Theory and Critical Adoption Studies.[9] I argue that colonial legacies determine differential parental rights and result in the "adoptability" and "transferability" of certain vulnerable children, those with disadvantageous positionalities as determined by race, gender, geopolitics, socioeconomic class, or a combination thereof.[10] In "Adoption Studies and Postcolonial Inquiry" (2018), John McLeod highlights the common concerns of the two fields in the title of his essay, namely, the historical and cultural origins of unequal power relationships in neo/postcolonial societies and the perpetuation and various manifestations of structural inequalities. McLeod succinctly remarks that postcolonial theory "doesn't say much" about adoption narratives, underlining the surprising paucity of dialogue between the two sectors of study notwithstanding their shared interests.[11] He outlines the generative lines of inquiry that could result when literary works that feature adoption accounts are included in the scope of postcolonial analyses, likewise, when adoption literature is read with a postcolonial filter. McLeod argues that literary representations of adoption are hermeneutic in depicting how the "inequalities of

[7] Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy,* 2.

[8] On the notion of "the processes of racialization" which were essential to the construction of *italianità,* see Romeo, "Italian Postcolonial Literature," 4, 12, 16, 33; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy,* 2, 13-15; Lombardi-Diop, "Postracial/Postcolonial Italy," 175-190; Romeo, *Riscrivere la nazione,* Introduction and Chapter 3 on "Difformi della norma cromatica."

[9] Critical Adoption Studies is defined by Margaret Homans, a prominent scholar in the discipline, as "the field of cultural critique and scholarly debate that captures and finds meanings in these controversies (adoption practices), and, in so doing, poses fundamental and constructive challenges to existing modes of thought and of scholarly inquiry." Homans, "Introduction to Critical Adoption Studies: Conversation in Progress," 2, my insertion.

[10] McLeod, "Adoption Studies and Postcolonial Inquiry," 208.

[11] McLeod, "Adoption Studies," 226. McLeod had expressed this same concern earlier, the lack of consideration of adoption narratives by postcolonial studies, in his monograph *Life Lines: Writing Transcultural Adoption* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 4*:* "the absence of an attention to transcultural adoption lives, histories and texts is almost total—a surprising omission, given that transcultural adoption is central virtually to all incidences of transcultural contact and shaped by the advent and legacies of imperialism, colonialism, migration and global conflict." However, in his 2018 article cited in this study, race becomes the crux for his argument that certain children are available for adoption, thus, he names it as such by specifying "transracial adoptions" as opposed to "transcultural."

power produced by and inherited from colonial modernity" are determinate in conferring differential familial rights and protections, rendering some children "adoptable and transferable," in other words, "vulnerable and…available for state-endorsed ownership."[12] He contends that by tracing historical antecedents (colonial dominations, the rhetoric and laws that discursively produced the racialized/gendered/Global South Other), scholars can lay bare the heredity of empire-building in determining the subaltern status of persons in postcolonial nations, one particularly fruitful line of investigation being the examination of colonial legacies in what he calls "family-making and family-breaking": the reconfiguration of families via the transfer of children from poor, single mothers who are often racially-marked, to wealthier families with hegemonic statuses.[13]

This study considers how Italian colonial history and its sequelae in the present are determinate factors in rendering particular children available for "transfer" via adoption in the Italian context by examining two narratives, *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia* (Red: The Story of a Mixed-Race Girl) (2011) and *La nemesi della rossa* (The Nemesis of the Red) (2012), the memoirs of Italian-Ethiopian writer and attorney, Carla Macoggi (1965-2013). The daughter of an Italian military officer and an Ethiopian woman, the author spent the first decade of her childhood with her birth family in Addis Abeba and then migrated to Italy at age twelve with an Italian woman who had adopted her. Macoggi can be situated as a "direct" Italian postcolonial writer, to use Caterina Romeo's nomenclature, given her immediate ties to a former Italian colony, her education in Italian schools, and her election to compose literary works in Italian that confront the construction of race and structural racism in contemporary Italy.[14] I contend that Macoggi's texts recount the effective abduction and enslavement of an Ethiopian-Italian child by an Italian woman in the late 1970s under the guise of a transracial, transnational adoption. A close reading of the fictionalized autobiographies reveals the perpetuation of colonial *madamato* (colonial temporary marriage) practices which rendered colonized women, like the protagonist's natural mother, the effective concubines of Italian men and delegitimized and disinherited their *meticci* (mixed-race) children.[15] This analysis reads Carla Macoggi's memoirs as adoption narratives which reveal the vulnerability of the child protagonist and her mother owing to the conservation of colonial racial, gender-based, and geopolitical inequalities that culminate in the adoption of the girl by her mother's Italian employer who then exploits, abuses, and abandons the child without legal or social sanctions.

Furthermore, a consideration of genre extends the singular to the collective, the personal to the political, by arguing that Macoggi's memoirs can be read as "semi-autobiography" as formulated by Michelle Wright in *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (2004):[16] Macoggi's adoption narratives have an allegorical significance which is applicable to a broader group of marginalized mothers and their children. Via a consideration of the economic, historical, political, and legal factors that diminish some women's parental rights and produce the "adoptability" and "transferability" of

[12] McLeod, 213; McLeod, 207. Margaret Homans also proposes adoption studies as a "critical lens through which to see, in new ways, such central features of human existence as race, identity, kinship, heritage, nationality, sexuality, and gender" that can "expose structural inequalities." Homans, "Introduction: Critical Adoption," 3.

[13] McLeod, 207.

[14] Romeo, *Riscrivere la nazione,* 27-28. Caterina Romeo coined the term "direct Italian postcolonial writers" to describe writers who come from or have origins in a former Italian colony, those who have "la familiarità con la storia, la cultura e la lingua italiana, elementi che derivano, in vari modi, dal rapporto coloniale dei loro Paesi con l'Italia" (familiarity with Italian history, culture, and language, elements which derive in various ways from the colonial relationship of their countries with Italy). As exemplars of this group of authors, Romeo cites Igiaba Scego, Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, and Gabriella Ghermandi.

[15] It is acknowledged that *meticcio* is a controversial, offensive term referring to those of complex ethnic heritage. Given that it is the designation adopted by Macoggi in the title of *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011) to describe the status of her protagonist, it will be used as such in this study.

[16] Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*, 162-163.

their children, it is shown that the colonial practices of *madamato* and the illegitimate status assigned to the *meticci* children of Italian men and women in the colonies persisted well after the historical conclusion of Italian colonialism. Additionally, these legacies manifest yet today in transracial, transnational adoptions in Italy or, more generally, in the minoritization and even dehumanization of black diaspora mothers and children in postcolonial Italy which can result in family separations.

Disenfranchised Women, Fragile Maternal Rights: A Manifestation of Enduring Colonial Power Relations

To summarize briefly, Macoggi's first work, *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011), recapitulates the early childhood of the protagonist, Fiorella, in 1970s Ethiopia. At age ten, for reasons unbeknownst to her, she is taken from her natural mother, siblings, and extended family to live with and work for her mother's former employer, Romana Gridoni, an Italian woman who is the proprietor of La Pensione Lombardia (Hotel Lombardy) in Addis Abeba. The story concludes when twelve-year-old Fiorella departs for Italy with Romana, her adoptive mother who insists on being called *zia* (aunt). The second text, *La nemesi della rossa* (2012), consists of a series of flashbacks from the point of view of adult Fiorella, twenty years after her adoption by the Italian *zia*: the narrative reconstructs the protagonist's painful life events after her adoption, to her exploitation as child labor in the *zia*'s hotel, to her abandonment by the woman in a countless series of foster homes and convents immediately after their migration to Italy; the tale concludes with Fiorella's homelessness at age twenty-four which results in her institutionalization for a psychotic breakdown. The pretext for the narrative of *La nemesi della rossa* is to understand the "why" and the "how" of the protagonist's traumatic adoption experience, information which was never provided to her during childhood or adolescence: "Voglio capire perché… Voglio mettere ordine in questa confusione." (I want to understand why… I want to put order in this confusion.)[17] To accomplish this objective, Fiorella probes her memories of the agonizing exploitation, abuse, and abandonment that she suffered at the hands of her adoptive mother, reviews the juridical documents related to her adoption, immigration, and various foster care situations, and conducts conversations/interviews with some of her custodial parents and her natural mother. The two texts were intended as a sequence to be considered, in the author's terminology, an organic "racconto autobiografico" (autobiographical tale).[18]

The circumstances leading to the transracial, transnational adoption of ten-year old Fiorella are rooted in the lopsided power dynamics that undergird her family of origin and which replicate structural inequalities of race, gender, and geography reified during Italian colonialism. Fiorella was the fruit of a seemingly brief encounter between a seventeen-year old Ethiopian girl, Selamawit, and an Italian *"*seduttore*"* (seducer) as he is referred to years later by his grown daughter in *La nemesi della rossa*.[19] Fiorella's parents meet by chance in Romana's hotel in the late 1960s where Selamawit works as a chambermaid; the man impregnates the teenager and then disappears: his daughter never knows him or even his name. Shortly thereafter, most likely to guarantee the survival of her infant and herself, the young Selamawit becomes a sort of *madama,* a temporary "comfort wife," of another Italian man.[20]

[17] Macoggi, *La nemesi della rossa,* 15, 19.

[18] The author clearly posits the second novel, *La nemesi della rossa* (2012), as a continuation of the first, *Kkeywa: La storia di una bimba meticcia* (2011): the first phrase of *Nemesi* refers explicitly to the conclusion of *Kkeywa* and the second chapter of *Nemesi* recapitulates the events in the first novel and adds other historical details that the protagonist discovers as an adult while investigating the circumstances of her adoption; Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 15.

[19] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 21.

[20] For a succinct historical overview of *madamato,* alternatively referred to as *madamismo,* in Italy's colonies in Africa, see Iyob, "*Madamismo* and Beyond: The Construction of Eritrean Women," 233-244. Iyob's essay focuses largely on the practice in Eritrea but draws parallels to similar "contracted conjugal arrangements" between black, indigenous women

Seventy-year old Colonnello Giuseppe, described as "un vecchio fascista diventato anarchico" (an old fascist turned anarchist), is an elderly, renegade military officer who elected to remain long term in Addis Abeba after his military service.[21] Italy's colonial campaign in Ethiopia (1935-1936), three decades prior to Fiorella's birth, serves as an important backdrop that sets the stage for the events in *Kkeywa*. An official state document inserted prior to the narrative links the existence of a mixed-race girl born in the Sixties to continuing Italian presence (and domination) in Ethiopia. Entitled *Specchio IV* (Mirror IV), it recognizes the military valor of Colonnello Giuseppe, Fiorella's surrogate father, with a list of numerous medals dating back to World War I.[22] Additionally, the first two chapters of *Kkeywa* recount his role as a captain in Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia for which he expresses only regret and shame; he deems the war on Ethiopia: "il peccato" (sin), "l'obbrobrio" (disgrace), senseless bloodshed motivated "dall'arroganza e dall'orgoglio di chi si riteneva il meglio" (by the arrogance and the pride of who considers himself superior) for the dubious goal of "garantire il posto al sole" (guaranteeing a place in the sun/Africa) for his compatriots.[23] Acknowledging his role in having taken so many lives and as a seeming atonement for his transgressions, the Colonnello adopts Selamawit's daughter, Fiorella, and confers his own surname on the child—"da quel giorno… avrebbe avuto un nome e un cognome. Un nome floreale, primaverile, a cui seguiva il *suo* cognome" (from that day forward… she would have a name and a surname. A floral, spring-like name, followed by *his* surname).[24] The act is significant in that seems to confer undeniable rights on the child given the historical moment, long after the independence of Ethiopia from Italy (1941), theoretically granting claims on Italian citizenship and the man's patrimony.[25] The father-daughter bond is not only legal: Colonnello Giuseppe, referred to throughout both texts as *mio padre* (my father), is the only paternal figure that Fiorella ever knows and is a loving, involved father to "quella figlia adorata" (that adored daughter) who provides him with a means of redemption for his sins as well as a source of joy: "Ti ha mandato il cielo, sei il regalo che Dio ha voluto farmi." (Heaven sent you, you're the gift that God wanted to give me.)[26] Moreover, *il padre* is the one who spurs Fiorella, while she is still a child, to record her memories at least once a year which provides the premise for the first work, *Kkeywa*: "Le avrebbe raccomandato di avere memoria di sé, e di rendere ciò esplicito almeno una volta all'anno… di rammentare ciò che capiva, ma anche ciò che non comprendeva." (He would have told her to have remembrance of herself, and to convey the memories explicitly at least once a year… to recall what she understood, but also what she didn't comprehend.)[27]

Just a few years afterwards, the Colonnello suddenly dies leaving his daughter, a newborn son presumably fathered by him, and his common-law wife in a disastrous economic and social predicament. The voids left by his death, emotional, financial, and protective, are a looming theme of *Kkeywa,* and are marked repetitively by a phrase which punctuates the narrative, "mio padre mi avrebbe detto questo" (my father would have told me this). The momentousness of his death and its material

and white, male colonizers in Italy's other colonies in Somalia, Ethiopia, and Libya. This study relies on the more extensive studies on *madamato* and racialized sexual policies in the colonies by Barbara Sòrgoni and Giulia Barrera in the fields of anthropology and history, respectively.

[21] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 21.

[22] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 9. The term "specchio" (mirror) is a significant component of (re)constructing the identity of the protagonist in both in *Kkeywa* and *La nemesi* and will be explored in the section on literary genre.

[23] Macoggi, 27-28.

[24] Macoggi, 27, author's emphasis.

[25] Italian law did not permit the recognition of children born out of wedlock until the 1975 *Riforma del diritto di famiglia* legislation (May 19, 1975, n. 151), a few years after the birth of Fiorella. Barrera, "Colonial Affairs: Italian Men, Eritrean Women, and the Construction of Racial Hierarchies in Colonial Eritrea (1885-1941)," 231. In any case, Macoggi's text furnishes no evidence that the Colonello provided in any way for the family he left behind in the colonies.

[26] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 25, 27.

[27] Macoggi, 29.

implications for the family are marked by an abrupt switch in verb tense in the narration: the first paragraph of Fiorella's narrative in *Kkeywa* is in the imperfect tense, reminiscent of a fairy tale, and recalls the idyllic birthday celebrations when her family was still intact, under the protection of *il padre*:

> La ricorrenza che più di ogni altro ricordo di aver festeggiato con grande emozione durante la mia infanzia era il mio compleanno. In quell'occasione la mamma mi acquistava il vestito nuovo, le scarpe e le calze di cotone traforato... tutto rigorosamente prodotto in Italia, una torta accanto cui venivano accese tante candele quanti erano gli anni che compivo e, infine, un fotografo mi immortalava vestita di tutto punto... ero… (la) protagonista dell'evento in casa mia...[28]

Thereafter, the protagonist abruptly shifts to the *passato remoto* tense, demarcating the "before" and "after" of her childhood when the family's reality changes overnight: *"*Avevo sette anni e mezzo quando morì mio padre." (I was seven years old when my father died.)[29] Underscoring the gravity of this misfortune, the entire subsequent chapter, entitled *"*La *fine* del padre,*"* (The *end* of my father) is dedicated to the veritable calamity that capsizes Fiorella's (and her mother's) economic, social, and political standing, thereby determining her vulnerability, "il mio status di orfana, di *priva* di padre" (my status as an orphan, *lacking* a father), which eventually leads to the loss of her mother and siblings as well.[30] It is apparent that the Colonnello has made no provisions for his family given that Selamawit is compelled to work two jobs, managing two different restaurants, while caring singlehandedly for her daughter and her newborn son. Given the family's precarious financial situation as well as surging political unrest in Ethiopia under military dictatorship, Selamawit and her children move five times in two years in search of a safe abode among various friends and relatives.

It must not be missed that the calamitous social and economic predicament in which Selamawit finds herself, in the late 1970s, anachronistically reproduces the commonplace conclusion of a colonial era *madamato* temporary marriage: Selamawit and her children are deserted by two successive Italian men, like so many other *madama* wives and *meticci* children during Italian colonialism, which becomes a decisive factor in the eventual adoption of her daughter. In *Parole e corpi: Antropologia, discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali nella colonia Eritrea (1890-1941),* Barbara Sòrgoni characterizes the informal *madamato* arrangement as an Italian corruption of the *demoz,* which was a temporary, for-payment marriage practice limited to a circumscribed area and people, the Tigrinya and the Amhara ethnic groups from Eritrea and the high plains of Ethiopia.[31] Sòrgoni highlights the marked differences between the more equitable *demoz* marriages and the predilection of Italian men for taking a *madama* wife during their tenure in the colonies: a *demoz* union, terminable by either party, entailed significant obligations on the part of the husband, including providing for the wife and any eventual children even after the dissolution of the arrangement; his responsibilities included conferring his name on the children born of the marriage, supporting them financially, and bequeathing an inheritance of land and other property to them.[32] In a historical analysis of the *demoz* practice, Giulia Barrera clarifies that the term signifies "pay, wage, remuneration" in Amharic and is also referred to as *quzar,* meaning "conjugal union by payment."[33] She further specifies that *demoz* was a less desirable union for women

[28] "The event that I remember more than any other to have celebrated with great excitement during my childhood was my birthday. On that occasion, my mommy bought me a new dress, new shoes, and new lacy cotton tights… everything rigorously made in Italy, a cake on which were lit as many candles as the number of years I had turned and, lastly, a photographer who immortalized me, perfectly-dressed… I was… the star of the event in my home…" Macoggi, 31.
[29] Macoggi, 31.
[30] Macoggi, 37, author's emphasis; Macoggi, 41, author's emphasis.
[31] Sòrgoni, *Parole e corpi: Antropologia, discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali nella colonia Eritrea (1890-1941)*, 117-118.
[32] Sòrgoni, *Parole e corpi,* 123.
[33] Barrera, "Colonial Affairs*,"* 150-151. Barrera notes that alternate spellings of *demoz* include *dumoz* and *damoz*.

than *qal-kidan,* denoting "marital pact." A *qal-kidan* marriage could be religious or secular in nature, both of which were legitimized by the Orthodox Christian Church, and was typically contracted when the bride and groom were still infants. A *qal-kidan* contract required the payment of a dowry, was dependent on the lineages of the two families and the virginity of the bride, and was excluded to certain classes and occupations.[34] Thus, *demoz* marriages offered a respectable alternative for women not marriageable by *qal-kidan* and guaranteed the legitimacy and economic wellbeing of the women and their offspring who enjoyed the same rights as the children of the more prestigious marital union.[35] Both Barrera and Sòrgoni sustain that *madamato* agreements, a temporary cohabitation of Italian colonists with colonized women, were an Italian debasement of *demoz*: Born out of ignorance or convenience or both, the colonizers justified their tenuous unions with women in the colonies by claiming that a limited-term marital practice existed prior to colonization and, besides, native women had relaxed morals and sexual norms consonant with the ubiquitous Black Venus imaginary.[36] *Madamato,* in reality, was little like *demoz* in terms of the security and provisions made for the woman and the children, being more akin to another practice, *çingherad,* meaning literally "tight servant" or concubinage: an Italian man enjoyed the company and domestic services of his *madama* wife but could unilaterally absolve himself of any responsibility for her and the offspring born of the marriage.[37] Abandonment of children by their fathers was almost unheard of among the Tigrinya populations, independent of the type of marital arrangement, which further highlights the disparity between *demoz* and *madamato* unions with the latter reflecting the colonial imbalance of power (racial, gender-based, national/geographical) that undergirded it.[38] Italian men's pervasive abdication of paternal responsibilities resulted in the so-called *piaga dei meticci* (plague of the mixed-breed cast), which became an embarrassment to the fascist regime being counter to the imaginary of Italian superiority. The abandonment of children by Italians in the colonies was so prevalent that, by 1921, the plight of the *meticci* became the central argument of the Third National Anti-Slavery Congress in Rome and missionary institutes were established in 1928 for the care and education of these children, the first of which in Asmara, Eritrea.[39]

What is remarkable about Selamawit's story in Macoggi's memoirs is the historical moment of the narrative: the young woman's marital-like arrangement with Colonnello Giuseppe takes place in the 1970s in Addis Abeba, long after the terminus of Italian colonialism in Ethiopia (1941), yet it anachronistically reproduces the selfsame hierarchically ordered *madamato* temporary marriage which conferred no rights or recognition on her or her children. The texts make clear their status as a family: the man formally adopted Selamawit's daughter, loved the child tenderly, and fathered another child with the woman. Fiorella's own loving relationship with her father is reflected in small, intimate details such as her recollections of grocery shopping with him, their blissful family birthday celebrations, and the fact that he procured milk for her during her infancy: "come tanti bambini privilegiati della mia città, bevevo il latte… mio padre acquistava confezioni di latte in polvere da *Bambis,* il supermercato

[34] Barrera, 145-150.

[35] Barrera, 150-159.

[36] Sòrgoni, *Parole e corpi,* 118 and Barrera, "Colonial Affairs," 159-168. Nonetheless, both Barrera and Sòrgoni provide evidence that some men viewed their *madama* as their legitimate wives and loved them as such as well as the children born to the marriage: this was demonstrated by their cohabitation as a family with their wife and children, their legal recognition of their offspring, and their applications for Italian citizenship for their children. *Madamato* marriages were quite common in the colonies and were realized in a wide gamut of possibilities until 1937 when the practice was criminalized and sanctioned with prison sentences by the December 30, 1937 Law-XVI, number 2590 "Sanzioni per i rapporti d'indole coniugale tra cittadini e sudditi." Sòrgoni, *Parole e corpi,* 153-154.

[37] Barrera, "Colonial Affairs," 154.

[38] Barrera, 160. Barrera notes that Tigrinya law confers the same rights on children born to marriages or even out of wedlock and that "the status of (an) illegitimate child was virtually unknown," common only among slaves.

[39] Sòrgoni, *Parole e corpi,* 146.

da cui si rifornivano gli occidentali" (like so many other privileged children in my city, I drank milk… my father bought packages of powdered milk at *Bambis,* the supermarket where Westerners shopped).[40] *Kkeywa* clearly argues Fiorella's *italianità* (Italian-ness) as a birthright, given her paternity, her deep bond with her adoptive father, and her education and upbringing which reflected the typical patrilinear descent of a child's identity construction in both Italian and Ethiopian cultures:[41] Fiorella attended exclusively Italian schools, even in Addis Abeba, she wore Western clothes, and she ate in the Italian style with utensils instead of scooping up food by hand with injera bread as is done in Ethiopian culture: "Mia madre sosteneva che sin da *piccola* non amavo sporcarmi le mani con il cibo…. Mia madre ripeteva sempre che fu quindi *costretta* a nutrirmi *all'occidentale.*" (My mother maintained that, since I was *a little baby,* I didn't like to get my hands dirty with food.… She always said that she was *forced* to feed me *in the Western way*.)[42] Despite all this, upon her father's death, Fiorella, her mother, and baby brother are not recognized by the Italian State as the man's legal heirs and remain in abject poverty after his demise, reproducing precisely the plight of *madama* women and their *meticci* children during colonialism.[43] Even though decades had passed since the independence of Ethiopia from Italy (1941) and the termination of the *legge razziali* (racial legislation) which subordinated and exterminated the colonized (1944), the abysmal conditions in which Selamawit and her (his) children find themselves after Colonnello Giuseppe's death confirm the perpetuation and naturalization of race, gender, and nation-based power dynamics rooted in colonial history, culture, and practices.[44] Carla Macoggi, in her 2009 Introduction to *Kkeywa,* explicitly identifies the abject subjectivity ascribed to Selamawit and Fiorella, and others like them, and traces its genealogy to the fascist era: "Ritengo quindi di voler precisare che... ciò che avenne negli anni '30 fa parte in modo inequivocabile della storia italiana... e continua ad avere conseguenze 'in'-spiegabili nella contemporaneità." (I hold, therefore, that I want to point out that… what happened in the 1930s is an unequivocable part of Italian history… and it continues to have 'un'-fathomable consequences on the current day.)[45] Likewise, in a radio interview about her memoirs, the author confirms the glaring chronological erroneousness of her story: "Penso di aver subito questa violenza anachronistica (la separazione dalla madre)... Il fascismo e le leggi razziali avrebbero dovuto essere già superati da almeno trent'anni. Io sarei dovuta essere immune a tutto

[40] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 45.

[41] Barrera, "Colonial Affairs," 6, 194-237.

[42] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 45-46, author's emphases.

[43] Giulia Barrera traces the marked evolution of the policies and laws governing racial hierarchies in the colonies and how they impacted sexual and sentimental relationships between Italian colonizers and indigenous colonized women. The central thesis of her work is that practices and legislation were modified to suit the political ideologies of the period: "Government attitudes toward interracial concubinage changed over the years, ranging from encouragement to discouragement (and even penalized with repatriation or imprisonment), according to different political contingencies." Barrera, "Colonial Affairs," 76, my insertion. For example, during the Liberal Period (1885-1935), Italian men were expected and even encouraged to form liaisons with colonized women, could recognize the children born of the unions, and apply for Italian citizenship for their sons and daughters. Instead, in the Fascist Period beginning with Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia (1935-1941), *madamato* marriages became prohibited by law as part of the Duce's platform to found and authenticate the "prestige of the Italian race." Mussolini recognized that by permitting long-term unions between Italian nationals and women in the colonies and conferring Italian citizenship on their children, the lines between colonizer and colonized were blurred, thereby casting doubt on the anthropological and scientific racism that he was promulgating as the basis for founding his Empire. Thus, after 1935, abandonment of the children of Italian men born in Italian colonies became the norm. Barrera, "Colonial Affairs," 222.

[44] Repeal of racial legislation was accomplished via R.d.l. n. 25, January 20, 1944. However, Barrera clarifies that Italian authorities interpreted the abrogation as applicable only in the case of the Jews and continued to repress individuals of African descent in the former colonies. Thus, a new law had to be enacted in 1947, D.l.c.p.s., n. 106, August 3, 1947, to specifically abolish the legislation relevant to the *meticci,* revealing the deep and persistent roots of the colonial racial hierarchies. Barrera, "Colonial Affairs," 373.

[45] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 11.

questo. Però mi è successo, mi è capitato." (I think that I suffered an anachronistic violence [the separation from my mother]…Fascism and its racial legislation should have been obsolete by at least thirty years. I should have been immune to all this. Instead, it happened to me, it happened to me.)[46]

Disenfranchised of her common law husband's provision for her and his children, Selamawit becomes vulnerable to losing her child as well. *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia,* narrated from the point of view of ten-year old Fiorella, reveals few details of the circumstances of her adoption as they weren't made known to her, recounting primarily the protagonist's bewilderment when her mother leaves her in the care of Romana, Selamawit's prior employer: "Per qualche ragione a me sconosciuta, la mamma voleva avvicinarmi a quella signora (Romana), o forse era costretta a farlo." (For some reason, unbeknownst to me, my mama wanted to draw me near to that lady [Romana] or, perhaps, she was forced to do so.)[47] The result is that Fiorella is permanently deprived of her mother, brother, and baby sister: "Io dovevo stare lì (nell'albergo con Romana), in quella stanza, in quel luogo... Quella era la mia famiglia, ma a me era negato appartenerle… Chi aveva deciso tutto questo?" (I had to stay there [in the hotel with Romana], in that room, in that place... That was my family, but I was denied from belonging to them... Who had decided all this?)[48] It isn't until two decades later, as the result of an extensive investigation by the adult protagonist as recorded in *La nemesi della rossa,* that Fiorella uncovers the actual terms of her adoption. Romana, having been abandoned by her own husband who left her for another woman, was envious of Selamawit: "Romana… avrebbe voluto quel Colonnello Giuseppe come compagno perché era un uomo colto, simpatico e dai modi gentili e lei aveva dovuto sposare malvolentieri uno degli aiutanti di suo padre." (Romana… would have wanted that Colonel Giuseppe as her companion because he was an educated, nice, and genteel man, and she had had to marry one of her father's assistants against her will.)[49] More importantly, Romana found intolerable that Selamawit, an Ethiopian woman, presumed to think herself the legitimate wife of an Italian:

> Quando il Colonnello morì… dopo quasi tre anni da quel giorno (Romana) prese con sé Fiorella per farla lavorare nella sua pensione. Alla madre di Fiorella Romana disse: Te la faccio crescere io (la bambina)...dovrà lavorare per me, non ho dimenticato sai che tu, appena il Colonnello ti disse che avrebbe mantenuto te e tua figlia, smettesti di sgobbare in questa pensione e te ne andasti fiera come una regina. Colonnello Giuseppe non c'è più e i debiti si pagano comunque, quel che non hai fatto tu, farà tua figlia, così è la vita.[50]

Convinced of the inherent veracity of the lingering colonial order and operating from her position of hegemony (wealthy, white, Italian), Romana exacts Selamawit's daughter from her as a form of payment for the perceived offense of Selamawit having overstepped the established hierarchies. Two years later, when Romana decides to repatriate to Italy owing to the deteriorating political situation in Ethiopia, she formally adopts Fiorella, again by intimidation of the child's natural mother who is without resources (financial, social, legal) to resist her: "Porto tua figlia in Italia, andiamo a firmare dei documenti perché Fiorella abbia il permesso di uscire da questo Paese. Tu firma tutto quel che ti dico, perché altrimenti non la vedrai mai più, come è vero l'Iddio in cui credi." (I'm taking your daughter to Italy, let's go sign the documents so that Fiorella has the permit to leave this Country. You'd better

[46] Macoggi, *Le strade di Babele.*
[47] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 55, my insertion.
[48] Macoggi, 96, my insertion.
[49] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 22.
[50] "When the Colonel died… almost three years to the day later, (Romana) took Fiorella to have her work for her in her boarding house. To Fiorella's mother, Romana said: I will raise her (the child) for you... she will have to work for me, you know, I haven't forgotten that you, as soon as the Colonel told you that he would support you and your daughter, you quit toiling away in this hotel and you went off as proud as a queen. Colonel Giuseppe isn't here anymore, and you have to pay your debts in any case, what you didn't do, your daughter will do, life is like that..." Macoggi, 22-23, my insertions.

sign what I tell you because, otherwise, you will never see her again, as sure as the God that you believe in.)[51] Only after unearthing the terms of her adoption as an adult, Fiorella comprehends the true nature of "quella farsa" (that farce) of her adoption, recognizing that she was forcibly taken from her mother and siblings, acquired as a "piccola schiava" (little slave) at the mercy of the *zia*: "([Romana] aveva acquistato Fiorella. Per niente. She had purchased Fiorella. For nothing.)[52]

Margaret Homans in *The Imprint of Another Life: Adoption Narratives and Human Possibility* (2013) tackles head-on the oft unacknowledged economic and political global inequalities that are frequently at the root of adoption, particularly transnational and transracial ones. In the chapter "Money and Love" in the same volume, Homans argues that fiscal realities determine one's access to love and family including the possibility to raise children: "Economic conditions… determine emotional life... Love is not separable from the economic. Raising children, adopted or not, requires resources."[53] Departing from the premise of family as an economic unit, Homans examines two prevalent, diametrically opposed viewpoints regarding intercountry adoption: on the one hand, the "rescue" narrative argues that children in orphanages, and/or those who suffer from poverty, war, or famines, prevalently poor children from the Global South, are rescued by wealthy/ier individuals from First World countries.[54] Therefore, adoption is in the "best interest of the child." To the contrary, some social activists and adoption studies scholars hold that transnational adoption is tantamount to "baby buying" or "baby stealing" of Third World children by the well-off and powerful who take advantage of the hardships and vulnerability of these children and their birth families to complete their own families.[55] The rationale of the latter camp holds that particular groups of children are more available for adoption, are "adoptable" and "transferable" in McLeod's phraseology: the sons and daughters of "impoverished, delegitimized, and disenfranchised categories of mothers… have made large numbers of children available for adoption."[56] Homans acknowledges that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between legitimate transnational adoptions and those that occur as a result of kidnapping, threats, or bribes which involve "coercion and betrayal" of the birth mother, as was the case for Selamawit.[57] Even if informed consent has been obtained from the birth parents, Homans notes that many times women's choices are compromised by the aftermath of war, by poverty, violence, and/or their refugee status, again, true in the case of Fiorella's family of origin.

In the Italian context, Rossana Di Silvio's *Affetti da adozione: Uno studio antropologico della famiglia post-familiare in Italia* (2015) verifies Homan's and McLeod's (and others') assertion that intercountry adoptions, often transracial in nature, most frequently involve the movement of children from the Global South to the Global North. Di Silvio describes a "flusso unidirezionale (di bambini) tra paesi 'donatori' e paesi 'riceventi'" (unidirectional flow [of children] from "donor" countries to "receiving"

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[51] Macoggi, 23.

[52] Macoggi, 23.

[53] Homans, *The Imprint of Another Life: Adoption Narratives and Human Possibility,* 25.

[54] Homans refers to Elizabeth Bartholet's *Family Bonds: Adoption and the Politics of Parenting* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993) as an influential proponent of the "rescue" paradigm which has been tremendously influential politically in advocating for transnational adoptions.

[55] As voices who oppose transnational adoptions, yet who present divergent arguments for such, Homans cites: Briggs' *Somebody's Children: The Politics of Transracial and Transnational Adoption*, Claudia Castañeda's *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), and Sandra Patton's *BirthMarks: Transcracial Adoption in Contemporary America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000).

[56] Homans, *The Imprint,* 18. It is important to note that Homans does not adhere unequivocally to either side of the argument for/against transnational adoptions. She recognizes that adopted children do frequently gain economically from their new family situation, nonetheless, she argues that "geopolitical economic inequities" render their adoption possible in the first place. Homans, *The Imprint,* 20. Her thesis is that, instead of camouflaging the economic, social, and geographical inequalities of adoption, they should be acknowledged and confronted head on.

[57] Homans, 44.

countries), highlighting the qualifying characteristics of the "donating" regions and the "receiving" ones as "ideological" in nature, not geographical: by underscoring the fact most adopted children to Italy hail from Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America, nations with a colonized past and with considerable numbers of poor children and women of color, Di Silvio acknowledges that systemic inequalities such as race, class, and geopolitics determine the one-way flux of children.[58] A significant phenomenon which has been dubbed a "silent migration," more than a million children were adopted across borders from 1948-2012, Italy consistently appears among the top nations in the world in intercountry adoptions, frequently second only after the United States.[59] Clearly, there is a consensus among adoption studies scholars that economic, racial, and political forces often operate in what McLeod dubs the "strategic reshaping of family relations:" the children of poor single women from Third World countries are transferred to the more powerful and wealthy in privileged nations in a form of what Laura Briggs and Diana Marre refer to as "gendered violence."[60] Impoverished women, frequently of color, are afforded little access to education and reproductive measures to regulate the number of children they are bear, moreover, the women are granted few social and governmental supports to empower them to raise their own children. This was clearly the case in Fiorella's story: Selamawit's relationship with Colonnello Giuseppe, evocative of colonial *madamato* practices, leaves her and her children defenseless against the predation of another Italian in a position of power. Romana's hegemony (economic, geopolitical) allows her to intimidate her former employee, Selamawit, to relinquish her daughter to her. *La nemesi della rossa* makes clear that, not only Fiorella, but also Selamawit was traumatized by the adoption: "Dopo l'esperienza che aveva subito con Fiorella, Selamawit tenne stretti a sé i suoi due piccoli (gli altri due figli), non volle mai l'aiuto di alcuno per crescerli e guardava con sospetto chi si avvicinava dicendole: 'Ah, che bei bambini.'" (After the experience she had suffered with Fiorella, Selamawit held tight to herself her two little ones [her other two children], she didn't want help from anyone to raise them and she looked with suspicion at anyone who came close, saying to her: "Oh, what beautiful children.")[61] As John McLeod contends, reading adoption memoirs with a postcolonial filter can "expose and contest colonialism's enduring legacies in both once-colonized and metropolitan spaces" and can reveal that "iniquitous adoption practices

[58] Di Silvio, *Affetti da adozione: Uno studio antropologico della famiglia post-familiare in Italia,* xx-xxiii. Di Silvio's project, an anthropological study of adoption in Italy was accomplished by close contact with fifteen families in Milan and Sardinia from 2010-2014. The study is not by any means a critique of international adoption even though it recognizes the structural inequalities that underlie it. The goal of Di Silvio's project is to contribute to the conversation in anthropology on "cosa sia—e cosa stia diventando la famiglia in Italia" (what is—and what is becoming the family in Italy), moving beyond exclusively biocentric models of family. Moreover, Di Silvio identifies the strategies by which family bonds are established among effective strangers who "sono resi parenti 'per legge'" (are rendered relatives "by law," xviii). Di Silvio's prior monograph, *Parentele di confine: La pratica adottiva tra desiderio locale e mondo globale* (Verona: Ombre Corte Editore, 2008), is recognized as the first anthropological study of adoption in the Italian context; Di Silvio, xix; Di Silvio, xxiv-xxv.

[59] Di Silvio credits the term to Peter Selman. See, among others, Peter Selman, "One Million Children Moving: The Demography of Intercountry Adoption," paper presented at Fourth International Conference on Adoption Research (Bilbao, Spain, 2013); Di Silvio, *Affetti da adozione,* xxiv-xxv. Di Silvio attributes Italy's propensity for international adoptions to delayed childbearing which augments infertility, as well as for humanitarian reasons. The "typical" adoptive Italian parents are older, more than 45 years old, and live in the wealthier regions in the north. According to Italy's Commissione per le Adozioni Internazionali, Italy follows only the United States in the number of international adoptions. See the Commission's 2019 statistical report: http://www.commissioneadozioni.it/notizie/cai-pubblica-il-report-statistico-sulle-adozioni-internazionali-nel-2019/

[60] McLeod, "Adoption Studies," 208; Briggs and Marre, "Introduction: The Circulation of Children," 15-20. Briggs and Marre refer to "stratified reproduction" in which global power relations determine which women can bear and raise children and which women are denied that right. Among a multitude of examples to support this argument they cite: the access or denial to birth control, the means for assisted fertility treatments, the ability to pay for childcare, governmental and social programs which sustain single motherhood.

[61] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 24, my insertion.

in once-colonized spaces have continued forward after the achievement of formal independence."[62] Notwithstanding the three decades that followed the independence of Ethiopia from Italy, it is clear that Italian colonialists were still exerting violence and oppression on the former colonized as demonstrated by Selamawit and Fiorella's story.

The 1980 Hague Convention, Article 26 on International Child Abduction, followed by the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption, also known as the Hague Adoption Convention, were enacted specifically to counteract the "iniquitous" adoptions referred to by McLeod and depicted in Macoggi's memoirs: those that involve baby stealing, baby buying, or violence and oppression against birth mothers that compel them to surrender their children.[63] The Hague Adoption Convention was intended to codify and enforce the United Nations' Article 21 on the Rights of the Child, specifically, to "protect children and their families against the risks of illegal, irregular, premature or ill-prepared adoptions abroad… and to ensure that intercountry adoptions are in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights."[64] Fiorella's adoption by Romana took place just a couple of years prior to the ratification of the 1980 Hague Article 26, yet the terms of her "acquisition" by an Italian woman clearly demonstrate the necessity of an international protocol to regulate intercountry adoptions. Fiorella's adoption experience violates several key terms of the convention. First, the Hague Adoption Convention specifies that there are responsibilities on both the state of origin as well as the receiving state to determine that a child is indeed adoptable, that the parent(s) have been counseled as to their rights and the permanent implications of the adoption, and that they have given their consent freely and in writing. *La nemesi della rossa* makes evident that none of these safeguards were followed in Fiorella's case, neither by Ethiopian nor Italian authorities. Fiorella had a family, albeit a poor one, and she was not an orphan as Romana forced her to declare upon their immigration to Italy: "(Romana) mi disse che se qualcuno mi avesse fatto delle domande dovevo dire che non avevo la mamma con me e, poi, quei suoi bambini…non erano neanche i miei veri fratelli." ([Romana] told me that, if anyone asked questions, I had to say that I didn't have my mother with me and, moreover, those two children... they weren't even my true brothers and sisters).[65] Additionally, Romana swore to Italian immigration authorities that Fiorella had lived with her since birth and had no living parents, most likely to avoid the necessity to obtain Selamawit's informed consent; yet, seemingly, no verifications were ever sought or obtained by state officials or the court:

> [Romana] andò davanti a un giudice tutelare a dire: "Fiorella ha sempre vissuto con me dalla nascita a oggi." Mentre in verità Fiorella aveva vissuto dieci anni e mezzo con sua madre, tre mesi con sua zia naturale, tre mesi e mezzo con Terza [la cognata di Romana] e poco più di due anni con Romana.[66]

Similarly, adult Fiorella unearths another document deposited in Bologna's Juvenile Court of Bologna in which her acting guardian falsely declared that the child was an orphan and was brought to Italy by Romana "dato che Fiorella non aveva più nessuno" (given that Fiorella no longer had anyone).[67]

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[62] McLeod, "Adoption Studies," 208, 215.
[63] https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/full-text/?cid=24; https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/specialised-sections/intercountry-adoption
[64] https://www.hcch.net/en/instruments/conventions/specialised-sections/intercountry-adoption
[65] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 99, my insertion.
[66] "[Romana] went in front of the tutelary judge to say: 'Fiorella has always lived with me from her birth until today.' While, in truth, Fiorella had lived ten and a half years with her mother, three months with her natural aunt, three and a half months with Terza [Romana's sister-in-law] and a little more than two years with Romana." Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 25, my insertion.
[67] Macoggi, 13.

Moreover, Fiorella's adoption as recorded in Macoggi's memoirs also violates Articles 5, 9, and 15 of the Hague Adoption Convention which require an assessment of the adoptive parent(s), including their "eligibility and suitability to adopt" and their "reasons for adoption." Even a cursory investigation by authorities would have revealed the questionable circumstances of Fiorella's adoption as well as Romana's loathsome motives for wanting to become an adoptive mother—"I debiti si pagano… la bambina dovrà lavorare per me" (Everybody has to pay their debts… the girl will have to work for me)—and her dubious moral character: in addition to her repeated false testimonies regarding Fiorella's family of origins and, later, the child's wellbeing and whereabouts, one of Romana's principal motivations for returning to Italy was to escape a public scandal in Addis Abeba when she was discovered having sex with the husband of another Italian woman who worked for her: "Tutta la città sogghignava al pensiero dei due trovati al culmine dell'amplesso, nudi e crudi così come mamma li aveva fatti.… Romana… non accettava che tutti, a Addis Abeba, ridessero delle sue gambe all'aria." (The whole city was sniggering at the thought of those two found at the height of sexual intercourse, butt naked like their mom had made them.… Romana… couldn't tolerate that everyone, in Addis Abeba, were laughing about her legs up in the air).[68] Macoggi's portrayal of Romana hardly depicts a woman with altruistic motivations at heart who is "eligible and suitable" to adopt a child.

In addition, Article 25 of the United Nations Rights of the Child requires that "States Parties recognize the right of a child who has been placed by the competent authorities for the purpose of care… to a periodic review of the care provided to the child and all other circumstances related to his or her placement." Macoggi's memoirs document that no checks were ever made neither at the moment of Fiorella's adoption, nor when she immigrated to Italy with her adoptive mother, nor in the successive decade when she was deposited in one foster home or convent after another: "il giudice avrebbe saputo qualcosa di più se si fosse rivolto al Console italiano in Etiopia (a proposito dell'adozione e dell'immigrazione in Italia), ma allora questa storia non esisterebbe." (The judge would have known more if s/he had inquired at the Italian Consulate in Ethiopia [about Fiorella's adoption and immigration to Italy] but, then, this story wouldn't exist).[69] To the contrary, Romana presented to the Juvenile Court in Bologna a Certificate of Residence declaring that Fiorella was living with her when, in reality, the child had been abandoned in a series of temporary guardianships; yet neither the court, nor the social worker assigned to her case ever ascertained where Fiorella was actually residing.[70] In fact, the *protutrice* (court-appointed guardian) never checked on Fiorella's welfare in more than a decade: "Già dal momento della nomina a protutrice non si fece vedere… mai una telefonata, mai un augurio per Natale, Pasqua, compleanno o onomastico." (From the moment she was named court-appointed guardian, she was never seen again… never a phone call, never a Merry Christmas, Happy Easter, Happy Birthday, or best wishes for my name/saint's day).[71] Thus, the responsibility for the unlawful separation of Fiorella from her mother and siblings lie surely at the feet of Romana, but the social worker, the court-appointed *protutrice,* and the Italian State are culpable as well. The complicity, or at best neglect, of the Italian bureaucracy (immigration authorities, child welfare court, social services) confirm the abject, subhuman status assigned to both Selamawit and her daughter by all involved, thereby depriving mother and child of fundamental human rights: the right to affiliation with one's loved ones, the right to education, adequate housing, and nutrition, and the freedom from exploitation and abuse, as is demonstrated in the next section.[72]

[68] Macoggi, 24-25.
[69] Macoggi, 26, my insertion.
[70] Macoggi, 26.
[71] Macoggi, 26.
[72] The *Innocenti Digest,* a publication of UNICEF on International Adoptions, provides an overview of the recommended praxis that should govern intercountry adoptions, nearly none of which were followed in Fiorella's case. The document emphasizes that adoption of children across borders is fraught with abuses of birth mothers and children: given the unequal

Adoptive Mother-Daughter Rapport: Padrona-Schiava, the Perpetuation of Colonial Power Structures

The racial, gendered, and geographical hierarchies that render Selamawit the delegitimized wife of an Italian military officer and their daughter "adoptable" and "transferable" across international borders neglecting standard adoption and immigration protocols are determinant as well in governing the terms of Romana and Fiorella's relationship. The selfsame structural inequalities permit the adoptive mother-daughter rapport to be formulated along a colonial master-slave dynamic, subordinating the child to her adoptive mother as a servant and discounting the girl's inherent dignity and humanity. Both *Kkeywa* and *La nemesi della rossa* cite many occasions in which Romana humiliates, exploits, and violates Fiorella, many of which constitute *bona fide* child abuse, yet Romana is never denounced for any crime nor is she even socially sanctioned. The dehumanization of Fiorella begins the day she arrives to live in the hotel with the *zia*: the child is inexplicably shorn like an animal by a man she has never seen before, a scene which recalls the initiation rite of Holocaust victims in concentration camps:

> La proprietaria del Lombardia [Romana]… mi accompagnò al primo piano e mi lasciò sola con il signor Gianni, incaricato di lavarmi i capelli.… [lui] districò i miei capelli e poi mi coprì con una stoffa che mi allacciò dietro alla nuca. Guardavo attonita questi strani preparativi, e un brivido mi corse lungo la schiena quando vidi un paio di forbici luccicanti tra le dita di quel signore brizzolato.... [prese] l'arma tagliente.... Stavo per assistere a uno scempio, viverlo.... La mia chioma, che, per volontà di mia madre... nessuna lama affilata aveva mai sfiorato, fu ridotta a poche decine di millimetri di capelli che coprivano il mio cranio. Tutto avvenne in fretta. Non pronunciai neppure una parola. Forse il terrore e l'impossibilità di reagire non mi facevano neanche respirare.... A terra c'erano ciocche che avevano condiviso la mia esistenza sin da quando stavo nel grembo di mia madre. Erano sul pavimento, senza vita.[73]

Fiorella employs terms of weaponry and violence to underscore the violence and humiliation which characterized her "welcome" to the home of her new mother: "forbici luccicanti" (glistening scissors),"l'arma tagliente" (the sharp weapon), "scempio" (slaughter),"terrore" (terror), "senza vita" (lifeless). Immediately afterwards, she is stripped nude, at ten years old, and bathed with an unknown blonde boy, again without explanation; the Italian boy is openly encouraged by Romana to laughingly deride how "nera" (black) and (therefore) "brutta" (ugly) Fiorella is.[74]

In this brutal way, Fiorella discovers race at age ten, becoming black only after her adoption by the *zia*. Significantly, Macoggi included two racial terms in the title of her first memoir, *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia*: *kkeywa* means *rossa* (red) in Amharic and refers to a person with lighter skin color; the term has neither positive nor negative connotations in the Ethiopian context but is merely

power dynamics between sending and receiving nations, and between typically young, poor, often single mothers who have no safety net and rich, educated women from more hegemonic countries who are often backed by at times unethical, for-profit adoption agencies, UNICEF recommends adoption of children across international borders only as a last resort. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest4i.pdf

[73] The proprietor of the Lombardy Hotel [Romana]... accompanied me to the first floor and left me alone with Mr. Gianni, who was charged with washing my hair.... he untangled my hair and then covered me with a cloth that he tied behind my neck. Stunned, I watched these strange preparations, and a shiver passed along my back when I saw a pair of glistening scissors between the fingers of that salt and pepper-haired man... [he took up] the sharp weapon... I was about to witness a slaughter, to live it... My mane, which for the will of my mother... no blade had ever touched, was reduced to a few dozen millimeters of hair that covered my cranium. Everything happened in a hurry. I didn't say even one word. Maybe it was the terror or the impossibility to react that didn't even let me breathe... On the ground were the locks that had shared my existence since I was in my mother's womb. They were on the floor, lifeless." Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 60-61.

[74] Macoggi, 61.

an acknowledgement of skin hue.[75] Similarly, Fiorella's maternal cousins had referred to her as *kəllə́swa,* also a neutral designation, signifying "sangue mista" (mixed blood), given that she is the daughter of a *ferenǧ* (a white foreigner).[76] *Meticcia* (half breed), instead, is a pejorative in Italian: widely used in fascist discourses, colonial policies, and racial laws to assert the superiority of the Italian stock, Macoggi includes the essentializing racial term in the title of her memoir to indicate Fiorella's anachronistically diminished status, in the 1970s through the late 1980s when the story is situated.[77] In her 2009 Introduction to *Kkeywa,* Macoggi troubles colonial racial terminology as hollow, lacking a signifier, and asserts instead that *meticcio* is "uno strumento di potere" (an instrument of power) discursively brought into being by fascist legislation and propaganda: "la creazione di una casta di meticci è una utopia" (the creation of the mixed-breed cast is a Utopia) concocted to establish and enforce the "prestigio della razza [italiana]" (prestige of the [Italian] race).[78] Macoggi deconstructs the arbitrary, empty concept of *meticciato* which is "imposta a (sola) una parte dell'umanità" (imposed on [only] a part of humanity), yet which is intrinsic to humankind itself: specifically, she argues that the various countries that make up the European Union are themselves composed of a "vero mosaico di popoli" (true mosaic of peoples) who embody a multitude of languages, ethnicities, origins, and cultures. Yet considerable rights are conferred on this heterogeneous blend of populaces, for example, free migration among the European Union countries, "indipendentemente dalla nazionalità o dal luogo di nascita" (independently of nationality or birthplace).[79] Macoggi verifies that Italy itself is *meticcia* by citing its long history of em/immigration as well as the significant linguistic, culinary, cultural, and political divergences between regions and even between adjacent cities. By highlighting the arbitrary nature and emptiness of racializing terms such as *meticcio,* the author declares her intention that her memoirs serve as "una denuncia di diversi fenomeni contraddittori" (a denouncement of several contradictory phenomena) related to the construction of race in Italy; she implores the reader to recognize the colonial legacy of racial hierarchies and how they continue to condition the lived experiences and human rights of only a "part of humanity," those like her: "in quanto donna… meticcia, emigrata, immigrata, atea" which render her "negli ultimi gradini della scala sociale" (inasmuch a woman… mixed-breed, emigrant, immigrant, atheist…on the lowest rung of the social ladder).[80]

By taking advantage of the hereditary colonial power structure, Romana permits herself to exploit her adoptive daughter as an unpaid employee in her business activity, subject the child to sexual abuse at the hand of her lover without consequence, and eventually abandon the child when she is no longer economically profitable. Fiorella becomes quickly aware that she has the role of an employee,

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[75] Macoggi, 47.

[76] Macoggi, *Le strade di Babele.* In the radio interview, Macoggi contrasts the significance and the implications of the terms *kkeywa, meticcio,* and *kəllə́swa* (sangue mista/mixed blood) in the two nations/cultural environments in which she lived: in Ethiopia, these labels have a neutral value since, in her opinion and experience, it is a "mondo più rispettoso delle differenze" (world more respectful of differences), whereas in Italy the same terms are most often employed in a derogatory or an exclusionary way.

[77] For a deconstruction of the scientific racism inherent in the term *meticcio* which relates to its history in the fascist era invention of racial hierarchies, see Gabrielli, "Un aspetto della politica razzista nell'Impero: Il problema dei meticci," 77-78.

[78] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 15; Macoggi, 13, my insertion. Reflecting her legal education, Macoggi performs an *excursus* in the Introduction to *Kkeywa* of the evolution of colonial racial legislation, thereby demonstrating the arbitrary nature of racial laws which varied dramatically according to political ideologies. She notes that, first, Italy conferred citizenship to *meticci* children and considered them Italian by anthropological standards. Later, under Mussolini, the laws underwent a complete reversal: Italian men were imprisoned for having indigenous wives and the Italian State denied juridical status and recognition to these couples' children.

[79] Macoggi, 12.

[80] Macoggi, 20.

albeit unremunerated like a slave, like the other *habiša* (indigenous person) in the *zia*'s employ, and is hardly considered a daughter or even a child with legitimate needs for food, rest, study, and play: "non credo che mi considerasse una bambina" (I don't believe that she considered me a child).[81] At ten years old, Fiorella is charged by Romana to oversee the hotel's restaurant, respond to telephone calls, write the daily menu, operate the cash register, and distribute employee paychecks. The girl's role as an *"*operaio adulto*"* (adult laborer), at the service of her new "mother," constitutes "lo sfruttamento del lavoro minorile*"* (child labor exploitation) and comes at the cost of her education and socialization: Fiorella must skip lunch so that she can work her lengthy shift in the restaurant, isn't permitted to read or do homework until late at night when her work is finished, and is rarely allowed to have play dates with her only school friend.[82] Cruelly, Romana also deprives Fiorella of food with the justification being that she despises corpulence; Fiorella learns to starve herself or face constant haranguing about what and how she eats: "preoccupata esclusivamente di non dare un dispiacere alla *zia*, sapevo di dovermi mantenere esile come un fuscello: non dovevo ingrassare, dovevo mangiare poco" (singularly worried about not displeasing my *aunt,* I knew that I had to keep myself as thin as a rail: I couldn't get fat, I had to eat very little).[83] The child remains so thin and malnourished that she comes to the attention of the local physician: "(Romana) non aveva affatto piacere di vedermi mangiare e il medico aveva deciso che almeno le vitamine le avrei dovute immettere nell'organismo" ([Romana] didn't like at all to see me eating, and the doctor had decided that at least vitamins I had to put into my organism).[84] Romana even permits her lover to sexually violate Fiorella: he obligates the twelve-year old girl to participate in a swimming pool "game" in which he fondles her buttocks while she is underwater and forces her to touch him as well; this takes place in full view of other guests of the hotel, as he laughingly declares that they are "porcellini" (little pigs), an obvious sexual reference, yet no one reports it or files charges against him or Romana.[85] As a final confirmation that Romana views her relationship with Fiorella as *padrona-schiava* (master-slave), the woman discards the twelve-year old child to a series of foster homes when their relationship is no longer cost-effective: Romana returns to Italy with Fiorella after scandal erupts in Addis Abeba over the woman's sexual escapades with her married lover. Since the child is no longer profitable, Romana abandons her upon their arrival in Italy to a convent and a long series of temporary guardians, all while the woman remains officially registered in the Bologna Juvenile Court as Fiorella's adoptive mother for which she receives a stipend from the State.[86] As an entrepreneur-*colonizzatrice* (colonizer) who is solidly convinced of the inherent authority of the Italian race/nationality, Romana concedes the sole value of the Ethiopians, including her own adopted daughter, in economic terms: in the manual labor that they provide, otherwise, they are disposable.

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[81] Macoggi, 75.
[82] Macoggi, 74.
[83] Macoggi, 85.
[84] Macoggi, 89.
[85] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 36-37.
[86] In *La nemesi della rossa,* Fiorella meticulously lists the multitude of various temporary custodial arrangements where she was deposited by Romana after their immigration to Italy which demonstrates incontrovertibly the woman's negligence and disregard of her adoptive daughter: Fiorella spent four months in Rome in 1977 in the home of the *protutrice* (court-appointed guardian), Romana's sister-in-law, who sent Fiorella back to Ethiopia because she thought her daughter had contracted head lice from her; then, eight months in Addis Abeba working again for the *zia*; successively, Fiorella was locked for several days alone in a hotel room in Rome (1978) while Romana traveled with her lover; she then spent several days in Romana's aunt's home in Emilia Romagna, followed by two and a half years at a convent in Bologna (September 1978-late 1980); after, Fiorella lived for a year in foster care in a Bologna couple's home who considered adopting her (1981), yet the wife declined by accusing sixteen-year old Fiorella of causing problems between her husband and her; Fiorella's last four years as a minor were spent in the same convent in Bologna (1981-1985).

Macoggi's memoirs depict Romana Gridoni as a feminized version of an Italian colonizer who purports herself to be a benevolent adoptive mother. The master-slave/European-African colonial order is so indubitable for Romana, even in the context of the mother-daughter rapport, that she openly refers to herself to Fiorella as a "colonialista di quinta elementare figlia di colonialisti di seconda elementare" (colonist with a fifth-grade education, daughter of colonizers with a second-grade education) and "la colonnella" (the woman-colonel), using the present-tense to assert her status as a "colonialista" notwithstanding the nearly four decades that have passed since the conclusion of Italian colonialism in Ethiopia.[87] Likewise, the child protagonist refers to her adoptive mother privately in military terms, as the *"*colonello-dittatore*"* (colonel-dictator), affirming the woman's absolute rank over herself who is merely a "piccola soldatessa*"* (little soldier), a "piccola schiava" (little slave), who must follow orders without question.[88] Fulvio Pezzarossa, in his Preface to *La nemesi della rossa,* confirms Macoggi's portrayal of Romana as an archaic colonizer:

> acutamente l'asse centrale del racconto… ci riporta con forza e caparbietà… a contatto con la lunga stagione del colonialismo italiano, che travalica gli estremi della cronologia ufficiale…. La singolare invenzione sta anche questa volta (come in *Kkeywa*) nel rovesciare il modello storico, un poco semplificatorio, dell'esclusiva mascolinità coloniale, e portare al centro quale deuteragonista la proprietaria della pensione Lombardia, che disinvoltamente assume nel suo abito femminile quei tratti di arroganza, razzismo, cinismo, crudeltà, menefreghismo, disordinato appetito sessuale, intraprendenza, che possono sintetizzare il colonialismo italico.[89]

Consistent with Fiorella's account of being victimized by her adoptive mother, Margaret Homans cautions in *The Imprint of Another Life* (2013) that children who are adopted transnationally are at risk for becoming "part of the globalization of capital that is often enmeshed in exploitation and illegalities and that adopted children moving from the underdeveloped to the developed world constitute unpaid and unconsenting labor."[90] As extreme examples, Homans cites the practices of mail-order child brides, baby buying or stealing, forced prostitution of minors, child pornography rings, and organ harvesting, yet she notes that all adoptees, at a minimum, perform emotional labor in conferring "family" and "parental" status to the adoptive parents. Homans does not wholly vilify intercountry adoptions nor does she call for an end to them; however, she contends that anecdotal, romantic accounts of adoption (an "orphaned" child in need, adoptive parents who "fall in love" with a specific child to whom they can provide love and material benefits, a parent-child union that was "meant to be") mask the economics of adoption.[91] Homans understands rescue narratives and/or falling-in-love adoption stories as "rituals of decommodification" which camouflage global systems, the economic and political inequalities, and "sweep away the history and circumstances" that make the transfer of one child to another family possible in the first place and which, in some cases, can result in significant

[87] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 23; Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 70.
[88] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 70; Macoggi, 86; Macoggi, 96.
[89] "…penetratingly, the central story line… brings us back with force and obstinacy… in contact with the long season of Italian colonialism that oversteps the bounds of the official chronology…. The unique invention, also this time (as in *Kkeywa*), is in overturning the historical model, which is a little simplified, of colonial as exclusively masculine, and brings to the center that deuteragonist, the proprietor of the Lombardy Hotel, who easily takes on, in a woman's dress, those traits of arrogance, racism, cynicism, cruelty, couldn't-give-a-damn attitude, uncontrolled sexual appetite, enterprise, that can sum up Italian colonialism…" Pezzarossa, "Il colore del memoir," 10-11, my insertion.
[90] Homans, *The Imprint,* 30. Here Homans refers to the studies of David Eng, "Transnational Adoption and Queer Diasporas" in *Social Text,* 76 (Fall 2003): 1-37, and Pamela Anne Quiroz, *Adoption in a Color-Blind Society* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007): Homans, 5, 8, 11.
[91] Homans, 24-58.

harm to the child.[92] As we have seen in Fiorella's (and Selamawit's) story, it is the history of Italian colonialism in Ethiopia—which established disparate power dynamics in *madamato* arrangements between Italian colonizers and colonized women and constructed *ex-novo* by fascist discourse, propaganda, and law an abject *meticcio* race and status for the children born of these unions—that rationalizes and permits the events narrated in Macoggi's memoirs: the delegitimization and abandonment of Selamawit and Fiorella by Colonnello Giuseppe and the Italian State, Romana's coercive and questionably legal adoption of Fiorella, the child's subjection to exploitation and abuse by her adoptive mother, and the complete absence of social and legal sanctions or even proper checks by authorities as to the child's well-being and whereabouts.

Color Blindness, Racial Evaporation, Historical Amnesia: The Argument for Exceptionality

One could proffer an alternate interpretation of Fiorella's effective enslavement then abandonment at the hands of her adoptive mother: the traumatic events recounted in Macoggi's memoirs could be explained away as an isolated case of international adoption by a mentally ill or pathologically cruel woman, an unfortunate case which "fell through the cracks." Philosopher Kelly Oliver refers to this type of interpretation, the argument of exceptionality, as being underpinned by "color blindness": racially motivated/permitted injustices and violence are oft dismissed as anomalous episodes committed by disturbed or extremist individuals.[93] Oliver describes this perspective, proclaiming to not see color, as trivializing racist oppression to a solitary, atypical misfortune, or to "personality traits or character flaws" of an aberrant individual, rather than as a collective cultural and political malady which is rooted in colonial racial dichotomies.[94] Oliver dispels the faulty logic in color-blind theory (and I would add the willful non-seeing of other factors of oppression as well, such as gender, economics, and geopolitics) as the "conflation of ought and is," how things should be and how they are: Macoggi's texts are situated in the late Seventies to early Nineties, a historical moment officially designated as postcolonial, post-slavery, an era of gender and racial equality, yet race and other structural inequalities continued to exert very real effects on the lived experiences of the Otherized protagonist and her natural mother.[95] In short, Fiorella was subjected to the material consequences of the master-slave/colonizer-colonized dialectic as the adoptee of a wealthy, white Italian woman whether it "ought" to have been so or not.

In the Italian context, Caterina Romeo similarly refutes color-blind dismissals of discrimination and violence that ignore race and become labeled as something more innocuous, in which race effectively "evaporates."[96] Romeo characterizes "racial evaporation" as when racially-motivated acts of oppression "vengono minimizzati o etichettati come altro (ignoranza, esasperazione, follia di un singolo)" (are minimized or labeled as something else [ignorance, exasperation, insanity of a single individual]), or they are conflated with societal or political ills, with "altri discorsi—immigrazione, cittadinanza, clandestinità, religione e, più in generale, differenze culturali. Il 'razzismo senza razze'" (other discourses—immigration, citizenship, illegality, religion or, more generally,

[92] Homans, 33; Homans, 49.
[93] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 158.
[94] Oliver, 161.
[95] Oliver, 159.
[96] Romeo, *Riscrivere,* 79. On the notion of "racial evaporation," Romeo refers the reader to David Goldberg, "Racial Europeanization," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* XXIX (2006): 334; and Goldberg, *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009): Chapter 5.

cultural differences. "Racism without race.'")[97] Romeo argues that racial evaporation, the erasure of race in explanations of racist episodes, hinges on historical amnesia: "una sistemica rimozione tanto della storia e della memoria coloniali, quanto dei processi di razzializzazione messi in atto nelle colonie" (a systematic removal of history and colonial memory, as well as the processes of racialization that were put in place in the colonies).[98] Instead, she counters that the construction of race is/was central to establishing the identity of European nation-states themselves: in the consolidation of fragmentary Italy as a nation, with its subordinate position to other European nations, its pluri-secular history of emigration, immigration, being constituted of a "true mosaic of populaces" in Macoggi's words, and long-standing social-economic-political fracture between North and South, race was an essential element in propping up the unlikely notion of a unified Italian state.[99] Romeo argues that modern states have an intrinsic "structural racism" which depends on and is constructed on fictitious binaries of race that fix diametrically opposed positionalities of us/them, white/black, Italian/African-Jew, citizen/alien.[100] The racial order, inherent to the founding and existence of the Italian nation-state, thereby determines who is and is not worthy of specific juridical statuses if one considers how citizenship is conferred in Italy, by blood only, and who is meritorious of fundamental human rights and protections. In the case of Carla Macoggi's memoirs, the protagonist's subordinate positionality (*meticcia*/Black, female, poor, origins in a former Italian colony) determines, whether it should be so or not, if she will be afforded the privileges of affiliation with one's family, affection from her caregivers, a stable home environment, the time and freedom to devote herself to her education, the opportunity to foster relationships with other children, protection from exploitation, abuse, and abandonment.

The exceptionality argument, which makes race evaporate and demands historical amnesia of *madamato* practices and fascist *meticciato* legislation, does not hold weight in explaining the events in Selamawit's and Fiorella's story: the exploitative adoptive mother-daughter/master-slave dichotomy is reproduced multiple times in the narrative; in fact, it is the rule, not the exception. An entire chapter of *La nemesi della rossa* is devoted to the ways in which Fiorella's various Italian guardians, whom she refers to as "t'ru sew," meaning "brava persona/brava gente" in Amharic, an explicit reference to the false myth of benevolent Italian colonizers, exploit her as free/cheap labor and disregard her basic needs for affection and care: "volevo una famiglia… continuavo da stupida a cercare qualcuno che mi capisse e mi proteggesse" (I wanted a family… like a fool, I continued to search for someone who understood me and who protected me).[101] In a chapter satirically entitled "I numeri della vita" (the numbers of life), the now-adult protagonist reflects dolefully on how she was never seen as a child by any of her Italian caregivers; her sole value was in her economic utility to them: Fiorella is expected to provide free babysitting services for the multiple families that she lives with, frequently at the cost of her school attendance, study, and recreation time: "uscita da scuola, tornavo sempre a casa. Mai un giretto per i negozi. Mai a cianciare con i compagni di scuola… i miei signori si approffittavano di me." (When school was over, I always went straight home. Never a stroll by the shops. Never hanging out with my schoolmates…My masters took advantage of me.)[102] During her lengthy sojourns in a convent in Bologna, when neither Romana nor any of her other *signori*/surrogate parents want her, the nuns require Fiorella to work to earn her keep and thus hire her out for various jobs, some of

[97] Romeo, *Riscrivere,* 82. The expression "racism without races" is attributed to Étienne Balibar, "Esiste un 'neorazzismo'?" in *Razza, nazione, classe: Le identità ambigue,* Étienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1991): 33.
[98] Romeo*,* 80.
[99] Romeo*,* 79.
[100] Romeo, 86. On structural racism in modern nation-states, see also: Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, *Postcolonial Italy,* 13-15.
[101] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 21; Macoggi, 66.
[102] Macoggi*,* 69; Macoggi, 57, 61.

which put her into peril. The sisters knowingly send Fiorella to serve as a caregiver to a woman who is addicted to Roipnol/flunitrazepam, a strong sedative and street drug, which eventually leads to the young adolescent taking it herself.[103] On another occasion, the nuns hire out fourteen-year old Fiorella to a troubled twenty-eight-year old man for an entire summer, not concerning themselves if she will be at risk for emotional trauma and/or sexual abuse. The miserly *suorine* (little nuns) keep detailed spreadsheets on Fiorella's earnings from which they subtract her living expenses so that, in the end, she earns nothing for her work, just as a slave:

> A loro (le suore) io consegno le seimilalire. Servono per quaderni, tessera del bus, mutande, pigiama, assorbenti tutti i mesi… si scrive tutto in un quaderno... Cifre a sinistra e a destra. Per le suore la mia vita sono quei numeri. Nessuna parola d'affetto, nessun incoraggiamento.[104]

The incontrovertible proof that Romana and all the other individuals with whom Fiorella lived do not regard her as human occurs at the conclusion of *La nemesi della rossa*. The protagonist graduates in Law from the University of Bologna which she accomplishes with no financial or emotional sustenance from any of her "mothers" or the nuns in the convent; since she is no longer a student, Fiorella becomes ineligible for continued support from the State: "Finita l'università...Luisa (l'assistente sociale) mi fece rimanere subito senza il mio assegno…Ed è così che non ho più soldi per mangiare e per pagare un letto. In mezzo alla strada senza cibo né acqua" (Once I graduated from university… Luisa (the social worker) immediately made sure I was left without my monthly check…And, like that, I had no more money to eat or to pay for a room. In the middle of the street without food or water).[105] Homeless and hungry, Fiorella desperately reaches out for help in the form of temporary housing to Romana who she discovers has sold everything in Italy and relocated to New Zealand where her biological children reside—"se n'è andata senza avvisare" (she left without warning)—then to Lucrezia and Gregorio, the Bolognese couple who had considered adopting her.[106] Yet Fiorella is abandoned by all: "Via da tutti" (Bug off, from everyone).[107] After appealing unsuccessfully to Romana, Fiorella begs Lucrezia for simply "un piatto di pasta e mettermi in un letto caldo" (a plate of pasta and a warm bed to crawl into).[108] Instead, the woman chastises her for having tired herself by studying too much, and exhorts her instead to "prega, prega tanto la Madonna e vedrai che starai meglio. Convertiti e prega." (Pray, pray a lot to the Virgin Mary and you'll see that you'll feel better. Convert and pray.)[109] Lucrezia's empty "help" in a true moment of crisis and Romana's complete eschewing of any responsibility for Fiorella for over more than a decade reveal the absence of affection or even moral obligation of multiple individuals who purported to be caregivers, even in a legal sense, for Fiorella. Macoggi's second memoir concludes when Lucrezia and her husband Gregorio involuntarily commit the desperate, hysterical young woman, abandoned by everyone, to a psychiatric hospital. Gregorio, a physician, coldly comments in Fiorella's earshot: "Allora succede anche ai ne…" (Well then, it also happens to Ne…), as if the psyche of Blacks/*meticci*/Ethiopians were subhuman, fundamentally different from that of whites/Italians.[110] Guiltlessly, the religiously devout couple abandons Fiorella

[103] Macoggi, 70.
[104] "To them (the nuns), I turned over the six thousand lire. They were needed for my notebooks, bus pass, underwear, pajamas, sanitary pads every month... They wrote everything down in a notebook... Sums on the left and on the right. For the nuns, my life is those numbers. No word of affection, no encouragement." Macoggi, 69.
[105] Macoggi, 79, my insertion.
[106] Macoggi, 69.
[107] Macoggi, 72.
[108] Macoggi, 84.
[109] Macoggi, 82.
[110] Macoggi, 87; A discussion of such a negation of the full personhood of individuals of African descent, what Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) as their effective reduction to an "epidermalized," egoless body, can be

to recover in the hospital alone while they go on their planned vacation, oblivious to the irony in the fact that they registered themselves in the hospital as her "riferimenti familiari*"* (family contacts).[111]

Claudia Mattalucci parses the Latin origins of the lemma "adoption," *ad-optare,* as "una scelta," a choice to create familial bonds via legal contract instead of biology: "l'istituto giuridico con cui s'instaura un rapporto di filiazione tra persone non consanguinee." (The legal arrangement via which one establishes a relationship of filiation between persons not related by blood.)[112] She traces the evolution of the motivations for adoption in Europe and North America over the last couple of centuries: in the past, the practice was conceived as a mutually advantageous economic and political pact for both adopted child and adoptive parents: "orfani… trovatelli o… bastardi" (orphans… abandoned children… bastards) were provided with a home and material comfort, and infertile couples were guaranteed a secure, direct line of inheritance for their estate.[113] Currently, however, adoption is undertaken primarily for its social and psychological benefits: the "orphan" will have parents to care for them given the absence/impossibility of their biological parents to do so, and the adoptive parent will have a child to love who, in turn, will love them. Mattalucci also highlights the performative function of adoption: adopted children provide childless couples with the opportunity to present as a "normal" family which confers an important socio-economic status in Western cultures.[114] Like Mattalucci, Di Silvio emphasizes the presupposed economic advantages of adoption for the child and the couple's desire for a child, thus, adoption can be understood as a mutually beneficial legal-social-economic accord between "sofferenti e soccorritori" (sufferers and rescuers), reminiscent of Homans' description of the "rescue narrative" of adoption.[115] Di Silvio casts adoption also as a "technological zone" in which law, politics, medicine, and international markets intersect and collaborate to "assemble" families from extraneous, unrelated individuals via shared living spaces, a common familial linguistic code, and the mutual contributions of memories and experiences of adoptive child, parents, and extended family members, yet she acknowledges the structural inequalities that make these family "assemblages" possible in the first place.[116]

In light of Mattalucci and Di Silvio's analyses of the motivations and justifications for adoption, it is important to consider Carla Macoggi's memoirs: the protagonist, Fiorella, was not an orphan, even though her family was poor, and she had already been "adopted" by an Italian military officer. Moreover, she had an extended natural family in Ethiopia of aunts, uncles, and cousins, with whom she lived for short periods after her father's death. Macoggi's narratives provide no evidence that Fiorella benefitted economically from her adoption, nor that Romana Gridoni adopted Fiorella for philanthropic motivations or for her own desire to have a close emotional relationship with a child. To the contrary, Romana openly declared her intentions to acquire a child worker-slave: "dovrà lavorare per me" (she will have to work for me). Moreover, an argument of the unfortunate exceptionality of Fiorella's adoption experience is baseless given that multiple actors were complicit in the exploitation and abuse that she suffered, including the Italian State, the church, and several individuals of authority (the physician in Addis Abeba who noted the child's malnourishment, the social worker in Bologna, the court-appointed guardian who never checked on Fiorella's wellbeing or whereabouts for more than a decade, the nuns in the convent, the foster care guardians), all of whom

found in the dissertation by this author. Cornette, "Postcolonial Pathology in the Works of Italian Postcolonial Writers Carla Macoggi, Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, and Igiaba Scego."

111 Macoggi, 87.

112 Mattalucci, Preface to *Affetti da adozione: Uno studio antropologico della famiglia post-familiare in Italia,* by Rossana di Silvio,ix.

113 Mattalucci, ix.

114 Mattalucci, ix-x.

115 Di Silvio, *Affetti da adozione,* xxxiv.

116 Di Silvio, 235. Di Silvio attributes the term "technological zone" to describe adoption to A. Ong and S. Collier, eds., *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden-Oxford, Blackwell, 2005): 242.

had some knowledge of Fiorella's situation yet did nothing to secure her safety and wellbeing. Instead, the only plausible explanation for the separation and trauma that Fiorella and her mother Selamawit endured is the entrenched inequalities of race, gender, and geography, enduring colonial hierarchies, which allowed the "transfer" of Fiorella to Romana without her mother's informed consent and turned a blind eye to more than a decade of abuse and abandonment of an adoptee.[117]

Genre Hybridity: Memoir, Autobiografia Self-Helpista, and/or Semi-Autiobiography

When asked to classify the literary genre(s) of *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia* and *La nemesi della rossa*, Carla Macoggi confirmed in an interview that both works recount her personal experiences, referring to them as her "due memoir," "la mia vicenda personale" (two memoirs, my personal story).[118] Fulvio Pezzarossa also qualified the texts as memoir as opposed to autobiography:

> sarebbe falso obiettivo restringere l'attenzione alla successione delle situazioni del soggetto narrante… scambiando per l'ennesima volta questa forma di narrazione, proprio perché debordante di dettagli, circostanze e luoghi, con la tradizione delle vicende sequenziali dell'autobiografia, meravigliandosi poi come l'ennesimo esempio di scrittura di migrazione.[119]

Differentiating Macoggi's works from (im)migration literature, Pezzarossa categorizes the texts as memoir, specifically a "capolavoro mnestico" (mnestic masterpiece), given the conspicuousness of memory and its lacunae in the narration, the dexterity and maturity of Macoggi's writing, the employment of an "autofinzione" (self-fiction) literary device, and the prominence given to the psychological interiority of the protagonist which reveals "dolore dappertutto" (pain everywhere).[120]

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[117] To support the argument of the unfortunately commonplace human rights infractions associated with international adoptions, see prior footnote (#72) on UNICEF's position paper, *Innocenti Digest,* which recommends the placement of children across international borders only as a last resort. https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest4i.pdf Similarly, a recent position paper on "Illicit Intercountry Adoptions" (July 2020) confronts the often unethical and/or illegal practices associated with international transfers of children, including: "illicit practices… where the child should never have been removed from (or should have been returned to) the family (of origin)… (in cases where) it may have been necessary for the child not to be with their family, in-country solutions should have been used…then there are wrongs that go to matching—such as falsified child study forms—(which)… led to creating a placement that was problematic." (2, my insertions) https://intercountryadopteevoices.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Illicit-Adoptions-Responses-from-Lived-Experience.pdf

[118] A more extensive exploration of the genre(s) of Carla Macoggi's two literary works can be found in this author's dissertation, Cornette, "Postcolonial Pathology." Briefly, a case is made for considering *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia,* not only as a memoir, but as an inverted *Bildungsroman,* a capsized coming-of-age novel, in which the child protagonist's ego/identity is dismantled instead of constructed owing to her subjection to racialized oppression at the hands of her Italian adoptive mother and many others. *La nemesi della rossa,* instead, is framed as a form of witnessing akin to Holocaust victims' testimonies, given the space that Macoggi dedicates to the historical and legal documentation related to her/the protagonist's adoption, as well as the account of the psychoanalytic aspects of her traumatic experiences. For the bivalent notion of witnessing as both factual/historical and psychological in nature, see Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*; Macoggi, *Le strade.*

[119] "…it would be a false objective to limit the attention of the succession of events of the narrative voice…confusing, for the umpteenth time, this type of narration, precisely because it is overflowing with details, circumstances, and places, with the tradition of sequential events in an autobiography, being astounded then by the umpteenth example of migration writing…" Pezzarossa, "Il colore," 8.

[120] For a periodization and a critical differentiation between the genres of *letteratura di immigrazione* and *letteratura postcoloniale,* see at least: Ponzanesi, "Il postcolonialismo italiano: Figlie dell'impero e letteratura meticcia,"; Lucia Quaquarelli, "Introduzione," in *Certi confine: Sulla letteratura dell'immigrazione,* ed. Lucia Quaquarelli (Milan: Morellini, 2010): 7-22; Lucia Quaquarelli, "Definizioni, problemi, mappature," in *Leggere il testo e leggere il mondo: Vent'anni di scrittura della migrazione in Italia,* eds. Fulvio Pezzarossa and Ilaria Rossini (Bologna: Cooperativa Libreria Universitaria Editrice, 2011): 53-64;

Likewise, in the previously cited radio interview, the journalist and Carla Macoggi distinguish her memoirs from autobiography, given that the latter seeks to "ricostruire i fatti, gli eventi" (reconstruct the facts, the events) by focusing on "la verità fattuale, oggettiva" (the factual, objective truth).[121] Rather, the author clarifies that she structured the texts as a series of flashbacks which "andare avanti e dietro nel tempo" (go back and forth in time) to give witness to "l'emozione vissuta, la verità emotiva" (the emotion experienced, the emotional truth) as opposed to a mere chronological documentation of her experiences.[122]

Pezzarossa also refers to Macoggi's memoirs also "la scrittura come *way of healing.*"[123] Well aware of the curative benefits of recording one's traumas, the author affirmed in an interview the sanative intentions for writing her story*:* "ero in piena autoanalisi in quel periodo… volevo approfittare della funzione terapeutica della scrittura… volevo autoanalizzarmi.*"* (I was in full self-analysis in that period…. I wanted to benefit from the therapeutic use of writing…. I wanted to analyze myself.)[124] Similarly, in her 2011 introduction to *Kkeywa,* she openly expresses her hopefulness of putting down on paper "Fiorella's" story as remedy, as a means of closure, as an instrument to "save" herself: "è giunto il momento di separarsene (dal racconto) con una chiusura e un impegno a lungo termine...alla ricerca di un altro inizio, una rinascita essenziale e decisiva.... Come faccio a salvarmi... altrimenti?*"* (the moment has come to separate myself [from the story] with closure and a long-term commitment... in the search for another beginning, a fundamental and crucial rebirth... How will I save myself... otherwise?).[125] Macoggi's choice of the locution *separarsene* (separate oneself from) seems significant considering that the author opted to call the protagonist of *Kkeywa* "Fiorella" instead of "Carla" as she was referred to in a prior published version of the text, *La via del paradiso* (The road to paradise) (2004).[126] A similar aim to disconnect from the trauma she suffered as a transnational adoptee is revealed by a stylistic peculiarity in a short story precursor of *La nemesi della rossa* entitled "Come uno sciocco mulino a vento" (Like a foolish windmill) (2009): written under the pseudonym "Carla M." for a literary competition for those recovering from mental illness, the point of view in the story oddly vacillates between first person, *io*, and third person, *lei,* as if the author harbors an (unconscious?) desire to disassociate herself from the story. In a similar fashion, in an interview Macoggi maintains her distance from her memoirs by responding to the journalist's interrogatives about her experiences with references to "lei" (she) and "Fiorella's" story, instead of "io" (I) and "my" story, even though she had confirmed they were one and the same, "la mia vicenda personale" (my personal experience), just a few minutes prior.[127] Perhaps by relegating Fiorella and the injustices she suffered to a two-part "racconto autobiografico" (autobiographical tale), Macoggi could divorce herself from what she had endured: a dissociation from Fiorella would allow Carla to construct a new identity for herself, no

Caterina Romeo, *Riscrivere la nazione: La letteratura postcoloniale* (Milan: Mondadori Education, 2018); Pezzarossa, "Il colore*,"* 8-9.

[121] Macoggi, *Le strade.*

[122] Macoggi.

[123] Pezzarossa, "Il colore," 11, author's cursive. Here, Pezzaroos utilizes Louise DeSalvo's terminology, *writing as a way of healing,* from her homonymous book.

[124] Macoggi, *Le strade.*

[125] Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 20-21, my insertion.

[126] Macoggi published a prior work very similar to *Kkeywa* (2011)*, La via per il paradiso*, under the pseudonym of Carla Amete Ghebriel di Liberio, meaning "Carla, free slave of Gabriel" in ge'ez, the liturgical language of Ethiopia. Her second novel, *La nemesi della rossa* (2012)*,* evokes many similar themes and content in her preceding short story, "Come uno sciocco mulino a vento." For a more extensive analysis of the evolution of Macoggi's prior texts and their relation to the works cited in the current study, see the dissertation by this author: Cornette, "Postcolonial Pathology," 49-50, 117-122.

[127] In the same radio interview*,* Macoggi states explicitly that she chose to name her protagonist "Fiorella" in part because "questo nome porta la possibilità di rinascere, di trasformarsi*"* (this name carries the possibility to be reborn, to transform oneself). Macoggi, *Le strade.*

longer rooted in her traumatic past and no longer determined by the racial, gendered, geopolitical hierarchies to which she had been subjected by her Italian adoptive mother, the nuns in the convent, Lucrezia and Gregorio, and the Italian authorities themselves.[128]

Indeed, the meta-narrative voice at the outset of *La nemesi della rossi* equates storytelling to identity construction by making an explicit reference to the Lacanian mirror stage of ego development.[129] The first chapter is entitled "Specchio specchio della mia speranza" (Mirror, mirror of my hope) and *specchio* is repeated three more times when the narrator declares:

> Dopo venti anni Fiorella trovò uno specchio. Uno specchio che narrava le gesta di un eroe. Uno specchio che scoprì simile a tanti altri di rientrati dalle colonie. E trasformò questa storia nel racconto autobiografico che voleva pubblicare. E lo fece inventandosi un nome. Offuscando le parole.[130]

The author equates "mirror" as metaphor for "story" to reflect (and create) the protagonist on her own terms, as a hero as opposed to a *bimba meticcia* (a mixed-breed little girl), an abandoned child-slave. She accomplishes this by melding fact and fantasy—"inventandosi un nome, offuscando le parole"—through an "autobiographical tale," a hybrid genre which unites fiction, her personal history, and History.[131] Another confirmation of "mirror" as figurative for self-narration/self-construction precedes the narrative of *Kkeywa* as well: "Specchio IV" is a document that appears to be a certificate of military valor awarded to Fiorella's father by the Italian State. This particular mirror-text serves as "proof" of the protagonist's Italian paternity on which she/the author establishes (at least part of) her identity, her *italianità* (Italianness), and by which she can refute the degrading, subaltern identity assigned to her by Romana and the others, the "*t'ru sew,*" the "brava gente" (good people), who neglected, exploited, and abandoned her. Likewise, the meta-narrator's self-description in *La nemesi* as "rientrata" (returnee), like that of "tanti altri di rientrati dalle colonie" (so many other returnees from the colonies), presupposes one who is returning to the homeland, therefore, one who holds a legitimate identity that confers the political and social right to take up space and be welcomed as a compatriot.[132] Fiorella's status as *rientrata* also underscores the historical ties of the protagonist to Italy via its colonial past which she and "so many others" like her share; Fiorella's very existence is a testimony to Italy's invasion of Africa, and its continuing repercussions on formerly colonized individuals. *Rientrata,* therefore, pushes back against the alienation and minoritization that Fiorella and "tanti altri" racialized Others must face in current-day Italy. As the author asserts in the Introduction to *Kkeywa*, the terms *immigrati, extracomunitari* (illegal alien), among other terms of marginalization with racial undertones, are deployed to deny fundamental freedoms and rights to "only a part of humanity";

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[128] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 15.

[129] The first few paragraphs of *La nemesi della rossa* are recounted by an omniscient, third-person narrator as opposed to the first-person narration of the rest of text. The meta-narrator explains that the work is a continuation of *Kkeywa: Storia di una bimba meticcia*, but mostly the motivations for writing the story: "frugare nel passato che la lacerava" (dig around in the past that tore her apart) with the goal to create a hero in the telling. Macoggi, 15-16.

[130] "After twenty years, Fiorella found a mirror. A mirror which narrated the epic of a hero. A mirror which she discovered was similar to many other returnees from the colonies. And she transformed this story into the autobiographical tale that she wanted to publish. And she did it inventing another name for herself. Obfuscating the words." Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 15.

[131] Chiara Mengozzi and Eleonora Pizzinat make a case for the hybridity of genre in Macoggi's prior novella, *L'Italia, L'Eden: La via per il paradiso* (2009), which is similar in content and form to *Kkeywa* (2011). Mengozzi and Pizzinat identify a "confine instabile" (unstable confine) between autobiography and coming-of-age novel in Macoggi's text. They certify a "condizione di ibridità" (condition of hybridity) given the prevalent autobiographical elements that are, however, narrated via fiction, what they characterize as "una sorta di cortocircuito tra romanzo e narrazione di testimonianza" (a sort of short-circuit between novel and testimonial narration). Mengozzi and Pizzinat, "Mito infranto: Il miraggio italiano e la prospettiva coloniale nel romanzo di una scrittrice etiopica," 117.

[132] Macoggi, *La nemesi,* 21; Macoggi, 15.

she argues that they are hollow denominations which obliterate the history of Italy's and other Western powers' forays into the Global South and which camouflage that era's legacy in establishing racial and geopolitical binaries that criminalize and marginalize only certain bodies that cross political frontiers.

It is important to underscore that Carla Macoggi's memoirs do not represent a single, isolated case of a traumatic transnational, transracial adoption of an Ethiopian-Italian child by an Italian woman that resulted in veritable physical and psychological child abuse. Moreover, it can neither be claimed that the author was exclusively motivated to compose the narrative for reasons of self-psychoanalysis and self-preservation. Dagmar Reichardt notes that much of migration literature has been dismissed as "l'autobiografia selfhelpista" (self-help autobiography) to which is conferred little literary value, thereby justifying its exclusion from the Italian literary canon.[133] Instead, the author made claims of the allegorical nature of her memoirs, as well as her political aims for the works: "cercando spunti universali… volevo denunciare… il razzismo, il lavoro minorile, la mancanza di libertà di movimento" (seeking to find universal elements… I wanted to denounce… racism, child labor, the lack of freedom of travel/migration).[134] Motivated by altruism towards other marginalized persons, particularly children of color who are deprived of their families of origin, the author hoped to save others like herself from a similar fate via documentating and disseminating her memoirs: "volevo scrivere una storia che non trattasse solo di me... è il mio desiderio che ciò che è successo a me non accade agli altri… Fiorella ha sofferto per tutti. Basta! Basta!" (I wanted to write a story that didn't speak only about me… it's my desire that what happened to me doesn't happen to others… Fiorella suffered for everyone. That's enough! Enough!)[135] The Dedication to *Kkeywa* verifies Macoggi's intention to propose her experiences as an allegory given that it provides a frame for her "autobiographic tale" as a universal account:

> *A tutti i bambini costretti*
> *a crescere in fretta per le guerre*
> *pensate e messe in atto*
> *da coloro che hanno dimenticato*
> *il valore della pace,*
> *convinti di essere in possesso*
> *della verità assoluta.*
>
> *A tutti i bambini costretti*
> *a separarsi*
> *dalla loro famiglia di origine,*
> *a causa della povertà*
> *e/o all'impossibilità*
> *per i loro adulti di riferimento*
> *di viaggiare liberamente,*
> *per garantirsi la sopravvivenza.*[136]

[133] Dagmar Reichardt, "La presenza subalterna in Italia e la scrittura come terapia," 19.
[134] Macoggi, *Le strade.*
[135] Macoggi, *Le strade.*
[136] "To all children forced to grow up in a hurry because of wars, wars conceived and put in place by those who forgot the value of peace, who are convinced that they possess the absolute truth./To all children forced to separate from their families of origin because of poverty and/or the impossibility for their adult points-of-reference to travel freely to guarantee their survival." Macoggi, *Kkeywa,* 7.

In *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (2004), Michelle Wright conceptualizes this type of narration, the singular as representative of the collective Other who is marginalized by sex, class, race, nationality, and/or a migratory experience, as "semi-autobiography." Wright proposes that Black diaspora women writers "use the first person most often and draw parallels between their personal lives and those of their protagonists… [with stories that] link Black women across time and continents."[137] Semi-autobiographical literary works allow the authors to highlight cultural and political denials of subjectivity that are imposed on an entire racialized subset of women, especially in the context of the modern nation-state in which ethnic homogeneity is presumed a given. As a case in point, Wright cites the literature produced by "Rhineland Bastards," children born to white German women and Black occupying forces in Germany, in three different historical moments over the last century: "the Allied occupation of the Rhineland after World War I, the Allied occupation of Germany after World War II, and the postwar years (1950 to present)."[138] Even though these children share the same language, culture, education, and history of their compatriots, "Black German" is viewed as an illegitimate if not inexistent identity and is consistently "relegated to a space 'outside' the nation." Wright argues that Black German writers assert their Germanness via their autobiographies and historiographies, by "the common strategy (of)… the literal writing of oneself into the nation."[139] In the Introduction to *Kkeywa,* Carla Macoggi writes herself into the (post)colonial history of Italy by her self-description as a *rientrata dalle colonie* (returnee from the colonies), a subjectivity which she amplifies to "tanti altri." Through presenting Fiorella's story as emblematic, Macoggi "writes back into the nation" children with historical ties in some fashion to Western dominations of the Global South, whether directly via parentage or by history itself.

Conclusion

Through the amalgamation of literary genres, memoir, writing as "a way of healing," and fictionalization of self, Ethiopian-Italian writer Carla Macoggi offers her story as a transnational, transracial adoptee in the late 1970s as an *exemplum* for multitudes of children who are separated from their families of origin and who suffer trauma as a result. By hybridizing fact and fiction in the form of semi-autobiography, the author submits her personal experiences as representative of the collective, as allegorical for other disenfranchised women and children whose families are fractured whether by war, poverty, differential access to migration, or international adoption, as in her case. This analysis proffers a heuristic line of inquiry for the interrogation of additional texts of Italian postcolonial literature that feature how abject positionalities (as configured by race, economics, gender, geography), statuses which were essential to the construction of modern nation-states and still dictate blood-based notions of citizenship in Italy, are determinate in making or breaking some familial relations.[140] The cross-pollination of Critical Adoption Studies with Postcolonial Theory, particularly in the Italian context with its unique history of colonialism, allows for a fruitful, critical focus on adoption narratives

[137] Wright, *Becoming Black,* 162-163, my insertion.
[138] Wright, 184-190.
[139] Wright, 191-192.
[140] By no means an exhaustive list, traumatic family separations, not necessarily in the form of adoption, in which race and colonial history are central causal factors can be verified in the following texts of Italian postcolonial literature. Set in and around the colonial period: Dell'Oro, *L'abbandono: Una storia eritrea*; Wu Ming 2 and Mohamed, *Timira: Romanzo meticcio*. Situated in postcolonial Somalia during the AFIS period, *Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana in Somalia*, Fazel, *Nuvole sull'equatore: Gli italiani dimenticati, Una storia*. Collocated decades after the official conclusion of Italian colonialism: Viarengo, "Andiamo a spasso?," 74-76; Ali Farah, *Madre piccola*; Ali Farah, *Il comandante del fiume*; Scego, *Oltre Babilonia*; Gangbo, *Due volte*.

within the body of Italian postcolonial literature to reveal the heredity of empire building in yet another consequence of an incomplete decolonization processes in Western European nations: the fragile parental rights of certain disenfranchised, delegitimized mothers and the subsequent adoptability and transferability of their children, resulting in "family-breaking" and "family-making" along lines of race, global economics, and politics. To this day, movement of children across borders is relevant as a contemporary debate, as evidenced by the proliferation of adoptee social-media networks, burgeoning academic scholarship in the field, and human rights activism, conversations which can shed light on the historical origins and material consequences of notions of cultural belonging and juridical status within and beyond *ius sanguinis* (the right of blood).[141]

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[141] In the Italian context, see the Adopt Cloud blog at https://adoptcloud.blogspot.com/ and ArP Adoptic, a "critical visual project" on international adoption at https://arpadoptic.com/?fbclid=IwAR25Ns47BVWs4DRoyqP6HU8cxjoBtUem7Znkd40WehXfXkIoWKJv3xi5hco , both founded by Alessia Petrolito. See also the conversation on "Adozioni e identità" (Adoptions and Identity) with several Italian transnational, transracial adoptees and activists on documentary filmmaker Fred Kuwornu's Facebook page (August 1, 2020): https://www.facebook.com/fred.kuwornu.

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