

# Where Are My Houses?

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## *Abstract*

In recent years, several audiovisual works made in Italy by (partly or wholly) people hailing from the former Italian colonies of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia have contributed to a challenge to the notions of displacement, deterritorialization and belonging in contemporary Italian society. They trouble the spaces of contact between people, of experiences and memories, therefore highlighting 'the historical continuum and cultural genealogy' (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, 2012) between the colonial past and the present. By examining displacement and deterritorialization as possible expressions of belonging, rather than polarized fields in relation to it, this essay explores several examples where characters and filmic narrations assume the presence in the 'here', and the possibility to convert the 'here' into 'home', by modifying relations with people and places.

During the last years some audiovisual works, realized by or in collaboration with Africans or Afrodescendants born or living in Italy, have contributed to question the notions of displacement, deterritorialization and belonging in contemporary Italian society.

In this essay, I have selected a cluster of these works made and performed by people hailing from the former Italian colonies of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. Their narrations, marked by the experience and/or the memory of Italian colonization and African diaspora, take part in the Italian postcolonial debate. Referring to the 'dubious spatiality' and the 'problematic temporality' of the term 'postcolonial' in Ella Shohat's *Notes on the Post Colonial*, Lombardi-Diop and Romeo state that in the Italian context, differently from others countries, the term 'postcolonial' is 'beginning to be employed to explore the historical continuum and cultural genealogy that link the colonial past to the contemporary Italy', both in order to reposition colonial history and its legacy, and to underline the continuity existing between the colonial era and the present in term of relations of power. One of the issues of concern is to question and redefine Italian cultural history and national identity.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, 'Defining Postcolonialism', in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, ed. by Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo

Migration is a central topic in the postcolonial landscape, involving both the heritage of colonialism and the persistence of a colonial condition reinstated in the postcolonial era.<sup>2</sup> In accordance with it, a specific interest has been devoted to the representation of the immigrant in Italian cinema and media. This investigation, variously imbricating national identity, race questions and racism, is recently having a dialogue with the growing audiovisual production by filmmakers and authors from the so-called ‘second generation’ or ‘new Italians’.<sup>3</sup> If on the one hand this production corroborates and validates the stratified field delineated above, on the other it contributes to expand the spectrum concerning individual experiences and positions. Additionally, within the frame of the imbalance of power, these audiovisual narratives highlight the complexity of an emotional landscape and its controversial dynamics issued by the different ways to stay and live in Italy: confined in reception centers, born in Italy, living in Italy for years or generations...

(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1–2. For a detailed review on postcolonial studies in the Italian context: see *ivi*, pp. 11–13, and *Postcolonialitalia* <<http://www.postcolonialitalia.it/index.php?lang=en&Itemid=156>> [accessed 20 April 2017]. For the relation between film and postcolonial studies, with specific attention to the Italian landscape, see *L’Africa in Italia. Per una controstoria postcoloniale del cinema italiano*, ed. by Leonardo De Franceschi (Rome: Aracne, 2013); *Postcolonial Cinema Studies*, ed. by Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); Aine O’Healy, ‘Postcolonial Theory and Italy’s “Multicultural” Cinema’, in *The Italian Cinema Book*, ed. by Peter Bondanella (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), pp. 295–302.

<sup>2</sup> See Shelleen Greene, *Equivocal Subjects: Between Italy and Africa — Constructions of Racial and National Identity in the Italian Cinema* (New York: Continuum, 2014); *Italy In&Out. Migrazioni nel/del cinema italiano?*, ed. by Vito Zagarrìo, *Quaderni del CSCI*, 8 (2012); Sandro Mezzadra, *La condizione postcoloniale. Storia e politica nel presente globale* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> For a critical approach to the authority of Western cinematic realism in the construction of ethnic and racial others, see Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994). On Italian cinema: Aine O’Healy, ‘Race, Ethnicity, and the Dream of Multiculturalism: From *Pummarò* to *L’articolo 2*’, *Romance Languages Annual*, 12 (2002), 232–38; and ‘Mediterranean Passages: Abjection and Belonging in Contemporary Italian Cinema’, *California Italian Studies*, 1.1 (2010), <<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2qh5d59c>> [accessed 20 April 2017]; Derek Duncan, ‘Italy’s Postcolonial Cinema and its Histories of Representation’, *Italian Studies*, 63.2 (2008), 195–211; *From Terrone to Extracomunitario: New Manifestations of Racism in Contemporary Italian Cinema*, ed. by Grace Russo Bullaro (Leicester: Troubador, 2010); *The Cinema of Italian Migration*, ed. by Sabine Schrader and Daniel Winkler (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2013); Vito Zagarrìo, ‘Diversamente emarginati? Personaggi migranti nel cinema italiano contemporaneo a confronto’, in *L’Africa in Italia. Per una controstoria postcoloniale del cinema italiano*, ed. by Leonardo De Franceschi (Rome: Aracne, 2013), pp. 171–88; *Destination Italy: Representing Migration in Contemporary Media and Narrative*, ed. by Emma Bond, Guido Bonsaver and Federico Faloppa (Oxford and Bern: Lang, 2015). On national identity and race-question, see *Il colore della razza*, ed. by Gaia Giuliani Romeo (Florence: Le Monnier, 2015). On the new landscape, see also Alessandro Jedlowsky, ‘Una nuova voce nel cinema italiano? L’emergenza di forme di cinema migrante in Italia’, in *Camera Africa. Classici, noir, Nollywood e la nuova generazione del cinema delle Afriche*, ed. by Vanessa Lanari (Verona: Cierre, 2011), pp. 69–76; Farah Polato, ‘Il cinema, il postcoloniale e il nuovo millennio nel panorama italiano’, *Aut Aut*, 364 (October–December 2014), 173–82. For the effect on practices, see the new law on Italian cinema and its criteria on funding audiovisual productions (Legge 14 novembre 2016, n. 220 — Disciplina del cinema e dell’audiovisivo). Concerning representation and self-representation: Alice Cati and Maria Francesca Piredda, ‘Racconti dal mare. La difficile rappresentazione del Sé nelle testimonianze mediali dei migranti’, *Bianco e Nero*, 582–83 (May–December 2015), 126–33.

## Where Are My Houses?

Several contributions have investigated the common features of the cinematic productions by filmmakers from different originating and receiving countries, marked both in a thematic and stylistic level by figures of exile and diaspora, such as the liminal panic, the feelings of being confined within alien borders, illuminating that domestic spaces are also haunted by various modalities of foreignness within national borders.<sup>4</sup> Recently other perspectives of research have looked at displacement and deterritorialization as possible expressions of belongingness, rather than polarized fields in relation to it. From this perspective, cultural geography provides useful insights. In an article significantly titled *Searching for Belonging: An Analytical Framework* (2010), Marco Antonsich provides an extensive and systematic review on the Anglophone literature across academic disciplines. Drawing on the definition given by Elspeth Probyn's in *Outside Belonging* (1996), the author affirms that belongingness, as the term suggests, should be regarded in itself as an instable and dynamic condition, a 'longing', always negotiated and projected on somewhere / something else.<sup>5</sup> In his analysis, organized around the two main intertwined axes of place-belongingness and politics of belonging, he assumes that 'contemporary societies are characterized by the co-presence of a plurality of forms of belonging'. Promoting the mapping of the different ways in which belongingness are acted and performed, he finally exhorts us to focus on the plurality of geographical scales at which belonging can articulate itself, both at a national and transnational level. If the interrelation between the 'here' and 'there' of belonging has been already investigated, he argues, the different modalities in which the 'here' displays itself in all its multiple scales and in their connections are still largely unexplored.

In my article, I will question several examples in which the characters, claiming their presence 'here' and their right to convert 'here' into 'home', envisage the possibility of modifying their relations with people and places. Belongingness is here considered, in a very extensive way, as the 'longing' to change these relations, prompted by personal feelings and/or material circumstances. Filmic narrations by people hailing from the former Italian colonies of Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia configure here spaces of troubling contacts between people, experiences and memories which claim to be negotiated. In their 'searching of belonging' the above mentioned films show on the one hand conditions for virtuous dynamics, and on the other hand strategies to encourage positive emotional connections towards one or more places. Indeed, some of these audiovisual narrations highlight how the search of belonging frequently concerns simultaneously a plurality of spaces, differently articulated in multiple scales: nation, city, territory,

<sup>4</sup> Among them, Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 3; *Transnational Feminism in Film and Media*, ed. by Katarzyna Marciniak, Anikò Imre and Aine O'Healy (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Marco Antonsich, 'Searching of Belonging. An Analytical Framework', *Geography Compass*, 4.6 (2010), 644–59. On multiscalar approach, see also Tania Rossetto, 'Performing the Nation between Us: Urban Photographic Sets with Young Migrants', *Fennia: International Journal of Geography*, 193.2 (2015), 165–84.

*quartier*, house, in their interconnections with the hosting and/or receiving-place, the birthplace, the place left behind, the ‘here’ and the ‘there’.

All the films considered in my essay are characterized by a cooperative work, and realized by minor productions and/or by social/cultural networks. Neglected by the mainstream market, they are distributed and shown in Festivals and digital networks.

The diptych consisting of *Auló* (Id., Ermanno Guida, Graziano Chiscuzzu and Simone Brioni, 2009–2012) and *The Fourth Road* (*La quarta via*, Ermanno Guida, Graziano Chiscuzzu and Simone Brioni, 2009–2012). The first film features the writer Ribka Sibhatu, of Eritrean origins, and the second one the writer Kaha Mohamed Aden, of Somalian origins; both authors contributed to the screenplays written by Simone Brioni, who coordinated the projects as well. The production company Redigital and the distributor Kimera Film were set up by some members of the crew. *The Fourth Road* was created thanks to the support of Pavia University and is part of a research project on social-media communication.

The work of the Ethiopian director Dagmawi Yimer, deriving from his personal experience at the school for migrants Asinitas-onlus, was developed through the activities of the Archivio delle Memorie Migranti (AMM) foundation as well as various ongoing collaborations, such as those with Zalab, Andrea Segre and Giulio Cederna. In my article, specific attention will be paid to: *Like a Man on Earth* (*Come un uomo sulla terra*, Andrea Segre and Riccardo Biadene, 2008), produced by Asinitas Onlus and Zalab, *C.A.R.A Italia* (2010), and *Nothing but the Sea* (*Soltanto il mare*, Dagmawi Yimer, Fabrizio Barraco, Giulio Cederna, 2011), which was made with the support of Giulio Cederna and Fabrizio Barraco on direction, screenplay, photography and sound, and was produced by AMM.

*Asmarina. Voices and images of a postcolonial heritage* (*Asmarina. Voci e volti di un'eredità postcoloniale*, 2015) was realized by Alan Maglio and Medhin Paolos, who was born in Italy from Eritrean parents, in collaboration with Docucity Festival of Milan. The film is inspired by the 1983 work of photojournalist Lalla Golderer and Vito Scifo, *Stranieri a Milano*. Focusing on the last fifty years of the *babesha* community in Milan, *Asmarina* is the result of a year and a half of archival research and interviews. The movie is part of the *Asmarina project*, which includes a photographic book of private and public materials gathered during the shooting of the film.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> About *Auló* and *The Fourth Road*: Simone Brioni, ‘Memory, Belonging and the Right for Representation: Questions of “Home” in Kaha Mohamed Aden’s *Fra-intendimenti*’, in *Shifting and Shaping a National Identity: Transnational Writers and Pluriculturalism in Italy Today*, ed. by Grace Russo Bullaro and Elena Benelli (Leicester: Troubador, 2014), pp. 23–42; Simone Brioni, ‘Un pas que ma jambe se refuse à faire: expériences collaboratives et croisement de regards sur le colonialisme italien’, in *De la voix à l’auteur. De l’auteur à la voix*, ed. by Paola Cabot-Ranzini (Paris: Karthala, 2016), pp. 173–201; Franca Sinopoli, ‘Storia e memorie non condivise: il contrappunto dell’identità e la cultura italiana contemporanea’, in *Identità, migrazioni e postcolonialismo in Italia. A partire da Edward Said*, ed. by Bruno Brunetti, Roberto Derobertis (Bari: Progedit, 2014),

*Setting Another History: On Forgotten and Missed Encounters*

The aim shared by all the selected films is the reconfiguration of the historical narration and the promotion of a cultural turn after the historical one led by historians, such as Nicola Labanca quoted in a caption of *The Fourth Road*. The opposition to the collective process of removal of the colonial past and the effort done to produce a deconstruction of colonial rhetoric ('Italians are good people') are adopted by most of the films here considered. Nevertheless, these two essential steps appear useless if the epistemological approach is not able to save the relational dimension and to consider the 'other' as part of our own history. Obviously, this process is not intended to remove the ongoing relation of power produced by the colonial order and the present mobility.<sup>7</sup>

This perspective arises at the very beginning of *Like a Man on Earth* as well as of *C.A.R.A Italia*.

Before introducing those who reached Italy from the Horn of Africa after a nightmarish journey through the Libyan desert, Dagmawi Yimer, who also acts in

pp. 135–49 (pp. 147–49); Itala Vivan, 'Postcolonial Discourses in Italy', *Borderlands*, 12.2 (2013) [accessed 20 April 2017]; Clotilde Barbarulli, 'Kaha Mohamed Aden e Ribka Sibhatu in dialogo con Clotilde Barbarulli', in *Poetiche politiche. Narrazioni dell'(im)politico: figure e figurazioni della prossimità nell'intercultura di genere*, ed. by Cristina Bracchi (Padua: Poligrafo, 2011), pp. 157–75; Danyel Ghidini, 'Per un nuovo orientamento. I documentari *La quarta via* e *Auló*', *Affrica*, 12 September 2012 (<<http://affrica.org/per-un-nuovo-orientamento-i-documentari-la-quarta-via-e-aulo>> [accessed 7.5.2017]; Daniele Comberiat, 'Raccontare l'Italia postcoloniale: note sparse di identità e cultura nei documentari *Auló* e *La quarta via*', *Nazione Indiana*, 14 December 2012. On Dagmawi Yimer: *Come un uomo sulla terra*, ed. by Marco Carsetti and Alessandro Triulzi (Rome: Infinito, 2009); Farah Polato, 'Rachid, Theo, Dagmawi e gli altri. Voci e forme di un nuovo cinema', in *L'Africa in Italia*, pp. 139–56; Simona Wright, 'Lampedusa's Gaze: Messages from the Outpost of Europe', *Italica*, 91.9 (2014), 775–802; Federica Mazzara, 'Spaces of Visibility for the Migrants of Lampedusa: The Counter Narrative of the Aesthetic Discourse', *Italian Studies: Cultural Studies*, 70.4 (2015), 449–64; Aine O'Healy, 'Imagining Lampedusa', in *Italian Mobilities*, ed. By Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Hom (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 152–73; Derek Duncan, "'Il clandestino è l'ebreo di oggi': Imprints of the Shoah on Migration to Italy', *Quest: Issues in contemporary Jewish History*, 10 (2016), 60–88; Elena Korzhenevich, 'Changing the Narrative of the World: Interview with Gabriele Del Grande and Dagmawi Yimer' and Alessandro Triulzi 'Empowering Migrants' Voices and Agency in Postcolonial Italy', *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture*, 10.1 (2016), 107–14 (pp. 58–70). On *Asmarina*: Camilla Hawthorne, 'Asmarina: Postcolonial Heritages', *Doppiozero*, 13 May 2016, <<http://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/why-africa/asmarina-post-colonial-heritages>> [accessed 20 April 2017]; Leonardo De Franceschi, FCAAAL 2015: *Asmarina, Cinemafrica. Afriche e diaspora nel cinema*, 10 May 2015, <<http://www.cinemafrica.org/page.php?article1549>> [accessed 20 April 2017]; Igiaba Scego, 'Un angolo di Eritrea a Milano', *Internazionale*, 5 May 2015, <<http://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2015/05/05/eritrea-milano-asmarina>> [accessed 20 April 2017]. For an overview see the site *Asmarina project*, <<http://asmarinaproject.com/it/project/>> [accessed 20 April 2017].

<sup>7</sup> See in this regard the archive project *Immaginari (post)coloniali. Public and Private Memories of Italian Colonialism*, in Giulia Grechi, "'Le storie più belle sono raccontate da cose, cose che stanno morendo": immaginari (post)coloniali, memorie pubbliche e private del colonialismo italiano', *From the European South: A Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 1 (2016), 139–50 <<http://Europeansouth.Postcolonialitalia.it>> [accessed 01 August 2016].

the film, recalls the historical ties between Italy and these countries, considering other possible trajectories which are not limited to the present 'migration pressure': 'I think I should start telling this story going back to 100 years ago when our great-grandfathers met each other...because of the war, when Italy tried to invade Lybia first and then Ethiopia. But now...'

At the visual level, archive images relating to the Italian colonial enterprise, which has been removed or differently narrated by the Italian institutional history, follow the shots of Yimer looking at the coming and going of people in a bus station in Rome. This editing makes images of the past enter the present. They mingle with the space of the bus station and become closer.

*C.A.R.A Italia* is filmed at the Centro di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo (reception center for asylum seekers) in Castel Nuovo di Porto, Rome. In a dialogue, the refugees express their sufferance caused by exile and the feeling of being uprooted as well as by immigration policies and perceived hostility from Italian people. One of the refugees points out that the relationship between Somalia and Italy dates back to the past, in the colonial context, and that this relationship has been shaping life of both countries and peoples for a long time. He claims the existence of a relational network between Somalia and Italy 'that cannot be forgotten'.

The relational dimension is also relevant in *Nothing but the Sea*, in which Yimer comes back to Lampedusa where he arrived as refugee. His coming back, his 'return', is the answer to the need to recover the missed encounter with the island and its inhabitants because of the migration procedures that expropriate people from their individual and relational agency.

Proximity appears in this regard as a recurring reference and a discursive strategy.

### *Reconfiguring Spaces and Emotional Landscapes: 'We Are Old Neighbours'*

In *Asmarina*, some characters claim the cultural ties and similarities between Italians and Ethiopians. This notion of proximity is expressed in different ways, as something both material and symbolic. It seems to me to be a central issue in the narratives considered in this essay: proximity as affinity (cultural affinities), as neighbourhood, coexistence and familiarity. It looks at an idea of relational community.

The period considered by *Asmarina*, which covers a long period in history and more than one generation, from the fascist colonization up to the present time, moves against that representation of the presence of the *habesha* community in Milan and in Italy which relegates it to some specific historical episodes, such as colonization or the so called 'migrant emergency' of today.

This notion of familiarity and proximity also works at the visual level. As Medhin Paulos remarks, *Asmarina* is not 'just a story about Ethiopians and Eritreans, it was intended to be a story about Milan.' *Asmarina* does not reveal a 'hidden' city, rather it makes visible what already exists, replacing it in our

## Where Are My Houses?

urban imaginary, 'rediscovering' the urban landscape.<sup>8</sup> The interaction between the temporal and visual levels shows streets, shops, houses, public gardens, buildings, restaurants, *quartiers* shaped by the women and men who lived and are living there, according to a familiar proximity.

In *Asmarina* the belonging questions different places and communities. Where is the 'here' in *Asmarina*? 'Here' is Italy and Milan from where the characters speak, where they live, but in their narrations the boundaries between 'here' and 'there' are sometimes clear, sometimes not so evident (see the reference to the Bologna Festival). It is interesting to underline that even the definition of *habesha* is differently claimed by the characters, depending on their age or personal biography, and refers to cultural definition or affective experiences.

From this perspective the cross-cutting technique in these films has a peculiar relevance, specifically in *Auló* and in *The Fourth Road*. *Auló* takes its title from Eritrean oral poems performed in public events. During the movie, Ribka Sibhatu plays a number of *Auló*, included some composed by her relatives. She speaks about her life and the personal and national events that in the 1980s forced her to leave her birthplace. Italy is concerned in all of these levels: as the nation that colonized Eritrea and as the nation in which Sibhatu lives. She describes herself as a sycamore with three roots. The first one is Eritrea, the land of the ancestors and the birthplace. The second is Italy because of Rome, the city where she is living, and because of the Italian language, the very first foreign language learnt and conceived as her own. Finally, the third root is France, the country where she was recognized as an European citizen for the very first time and where she gave birth to her daughter. The belongingness concerns here the policies of belonging (to be recognized as citizen) as well as the personal affective realm.

The film is structured upon two audiovisual series: the first one is marked by the presence of Ribka Sibhatu, the second one by that of Ermanno Guida, who is shown during his urban crossing in the city of Rome. Roman landscape and architectures accompany Sibhatu's speeches and are always relevant to them. Sometimes they are representative of Roman/Italian imperial/imperialist history (e.g. the via Appia and the Vittoriano); sometimes they refer to personal memories, such as a church attended by Eritrean people in Rome. The sound of prayers coming out of the religious building reminds Sibhatu of a catholic church in Eritrea, which is the starting point for talking about the three major religions in Eritrea.

Yet Rome is also 'the other Rome', the 'Little Rome' as Asmara was named during the fascist colonization. Introduced by Sibhatu this line is developed in the audiovisual series characterized by the presence of Ermanno Guida. It shows buildings, shops, cinemas and all sort of Italian architectures shaping Asmara's urban landscape, as a brand and legacy of the Italian colonization. In a sort of reverse-shot Ermanno Guida, walking around Rome, reveals the persistence of

<sup>8</sup> See Hawthorne. The statement was released at a screening of the film at Rome's Palladium theatre in March (quoted in Hawthorne).

colonial marks: among them, Piazza dei Cinquecento, consecrated to the Italian soldiers dead in the battle of Dogali in 1887 and the relative commemorative stele, now located elsewhere, or Amba Alagi road.

In *The Fourth Road*, Kaha Mohamed Aden is questioned about forms of definition and self-definition. She rejects for herself the definition of 'italo-somala', and its additional meaning. At the beginning of the film, the over-titles, written in first person, state the date and place of birth (Mogadishu, 1966), the place and period of residence (Pavia, since 1987), finally her own name and profession ('I'm a writer'). Two spatial series compose the film, one related to the city of Mogadishu and the other one to the city of Pavia. In some cases, Mogadishu stands for Somalia.

The title *The Fourth Road* refers to the four roads drawn by Kaha Mohamed Aden in different colors representing the history of Mogadishu, her place of birth and the capital of Somalia. The history of Mogadishu is conceived as a biography of the city, with the different ages of its life shaping its character: the green one, which is also the oldest, is the Islamic soul, the black recalls the fascist period, the red is evocative of the socialist dream, which spread after the independence of the nation. All these roads concern specific *quartiers*, associated with these historical events as well as to the writer and her family life. The fourth road is grey: this is the road of the so-called 'Signori della guerra' (Men of war), referring to the civil war which broke out after the collapse of Mohamed Siad Barre's government in 1991.

The starting point of *The Fourth Road* is indeed the search of a lost place, the city of Mogadishu, 'a place I have loved, a place I have known', the belongingness of which seemed obvious to Aden. It is a city which has been both materially and psychologically lost, destroyed during the civil war. To tell personal tales about Mogadishu is for Kaha Mohamed Aden a way to make the city live once more after its destruction. Nevertheless, the reconstruction and the narration of Mogadishu, the old home, can restart only in Pavia, when the city becomes a 'new home', thanks to the acquired citizenship (politics of belonging) and a restored affective landscape (friends, love).

### *From Maps to Mapping*

Maps are a constant presence in the films analysed, playing different functions.<sup>9</sup> Some of them visualize dislocations, such as the migratory routes (e.g. *Like a Man on Earth*) or the geographical position of nations/cities/places involved in the discourse (e.g. the map of the Horn of Africa on the atlas shown by Asli Haddas in *Asmarina*). The people interviewed in *Auló*, for example, do not know exactly where Eritrea is, nor are they aware of the colonial ties with this part of Africa. In

<sup>9</sup> For an extensive analysis, see Tania Rossetto, 'The Map, the Other and the public visual image', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 16.4 (2015), 465–91.



## Where Are My Houses?

this perspective, maps also become a concrete object that symbolically contrast the removal of the colonial past and simultaneously highlight the ideologically and power-related practice of mapping. In *Aulò*, again, the urban map of Rome points to the persistence of colonial rhetoric in the urban fabric, disclosed by the names of streets and places. Power-related maps, such as the colonial maps exposed at the Associazione Nazionale Reduci Rimpatriati d’Africa — A.N.R.R.A, appear in *Asmarina*. Nevertheless, the aerial view of Asmara on a serving tray at an Eritrean restaurant seems to display a sentimental feeling, an emotional connection with the country.<sup>10</sup>

In *The Fourth Road* the map in the atlas shows us that ‘Mogadishu does indeed exist’, that the beloved city (and Somalia as whole) is not an ‘invented’, phantasmatic or ‘dreamt’ space. Moving from this anchor point and from her new house, Pavia-Italy, Kaha Mohamed Aden is able to draw and shape her own colored maps, originating from interconnected geographies. In so doing she takes her biographical and emotional space back, but she also creates a new space of belonging, a new house in which to live, linking past with present in an experiential dimension.

In *C.A.R.A Italia* too, self-made maps come into view. They are assembled with colored strings, visualizing the itineraries that refugees must complete to reach strategic places, such as the route from the reception center to a school. Other colored maps display instead the personal itineraries conceived in order to discover a new, unknown space. In this regard, it is relevant to note that the action of walking through the city appears as a way to embody this. In *Aulò* Ermanno Guida’s promenades throughout Rome display the persistence of colonial rhetoric, but they also reveal the city, through its architecture and through people who live there, as the result of its history, relations and influences: ‘everything I see around here takes me to a faraway place’ which made Rome the city we know today.<sup>11</sup> These are embedded, dynamic maps.

In the last sequence of *Aulò*, Ermanno Guida, a ‘non-Roman’ living in Rome, claims that ‘Roma isn’t in the genes’. Echoing Igiaba Scego’s novel *La mia casa è dove sono* ([*My Home is Where I Am*], 2011) he affirms that Rome belongs instead to the people who live there. According to the narrative strategies and practices developed in the analyzed films, he reminds us that belonging is not a problem which concerns only specific people: it concerns a network of relations. In that sense, belonging is ‘our’ affair.

<sup>10</sup> See Hawthorne for this detail.

<sup>11</sup> Regarding promenade as performative act in a postcolonial perspective, see bell hooks, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (New York: Routledge, 2009).