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## "Perché il mondo è cambiato": Second Generation Italian Hip Hop and the Authorization of Postcolonial Italian Identities

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*“Perché il mondo è cambiato”*: Second Generation Italian Hip Hop  
and the Authorization of Postcolonial Italian Identities

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies

by

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May 2023  
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This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

Second generation Italian hip hop artists negotiate, contest, and decolonize *italianità* through their lyrics, music, and activism. Italian Postcolonialism, Cultural Theory, and Musicology inform my approach to understanding the struggle over contemporary Italian politics of identity and belonging. I utilize Discourse Analysis to contextualize lyrics, music, and music videos that resist hegemonic notions of *italianità* and champion inclusive citizenship. Artists analyzed include Amir Issaa, Karima DueG, Ghali, Tommy Kuti, Cécile, Chadia Rodriguez, and Alessandro Mahmoud.

Centralizing hip hop as a collective site of resistance demonstrates the movement towards recognition as well as equal representation. Second generation artistry and lyricism starts at the intersections of *italianità*, including Blackness, belonging, racism, and the struggle over identity. The act of storytelling breaks down barriers, instead creating bridges of solidarity, unity, and understanding. Second generation hip hop artists actively engage in this discourse by integrating individual and collective stories that highlight the navigation of Italy's social, cultural, and political structures. Creating and sharing their consciousness of belonging with each other decolonizes institutionalized *italianità*, promoting an inclusive and plural sense of belonging.

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After completing my MA at San Francisco State, I had sworn off academia all together. Never again would I subject myself to that kind of stress. Needless to say, a doctorate was officially off the table. And yet, here I am now, thanking those that helped me reach this seemingly impossible and unattainable milestone.

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## **Dedication**

To Michelle,

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## Introduction

### The Contentiousness of Italian Identity

*“Two G  
 Second generation  
 Citizen right  
 Who represent the nation”  
 -Karima 2G, “Orangutan”*

Italian identity is a complex and salient phenomenon worthy of study, especially as it relates to citizenship and belonging. Answers to the question “Who is Italian?” can be found throughout over 700 years of Italian history. Geography has played a central role in determining who has access - legally, culturally, socially, and linguistically - to *italianità*, or Italianness. Contemporary discussions of *italianità* highlight its fluidity and contentiousness. It is within this context that I frame my dissertation.

#### What’s Really “Italian” in *Italianità*?<sup>1</sup>

Scholars have already documented the contentious and often contradictory paradigm of *italianità* in historical (Cassano 2005; Caponetto 2019; Gabaccia 2000; Giuliani 2013; Gramsci 1995; Kuwornu *Blaxploitalian* 2016; Pugliese 2008; Verdicchio 2016) and contemporary (Angelucci 2021; Ardizzoni 2020; Clini 2015; Dos Santos 2021; Giuliani 2019; Hawthorne 2020 and 2022; Kuwornu *I 8 ius soli* 2011; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012; Lyons 2020; Scego 2021; Sigona 2016) contexts. These scholars decolonize institutionalized *italianità*, demonstrating its elasticity and dependence on power, history, and current events. Consequently, the question “Who is Italian?” takes on a multidirectional and multidimensional context that privileges time, geography, language, positionality, race, gender, sexuality, religion, class, accent, heritage, and dominant historical narratives. “Who” refers to individuals and groups with

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<sup>1</sup> This is a direct reference to Stuart Hall’s “What is this ‘black’ in black popular culture?” (2009), which explains the power of popular culture in the construction and negotiation of identity, emphasizing the importance of historical and contemporary locations.

intersecting and overlapping identities that represent a myriad of populations: so-called natives with a claim over a specific generation (first, second, fifth, etc.), diasporas<sup>2</sup> within and beyond institutionalized nationalistic borders, liminal global citizens, cultural citizens, as well as other and othered identities. Within a postcolonial lens the descriptor “Italian” becomes detached from strict, monolingual ethnocentrism, instead embodying a transnational understanding of Italian places, spaces, and peoples. “Is” encapsulates identity, the negotiation of belonging, ingroup/outgroup politics, and the relationship between power, violence, oppression, intersectionality, and humanity. Analyzing the Italian identification paradigm, the process of Italianization, and the maintenance of *italianità* demonstrates contentions and contradictions. Integral to this discussion is unpacking what it means to be Italian, citizenship as a whole, and how contemporary Italian hip hop negotiates these meanings.

A working definition of *italianità* is needed. According to Treccani, an Italian encyclopedia, *italianità* means “l’essere e il sentirsi italiano; appartenenza alla civiltà, alla storia, alla cultura e alla lingua italiana, e soprattutto la coscienza di questa appartenenza<sup>3</sup>” (“being or feeling Italian; belonging to the Italian civilization, history, culture, and language, and especially the consciousness of this belonging”). While the first two parts of this definition are rather matter-of-fact, where being and belonging, integral to the experience of identity, introduce the relationship to Italian phenomena, the “consciousness of this belonging” aspect plays a significant role in understanding identity and place in the world. It is the relationship between awareness and lived reality that determines – individually, collectively, nationally, even internationally – *italianità*. Contextualizing this phenomenon, Tamburri (1991) stresses the

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<sup>2</sup> I use this term to refer to all types of diaspora (economic, cultural, political, etc.) with varying levels of distress.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/italianita/>. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

importance of its flexible ahistoricity, stating that *italianità* “is redefined and reinterpreted on the basis of each individual’s time and place, and is therefore always new and different with respect to its own historical specificities vis-à-vis the dominant culture” (21).<sup>4</sup> Power, politics, time, and space further complicate the definition in relation to “the dominant culture” and “historical specificities.” In the case of *seconde generazioni* (second generations), time and space are rooted in the past, looking towards the future, and right now. Contemporary debates about citizenship, belonging, and Black Lives Matter continue to gain visibility. One anchor of this visibility is Italian Postcolonialism, which specifically investigates how Italian colonization and its legacy influence ideological and structural institutions. *Italianità* describes the dynamic relation between lived reality, social status, citizenship, and belonging at local, provincial, regional, national, and global levels – all of which exist simultaneously, complementing and contradicting one another. It is important to note that these intersecting and overlapping levels are fluid, change over time, and exhibit complex relationships between and within each other, and at the same time exist in very specific historical and contemporary contexts.

One central site of resistance is the process of citizenship, that is to say, becoming an officially recognized Italian by the State. With the current laws in place in Italy, people of Italian descent living abroad have a much easier way to obtain (under the guise of re-gaining) Italian citizenship. *Seconde generazioni*, on the other hand, can only apply for citizenship between the ages of 18 and 19, if and only if they possess documentation that proves without any doubts they have been continuously residing in Italy. Eligibility expires after their 19th birthday. This grueling process is not guaranteed and “privileges children of Italian blood, who may not know how to speak Italian or have any familiarity with Italian culture, while penalizing second

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<sup>4</sup> When cited from a book or digital source with pagination, page numbers will appear in the parenthetical citation. If cited from a source without pagination (a website), only the year will appear in the citation, even when quoting directly.

generation Italians, though Italy is the only country they know” (Caponetto 232). As a result, a significant number of second generation Italians are not citizens and therefore do not have access to important resources. The collective consciousness of belonging that *seconde generazioni* share, when not recognized by Italy and other Italians, thus becomes itself a site of resistance.<sup>5</sup>

A primary stage of this resistance is the realm of Italian hip hop written and performed by second generation Italians. These artists and authors demonstrate the contentiousness of a singular, monolithic Italian identity by successfully deconstructing hegemonic *italianità* that is promoted and disseminated by contemporary Italian politics and policies in which ascribed hybridity disqualifies access to Italian identity. Examples of characteristics that supposedly “taint” *italianità* include being Black and Italian, being born of one or more parents from another country, and not “looking” Italian. The latter is a common racist dog whistle that seeks to cover up and normalize Italian white supremacy, which suppresses the history of Italy’s heterogeneous populations, painting a racially homogenous picture that continues to marginalize people of color. This oppressive structure operates under the assumption that pure *italianità* exists and is contaminated by other races, ethnicities, languages, and cultures. More specifically, these Italian musical artists, by negotiating and contesting contemporary Italian identity through the lens of hip hop culture, re-articulate and re-establish *italianità* at global and local levels. The resulting postcolonial identities humanize and champion plurality, multilingualism, interculturalism, transnationality, and a holistic sense of self and community.

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<sup>5</sup> In summer 2022 a bill was working its way through the Italian parliament that would give citizenship to anyone who has completed at least five years of education in Italy. It is called *jus scholae* (the right of school), which itself stems from *jus culturae* (the right of culture). There is doubt whether this law, if passed, would be applied retroactively.

The normalization of a white, male, heterosexual, supposedly Catholic<sup>6</sup> Italian identity marginalizes everyone and results in the process of othering, which excludes all identities that do not conform or obey this hegemony. Resulting oppressions manifest themselves in politics and political policy, including *jus sanguinis* (right of blood), a nationality law that assumes citizenship is passed down by the nationality or ethnicity of one or more parents, regardless of where one is born. It is often juxtaposed with *jus soli* (right of land), in which citizenship is conferred based on place of birth. A third type that is gaining ground in Italy, *jus culturae* (right of culture), instead appeals to socialization (e.g. upbringing, environment, language, education, traditions) as the deciding factor for citizenship. Other oppressions include messaging surrounding integration, as well as everyday experiences, such as being asked for a *permesso di soggiorno* (Italian residency permit) instead of an Italian identification card, patronizing compliments about Italian language proficiency (e.g. “You speak so well!”), and microaggressions such as “But where are you really from?” or “Where are your parents from?” In short, these racist, sexist, and xenophobic examples colonize *italianità* and Italian society as a whole.

From these dueling concepts, two sets of research questions result from my inquiry: (1) questioning Italian identity in general and (2) understanding how second generation Italian hip hop artists negotiate, challenge, and embrace inclusive *italianità*. Questioning Italian identity in general uncovers colonial projects that have beset inclusivity, setting the stage for hip hop artists to tell their stories. They do this in order to authorize postcolonial Italian identities.

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<sup>6</sup> While Italy is certainly not a 100% Catholic country, Catholic religious supremacy plays a key role in marginalizing second generation Italians. For example, Islamophobia posits a fundamental disconnect with *italianità*. Additionally, religious, historical, and cultural lines are often blurred with respect to contemporary Italian society.

First and foremost, who has access to *italianità*? What categories, characteristics, de facto<sup>7</sup>, and de jure<sup>8</sup> rules inform the Italian identification paradigm? What roles do power, race, gender, class, geography, language, religion, and socialization play in determining who identifies and is considered Italian? The goal of these questions is not only to uncover the complex and contradictory nature of Italian identity and identity thinking, but also to challenge the very questions themselves, since, in every instance, “Italian” can take on a strict and exclusionary nationalist and ethnic angle that prohibits flexibility, fluidity, and lived reality. These questions culminate to ask: how, when, and why does the Italian identification paradigm contradict itself with respect to second generation Italians?

After establishing a historical and contemporary context, the central question is: What strategies do second generation hip hop artists exercise to unsettle racism, sexism, and xenophobia? Of particular interest are the sphere of music and its accessibility in the age of the Internet and streaming; the discursive strategies employed, such as claiming to be 100% Italian, Afroitalian, second generation, and/or a complex combination of identities; and the process of building consciousness. Italian hip hop itself acts as a vehicle for this consciousness to “be raised” (Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015) by uncovering the history of Italian colonialism and invisibilized<sup>9</sup> identities (Hawthorne 2020) because, to put in simple terms, the personal is political (Harris-Perry 2011; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015). Second generation livelihood depends on a sense of belonging based on humane recognition and access to *italianità*. Hip hop creates this environment.

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<sup>7</sup> To exist in fact, although not officially recognized by law.

<sup>8</sup> Officially recognized by law but not necessarily apparent or practiced.

<sup>9</sup> I utilize Hawthorne’s terminology to describe how identities are invisibilized by hegemony. These identities exist and therefore are not invisible to everyone.

Centralizing hip hop as one of their collective sites of resistance and *italianità* demonstrates the movement towards recognition as well as equal representation. Second generation artistry and lyricism starts at the intersections of *italianità*, including Blackness, belonging, racism, and the struggle over identity. Through the act of storytelling, artists break down barriers; by doing so, they in fact create bridges of solidarity, unity, and understanding. Second generation hip hop artists and authors actively engage in this discourse by integrating individual and collective stories that highlight the navigation of Italy's social, cultural, and political structures. They create and share their consciousness of belonging with each other and, via the internet and social media, the world. Their rise in popularity and success reflects a growing movement. Additionally, their creative, often multilingual, and inclusive approaches to lyrics and music shine the spotlight on second generation Italian consciousness by celebrating heterogeneity and challenging hegemony.

### **Historical Context and Contemporary Conjuncture**

While volumes and lifetime scholarship can be dedicated to historical and contemporary dynamics of Italian identity, the goal here is to briefly introduce the connections between the past and present, to underscore the long history of Italian identity negotiation, and to align it with current debates about who is Italian, what "Italian" means, and how power influences discourse. These are meant to be brief highlights in the history of the language and not an exhaustive discussion. The main reason for this is to demonstrate that *italianità* has been debated for the past 700 years (and counting) at different times, with diverse political motivations, under the umbrella of creating a sense of national, linguistic, political, and cultural identity.

To say that notions of Italian national identity were born at the time of the Risorgimento (Resurgence) in 1861 would be at least 500 years too late, as the concept of an Italy, of Italians,

and of a common language goes all the way back to the *Duecento* (13th century). A century before Dante's radical decision to write a *poema* (epic poem) in the language of Tuscany, evidence of Tuscan literature appears in the works of Francesco di Assisi (1182-1226), *Compiuta Donzella* (c.1200-c.1300), Guittone d'Arezzo (c.1230-1294), and La Beata Angela da Foligno (c.1248-1309), to name a few. Dante himself wrote a treatise about this *lingua volgare* (language of the people) in c.1302, *De vulgari eloquentia*. One of the first books of its kind, *De vulgari eloquentia* discusses the relationship between Latin and regional Italian languages. I position this work at the beginning of the process in which aristocratic Tuscan, through strategic political maneuvering and an appeal to the three crowns of Italian literature (Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio) during the Risorgimento, will become the official, state-sponsored Italian language.

The *Divina Commedia* (originally finished around 1320), which Dante Alighieri wrote in exile<sup>10</sup>, is significant not only in allegorical terms - Dante the pilgrim's soul, with Virgil as his guide, travels from *Inferno* (Hell) to *Purgatorio* (Purgatory) and then, with his beloved Beatrice, to *Paradiso* (Paradise), symbolizing the redemption of the soul according to Catholic theology - but also in its political implications. The 6th *canto* of each *cantica* (*Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*) is dedicated to local, national, and global politics, respectively. Dante the pilgrim, upon witnessing Virgil hailed and embraced by a fellow Mantovan (*Purgatorio* VI), laments the nonexistent unifying identity that plagues his homeland, criticizing an Italy that, like the

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<sup>10</sup> Not lost is the fact that Dante wrote his *Commedia* as a political exile. While abroad, the Guelph political party, of which Dante was a member, split into white and black (*guelfi bianchi* and *guelfi neri*). The White Guelphs supported the papacy, while the Black Guelphs wholly opposed it, specifically pope Boniface VIII. When the Black Guelphs took control of Florence, Dante, in favor of the papacy, became a political exile. Having missed the deadline to pay a fine he was given two options: return to Florence and be put to death or leave his home forever. He chose the latter, traveled around Europe, and eventually died of Malaria in Ravenna. Even though a funerary monument is inside the Basilica of Santa Croce, Dante's bones still reside in Ravenna. Not even a 16th century letter from Pope Leo X (born Giuliano de' Medici, second son of Lorenzo the Magnificent) and signed by Michelangelo could persuade otherwise.



comedy's protagonist, had lost its way. Two centuries later, *The Prince* (Machiavelli, originally published in 1532), written in the form of a political treatise directly to Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492, known as Lorenzo the Magnificent), unexpectedly ends with an exhortation for Italy's independence.<sup>11</sup> During the Italian Risorgimento, the famous poet and novelist Alessandro Manzoni<sup>12</sup>, obsessing over the perfect language, rewrote *I promessi sposi*<sup>13</sup> (The Betrothed, originally published in 1827) in the language of Dante and Machiavelli after spending time in Florence, thus supposedly cementing an end to the debate over national language and hoping to solidify national identity. In many ways it worked, as Tuscan was changed to Italian, officially becoming the national language of the newly formed, politically independent, "unified" nation of Italy.

Speaking in postcolonial terms, 1861<sup>14</sup> also marked the starting point of Italian colonialism (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2015), specifically with respect to the Italian South, which had been "'darkened,' thus fitting into a social process that naturalised their alienness as a set of inheritable, inferiorised, physical, and behavioral characteristics" (Giuliani, *Race Nation* 9). Clò and Fiore (2001), discussing Verdicchio's *Bound By Distance: Rethinking Nationalism Through the Italian Diaspora*, demythologize Italian "Unification" by historicizing *La questione meridionale* (*The Southern Question*) and exposing what the Risorgimento actually did:

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<sup>11</sup> Chapter 26 is entitled "Exhortation to Liberate Italy from the Hands of the Barbarians," and calls for the Medici family to exercise their papal influence (Leo X was pope at the time) in order to do so.

<sup>12</sup> Alessandro Manzoni was also the grandson of Cesare Beccaria, an Enlightenment Italian political theorist and philosopher who helped Italy become one of the first European countries to abolish the death penalty.

<sup>13</sup> Considered an absolute classic of Italian literature and the first example of Italian historical fiction, *I promessi sposi* is required reading for virtually all Italian high school students. It has four editions.

<sup>14</sup> After establishing the first Italian parliament in Turin in February 1861, Vittorio Emanuele II was officially recognized as King of Italy on March 17. The capitals of the new country were Turin (1861-1865), Florence (1865-1870), and finally, Rome (1870-).

internally colonize the Italian South. That is to say, the Risorgimento was an elite, top-down movement aimed at consolidating power, not uniting the many peoples of Italy. An imagined hegemonic community, propagated by the literature of Pascoli, Carradini, and Nievo, served as an inspiration for this ideology (Clò and Fiore 425). This resulted in the segregation, marginalization, and stereotyping of southerners as lazy, uncivilized, and other, thus deserving of colonization and a subaltern status. After the Risorgimento, peasants could not legally own land. This led to the creation and exacerbation of inequality, forcing people to either travel north to work in factories or abroad if they wanted to continue working in agriculture. This created two diasporas, one internal (to the north), and the other external (abroad), to countries such as England, France, the United States, and Argentina. This first round of inner colonization functioned as a training ground for Italian colonization that continued in the 20th century. Additionally, according to Donna Gabaccia, the most noteworthy scholar of Italian diasporas, 1861 marks the beginning of an Italian diaspora (Gabaccia 2000). Hegemonic ideology and the top-down dynamics of the Italian Risorgimento racialized and criminalized peasant farmers, specifically those from the south (Gabaccia 176). This ideology, combined with economic hardships, resulted in fourteen million Italians emigrating from Italy between 1876-1914 (Gabaccia 3). Within Italy as well as abroad, race and class determined the extent and essence of *italianità*.

Ironically, at the same time that many Italians were emigrating, Italian colonization began to take shape: Eritrea (1869-1941), Ethiopia (1887-1889, 1936-1941), Somalia (1889-1936, Trust Territory under Italian control 1950-1960), Tianjin (1901-1943), the Dodecanese Islands (1911-1943), Libya (1911-1947), and later Albania (1939-1943) were all at one time under Italian control, having been invaded, occupied militarily, and/or annexed. For example, Italy

invaded Ethiopia twice, once in 1895 and again in 1935. It invaded Somalia (at the time British Somaliland) in 1940. While all these nations have since attained independence (Tianjin was conceded in 1947), the legacy of Italian colonization remains, specifically its brutal, violent, and inhumane history that rarely, if ever, travels north across the Mediterranean, from whence it came.

With respect to the colonization of Somalia, one of the longest tenured and most well-known Somali Italian authors, Igiaba Scego, details the historical destruction and violence executed by Italians against the Somali people as well as criticizes the continued romanticization of this violence. Central to this critique is the *Piazza dei 500 cento* (Square of the 500 hundred), located right outside Roma Termini, the central and busiest train station in Rome, if not in all of Italy. *Piazza dei 500 cento* is dedicated to the Italian soldiers that died during the 1887 battle of Dogali in Eritrea during Italy's first stint at colonization. Scego and Italian postcolonial scholars challenge the dedication, uncovering the hidden history behind the monument. Within this framework, the violence and destruction by the 500 colonizers should be condemned and discussed, not honored and celebrated. At the very least, telling the truth about the history of the 500 and contextualizing Italian colonization must be central to debate. I discuss Igiaba Scego in more detail and the literary prominence of second generation Italian women of color in the next chapter.

Discussions such as these demonstrate that Italy has been in the middle of a postcolonial reckoning for at least the past decade (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012). Debates over identity, citizenship, and belonging have become mainstream in certain sectors of Italian society, namely literature, and more recently hip hop culture. Both enterprises utilize messaging, an ideology of

pluralism, and social justice initiatives in order to create a more inclusive and equitable *italianità* that challenges the myth of national, linguistic, ethnic, and racial homogeneity.

Lombardi-Diop and Romeo (2015) characterize Italy as an emigrant nation, an Italian-specific phenomenon due to “mass emigration, the subalternity of the South, the subsequent intranational migration from the South to the North, and a new wave of emigrations in the present” (371). The elite-driven Risorgimento, followed by a mass exodus caused by economic and racial inequality, not only demonstrate “a failed unification” (371), but also contextualize the reality of racism, sexism, and classism that has pervaded the country since its inception. Italy has been, is, and will, for the foreseeable future, continue to be heterogeneous.

Citizenship and belonging are at the forefront of current debates about *italianità*. *Jus sanguinis* - based on the conceit that blood belongs to nations - dominates Italian citizenship law, which is mostly used to exclude second generation Italians by making it extremely difficult to gain citizenship. This is rarely, if ever, discussed in Italian language classrooms. Clò and Fiore (2001), challenging contemporary Italian curriculum, argue that “A revision of pedagogical objectives for the Italian curriculum starts with precisely a questioning of the accepted normativity of Italian citizenship and culture” (418). In 2013 the *camera dei deputati* (lower legislative chamber) passed a law that allowed for *jus soli*, however it quickly deteriorated in the Italian senate. Renewed calls for *jus soli* and *jus culturae* are part of current political discourse, especially with activists working in Italy to expose, challenge, and change racist citizenship laws that exclude people from where they belong.<sup>15</sup>

These activists have established organizations such as *L'Italia sono anch'io* (I Am Italy, Too), *Rete G2* (Second Generation Network), *Italiani senza cittadinanza* (Italians Without

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<sup>15</sup> A law that would grant citizenship to those that complete five years of Italian education is currently working its way through the Italian parliament.

Citizenship), and *Dalla Parte Giusta della Storia* (On the Right Side of History) that continue to build consciousness, spread the message of second generation Italians, and fight for changing citizenship laws (Romeo, *Riscrivere* 97). The guiding principle is what Tufi (2012) describes as the rethinking of citizenship in terms of the everyday experience of belonging. For example, surgeon and author Kossi Komla-Ebri, during a Zoom webinar in October 2020, discussed the importance of inclusive citizenship by emphasizing the reality of everyday experience, “Non abitiamo in spazi, abitiamo in relazioni” (“We don’t live in spaces, we live in relations”), and identity is plural, as it transforms continuously throughout individual lives as well as collective intergenerational imaginations. This identity is negotiated with and within relations.

The current situation in Italy has made mainstream news. On February 8, 2021 VICE News released its first episode of *Black Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning*.<sup>16</sup> It came as no surprise, given the circumstances discussed above, that the first episode detailed Italy, Italian citizenship laws, and the legacy of Italian colonialism. Interviewing activists, politicians, and everyday Italians, *Black Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning: Italy* takes a close look at the contemporary struggle over *italianità*. One of the founders of Questaèroma (This is Rome), Kwanza Musi Dos Santos, describes how Black Italians “feel like outsiders in their own country” due to exclusionary and racist citizenship laws that validate racism and xenophobia. Italian political parties such as *La Lega*<sup>17</sup> (The League) and *Fratelli d’Italia*<sup>18</sup> (Brothers of Italy) continue to push the false narrative of an immigrant “invasion” that seeks to take over Italy,

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h60y7Z-GipQ>

<sup>17</sup> Originally *La lega nord* (The Northern League), its initial platform revolved around northern racial and cultural supremacy. Once the contemporary politics of Italy became more international, they changed their name to *La lega*, migrating their North vs. South ideology to Italy vs. the global South. *La lega* is a conservative, right-wing, populist political party.

<sup>18</sup> Taking its name from the first words of the Italian national anthem, *Fratelli d’Italia* is a right-wing, conservative, nationalist political party. It has Italian neo-fascist roots.

destroy “Italian” culture, and soil *italianità*. In this respect, existence is resistance (Dos Santos 2021; Fabbri 2020).

*Black Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning: Italy* spotlights Luca Neves, a Black Italian hip hop artist born in Rome, who has been denied citizenship for over 13 years. He describes his experience at home in Italy as “living in a prison out in the open.” Neves documented his trips to the *Questura* (Immigration Office), exposing their attempts to falsely claim he was born in Cape Verde and showing the disrespect and unwelcome reception he received. One of his most influential responses to this situation is his song ft. Amir Issaa “*Sono nato qua*” (I was born here). Its assertive, critical chorus of “Tu non capisci sono nato qua / Tu non capisci sono nato QUA” (“You don’t understand I was born here / You don’t understand I was born HERE”) reclaims his identity. This is one example of hip hop as a site of resistance, visibility, and activism that has become commonplace amongst second generation Italians. The chorus creates a fitting end to the first episode of *Black Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning* right after Angelica Pesarini, Assistant Professor of Race and Cultural Studies / Race and Diaspora and Italian Studies at the University of Toronto, states “This generation is going to make a change.” In practice, specifically in the realm of hip hop, the collective second generation *is* making a positive change towards a more inclusive and intercultural *italianità*. This project analyzes their lyrical and musical efforts to achieve this goal.

### **Theoretical Foundations: Postcolonialism, Cultural Studies, Diaspora, and Black Italy**

I posit that Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1979) and Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) ground Postcolonial theory. Each seminal work demonstrates how language and power create strict dichotomies of humanity that are subsequently used to justify and maintain physical and cultural invasions. The ensuing political manufacturing of consent (Herman and

Chomsky 2002) legitimizes the oppressions, destruction, and ultimate disposability of those defined as subaltern. All of this is based on reductive and monolithic categories.

In this manner, *Orientalism* explains and historicizes how the West benefits from the tradition of categorizing the East as a static, monolithic, and inferior world. Emblematic of Western imperialism, the resulting project has colonized education systems as well as the imagination via the East-West “geographical” boundary. Consequently, the East does not possess any autonomy of action or thought. Two central components of Orientalism are the “strategic location” and the “strategic formation” of a particular author. These include historical position, selected texts, the relationships between them, and the skills employed to attain success. Reconceiving scholarship as the relative fruits of this process shifts the focus away from the search for objective truth about the Orient and elucidates traditional Orientalism for what it is: by and for the Occident. Said is mindful of misrepresentations and fallaciousness. In his view, scholarship must find a balance between generalities that oversimplify the object of study and specificity that leaves no room for generalizations. Anzaldúa’s concepts of the borderlands and “mestiza consciousness” further contextualize Orientalism, highlighting the struggle over colonized definitions and descriptions. The borderlands encompass the material boundaries between at least two geographical locations as well as the historical, social, and symbolic spaces that bridge two or more cultures. This is a central aspect of second generation Italian identities. These resources provide a comparative and theoretical base that strengthens and informs the application of Italian Postcolonialism by contextualizing the legacy of colonial institutions as well as reframing the discussion in terms of lived reality. This opposes romanticized versions of a singular and homogenized Italy.

Additionally, Anzaldúa emphasizes the liminal and oppressive nature of the borderlands when enforced through the lens of reductive (either/or) dichotomies. The borderlands embody a transitional space that challenges binary categorizations, for example the choice between being Mexican or American (or Black or Italian, assuming one has to choose). Anzaldúa breaks down the myths of the borderlands by dissecting the power relationships between oppressor and oppressed, specifically with respect to settler colonialism and the fact that the border crossed the Mexican people and not vice versa. Consequently, the new *mestiza* encapsulates the postcolonial subject position in her ability to exist between and amongst multiple spaces and places without creating an oppressive hierarchy. Pluralism, critical theory, and new ways of knowing inform this consciousness, creating a bridge that links and contradicts rigid categorization systems propagated by cultural and political elites. This is precisely the complex, fluid, and dynamic space in which second generation Italian hip hop artists ground their postcolonial identities.

*Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (2012) provides the specific starting point for my inquiry, as it builds a postcolonial theory grounded by a range of topics including immigration, literature, film, and music. The goal of Postcolonial studies in Italy is to consider “how the postcolonial paradigm formulates new epistemologies produced by previously voiceless subjects, while at the same time highlighting and examining the relationships of power created by colonialism and reproduced and reinforced in contemporary postcolonial societies” (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2). *Postcolonial Italy*’s last chapter, “Hip Pop Italian Style: The Postcolonial Imagination of Second-Generation Authors in Italy” (Clò 2012), discusses the importance of centering second generation authors in analysis. Second generation Italian authors and artists represent the future and the suppressed, violent past of Italian double colonization. Additionally, “Their analysis of Italian culture is particularly insightful because they access it



from the vantage point of a diasporic sensitivity, one that is simultaneously Italian and international” (Clò 275). This pluralistic analysis of second generation hip hop artists provides a contemporary context and diversifies the anglo-dominated realm of hip hop scholarship globally as well as the male-dominated realm of Italian hip hop.

Italian postcolonial theory analyzes the institutional, social, and cultural legacies of Italian colonialism, providing a starting point for trying to understand second generation Italians and their *italianità* (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012 and 2014; Romeo 2015 and 2018; O’Healy 2021; Ponzanesi and Polizzi 2016). This theory presents *anti-nerezza* (anti-Blackness) as the continuation of a colonial ideology that maintains the myth of pure *italianità* by protecting Italy and Italians from “foreign invaders.” Additionally, these supposed outsiders are consistently painted as one-dimensional uncivilized creatures unworthy of the *brava gente* (decent, nice, good people). A superiority complex diffuses the *brava gente* myth, that all Italians are decent, even when they colonize and enact violence (Ponzanesi and Polizzi 155). Applying this theory contextualizes racism, xenophobia, and the continued contentiousness of who is and deserves to be Italian.

Scholars have been historically late to the greater conversation. This is due, predominantly, to the continued myth of *brava gente* (Ardizzoni 2020) and overall historical amnesia (Derobertis 2012; Lombardi-Diop 2012; Mellino 2006; Scego 2021) that has impeded a reckoning with Italian colonialism. Consequently, scholars have had to catch up and carefully navigate a country that, in many ways, lives under its own romanticized historical, artistic, cultural, and linguistic shadow. The ideology of the *bel paese* (beautiful country) has infiltrated and can impede critical analysis. One such realm that has successfully popularized dissent without undermining its integrity is Italian hip hop culture. Going as far back as the album *SxM*

(1994) by *Sangue misto* (Mixed Blood), Italian hip hop artists have challenged what it means to be Italian and uncovered Italy's violent and dehumanizing colonial past, focusing on internal colonization with respect to the Italian South (Zammarchi 2019, unpublished). Looking at Italy's historical internal colonization of the South (Gramsci 1995; Cassano 2005) reveals colonial and racialization projects that were subsequently exported (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012; Mellino 2006) to countries such as Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

These latter scholars apply Ania Loomba's critique of postcolonialism in "Situating Colonial and Postcolonial Studies," (2015), maintaining that postcolonialism should be about "the contestation of colonial domination and the legacies of colonialism" (32) and not an extension of colonialism itself. Postcolonialism has evolved and now differs from Bhabra's (2014) definitions of postcolonialism and colonialism. While these two approaches do overlap, Italian Postcolonialism, in its effort to explain the use of the prefix "post," and based on my readings of second generation Italian hip hop artists, describes what these authors are doing: they actively question what it means to be Italian while claiming to be Italian at the same time. They re-imagine, re-establish, and re-articulate *italianità* (Angelucci 2021; Ardizzoni 2020; Clò 2012; Triulzi 2012). As Clarissa Clò explains, "The use of hip hop and popular culture by second generation postcolonial authors should be taken seriously as both a marker of integration and dissent" (285). Artists claim *italianità* while disrupting colonial ideology, creating a postcolonial and inclusive space.

Applying Italian Postcolonialism to this dissertation, three processes come to light: the Italian identification paradigm, Italianization, and the maintenance of *italianità*. The Italian identification paradigm governs the answer to "Who is Italian?" A seemingly innocuous question, in theory and in practice it colonizes race, gender, religion, sexuality, language, and

geography. The paradigm seeks to be ahistorical, taking diaspora for granted and preventing contextualization and historicization of how this strict set of rules and regulations advised political policy, aiding and abetting Italian colonization. The Italian identification paradigm centers Italianization by legitimizing and thus normalizing a particular race (white<sup>19</sup>), religion (Catholicism), sexuality (heterosexual), language (Italian), and geography (Italy). The Italianization of 14th and 15th century Tuscan, better known as the answer to the *Questione della lingua* (Language Question) continues to play a central role in *italianità* and shows how inner colonization existed well before the start of the 20th century. Italianization is all about the process of becoming, belonging, and documenting a politically and culturally sanctioned identity that decrees respect, freedom of movement, and authorization to exist in society. This self-replicating system maintains itself through the continued application of the Italian identification paradigm to ensure that *italianità* remains consistent with hegemony. Historically, any deviance or questioning of this system, which can be conceived of as a cultural/racial/religious/linguistic canon, results in harsh criticisms by cultural elites and those that have internalized the paradigm. Functionally, from a hegemonic standpoint, the Italian identity is pure, monolithic, static, and “civilized.” Any hint at hybridity, pluralism, complexity, or nuance becomes almost immediately conceived as contaminating the perfection of being 100% Italian. This is reminiscent of the “One drop rule” in the United States, where even the smallest amount of “Black” blood was considered a corruption of Whiteness and therefore a disqualification from Whiteness. It can be argued that the “One drop rule” is still in practice

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<sup>19</sup> While Italian immigrants to the United States faced racism, violence, and oppression in the 20th century, they developed a white consciousness over time. See *Are Italians White? How Race is Made in America*, edited by Jennifer Guglielmo and Salvatore Salerno (2003).

today, especially with respect to the racist double standard of mixed-race people in the United States and elsewhere.<sup>20</sup>

While Italian Postcolonialism contextualizes contemporary racism and race thinking in Italy, cultural theory centralizes second generation Italian hip hop artists, characterizing them as authors of texts. These artists and authors negotiate and re-articulate their identities through sound, voice, rhythm, space, and place. The resulting discourses demonstrate layered and plural identities that contest the monolithic tendencies of essentialism as well as showcase the utility of postcolonial and diasporic aesthetics. Examining popular culture and how it both informs and reflects value systems is central to any cultural studies endeavor. This approach is less utilized in Italian studies in both the United States and Italy, which typically focus on “Culture” with a capital “C” (e.g. Literature, Art, and Philosophy). Instead, I analyze popular culture, integrating and applying theory developed by Stuart Hall (1932-2014).

Stuart Hall’s “What is this ‘black’ in black popular culture” (1993) conceptualizes popular culture as a mythic arena where imaginations manifest themselves through and within discourse. This theater is “where we discover and play with the identifications of ourselves, where we are imagined, where we are represented” and how these relationships become influential to both those who represent as well as those who are represented (Hall 113). Hall’s scholarship, however, goes beyond the message-messenger-receiver triptych and delves into the postmodern and what may be considered the post-structural. He outlines this project in “Minimal selves” (1987), defining three primary characteristics of a politics of identity (137). First,

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<sup>20</sup> For example on *The Daily Show* and in his comedy, Trevor Noah has, on many occasions, posited the double standard of people who are, for lack of a better term, half Black and half white. Interestingly, he argues, these people are labeled mixed (his word choice) until they reach a level of success. Then they become Black. According to Noah, Barack Obama and Alicia Keys are prime examples of this. He concludes that while mixed people can become Black, they seemingly will never be white.

difference is center stage and shows an evolution from the monolithic tendencies of identity politics. This underlying identification process articulates identity to be constructed in difference, showing the multiaccentual and hybridized existences that are lived by a specific subject at a specific historical, political, and social conjuncture. Second, the subject is conscious of its specific context, is code aware, and understands the specificities of its position. Hall refers to this as self-reflexivity. Third, identity is contingent “but still able to act” (137). These three parameters result in the rejection of binary categorization systems and the acceptance of a new paradigm centered around hybridity and difference. Hall (1996) warns against the slippery slope of postmodern deconstruction, instead reminding us that “cultural identity is always hybrid, but this is because it comes out of very specific historical formations” (*Critical Dialogues* 503). These formations, grounded in contemporary and historical Italian contexts, frame this dissertation. Second generation Italian hip hop is front and center. Lyrics, music, and music videos are my data set. I will demonstrate their collective importance by putting them into conversation with each other as well as greater debates on *italianità*, citizenship, and belonging.

Fundamental to cultural studies is an understanding that identity is constituted within representation. This is the main argument in Hall’s “Signification, Representation, Ideology” (1985). Reflecting upon the encoding/decoding model previously espoused in 1980, which proved to be a radical and paradigm-shifting realization in the realm of communication, Hall expands this theory to not only apply to representations of identity, but to objective reality itself, surmising that “the real world is not outside the discourse; it’s not outside signification” (*Critical Dialogues* 261). In Hall’s consideration of semiotics and deconstruction he pushes intellectual and performative discourse forward, explicating and reasoning for full stops, points of

intersection, positionalities that *do* say something specific, historical, political, and therefore important:

Potentially, discourse is endless: the infinite semiosis of meaning. But to say anything at all in particular, you do have to stop talking. Of course, every full stop is provisional.

The next sentence will take nearly all of it back. So what is this ‘ending’? It’s a kind of joke, a kind of wager. It says: ‘I need to say something, something... just now’. It is not forever, not totally universally true. It is not underpinned by any infinite guarantees. But just now, this is what I mean; this is who I am. At a certain point, in a certain discourse, we call these unfinished closures, ‘the self’, ‘society’, ‘politics’, etc. (“Minimal selves” 136)

This passage, in many ways, summarizes how meaning should be conceived in a particular society and stresses the importance of contingency. Not everything is “always-already” or pre-linguistic. There are, in fact, dynamics of communication and negotiations of meaning that take place at the present time *even though* they are determined (albeit unevenly) by the past. This is precisely the apparatus that supports applying Italian Postcolonialism. Second generation Italian hip hop artists, in all their complexity, beauty, innovation, and sound revolutions, embody “this is who I am” as well as “this is who we are.” Unsurprisingly, lyrics commonly flow from first person singular to plural and vice-versa, reflecting a heterogeneous population fighting for more recognition.

Stemming out of an interdisciplinary approach to cultural studies, diaspora theory is incorporated to challenge institutionalized parameters that ascribe identity. The seemingly innocuous question “Where are you from?” takes on powerful meanings as it can single-handedly crystallize an origin and therefore an identity. Brah (1996) and Schultermantl

(2004) discuss the difference between the former question and “Where are you at/in?” as a way to resist privileging a singular, monolithic origin. Khader (2003) continues the development of diaspora theory in terms of a third question that better represents the diasporic experience, “Where are you in between?” This question centralizes marginal identities that are often overlooked or cast off as illegitimate because they do not easily conform to institutionalized monolithic categories.

Nationalism and colonialism, historically and contemporarily contextualized, perform an integral role in diaspora theory (Duany 2000). Butler (2001) builds upon this conjuncture, framing diaspora as an interpretive lens utilized to understand the development of this collective phenomenon. Locations and memories negotiate identity in complex ways by challenging colonial epistemology and its power structures (Brah 1996) aimed at unpacking the pillar of origin in diaspora theory (Khader 2003). Theorizing diaspora, therefore, is central to understanding it as both a descriptive term and theoretical framework within the context of postcolonial studies, specifically in Italy. Italian diaspora studies (for example Clò and Fiore 2001; Fiore 2017; Gabaccia 2000; Lombardi-Diop 2015; Romeo 2018; Verdicchio 2016) have already established postcolonial discourses that focus on the dynamics of double (inner) colonization, how colonialism creates and maintains inequality that prompts migration and diaspora, and the fact that, although postcolonial studies officially came to Italy late, it has been de facto practiced in scholarship for generations (Ponzanesi and Polizzi 2016). Further, power relationships within colonialism are triggered by the presence of historically othered people in Italy (Ponzanesi and Polizzi 2016). A brief example of this manifestation in second generation Italian hip hop is the framing narrative of “Hassan” (Kuti 2018). The frame, a speech by Senegalese Italian activist Pape Diaw, makes the argument and the experience clear, “E allora, se

si sfrutta l'Africa, ai loro contadini gli prendiamo la loro terra, ma queste persone da qualche parte dovranno pur andare? [Applauso]. Io penso che è da lì che bisogna ripartire se vogliamo fermare l'immigrazione” (“And so if Africa is exploited, we take all their farmer’s land, these people will have to go somewhere else, yes? [Applause]. I think we need to start from here if we want to stop immigration”). Pape Diaw’s speech begins by establishing a historical account of colonization, framing it as the cause of immigration. He opposes imperial rhetoric centered around cultural elitism and racism, and instead represents the colonizers as the true criminals. After the song has finished, he begs the question of where exploited people should go. This line garnered a resounding applause because it debunks the dominant myth of “illegal” immigration, i.e. people are coming to Italy to steal land, and tries to understand its cause. In this way, immigration is the effect of colonization. It is the land of the colonized that has been illegally taken. Tommy Kuti’s first LP *Italiano vero* (True/Real Italian) as a whole criticizes who “real” Italians are, positing himself as real and true: the proof is in his experiences and his lyrics. More detailed analyses of Tommy Kuti are in Chapter 2.

On a larger scale this dissertation contributes to the Black Mediterranean project (Dos Santos 2021; Fabbri 2020; Hawthorne 2020 and 2022; Oliva and Zagarella 2020 and 2021), which builds upon the scholarship of Paul Gilroy and *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). Similarly, the Black Mediterranean project<sup>21</sup> seeks to uncover what new narratives Black Italians are creating and how they “challenge the banality of whiteness and the stereotypes and archetypes that are the legacy of colonial systems of oppression” (Hawthorne 2020). This aligns with the objectives of Diversity, Transformation & Italian Studies (Calabretta, Conrad, Giuliani Caponetto, Melita, and Nathan), a newly formed collective aimed at

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<sup>21</sup> See *The Black Mediterranean: Bodies, Borders, and Citizenship in the Contemporary Migration Crisis* (2021) and *Contesting Race and Citizenship: Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean* (2022).



diversifying the Italian curriculum, challenging the canon, and promoting historically othered voices.<sup>22</sup> This involves fostering an environment at both the scholarly and pedagogical levels that centers Black Italy, national identity formation, and additional forms of knowledge production. Important in this debate are the documentaries *18 ius soli*<sup>23</sup> (2011) and *Blaxploitalian* (2016), both by Italian Ghanian activist and director Fred Kuwornu, that trace the use of racist imagery as well as the legacy of colonization and exclusion through racist immigration politics and policies. These works are part of his Teaching Black Italy<sup>24</sup> project, which launched its first annual summer course in 2021. A resounding success, its curriculum centers historical and contemporary Black Italy and Black Italians. In fact, “Blackness is not anything new in the Italian peninsula” as it has always been a fundamental part (Hawthorne 2020). That is to say, *Nerezza* (Blackness) is inseparable from *italianità*. Voices, experiences, people, and memories, however, have been “invisibilized” (Hawthorne 2020). The postcolonial project of exposing the legacy of colonialism contextualizes contemporary racism in Italy (Fabbri 2020). Hawthorne and Fabbri further emphasize the importance of new “sites of theorizing,” of which second generation Italian hip hop culture is a primary example. The social media revolution has created new tools to connect and dialogue with overlapping, international, and transnational experiences. Contemporary projects and communications include the Afroitalian Souls blog (www.afroitaliansouls.it), the Black Italy five article series (www.publicbooks.org), the Sulla razza (On/About Race) podcast (www.sullarazza.it/), Black Italia (www.blackitalia.info), 2G rap with Rebecca Kazadi and Tommy Kuti episodes on the TRX radio YouTube channel<sup>25</sup>, “Black

<sup>22</sup> For more information on DTIS: <https://dtitalianstudies.uark.edu/>

<sup>23</sup> *18 Ius soli* has been criticized for operating under an apolitical and acritical view of these issues. For example Gianfranco Fini, a historic leader of the pro-fascist and now defunct party *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance), is featured in the film as a promoter of a nationalist (monolithic) Italian identity.

<sup>24</sup> [www.blackitalia.info/teachingblackitaly](http://www.blackitalia.info/teachingblackitaly)

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC\\_Rpz5usWMpY\\_qLcENPFEGO](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_Rpz5usWMpY_qLcENPFEGO)

Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning: Italy” (VICE News 2021<sup>26</sup>), and the global Black Lives Matter movement (blacklivesmatter.com). These grass roots resources rehumanize Blackness on a global scale. Taken together, they demonstrate the growth of a movement that is multifaceted and multilingual.

### **A Note on Author, Authority, and Authorization**

The subtitle of my dissertation, *Second Generation Italian Hip Hop Artists and the Authorization of Postcolonial Italian Identities*, refers to the multiaccentual, layered, and interconnected meanings of author, authority, and authorization. Central to each chapter are second generation Italian hip hop artists, *cantautori* (singer-songwriters) who author and perform their work in their own words, representing themselves individually and as part of a collective whole, each with specific histories that matter. The Italian term *cantautore*, a compound word of *cantante* (singer) and *autore* (author), does a better job at describing the work these *cantautori* do: their authorship is integral to who they are. Songwriter, while a much more specific term, loses a sense of authority. This has to do with cultural and political connotations to authors and authorship with respect to power and influence. Taken literally, *cantautore* also challenges the cultural hierarchy of authors, which is the term used predominantly for writers of books and therefore privileges institutionalized, hegemonic definitions of Literature. Literature with a capital “L” is a common way to call out this dominating hierarchy and challenge literary authority (who has it, who should have it, who does not have it yet). At the same time, applying cultural theory designates songs as authentic cultural products and multimodal poetic<sup>27</sup> texts that inform and react to culture. They are just (if not more) as influential and essential as indoctrinating canonical texts. Additionally, authorship establishes autonomy, voice, perspective,

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h60y7Z-GipQ>

<sup>27</sup> Poetry is central to Italian literature and identity. Dante Alighieri is often referred to as *il sommo poeta* (the supreme poet). Songwriting is itself a form of poetic voice.

and the power of the story. Autonomy links authorship and authority, providing a solid ground for political power. This power has both a force and a direction, denoting physical, political, societal, and symbolic movement. Lastly, I utilize both authorization in its common definition of “granting legitimate power, authority, and permission” and as an attempt to understand the process of becoming an author. Since all terms and concepts are related, it is important to push these meanings to the forefront of the discussion. Authorization then comes to mean “the process of granting authority” and “the process of becoming an author,” who also possesses authority. Authorization, in both instances, assumes not only legitimate, worthy, and permitted recognition, but also the authority to practice this power. More specifically, second generation Italian hip hop artists authorize postcolonial Italian identities through their music, voice, and lyrics. Second generation stories are authorized: both as postcolonial texts and as authentic cultural discourse.

### **Methodology and Intersectionality**

Defined as the study of “language in use” (Gee 19; Johnstone 3), I utilize discourse analysis to elucidate the complex, multilayered, and embedded messages in second generation Italian hip hop. The term “discourse” functions as a mass noun, generally used in the singular to denote “instances of communicative action in the medium of language,” including symbolic behavior (Johnstone 2). With respect to second generation Italian hip hop, language exists in lyrics, beats, rhythms, rhymes, music videos, sampling, and signifying. Fundamental to the meaning-making process, discourse in the plural signifies “patterns of belief and habitual action as well as patterns of language” (Johnstone 3). In this way, discourses operate within a multidirectional, co-influential, complex, and dynamic relationship; they determine and contradict each other. Discourse analysis examines communication with respect to identity, power, inequality, and the social relations that enable, contradict, and challenge institutionalized

definitions and identities. If discourse is “language in use,” then analysis examines its aspects and functions, utilizing tools of inquiry and building tasks focused on asking and answering “how” questions that foreground identity formation (Gee 2014). Discourse analysis posits that “humans are active makers and designers” of meaning (Gee 2014), therefore reading, listening, and watching hip hop artists is integral to understanding what, why, and how they communicate within a specific intersection of contemporary and political contexts.

I apply discourse analysis to hip hop lyrics, rhythms, beats, and music videos that challenge the status quo by criticizing colonial practices of identification that exclude and dehumanize forever “non-Italians.” This analysis utilizes a postcolonial paradigm of plurality and internationality, as well as re-formulates multiculturalism - the doctrine that separate, monolithic cultures exist seemingly in geographic, historic, and cultural vacuums - into interculturalism. Operating within a cultural studies framework, hip hop lyrics, songs, mixes, productions, collaborations, and music videos are authentic texts that reflect and inform lived reality: “language in use” that reacts to and shapes contemporary Italian society. Therefore, it is important to conduct close cultural readings of these texts in order to fully develop and analyze their intricate, strategic, multi-layered, and complex discourses.

To accomplish this, cultural readings took place on individual and overlapping levels. I started with narrowing down a group of specific artists to study. I had previously written about Tommy Kuti’s “#AFROITALIANO” as well as Sanremo 2019 and Mahmood’s “controversial” victory.<sup>28</sup> I had first learned of Tommy Kuti from a Facebook post by Ryan Calabretta-Sajder in which he shared the music video. I had known of Sanremo since I began teaching Italian in 2012;

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<sup>28</sup> “Straight Outta Melanin: Tommy Kuti and His #AFROITALIANO Audience” in Communication and Cultural Studies (COMM 5503) with Thomas Rosteck, Fall 2018 and “Politics of Italian Identity: Mahmood and Sanremo 2019” in Politics of Race, Ethnicity & Immigration (PLSC 5253) with Pearl Dowe, Spring 2019.

I browsed songs from Sanremo every year and used them to teach new vocabulary and review grammatical structures. Each study highlighted institutionalized racism in contemporary Italy, the continued colonization of *italianità*, and how hip hop artists resisted hegemonic definitions of belonging. The YouTube algorithm, noting my increased listening and watching of Kuti and Mahmood, suggested other contemporary Italian rap songs, one of which was “Respiro” (“I Can’t Breathe”), ft. Amir Issaa, a collaboration born out of protesting the murder of George Floyd. At the same time, through networking with Clarissa Clò (I presented my research on Mahmood at PAMLA 2019 in San Diego, CA), I came into contact with Enrico Zammarchi. He sent me his dissertation on the history of Italian Hip Hop, which contained a wealth of background information, a section dedicated to Amir Issaa, and a last chapter that spoke of second generation Italians. This solidified the importance of Issaa and his place in this dissertation.

Once I realized that contemporary second generation Italian hip hop was my main data set, I knew I had to incorporate Ghali, Cécile, Chadia Rodriguez, and Karima DueG. Ghali’s attention to detail, high production value, and ability to create hit after hit made it clear of his significance in the rap scene. *Race, Nation and Gender in Modern Italy: Intersectional Representations in Visual Culture* (Giuliani 2019) contains a section on Cécile and Sanremo 2016. The end of “On Rhythms and Rhymes: Poetics of Identity in Postcolonial Italy” (Ardizzoni 2020) nominates Chadia Rodriguez as a way to look at gender, which is lacking in Italian hip hop scholarship in general and was a large gap in my project at the time. The articles “L’afrofuturismo tra Stati e Italia: dalla memoria storica ai viaggi intergalattici per re-immaginare futuri postumani” (“Afrofuturism Between the United States and Italy: From Historical Memory to Intergalactic Voyages In Order To Reimagine Post-Human Futures” Fabbri

2020) and “Karima 2G: A Racist Antidote” (Dabiri 2017) made Karima 2G/DueG’s importance very apparent. While there are more artists to include (Bello Figo, Marracash, Axell, etc.), I choose these seven to start because of their bodies of work and relative ease of access via social media and the internet.

Having established a fixed number of artists, I listened and/or read the lyrics to virtually all of their songs produced up until 2021. Every song was available to listen to via YouTube, Spotify, or Vimeo, and while lyrics for Ghali’s albums, most of Issaa’s, and many tracks from Tommy Kuti’s *Italiano vero (True/Real Italian)* were available, many from Karima DueG and even Chadia Rodriguez were not. This meant listening to audio tracks multiple times and even uploading a few lyrics to Genius.com. The purpose of this was to be able to read lyrics to textually identify themes of identity, race, sexuality, otherness, *italianità*, and second generations. After individually choosing songs that communicated these themes to varying degrees, I listened to them and watched every music video that was available. I did this to further understand the song as a whole: as a literary text, a musical experience, and a visual piece of art. This resulted in a plethora of notes on individual tracks. Next, I compared how artists communicate the themes above, focusing on similarities and variations. Sometimes it was a question of using the same or similar phraseology with respect to Italian identity, blood, and/or skin. Other times it took a closer reading of the lyrics to uncover covert and overt messaging. The goal was to organize their discursive strategies into different subsets, which would then become sections of chapters. Amir Issaa’s vast catalog quickly became an entire chapter. I decided to use Cécile as a frame for race and gender since “N.E.G.R.A.” approaches these themes unapologetically head-on. The resulting backlash and elimination proved to be an exciting starting point to introduce these dynamics as well as incorporate Italian postcolonialism and the Sanremo Music Festival. Tommy Kuti,

Chadia Rodriguez, Karima DueG, and Ghali were placed in their own chapter because they were all actively releasing new music, representing an interesting trajectory with respect to Italian hip hop.

Listening to the music entailed identifying specific instruments and mapping out the instrumentation, chord progression<sup>29</sup>, and notable changes in the music when transitioning from the intro to the first verse, chorus, bridge, or outro. Music stoppages highlighted certain lyrics, making them more noticeable in the song. This added a layer of interpretation with the texts themselves that harmonized messaging, creating a cadence of rhyme, memory, and reflection. It is also the way in which virtually all songs are consumed. When available, I watched corresponding music videos to tracks selected. Similar to listening to music, this required numerous instances of pausing, rewinding, and watching specific sections multiple times. Quick cuts and short scenes made this even more necessary. This third layer (lyrics and music being the first two) contained not only visual representations of themes in the lyrics themselves, but often added additional narrative elements for consideration, telling a story together with the lyrics, or telling two stories, or telling multiple stories stitched together with quick cuts. I found it necessary to first separate my textual, musical, and visual analyses before talking about songs as a whole because of the richness that each part brought to the discussion. Surmising that some songs and some artists would be recognized, together with writing this dissertation in English to readers with varying levels of proficiency in Italian, I decided to put translations of lyrics in parenthesis immediately following the original Italian. While not as aesthetically pleasing as footnotes, I believe it makes for an easier read: those that understand Italian see it first, those that want to skip over it can read what is in parenthesis. Background information is left footnoted for those that want additional context. The analysis does not stop with lyrics, music, and music

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<sup>29</sup> To the best of my ability as an amateur pianist.

videos, since they all exist within the realm of Italian hip hop during a time of struggling over meanings of *italianità*.

Reading, listening, and watching albums, extended plays (EPs), singles, and music videos are part of a greater opus within a postcolonial context. This means contextualizing these texts in terms of political, cultural, and historical moments. I present my interpretation of messaging as well as the ways in which these messages are communicated. Of particular interest is how hip hop lyrics come alive through being spoken, rapped, and sung. The musical experience becomes a multiaccentual reading and experience of discourse, with the artist and audience as participants. Tracing historical and contemporary references in songs demonstrates the legacy of these discourses and how hip hop re-interprets and re-articulates them in postcolonial terms. Historical references create a tradition and locate hip hop within a plethora of Italian cultural practices. Contemporary references to food, classic TV shows, and Italian politics locate the artists within Italian identity: they are active participants and should therefore receive equal treatment. Additionally, discussing growing up in Italy establishes strong grounds for citizenship.

Intersectionality informs my approach to analyzing discourses on race, gender, and sexuality. In “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics” (1989) Kimberlé Crenshaw demonstrates how race and gender are inextricably linked and how separating these oppressions distorts the lived experience of people of color, specifically Black women. Crenshaw’s call for a paradigm shift in thinking about structural inequality requires Black women to be at the center of the debate, as subjects and authors of their own stories and not as objects of study, which historically has been the case. Building upon the work of Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) and Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), Crenshaw critiques the primacy of race in



Black political thought, instead effectively explaining that struggles are not singular issues. Institutionalized knowledge is fragmented, incomplete, and based on the invasion of power and not on empathy, therefore inclusion is necessary to proceed holistically. Moreover, an intersectional methodology authorizes multidimensional paths of inquiry into the process of socialization. That is to say, instead of separating socialization into distinct and autonomous race, class, sexuality, and gender projects, applying Crenshaw's inclusive scholarship positions these projects in relation, and at times contradiction, with each other. Therefore, socialization can be understood as multiple, intersecting projects that negotiate and struggle over meaning, eventually crystallizing into a complex structure of interpretation and identity. Understanding this complexity resists essentializing and makes for more nuanced discussions.

In that vein, "Race-Class-Gender Theory: An Image(ry) Problem" (Ken 2007) problematizes the terminology and metaphors used to conceptualize intersectionality. Ken calls for new metaphors that put more emphasis on social locations, which are products of social processes and not additive descriptions of physical characteristics. In turn, these historical, economic, political, and social locations shape perspectives. Scholarship should focus more on the action of oppression and less on the essence of being, thus zeroing in on the multiple, contradictory and/or overdetermined processes that culminate during socialization. This strategy centers marginalized people and their experiences. They are the protagonists in their own stories, so their voices need to be elevated. With respect to gender, "Intersectionality and the Study of Black, Sexual Minority Women" (Moore 2012) demonstrates how the power structure of heterosexism systematically erases Black women from history, arguing that race filters gender, sexuality, and class, structurally affecting how they are experienced. The convergence of these structures, which are results of socialization processes, solidifies social inequality on multiple

fronts. Applying this methodology to second generation Italian hip hop maps the complex intersections of power, politics, and resistance in relation to the movements toward empathy, inclusivity, and citizenship, thus providing a rich space to encourage discussion.

Primary sources are the lyrics themselves, which can be found on the sites Angolo testi ([www.angolotesti.it](http://www.angolotesti.it)) and Genius ([genius.com](http://genius.com)). The former is a highly accurate repository of Italian song lyrics that is updated regularly. The latter is not only a collection of song lyrics from across the globe but includes a wiki-style system of textual annotations that must first be verified by staff. While this does not represent academically peer-reviewed research, it does speak to popular musicology and an exercise in international cooperation powered by the Internet. This is indicative of where my research has and will continue to take me, which is to say, outside of institutionalized avenues of knowledge and into the power of social media, YouTube, fansites, and the World Wide Web. The digital exportation of re-imagined and re-articulated *italianità* allows this research to be possible. A necessary part of this endeavor is archiving these texts into a singular, albeit ever-growing repository.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Seconde generazioni: Terminology and Trends***

In order to understand how second generation Italians authorize postcolonial *italianità*, it is paramount to define who *seconde generazioni*<sup>31</sup> (second generations) are and who they represent. However, the category of *seconde generazioni* is a contested term (Clò 2012; O’Healy 2021; Parati 2017; Scego 2021). In particular, Igiaba Scego has consistently stated her opposition to the term “second generation,” arguing that it can and has been used to treat diverse

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<sup>30</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>31</sup> Since “*seconde generazioni*” means “second generations,” I mostly translate the phrase to “second generation Italians” to maintain the plural. While I consider these terms relatively equivalent, I have intentionally used *seconde generazioni* frequently to familiarize the reader with this terminology.

populations and people as a monolith.<sup>32</sup> While this argument is understandable and shared, I have come to accept the use of *seconde generazioni* as a form of strategic essentialism, first defined by Spivak in the 1980s, in order to build a collective consciousness and sustain a movement. It is in this context that I adopt this terminology. Furthermore, second generation Italians relate, albeit to varying degrees, to the concept of “identità sospesa” (“suspended identity,” *Insider Trend* 2021), as their individual and collective identities are postponed and even banned by predominantly xenophobic policies and inequalities that exclude them from full participation.

Racialization plays a key role in weaponizing xenophobia in Italy, positioning second generation Italians as outside invaders attempting to take over and colonize essentialist notions of *italianità*.<sup>33</sup> Because of this, Black Italians and second generation Italians share a significant amount of overlap in how they are categorized and treated in Italy, and demonstrate similar strategies to build a collective consciousness. For example, Tommy Kuti and Igiaba Scego identify themselves, amongst other things, as Afroitalians. This generic term seeks to unify a shared experience that coalesces into political power. It is but one aspect of a kaleidoscopic collective identity (Tamburri 1991, 1994).

*Seconde generazioni* cannot be tied down to singular, monolithic definitions. At the heart of this collective identity is a strong sense of pluralism and heterogeneity. They are constantly in flux, inclusive, and adapting to build solidarity. In this way, *seconde generazioni* resemble a “kaleidoscopic population” (Tamburri 48). First espoused in *To Hyphenate or Not to Hyphenate* (1991) and further developed in “In (Re)cognition of the Italian/American Writer: Definitions and Categories” (1994), Anthony Tamburri utilizes this metaphor with respect to identities in the United States and in specific reference to Italian Americans. I apply this description to second

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<sup>32</sup> However, she herself has utilized this terminology in the past (2004).

<sup>33</sup> Ironically, this is an excellent description of Italian colonization.

generation Italians as a whole. They exemplify a heterogeneous population united under antiracism and citizenship rights (Issaa 195). In fact, “C’erano tanti modi di essere ‘di seconda generazione’, quanti eravamo noi” (There were as many ways to be ‘second generation,’ as there were us” Issaa 195).

Therefore *seconde generazioni* is by design a relatively vague term that seeks to unite any and all people born and/or raised in Italy from a young age having at least one parent with origins from another country. This working definition has been adopted by second generation Italians themselves as well as scholars who have written about them (Ardizzoni 2020; Caponetto 2019; Clò 2012; Fabbri 2020; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012 and 2015; Marin 2020; Parati 2017; Romeo 2018; Zammarchi 2019). This definition is also included in *The Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019*, written by an independent research foundation based in Milan, Italy (ISMU<sup>34</sup> 2020). Second generation is a term “employed as a descriptor to indicate those children who had no choice but to follow their parents’ decision to migrate. As such, they may have been born in Italy or may have arrived at a very young age” (Clò, “Hip Pop” 277).

An important qualification is missing from this definition: *seconde generazioni* is by design a relatively vague term that seeks to unite any and all people born and/or raised in Italy from a young age having at least one parent with origins from a *racialized* country. Racialization based on phenotype profoundly affects lived experience in Italy as well as the rest of the world. Those able to pass as “Italian looking” (read: white European) do not experience the same micro or macro aggressions related to racism and xenophobia.

Italian by culture, second generation Italians point towards their socialization, upbringing, and intimate relationship with the only home most have ever known. This also explains the push not only towards *jus soli*, but *jus culturae*, since birthright citizenship would

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<sup>34</sup> *Iniziative e studi sulla multiethnicità* (Initiatives and Studies on Multiethnicity), [www.ismu.org](http://www.ismu.org).

not apply to those who happened to be born elsewhere, even though they have spent virtually their entire lives in Italy. To put it bluntly, the *italianità* of *seconde generazioni* matters; their fight for recognition flows through their collective action by challenging homogenized, monolithic notions of *italianità*. Their stories deserve the spotlight. Of particular interest is how hip hop artists use their artistry to unsettle institutionalized definitions and champion inclusion.

In fact, second generation Italian hip hop artists actively re-articulate and authorize postcolonial Italian identities by challenging whitewashed, hegemonic notions of *italianità*. This discourse focuses on citizenship, belonging, and the art of storytelling that breaks down barriers and builds a sense of community within and through Italian borders. Clò (2012) outlines many common discursive strategies of second generation Italians, including,

the skilled manipulation of Italian language, local dialects, and youth jargon, the pungent use of irony, the savvy deployment of popular culture references, the representation of characters with hybrid identities, the dramatization of the intergenerational conflict, and the complicated confrontation with Italian institutions (278).

In these ways, *seconde generazioni* take advantage of their socialization by utilizing their knowledge of popular culture, referring to facts only a “native” would know, in order to further validate their *italianità*. For example, Tommy Kuti talks about growing up watching cartoons hosted by Cristina D’Avena, which was very popular in the 90’s and early 2000’s. Since “second generations and Afro-Italians are left without a real sense of belonging - both socially and at a bureaucratic level - to the Italian state” (Zammarchi 228-229), they create and establish their own belonging through and with their art.

Italian literature written by second generation authors already has a strong establishment both in Italy and internationally. Authors such as Igiaba Scego (1974-), Ubah Cristina Ali Farah

(1973-), Gabriella Ghermandi (1965-), Espérance Hakuzwimana Ripanti (1991-), and Djarah Kan (1994-) have written novels, short stories, blogs, and given interviews about the life of *seconde generazioni*, challenging homogeneity and utilizing postcolonial *italianità* as a site of resistance, hope, and change (Fabbri 2020, citing *Yearning* by bell hooks 68). In this way, existence is a form of resistance that establishes a path towards recognition, respect, and inclusion (Fabbri 2020; VICE News 2021). Existing includes bearing witness to racial and gender inequalities in Italy that are perpetuated by exclusionary politics, telling stories of what it means to be second generation Italian, and celebrating the heterogeneity of postcolonial *italianità*. Of particular interest is the relationship between the Italian words for resistance, *resistenza*, and existence, *esistenza*, which Fabbri (2020) combines to create *(r)esistenza* (16) showing the overlapping and intersecting dynamics of these two terms. It is within this space of existing and resisting that second generation Italians ground themselves and their bodies of work. At the forefront of this literature are Italian women of color, specifically Black Italian women. They continue to pave the way for more authors and artists to collectively tell stories, exist, and resist. This is interesting given that, as a whole, Italian women's literature still faces marginalization, tokenism, and lack of scholarly attention. Italian hip hop scholarship is no exception. Ardizzoni (2020) directly calls out this gap, pointing to the need to unpack gender and the process of gendering,

The gendered component of Italian postcolonial hip hop is indeed an important aspect that future research should pay attention to. Despite the overwhelming predominance of male artists, this genre is slowly opening the doors to women rappers like Chadia Rodriguez, and their poetics of identity in postcolonial Italy might have a different imprint (14).

This speaks to the importance of putting rapper *italiane* (feminine plural) in conversation with rapper *italiani* (masculine and general plural) to understand these dynamics and to realize more nuanced analysis and critique. Chapter 4 is dedicated to a discourse analysis of contemporary artists that seeks to answer Ardizzoni's call.

*Seconde generazioni*, sometimes referred to as “new” Italians - a multiethnic, intercultural, multilingual, and multiaccultural population that demonstrates Italy's historical, current, and future heterogeneity - should not be labeled a new concept. Quite the contrary, as diverse peoples, languages, ethnicities, and cultures have always been a part of Italy's history, both past and present. What has changed is the momentum towards national recognition and citizenship, including antiracist and antixenophobic protests in the post George Floyd era as well as literature that challenges the very conception of what it means to be Italian. Seen through the prism of hip hop, institutionalized Italian identity, which privileges cis gender, heterosexual, Catholic white men, is in the middle of a postcolonial reckoning (Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012). Second generation Italian hip hop is a major player in this movement. Amir Issaa, considered one of the first successful second generation artists in Italy, is a prime example because his music and music videos challenge these institutionalized definitions. He and his body of work are discussed in the next chapter.

Igiaba Scego, one of the most well-known Somali Italian authors, explains the precarious identity of second generation Italians in *La mia casa è dove sono* (*My Home is Where I am*, 2010),

Quindi molti della cosiddetta seconda generazione vivono da stranieri nella loro nazione.

Hanno vite bloccate perché non avere la cittadinanza, oltre a essere pesante a livello

simbolico, ti impedisce di iscriverti agli albi professionali, di viaggiare, di dire la tua attraverso il voto nel paese che è tuo da tutta una vita (110-111)

(Therefore many people of the so-called second generation live as foreigners in their own country. Their lives are blocked because not having citizenship, beyond being a heavy symbolic burden, prevents you from applying for jobs, traveling, saying your piece through voting in the country that has been yours for your entire life).

This is precisely the predicament of many second generation Italians: their de facto *italianità* lacks de jure recognition, which in turn creates barriers that determine symbolic and social outcomes. Scego identifies and belongs to the collective second generation; she has been a writer for over 30 years. Her newest novel, *La linea del colore* (*The Color Line* 2020), is a direct reference to the concept popularized by Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. duBois. Subtitled *Il gran tour di Lafanu Brown* (*The Grand Tour of Lafanu Brown*), its titular character represents international Blackness by bridging the concepts of Whiteness and Blackness in the United States and Italy. In this way, Scego re-articulates Italian history, geography, and the mapping of physical, cultural, racial, and symbolic borders, providing a path out of historical amnesia by building inclusive spaces.

### **Hip Hop Connections**

This section locates hip hop as a global phenomenon with roots in the late 1970s South Bronx. I situate the development of Italian<sup>35</sup> hip hop within two historical developments, both in the 1970s: (1) the cultural and musical productions of African American, Caribbean American, Latin American, Puerto Rican, and Italian American artists in New York City; and (2) Italian youth subcultures and widespread protest movements in Italy.

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<sup>35</sup> In Italy, made by Italians, and/or written in Italian



Numerous scholars trace hip hop's origins to the Bronx in the 1970s (Berrocal 2012; Dyson 2014; George 1998; Lipsitz 1997; Sciorra 2002; Zammarchi 2019); however contemporary hip hop also has roots in Los Angeles, CA (George 1998). Additionally, with roots in African oral traditions (Dyson 2014), hip hop is a cultural practice "of diaspora that developed out of cross-cultural exchanges between different groups in the African diaspora in the Americas" (Rivera-Rideau 156). Hip hop, among many other things, is a postcolonial, diasporic art form, and even though it has a specific space, place, and time (South Bronx, New York City, 1970s) with specific authors and artists at its inception (African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Latin Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Italian Americans), its roots and branches go beyond the American continent and precede the 1970s. As a diasporic discursive strategy and art form, the political environments from which hip hop emerges cannot be reduced to singular, monolithic, monolingual, or monocultural contexts.

Traditionally, the pillars of hip hop culture are "b-boying (dance), graffiti art (graphic art), beats (music), and rhyming (poetics)" (White 36). While this dissertation privileges the latter two - music and poetics in the form of rap - hip hop culture is a diverse and complex collection of discursive strategies, art forms, sounds, and voices. Hip hop discourse exposes historical and contemporary contradictions (White 2011) by reclaiming history, questioning authority, and challenging power dynamics (Dyson 67-68). It is a window into social and economic inequality (Dyson 2014), giving voice to the invisible realities of marginalized populations. Hip hop represents and practices the active decolonization of music by challenging the hierarchy of art (White 2011). These characteristics have made hip hop an internationally popular phenomenon with global and local appeal because it comes from the people. Their

power to relate, build consciousness, and empathize with marginalized voices, stories, and identities continues to take the world by storm.

George Lipsitz, in “Diasporic Noise: History, Hip Hop, and the Post-colonial Politics of Sound” (1997), highlights hip hop’s versatility and adaptability (26) to explain its ever-growing global popularity. Conscious of capitalist consumption, Lipsitz explains how hip hop, despite monopolized markets, creates a path for marginalized identities to tell their stories in their own words, “Although hip hop circulates as a commodity marketed by highly centralized monopolies from metropolitan countries, it also serves as a conduit for ideas and images articulating subaltern identities” (36). Hip hop transmits these messages through the use of lyrics, sound, and rhythm, effectively harmonizing collective struggles that appeal to consumers. This process creates a space for groups of people to exist and resist by articulating shared realities. In doing so, hip hop “maps out real and imagined relations between people that speak to the realities of displacement, disillusion, and despair” (36). Hip hop artists perform real and imaginary relationships that provide paths towards recognition, success, and solidarity. The result is a global phenomenon of experiences.

Hip hop’s global appeal creates a dynamic experience in Italy. Scholars writing about hip hop in the USA since the late 1990s already had a sense of what was happening across the Atlantic. White (2011) notes hip hop’s popularity amongst European youth and its “active, if relatively small underground scene since the early 1980s” (127). More specifically, George (1998) mentions hip hop in the middle of the Mediterranean, “In Italy, a place where extremes of political thought mesh with a passionate nature, there are many groups that have gravitated toward the [hip hop] culture for its ability to articulate anger” (205), referring to the Italian band *Articolo 31*<sup>36</sup> and their 1993 track “Legge del taglione” (“An Eye For An Eye”), performed at a

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<sup>36</sup> Formed in Milan in 1990, *Articolo 31* combines elements of hip hop, funk, and pop.

time of political and social unrest in Italy. Other examples include the groups *Sangue Misto*<sup>37</sup> (Mixed Blood) and *Sacre Scuole*<sup>38</sup> (Sacred Schools). In Italy, hip hop emerged as a product of youth subcultures in the 1970s at i centri sociali (social centers), which housed creative and dissident spaces in which young Italians expressed their struggles and shared experiences (Sciorra 2002; Zammarchi 2019). Widespread, youth-led protests, characterized by Il Movimento del '77 (the Movement of 1977), created a political environment in which hip hop began to take shape (Sciorra 2002; Zammarchi 2019).

Joseph Sciorra (2002 and 2012) and Enrico Zammarchi (2019) have been vital in tracing and historicizing Italian hip hop. *Italianrap.com* (1998-2012), Sciorra's 14-year project and first English website dedicated to archiving Italian hip hop, not only became internationally popular (Amir Issaa was a big fan), but also resulted in a 3-day international symposium and festival dedicated to "Hip Hop from the Italian Diaspora" in Tuscany in 2000 (Sciorra 2002). Sciorra decided to collect Italian rap via a website and not an "obscure academic journal" (Sciorra 3) so that it would be easily accessible internationally. His work details the role of hip hop in expressing popular memory for social justice and embracing multilingualism. His widely read and cited "Hip Hop from Italy and the Diaspora: A Report from the 41st Parallel" (2002), written after the 2000 festival and symposium, characterizes "the possibilities hip hop offers emigrants from, to, and within Italy and their descendants" in that it creates "new and hybrid social configurations that cross national and ethnic boundaries" (8). Twenty years later, hip hop continues to offer a path towards recognition, popularity, and success by creating international

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<sup>37</sup> *Sangue Misto* formed in Bologna in 1993. Their only album *SxM* is still regarded as a revolutionary work in early Italian hip hop.

<sup>38</sup> *Sacre scuole* formed in Milan in 1999. Their name changed to Club Dogo and then Dogo Gang.

and transnational configurations. Sciorra's scholarship has been instrumental in documenting Italian hip hop.

More recently, little attention has been afforded to this topic besides Enrico Zammarchi's dissertation "'My Style is Strictly Italo': A History of Italian Hip-Hop" (2019, unpublished), which details the historical development of hip hop in Italy by tracing its roots and discussing the political environment from which it surfaced. Zammarchi re-articulates Sciorra's characterization above, describing hip hop "as a historically transnational subculture" that "has allowed certain artists to negotiate the cultural expectations and identities that mainstream media and institutions have often attached to them, voicing their social distress while providing new, ethnically-hybrid conceptions of Italianness" (19-20). Mixed Blood's 1994 track "Lo straniero" ("The Foreigner") embodies this primary function of hip hop, on both global and local levels.

Hop hop developed in various Italian cities during the early 1990s. One region of importance is southern Italy, the site of Italy's first (inner) colonization. The newly formed country instantly subjected its southern citizens to inequities already present when Italy itself had been a colony. As discussed in the introduction, southern *contadini* (peasant farmers) were excluded from land ownership and therefore upward economic and social mobility. Southern Italians were differentiated from Northern Italians based on race, with Southerners racialized as African and therefore deemed inferior, uncivilized, and in need of proprietors. Lombardi-Diop and Romeo (2012) note that "the racialization of the South and of migrants is central to hip hop cultures in Italy" (14). Zammarchi, framing hip hop as resistance to this historical and contemporary colonization, locates Southern Italians as laying the groundwork for first and second generations to continue the tradition. Berrocal (2012) considers Italy's first hip hop record to be Mixed Blood's *SxM* (1994, of which "Lo straniero" is a track) because of its beat

and supposed purity (115). More importantly, this is representative of the “re-appropriation of some personal prerogatives from which we are alienated by urban society and modern lifestyle” (Berrocal 116).

Italian hip hop, therefore, claims and reclaims space and place, affirming postcolonial Italian identities. The linguistic diversity practiced in rap lyrics - the use of local languages, international languages, slang and dialect - create more rhyming patterns and possibilities that should be considered a strength (Angelucci 2021). Moreover, these artists and authors not only illuminate “the impact and flaws of the current immigration and citizenship legislation,” they also “offer an alternative, multiethnic, and multifaceted representation of Italy through astute aesthetic choices” (Clò, “Hip Pop” 275). Most importantly, second generation Italian hip hop artists, when faced with the decision of being either Italian or Other, “assert their right not to choose between them” (Angelucci 6). This postcolonial, diasporic viewpoint becomes “simultaneously Italian and international” (Clò, “Hip Pop” 275), decolonizing Italian ethnonationalism and demonstrating the fluidity of *italianità*. That is to say, “Hip hop becomes a space that helps overcome linguistic and cultural barriers and reflects the increasing transculturality of Italy’s new generations” (Angelucci 14). In effect, second generation Italian hip hop decolonizes and transculturizes *italianità* by embodying a holistic, plural, and radically inclusive sense of belonging.

### **Organization of Dissertation**

Hip hop artists and their musical productions are central to this dissertation. Before analyzing specific songs, lyrics, music, and music videos, in the next chapter I establish a contemporary conjuncture. I then contextualize “second generation,” “Italian,” and “hip hop” before putting these concepts together. Following this, I dedicate an entire chapter to Amir Issaa,

a pioneer in hip hop and specifically in second generation Italian hip hop. The penultimate chapter highlights four popular artists: Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez. I conclude with a look back to the Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song and what Mahmood's 2019 victory meant for the movement.

Chapter 1, “‘*Questo è ius music*’: Amir Issaa, Second Generations, and the Power of Music,” traces Amir Issaa's rise to fame and body of work, since he is considered one of the first second generation hip hop artists to gain national recognition in Italy. A targeted number of tracks are designed to show his development over time. As a whole, Issaa re-articulates *italianità* by challenging hegemonic definitions, resisting essentialist ideologies, and celebrating liminal spaces. Main themes include identification, hip hop culture, sites of resistance, and humanizing marginalized identities. An analysis of his instrumentation and music videos offers an additional layer of interpretation that focuses on audial and visual experiences, demonstrating the genius in Issaa's artistry that continues to this day. This chapter details the rise of a major protagonist in the history of second generation Italian hip hop.

Chapter 2, “Decolonizing Language, Race, Identity and Sanremo 2019” focuses on four artists: Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez. A comparative analysis highlights how, through their lyrics, music, and activism, these artists decolonize *italianità* and authorize their identities on individual and collective levels. They claim and reclaim space, using self-reflexive lyrics to signify multiple meanings that often complement and contradict each other. Socially conscious discourses that focus on lived reality explain the contemporary predicament of second generation Italians. As a whole, their work creates an inclusive, dynamic, and welcoming space. The second part of the chapter analyzes Mahmood's “Soldi” (“Money”), which won Sanremo 2019. His victory ignited an explosive scandal in which his *italianità* was

weaponized by xenophobic ideologies reminiscent of Italian colonialism. While the scandal itself was made-up by conservative politicians, it brought questions of *italianità* to the forefront. My analysis demonstrates how things have changed and have stayed the same in contemporary Italian society

Chapter 3, “Decolonizing Gender, Sexuality, and Sanremo 2016” centers Black Italian women and their generation-long struggle over identity and recognition. Language in use is demonstrated by applying theory and methodology to Cécile’s song “N.E.G.R.A.,” which she entered into the 2016 Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song. A pre-show censorship scandal and first round elimination add layers of meaning to her lyrics and music video. This chapter demonstrates the contentiousness of *italianità* and the power of hip hop as a site of resistance. My short concluding chapter synthesizes my project and serves as a jumpstart to further analysis and discussion.

As a whole, this dissertation builds upon the Black Mediterranean and Black Italy projects, establishing hip hop as a rich site of resistance, negotiation, art, and celebration. Similar to *Contesting Race and Citizenship: Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean* (Hawthorne 2022), I study how second generation Italian hip hop artists “are actively reworking the boundaries of Italianness, displacing blood and biological descent in favor of attributes such as cosmopolitan hybridity, economic productivity, and local cultural fluency” (16). What follows is one of the first full-length studies of contemporary second generation Italian hip hop, *italianità*, and the movement towards inclusive citizenship in Italy.

## Chapter 1

### **“Questo è ius music”<sup>39</sup>: Amir Issaa, *Seconde generazioni*, and the Power of Music**

*“La gente mi ha confuso con un immigrato / La gente mi ha confuso con un immigrato / Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione / Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione”*

*“People have confused me for an immigrant / People have confused me for an immigrant / With a foreigner’s face in my country / If there’s a future, it’s the second generation”*

-Amir Issaa, “Non sono un immigrato” (“I Am Not an Immigrant”)

Amir Issaa (1978-), born and raised in the Torpignattara neighborhood of Rome, was one of the first second generation Italian hip hop artists to achieve success and visibility in Italy (Zammarchi 2019), having been an integral part of bringing second generation Italian hip hop from the underground to more mainstream recognition. Torpignattara is an eastern neighborhood near the city center known for its murals and street art. In Issaa’s own words, he is “100% Roman,” “100% Italian,” proud of his “Egyptian blood,” and conscious of the fluidity of his identity. His lyrics tell a personal story that challenges exclusionary definitions of *italianità*. Although he has achieved great success in Italy and abroad, he feels “Italian but Italy doesn’t recognize [him]” (Issaa 2020). This lack of recognition is multidimensional, encompassing the failure to remember, identify, and acknowledge. The act of remembering deals with the past and previous encounters; identification and acknowledgement validate the existence and presence of contemporary Italians in all their pluralities. For example, the Iniziative e studi sulla multietnicità (ISMU) Foundation’s *Twenty-fifth Italian Report on Migrations 2019* (2020) contains a chapter dedicated to second generation Italians. The first sentence of this chapter alludes to a “popular second generation Italian rapper” (Riniolo 103), relegating Amir Issaa’s name to a footnote. This lack of visibility - it would have made sense to identify him directly within the paragraph - is another example of the continued struggle for identification and recognition. Gaining, promoting,

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<sup>39</sup> “This is ius music”



and disseminating visibility in literal terms, for himself and other second generation Italians, is one of Issaa's primary objectives.

Central to Issaa's identity are his family's roots and hip hop inspirations. Speaking at Zoom webinars in 2020 and 2021, he intentionally identifies the relationship his family had with fascism, noting that his grandfather was a fascist soldier who went to Africa to colonize, only to come home to a daughter who wanted to marry an Egyptian immigrant. This Egyptian immigrant became Amir's father (Issaa 2021). Since his father, however, spent a significant time imprisoned in Italy, he was mostly raised by his Italian mother. Growing up feeling voiceless in an Italy that failed to recognize his identities, hip hop introduced him to a world of discourse, protest, resistance, and celebration. Inspirations include Run-D.M.C., Nas, and Public Enemy, as he saw in them what he had always wanted and needed for himself: a method of representation that effectively and emotionally communicates with the world (Issaa 2021). His *modus operandi* includes reclaiming his story (Issaa 2021) as well as taking pride in his originality and authenticity, both on and off the stage (Issaa 2020).

Zammarchi (2019) locates Issaa as a bridge between old school and new school Italian hip hop as well as a central figure in second generation Italian hip hop. This categorization takes into account the development of Italian hip hop as well as discursive strategies that Issaa employs to say his piece. Both historically and stylistically, Issaa bridges underground Italian hip hop and second generation hip hop. At the same time, he continues to develop as an artist, frequently gives public talks, and visits classrooms to spread his message all across Italy and North America. His early track "Straniero nella mia nazione"<sup>40</sup> ("Foreigner in My Country" 2006) builds upon Sangue Misto's song of the same name (1994), as both emphasize structural

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<sup>40</sup> "Straniero nella mia nazione" is considered the first Italian hip hop song to talk about the collective second generation (Clò and Zammarchi 24).

inequality and feelings of foreignness within Italy. Issaa re-articulates beats and lyrics that pay homage to the past and embody an evolution in his own artistry (Zammarchi 2019). Issaa himself (2021) considers hip hop culture a non-judgmental family, emphasizing three out of its four traditional pillars: graffiti, breakdancing, and emceeing (the fourth is DJing). In his own words, rap music is “a tool to talk and protest” (2021) and “a tool for me to express myself and tell my story” (2020). Existence is not only resistance, but the power to represent and challenge institutionalized notions of *italianità*. In fact, Issaa promotes inclusive citizenship and belonging. He writes “for the people” and has been critical of rappers that embrace extreme capitalism and misogyny (Issaa 2021).

Personal storytelling occupies a fundamental space in second generation Italian hip hop as it actively decolonizes and re-articulates *italianità* via the power of representation, resistance, and celebration of postcolonial Italian identities. Autobiographical elements, therefore, are widespread in Issaa’s artistry. He bridges his intercultural identity grounded in Rome and occupies a multiaccentual space with respect to *italianità*, one that goes beyond the hyphenated hybridity that is commonly used to disqualify his identity. Instead, Issaa embraces a postcolonial plurality that second generation Italians embody today. As a site of resistance, hip hop anchors this bridge, utilizing its therapeutic nature to inspire poetic freedom of expression, transforming hegemony into autonomy. This intentional pattern is one of the many reasons why social justice movements around the world continue to utilize music, specifically hip hop, as anthems for their causes. The collective consciousness raised by Issaa since 2004, together with contemporary debates about Italian immigration and citizenship, has solidified a movement dedicated to existence, resistance, and challenging institutionalized racist nationalism that has pervaded virtually all Italian history since the country’s formation in 1861. Second generation Italian hip

hop carves out an inclusive space to share stories that celebrate all forms of *italianità*. Its growing popularity demonstrates success, inspiring activism and more conversations about inclusivity, belonging, and citizenship.

### **Issaa's Tracklist and Overview of Themes**

A strategic analysis of selected tracks emblematic of second generation Italian hip hop and the authorization of postcolonial Italian identities highlight the panorama of Issaa's musical artistry. The lyrics<sup>41</sup>, raps, music, and music videos (where available) of eight songs (six from Issaa's albums, two in which Issaa is featured) are the primary subject of analysis utilized to identify general themes, historical and contemporary references, and demonstrate how Issaa decolonizes and re-articulates *italianità* by challenging hegemonic definitions, resisting essentialist ideologies, and celebrating the liminal spaces inhabited by marginalized identities.

Released together with English Italian producer and DJ Mr. Phil<sup>42</sup> in 2004, "Vivo per questo" ("I Live For This") traces Issaa's origins with hip hop culture, specifically graffiti as it relates to personal and collective identity. "Straniero nella mia nazione" ("Foreigner in My Country"), identical to Sangue Misto's 1994 track, re-articulates Italian postcolonialism through a *seconde generazioni* lens, where the main focus is citizenship. "Questa è Roma 2008" ("This is Rome 2008") centers the Eternal City as a source of pride, identity, and resistance whereas "Non sono un immigrato" ("I Am Not an Immigrant") admonishes racism in Italy. Both tracks are from the 2008 album *Paura di nessuno (Fear of No One)*. In 2012 Issaa released "La mia pelle" ("My Skin"), which incorporates Black Italian Women's literature to frame the struggle over racialized identity, combining the liberating aspects of language and the wind. Two years later, the homonymous title track of *Ius music* (2014) was released during a period of heightened

<sup>41</sup> The original lyrics in Italian appear first in-text, followed by my translations in parenthesis. For longer lyrics, I create a table with Italian on the left and my translations on the right.

<sup>42</sup> Stage name of Philip Preston (1980-) (Genius.com).

awareness and growing movements towards *jus soli* as well as more inclusive citizenship policies. Issaa is featured in the last two tracks, “Sono nato qua” (“I Was Born Here”) by Luca Neves and “Non respiro” (“I Can’t Breathe”) by David Shorty, both from 2020. “Sono nato qua” appeals to *jus soli* and socialization as the only parameters necessary for citizenship and belonging. “Non respiro,” written in response to the murder of George Floyd, creates an international sound that gives voice to all victims of racial violence.

Taken together, these eight songs demonstrate multifaceted discursive, musical, and visual strategies emblematic of second generation Italian hip hop. The process of naming and identification take center stage, as Amir himself went by Massimo for the first eighteen years of his life, hoping to assimilate into mainstream, hegemonic Italian society. Reclaiming the name Amir led to a greater understanding of identification and the subsequent reckoning with space and place, which is central to hip hop culture (Angelucci 2021; Fabbri 2020; George 1998; Sciorra 2002; White 2011). The resulting sites of resistance highlight the lived reality of *seconde generazioni* in their collective fights for recognition and belonging by challenging institutionalized racism and xenophobia. The bulk of this chapter consists of detailed textual analyses of Issaa’s lyrics, music, and music videos with respect to sites of resistance.

In addition to the previously mentioned themes, musicality and visual culture play important roles in understanding the dynamics of Amir Issaa’s artistry. Musicality focuses on instrumentation, sound, rhythm, and beats that negotiate meaning with the lyrics. In this understanding, music does not simply accompany Issaa’s texts. Instead, it highlights, challenges, and works together with lyrics to create textual, audial, and visual experiences. Completely separating lyrics from music and/or music videos would create partial understandings of how these aspects collectively resist, champion, and celebrate the pluralities and complexities of

second generation Italian hip hop. Analyzing each facet and then taking them together, as a whole, provides for a more complex and nuanced discussion.

### **Naming and Identification**

Naming conventions are a critical aspect of Issaa's body of work. Amir's mother changed his name to Massimo to help facilitate assimilation, surmising that a name like "Amir" did not sound Italian enough (Issaa 2020 and 2021). His father, El Sayed, had a similar experience, having changed his name to Franco (Issaa 2021). Amir was Massimo for eighteen years, growing up in Italy, navigating his internal identity as well as external dynamics based on phenotype, which were exacerbated by an education system that by and large romanticizes Italian colonialism and suppresses marginalized people.<sup>43</sup> Amir reclaimed his identity (Ardizzoni 2020), tracing his lineage on both his father's and mother's sides, by talking and rapping about it. As seen in selected tracks, these processes of being and becoming often take center stage at both individual and collective levels. For example, introducing and reintroducing himself as Amir in his songs creates and maintains space for his identity. Appealing to the *seconde generazioni* and the use of "noi" ("we") expands this inclusive identity to people like him. In this way, his music functions as a mirror to Italian society, reflecting the multiaccentuality of *italianità*. Issaa challenges naming conventions and the way in which they crystallize identity. In "Non sono un immigrato," Issaa declares "Mi chiamo Amir come te ti chiami Mario" ("My name is Amir, just like your name is Mario") Issaa simply, yet profoundly states that his name is as logical, normal, and Italian as Mario. This has been a long time coming. Reclaiming his first and last names as Italian, Issaa normalizes his identity to help not only himself, but other *seconde generazioni* like him to achieve national, cultural, and social recognition as well as the right to citizenship. In

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<sup>43</sup> This is by no means a purely Italian phenomenon. For example, many people go by an "American" sounding name in the United States in order to assimilate, or avoid having to correct pronunciation, or to help temper xenophobic microaggressions.

“Non respiro” Issaa not only returns to his own name, but to his entire family, naming them all together, “per mia mamma e soprattutto per mio figlio, per mio padre El Sayed che è scappato dall’Egitto” (“for my mom and above all for my son, for my father El Sayed that escaped from Egypt”), recalling the dynamic past, present, and future parts of his identity. The power of names and storytelling highlight these personal and collective aspects. By oscillating between individual and collective identities, Issaa affirms second generation Italian solidarity and heterogeneity at the same time.

### **Space and Place: Hip Hop Culture and Identity**

Reclaiming his name and identity opened the doors to postcolonial spaces and places that continue to ground his story that he primarily tells with hip hop. In 2004, Issaa and Mr. Phil released *Naturale (Natural)*. Thirteen tracks in total, track six is entitled “Vivo per questo,” which eventually became the title of Issaa’s autobiography. The main theme of “Vivo per questo” is graffiti, one of the pillars of hip hop. As a form of public protest, graffiti illustrates identity and challenges institutionalized (classist) definitions of art. Amir started tagging - the act of writing a name or nickname on a surface - when he was a young teenager, inspired by a “forza misteriosa” (“mysterious force”) as he struggled at school, stealing spray paint instead of attending class, “Tutte le marine in giro a rubare gli spray” (“Every morning out and about, stealing spray paint”). This young Amir expresses pride in his graffiti, looking at old pictures and recounting the first trains that he sprayed. After successfully escaping the police, he returned to the same train the next morning to document his tag, historicizing the act and product of his imagination. The “forza misteriosa” is unexplainable and useless because, as an outsider, “non puoi capire” (“you can’t understand”) Issaa frequently addresses the audience in the second person singular “tu” (“you”) form. In 2004 Italian hip hop, especially second generation Italian

hip hop, was still an underground subculture born out of social centers and youth anti-establishment movements (Zammarchi 2019). The chorus flows between individual and collective identity, living for this, in the moment, in which Issaa cannot imagine himself “in un modo diverso” (“in any other way”). Hip hop chose him,<sup>44</sup> representing a calling in which hip hop culture is bigger than any individual voice. The end of the chorus lists other people and groups that “live for this,” creating a family of shared experiences and motivations. “Vivo per questo” essentially becomes “Viviamo per questo” (“We live for this”), closing the first chorus on a collective note. Each subsequent chorus nominates the many other members of his hip hop family.

The second verse of “Vivo per questo” opens with the memories of two close friends, a pioneering Italian breakdancer (Genius.com) and Zero. He formed these friendships while learning how to breakdance (another pillar of hip hop). The third and last verse recounts Issaa’s first ever rap, confessing that he did it “quasi per scherzo” (“almost as a joke”). Listening to his first track elicits the same priceless emotion of the old train graffiti, nourishing self-worth, belonging, and community, each of which Issaa did not find in mainstream, hegemonic *italianità*. He challenges himself and embraces the nostalgia of the moment, since in reality things have changed. This is made apparent while traveling throughout Italy, “Dall’Emilia alla Sicilia / Sentirsi parte di una grande famiglia” (“From Emilia-Romagna to Sicily / Feeling part of a big family”). This interregional family challenges the borders of Italy’s historical and contemporary regionalism, in which identity is tied to not only regions, but provinces, municipalities, and even neighborhoods. The last line, “Amo l’hip hop e sarò l’hip hop finché vivo” (“I love hip hop and I will be hip hop for as long as I live”), expresses Issaa’s love for the culture, recalling the title of

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<sup>44</sup> “Io non l’ho scelto, è lui [hip hop] che mi ha scelto” (“I didn’t choose it, it’s hip hop that chose me”).

the song as well as the chorus. They all point back to identity as Amir, having looked to the past via pictures and old lyrics, now turns to the future. Hip hop is a part of him; it represents who he is and who he wants to become. Hip hop has officially become the mechanism to tell his story, with identity at the forefront.

His personal identity begins with the city of Rome, Issaa's hometown and main source of *italianità*. This city is front and center in "Questa è Roma 2008." Issaa presents Rome holistically, with all of the city's complexities and identities, from the perspective of second generation Italians. The first verse begins with "Vengo da Roma" ("I come from Rome"), a more specific introduction than that of "Straniero nella mia nazione,"<sup>45</sup> and fitting since the scale has gone from nation to city. The city is literally and figuratively under his feet, representing Issaa's physical and cultural locations, his upbringing, accessible identities, and relationship to it. In fact, the root of the words for citizen and citizenship, "cittadino" and "cittadinanza," respectively, is "città" (city), which recalls the many city-states that occupied the Italian peninsula and surrounding islands during the Middle Ages all the way until the declaration of the Kingdom of Italy on March 17, 1861 (Gabaccia 2000). Consequently, regionalism still affects the dynamics of *italianità*, and big cities have their own individualized identities.<sup>46</sup> Within this Roman identity comes a strong sense of pride, especially with respect to knowing and acknowledging different parts and people of the city, "Posso riconoscere i quartieri dalle facce" ("I can recognize the neighborhoods from the faces"). The city is divided into districts and neighborhoods, each possessing their own local identity. Separate and distinct, together they form the Eternal City and all of its diversity. This description also applies to Italians as a whole,

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<sup>45</sup> "Straniero nella mia nazione" begins with "Nato in Italia" ("born in Italy"), which centers the nation.

<sup>46</sup> Romano, Fiorentino, Barese, Milanese, Veneziano, Palermitano, etc. My Roman history professor in Italy considered herself (in order): Roman, European, and then, eventually, Italian.



second generations being a part. In terms of Issaa himself, Roman knowledge goes beyond geographical boundaries and into the identities of Rome's inhabitants. Not only is Rome a source of this pride, but it also serves as a fountain of inspiration. Issaa's lived experience is integral to all of his work and "Questa è Roma 2008" exemplifies the power of storytelling based on his experience. This is also true of other second generation Italian hip hop artists, which are featured in the following two chapters.

### **Sites of Resistance: Humanizing Community, Citizenship, and Belonging**

Hip hop is the mechanism that transforms Amir's experience into a site of resistance. Although Amir is an Italian citizen, to this day he and others like him continue to be asked for their permesso di soggiorno (temporary residency permit). This is one example of the many shared experiences (Issaa 2020) of second generation Italians that Issaa unites in his lyrics, sound, and music videos. As a whole, his artistry recognizes the diversity of *italianità* that exists in Italy. Although priggish government forces oppose and seek to suppress this reality, "Today's Italy is multiracial and multicultural, irrespective of what the opposition may say" (Zammarchi 274). These words re-elaborate Tommy Kuti's "Il mondo è cambiato" ("The world has changed"),<sup>47</sup> which argues that the real resistance comes from the elite gatekeepers of hegemonic *italianità*, and not second generation Italians that have been and continue to tell their stories in their own words. Amir Issaa, to his credit, wants to change the world with his words (Issaa 2020). In addition, people from Torpignattara are frequently featured in his videos. Issaa refers to them as "his people" (Issaa 2020), emphasizing the power of collective identity and its ability to inspire change.

One such change is questioning the emphasis of Issaa's Egyptianness as an excuse to deny his *italianità*. Within the trope of essentialism, monolithic Egyptian identity becomes a

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<sup>47</sup> Lyrics from "#AFROITALIANO" (2018).

synecdoche for Amir Issaa, erroneously disqualifying his Italian identity. One of the first newspaper articles to feature Issaa labeled him and his music “Egyptian” and him a “Muslim,” (Issaa 2020) which in turn prompted a defense mechanism to distance himself from those assumptions. This struggle manifests itself in his early lyrics, when he, too, engages in a colonial discourse that maintains Egypt and Italy, as well as Christianity and Islam, are incompatible with *italianità*. The employment of this type of rigid, reductive categorization compromises the lived reality of the *seconde generazioni* and their collective struggle for recognition, belonging, and inclusive citizenship.

An excellent example of hip hop as a site of resistance is “Straniero nella mia nazione” from *Uomo di prestigio* (*Man of Prestige*), Amir Issaa’s first solo album released in 2006. The title is identical to Sangue Misto’s track on their album *SxM* (1994), demonstrating the continuation of postcolonial Italian identities in Italian hip hop, this time re-articulated through the lens of *seconde generazioni*. Issaa (2021) himself described this song as the first one he ever wrote about citizenship. The lyrics to “Straniero nella mia nazione” open with a strong self-identification emblematic of Italians like Amir. “Nato in Italia” (“Born in Italy”) appeals to the movement towards *jus soli*,<sup>48</sup> which continues to exclude Italians from their right of citizenship. “Amir scritto sulla sabbia” (“Amir written on the sand”) can allude to Issaa’s Egyptian ancestors, specifically his father, and shows an intentional embrace of a complex, postcolonial Italian identity. At the same time, Italy has over 4,400 miles of coastline (The World Factbook<sup>49</sup>), so “scritto sulla sabbia” just as clearly refers to his home country. This lyric also embodies the fluidity and temporality of identity, since things written in the sand eventually

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<sup>48</sup> See Fred Kuwornu’s documentary *18 ius soli: The right of being Italian* (2011), which highlights social inequality and discrimination produced by outdated and highly exclusionary citizenship laws in Italy.

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/italy/>

disappear. In fact, “Straniero nella mia nazione” is all about identity, “Figlio dell’amore e del cuore di due persone / Un mix di sangue, culture, razze e religione” (“Son of the love and heart of two people / A mix of blood, cultures, races, and religion”), and the importance of telling his story. The concept of “mixing,” a colonial paradigm and remnant of Italian colonialism specifically, is celebrated as a product of love, family, and belonging. This re-articulation creates an inclusive environment that recognizes the beauty of second generation Italians. Amir himself wants to be a voice for the “seconda generazione” (“second generation”) to pave the way for his son, who represents the third. As a site of resistance (Fabbri 2020; hooks 2015; White 2011), “Straniero nella mia nazione” re-articulates hate, transforming it into a project of counter hegemony, “Prendo il vostro odio e lo trasformo in questa penna” (“I take your hate and transform it with this pen”). In the second and final verse, hate is a source of pride for Issaa and his father, representing the strength to persevere. The hate itself becomes, through the power of language and perspective, a liberating tool that inspires change by telling stories and truth.

The site of resistance becomes even more apparent in the chorus. Beginning with an emergency call (S.O.S), Issaa is “pronto all’esecuzione” (“ready for the execution”), or the implementation of societal change. The etymology of the word “execution” means “a carrying out, a putting into effect<sup>50</sup>” therefore relating back to second generation Italian hip hop, the politics of recognition, and the fact that hip hop chose Issaa.<sup>51</sup> When faced with blatant xenophobia, Issaa utilizes a non-complementary response, turning around and smiling, as his lyrics and music continue to protest the inequities of Italian society and inspire change.

This postcolonial discourse disputes the many assumptions and ideologies that create an Italy with Italians that speak and live the “Italian” way of life. For example, “Questa è Roma

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.etymonline.com/word/execution>.

<sup>51</sup> “Vivo per questo” 2004.

2008” challenges the romanticized version of Italy that has and continues to permeate not only the Italian education system, but the world at large. At the same time, the song criticizes the many negative stereotypes that abound, including the Mafia, so-called “Spaghetti” westerns filmed in Italy, and the caricature of Al Pacino that embodies violence. Issaa actively engages the audience by his powerful truth telling, concluding that “Questa è la realtà più dura, cresci o riparati” (“This is the most difficult reality, grow up or take cover”), showing another side of Rome that rarely sees the light of day. Issaa takes pride in knowing the contemporary truth about the so-called Eternal City.

Another prime example is “Non sono un immigrato.” Its powerful chorus calls out xenophobia, refers to the main problem of alienation, and asserts that the collective second generation is, in fact, the future of Italy:

La gente m’ha confuso con un immigrato	People have confused me with an immigrant
La gente m’ha confuso con un immigrato	People have confused me with an immigrant
Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione	With a foreigner’s face in my country
Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione	If there’s a future here, it’s the second generation

Calling people immigrants has shifted from a racist dog whistle to a foghorn and is used to literally infer that people like Amir do not belong to Italy or in Italy. This ideology cements an eternal ingroup/outgroup mentality in which second generation Italians will never, under any circumstances, be fully franchised citizens. Even those that have been born in Italy are referred to as immigrants. The repetition strengthens the verse, bringing more attention to this salient topic and its absurdity - even people born in Italy are referred to as “immigrants.” The phrase “Straniero nella mia nazione” recalls Issaa’s 2006 track of the same name. The last line

emphatically decrees that the future is the second generation, referring to second generation Italians as well as Italy's historical, present, and future heterogeneity. The second stanza of the chorus remains the same, except for the last line. Instead of referring to the future in collective terms, it goes back to Amir's individual identity and name, "Mi danno dello straniero per il mio cognome" ("They treat me like a foreigner because of my last name"). Issaa, while ending in a vowel, does not conform to institutionalized definitions of Italian surnames. This paradigm would conclude that Issaa does not even sound "Italian," which is a common exclusionary strategy in which hegemonic monolingual logic is used to disqualify *italianità*. Additionally, Issaa's last name is a product of patriarchy, which in turn uses this practice to police and control identity through paternal lineage. The change from the collective "Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione" to "Mi danno dello straniero per il mio cognome" highlights the importance of individual stories within a heterogeneous collective. Issaa tells his personal story that connects to the greater struggle for recognition and citizenship. Without individual stories, the movement would lose integral inclusive aspects. The universality of unique, yet connected experiences keeps the momentum going.

The first verse<sup>52</sup> of "Non sono un immigrato" is a powerful exposition that challenges every stereotype Amir has faced, since he was born in Rome. Issaa, like Toto Cutugno in "L'Italiano"<sup>53</sup> ("The Italian") and Tommy Kuti in "#AFROITALIANO," appeals to Italian culinary expectations to legitimize his Italian identity, "Mangio pasta e pizza io sono un italiano" ("I eat pasta and pizza, I am an Italian"). The next verse quotes Cutugno's 1983 hit, "Lasciatemi

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<sup>52</sup> These lyrics also grace the cover of his autobiography *Vivo per questo* (2017), published nine years after "Non sono un immigrato."

<sup>53</sup> "L'Italiano" (1983) makes a strong argument for who Italians are by appealing to nationalism, sport, love, and food. It is a nostalgic ballad that yearns for self-determinism, albeit by utilizing a monolithic conception of *italianità*.

cantare perché ne sono fiero / Io sono un italiano, un italiano vero<sup>54</sup>” (“Let me sing because I am proud of it / I am an Italian, a real Italian”). Important to emphasize is that Cutugno’s version alludes to a monolithic Italian identity by the subtle use of the definite article, “Sono un italiano, l’italiano vero” (“I am an Italian, *the* real Italian) whereas Issaa’s use of the indefinite article “Sono *un* italiano” (“I am *an* Italian”) creates a much more inclusive and plural sense of *italianità*, challenging singular and static notions of who is and who is supposedly not Italian. In reality, second generation Italians have well-established roots in Italy. This has been the case for generations.

“Non sono un immigrato” demonstrates Issaa’s *italianità* through socialization, “Sono cresciuto qua sotto le vostre case<sup>55</sup>” (“I grew up here, outside your homes”) and “sono andato a scuola insieme ai vostri figli” (“I went to school together with your children”). Not only did he grow up in Italy, but he grew up around other Italians, creating a sense of community, even if some people in that community refuse to recognize Issaa’s Italian identity. More specifically, Issaa completed Italian education and therefore begs the question: if these facts and experiences do not make him Italian, what will? This is the main argument of *jus scholae*, the right of education, that explains how anyone who successfully navigates compulsory Italian education (6-18 years of age) should be able to access full citizenship. This includes passing the Esame di stato (State exam) that functions as a high school exit exam and grants the ability to apply to university. The Esame di stato is also known as the Esame di maturità (Maturity exam): it is conceived as a right of passage from adolescence to adulthood, demonstrating not only academic abilities, but social ones as well. Crossing the threshold of the Esame di maturità solidifies

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<sup>54</sup> The theme of the true/real Italian takes a literal and figurative center stage in Tommy Kuti’s first studio album, *Italiano vero (True/Real Italian)*.

<sup>55</sup> “Sotto casa,” literally “under/below house,” is an expression used when arriving at the base of an apartment building. Visitors are, in fact, below the apartments above, however this does not translate well into English.

*italianità*. Fulfilling these Italian socialization requirements should be recognized and celebrated by and for everyone, especially second generation Italians.

The end of “Non sono un immigrato” takes on anthemic dynamics, occupying both individual and collective consciousnesses, building and pushing forward the movement towards equal rights and recognition. His generation flies in the face of institutionalized, bigoted, and dehumanizing policies and practices that refuse citizenship to Italians.<sup>56</sup> “Tu” (“You”) makes the message even more personal. The power of the second person narrative inserts the listener into the text, creating a direct relationship and object of critique. While strongly accusative to the point of upsetting some, this use nonetheless calls out hegemonic *italianità* and those that actively or silently support it. Controlling this generation with bureaucracy, social status, or race is futile because the world has changed.

La mia generazione è il tuo incubo peggiore	My generation is your worst nightmare
Non puoi controllarla dal nome o dal colore	You can't control it by name or color
Con gli occhi da cinese capelli da africano	With Chinese eyes and African hair
Ci prendiamo le strade da Palermo a Milano	We take the streets from Palermo to Milan
Figlio di un'albanese figlio di un egiziano	Son of an Albanese son of an Egyptian
Figlio di questa terra sono un nuovo italiano	Son of this land I am a new Italian

The country of China and the continent of Africa represent two aspects of Italy's heterogeneity and colonial past, although Issaa's lyrics seem to equivocate China and Africa, a common colonial trope used to rationalize invasions and violence. Issaa refers to himself as a “figlio di un'albanese figlio di un egiziano,” and then more globally as the son of this land, announcing

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<sup>56</sup> Italiani senza cittadinanza (Italians without citizenship) is a major activist organization that makes a similar point: [www.facebook.com/italianisenzacittadinanza](http://www.facebook.com/italianisenzacittadinanza).

himself as a new Italian. At this time the concept of “new” Italians was still a predominant strategy to build solidarity, and has even been featured in academic conferences as late as 2019.<sup>57</sup> Thanks to a greater influx of Italian postcolonialism into the academic sphere, the concept of new Italians has fallen under scrutiny, since it renders invisible the realities of Italy’s double colonization and historical heterogeneity.

The incorporation of Black Italian Women’s literature, together with more self-reflexive and inclusive lyrics, encompass “La mia pelle,” the third track of *Grandezza naturale* (*Natural Greatness*, 2012). Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, a prominent Italian Somali author, poet, playwright, and performer, frames the song.<sup>58</sup> Her story and her history<sup>59</sup> is “una ragnatela” (“a spider web”) layered with strength over a long period of time. The web weaves stories “dentro una pelle” (“inside a skin”), one that she wears, inhabits, and embodies. Ali Farah concludes with the phrase “mescolati viaggiatori” (“mixed travelers”). The verb “mescolare” (to mix, to blend) derives from “to put different things together,”<sup>60</sup> alluding to the subject position of second generation Italians and Italy as a whole. Skin represents one such difference that is weaponized as an exclusionary and disqualifying characteristic incompatible with white-washed *italianità*.<sup>61</sup>

Consequently, skin is a central theme and site of resistance in second generation Italian hip hop. It negotiates identity from within when struggling with external factors determined by

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<sup>57</sup>The Pacific Ancient and Modern Language Association (PAMLA) 2019 conference in San Diego, CA is one example. I was part of a panel titled “New Italians,” in which I presented my preliminary research on Alessandro Mahmood’s “Soldi” and Sanremo 2019.

<sup>58</sup>Her most recent novel, *Le stazioni della luna* (*The Stations of the Moon*), was published in July 2021.

<sup>59</sup>“Storia” means both story and history in Italian. Conventionally, Storia with a capital “S” refers to history specifically, however in this translation I chose to include both meanings, as they overlap and compliment one another.

<sup>60</sup><https://www.etimo.it/?term=mescolare>

<sup>61</sup>Kym Ragusa’s *The Skin Between Us: A Memoir of Race, Beauty, and Belonging* (2006) talks specifically about these skin politics.



hegemonic definitions of race and gender. For Issaa, skin is a memory,<sup>62</sup> a state-inflicted bastardization since Italy does not recognize his skin with respect to his *italianità*. Although an Italian citizen, a sense of national belonging continues to torment him. He also sees himself in the skin of others like him. For example, the second verse to “La mia pelle” refers back to Ali Farah’s opening, emphasizing the wind, how it feels on one’s skin, and the sensory story that both tell. References to sand dunes and the desert embrace previous stereotypes about his father and his own identity. At one point in the music video, Issaa looks towards the sky, “L’estate ascoltavo il vento e i suoi segreti” (“In the summer I would listen to the wind and its secrets”) This beautiful metaphor represents the ephemeral yet timeless experience of the wind, connecting the end of the first verse as a bird in flight and returning to Ali Farah’s spoken words.

The symbolism of wind paired with the theme of flight manifests itself further, “Giocando tra le nuvole da quando ho pochi mesi” (“Playing in the clouds since I was a few months old”) and “volo libero” (“I fly freely”). Finally, towards the end of the second verse, Issaa mentions his mother’s skin as a part of him, too. While patriarchy and the masculine realm of hip hop have mostly dominated his self-representation, with references and emotions dedicated to Issaa’s father, here a combination of blood, identity and the womb have a brief time in the spotlight of “La mia pelle.” Not for long, however, since Issaa also describes himself as “Un bastardo da quand’ero nella pancia” (“A bastard ever since I was in the womb”), which operates under a patriarchal ideology in which masculinity and fatherhood humanize and legitimize identity. At the end of the song, Issaa is proud of his skin, a combination of his mother’s and father’s, as well as the memories and stories every scar tells, “Ho i segni addosso di ogni dramma che ho vissuto” (“I have signs all over of every tragedy that I have lived”). His music documents these tragedies through the power of representative story-telling.

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<sup>62</sup> See also *La mia casa è dove sono (Home is Where I am, 2010)* by Igiaba Scego.

Thanks to the internet, streaming, and social media, music has the capacity to challenge institutions of power on local and global levels, becoming a communicative force that builds coalitions within and across international boundaries. One such example is “Ius music,” the first track of the homonymous album released in 2015. The title echoes the phraseology of *jus sanguinis*, *jus soli*, and *jus culturae*, as well as establishes the power of music to build consciousness and affect societal change. Blood and pride, common themes in Issaa’s music, open the first verse, which also criticizes the “ignorante” (“ignorant”) “gente stupida” (“stupid people”) and their “medioevo” (“Medieval”) way of thinking. The frustration has grown from “Ci prendiamo le strade da Palermo a Milano<sup>63</sup>” (“We take the streets from Palermo to Milano”) to “Da Palermo a Torino scoppierà un casino” (“Chaos will explode from Palermo to Turin”). White and northern supremacy, championed by the likes of Matteo Salvini and *la Lega* (the League) political party, continue to be weaponized, creating a “paura di qualcosa che ormai vive qua vicino” (“fear of something that has lived nearby for a long time”). The world has changed, yet so-called “outsiders,” who are supposedly too “different” to be Italian, have been and continue to live in Italy as neighbors, classmates, co-workers, and fellow community members. Rejecting the ideological and colonizing space of the hyphen (Tamburri 44), Issaa affirms that he is not “un G2 italiano col trattino” (“a hyphenated second generation Italian”), and instead embraces a postcolonial, plural, and complex identity that refuses to conform to the oppressive nature of institutionalized *italianità*.

The harsh condemnation in “Ius music” is the result of over ten years of rapping and talking about the same social and racial issues in Italy. Issaa and everyone around him are “stanchi” (“tired”) of the constant attacks, exclusionary tactics, and widespread indifference to the cause of equal, humane recognition. This strategy already appeared in “La mia pelle.” After

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<sup>63</sup> Lyrics from “Questa è Roma 2008.”

thanking his father, which demonstrates a much more nuanced relationship than in previous albums, he hints at his father's story, "Ha lasciato tutto e ha trovato il coraggio per scappare" ("He left everything and found the courage to escape"). This is the story of many *seconde generazioni* that were brought to Italy under the wing of a parent or guardian, having not chosen Italy themselves, even though it is the only home most have ever known (Caponetto 2019). Additionally, and perhaps more importantly, this short verse re-articulates and humanizes refugees that escape persecution and violence, looking for a better life in Italy. This humanization opposes the criminalization of refugees and migrants, instead embracing empathy, understanding, and praise in the strength it takes to leave everything you know. The chorus of "Ius music" ends on a personal note, flowing from the collective to the individual (a common characteristic), "Orfano di quest'Italia, un superstite resto a galla" ("Orphan of this Italy and a survivor, I keep my head above water"). The concept of staying afloat, metaphorically as Issaa navigates the treacherous waters of dominant ideologies in and around Italy, also has a strong connection to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean.<sup>64</sup> As a whole, the chorus unites both the song and the entire album. Its three-fold repetition of "Questo è ius music" ("This is ius music") grounds Issaa's powerful messaging.

The second verse to "Ius music" further develops themes of survival, belonging, and calling out hypocritical *italianità*. References to previous tracks create a continuity of language

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<sup>64</sup> The country's geographic and strategic position within the Mediterranean and proximity to the African continent makes Italy one of the most accessible countries by sea, especially its southern coast. Only 100 miles separate Tunisia from Sicily. Between 2013 and 2019, approximately 690,000 migrants arrived by boat to Italy's southern shores. They are predominantly from and/or departing from north African countries, especially Libya (McKenzie and Mezzofiore 2019; Tondo 2019; Q. 2019). Additional data support the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean. The danger of death at sea is higher than ever at 15%: from January to June, 2019, 1940 people survived the voyage from north Africa to Italian shores and almost 350 died en route (Tondo 2019). Globally, from 2014 to 2018, "the IOM [International Organization for Migration] reported that, of the total of 32,000 global migrant deaths, over half – some 17,900 – died or went missing in the Mediterranean Sea."

and message that establishes Issaa as a premier voice of and for second generation Italians. His people are “stanca di essere accusata, di essere considerata il pericolo dentro casa” (“tired of being accused, of being considered a danger inside the house”). The status quo of *italianità* criminalizes the identity of second generation Italians, relegating their “impure” hybridity as antithetical to a monolithic national identity. This ideology has real world consequences, as his college educated friends are “fermati da uno con la terza media” (“stopped by those with a high school education”). Although Issaa employs a class-biased relationship between intelligence, understanding, and education, he does so to call out and criticize an ignorant police infrastructure that relies on a broken education system<sup>65</sup> to maintain a monopoly of state-sanctioned violence specifically aimed at Italians of color. It gets worse, as even citizenship “sulla carta” (“on paper”), incredibly difficult to attain in Italy without *jus sanguinis*, does not protect against oppression, mistreatment, and harassment. Therefore “Diventi uno straniero nella tua nazione” (“You become a foreigner in your own country”), a result of all these structures and ideologies. Issaa makes clear that “Siamo nella stessa merda, non sono io il tuo nemico” (“We are in the same shit, I am not your enemy”) and focuses on building a collective solidarity based on similar experiences that are the consequences of the same oppressive structures. While in the first verse Issaa himself was “orfano di quest’Italia” (“orphan of this Italy”), the end of the second verse brings the community together, “orfani, superstiti, fratelli d’Italia” (“orphans, survivors, brothers/siblings of Italy”), that should collaborate to make Italian society more inclusive. “Fratelli d’Italia” (“Brothers/Siblings<sup>66</sup> of Italy”), the title and first phrase of the Italian national anthem and the name of a far-right political party, references both contemporary Italian politics

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<sup>65</sup> Issaa’s activism takes place predominantly in schools, centering education as a seminal issue in Italian society.

<sup>66</sup> Since the masculine plural and general plural are the same in Italian, *fratelli* means both “brothers” and “siblings.”

and the Risorgimento, subtly popularizing Italian postcolonialism and the re-examination of Italian “unification” (*Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, 2012).

Apart from Issaa’s solo career, he is often featured on other tracks that promote social justice issues. Two primary examples from 2020 are “Sono nato qua” (“I Was Born Here”) by Luca Neves and “Non respiro” (“I Can’t Breathe”) by Davide Short. Luca Neves (1988-) and his single featuring Amir Issaa are a main component of *Black Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning: Italy*<sup>67</sup> (VICE News 2021). Near the end of the documentary, Angelica Pesarini (Assistant Professor in Race and Cultural Studies / Race, Diaspora, and Italian Studies at the University of Toronto) declares, “This generation is going to make a change,” referring to *seconde generazioni* and their movements of anti-racism, recognition, and inclusive citizenship. “Sono nato qua” closes the documentary, showing the front and center position of second generation Italian hip hop. Born and raised in Italy, Neves has been excluded from Italian citizenship his entire life. The documentary spotlights his plight, which is representative of many second generation Italians. Although he was born in Italy, the Italian government asserts that he was born in Cape Verde like his parents. This unending back and forth has left Neves without access to resources, employment, or any benefits. His single “Sono nato qua” has a very clear message that builds upon the *jus soli* movement: I was born here, therefore I deserve to be recognized.

Neves employs similar rhetorical strategies previously seen in Issaa’s body of work, including the appeal to socialization, reclaiming identity, and embracing the collective struggle over citizenship. “Sono nato qua” begins with a chorus of strong repetitions and direct indictments. The first line calls out *la Lega* political party, pointing to its racist and neo-fascist ideologies born out of ignorance. *La Lega* actively hides the truth; one central facet to Italian

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<sup>67</sup> A more detailed discussion of *Black Lives Matter: A Global Reckoning: Italy* is in the introduction.

postcolonial theory is the active reclaiming of invisibilized bodies and identities (Hawthorne 2020) because the personal is political (Harris-Perry 2011; Moraga and Anzaldúa 2015). Neves emphatically explains that “il nodo non si slega” (“the knot is not untied”), which not only creates a rhyme with “La Lega,” but also plays on the relationship between the verbs “legare” (to tie, fasten, connect) and “slegare” (to untie, unfasten, disconnect). Neves criticizes the naming convention of “La Lega”; it would make more sense to rename it “La Slega,” since it actively excludes second generation Italians from *italianità*, making Luca’s life “un inferno” (“hell”). Neves pleads with Italy and Italians, “Non hai capito sono nato qua” (“You don’t understand, I was born here”). The power of repetition and directly addressing a personal “tu” (“you”) creates a sense of frustration and tumult. The chorus ends with, “Romano italiano nero, ovvero sono nato qua” (“Black Roman Italian, in other words I was born here”). The intersection of Black, Roman, and Italian highlights race, nation, and location, decolonizing Blackness as “other,” since Neves is, in fact, from Rome. In Italy, Blackness is often used as a pretense for suspicion and/or exclusion. “Sono nato qua” keeps birth and identity front and center, embracing a plural and intersectional identity based on Neves’ (and by association, second generation Italians’) lived reality. Using these intentional words to describe himself creates solidarity.

The first verse laments, “Mi avete tolto le ali per troppi anni” (“You all have deprived me of wings for too many years”), using the “voi” (“you” plural) form of the verb to inculcate everyone in opposition to his struggle. As a result, Luca lives “senza un’identità” (“without an identity”) recognized by the state, which has real world consequences and highlights the importance of passing more inclusive laws. Neves declares that he was “cresciuto a Trigatoria<sup>68</sup>” (“raised in Trigatoria”), appealing to his own socialization, a common aspect of second generation Italian hip hop. In fact, *italianità* based on socialization is gaining some ground on social media

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<sup>68</sup> Trigatoria is a southern faction of the metropolitan city of Rome.

by utilizing the principle of *ius culture*, or the right of culture in determining citizenship. “Rome city è la mia storia” (“Rome city is my history and story”) reiterates Issaa’s “Questa è Roma 2008.” Issaa himself was raised in the Torpignattara district. Neves continues, this time more assertive, “Dammi la mia libertà, la mia identità” (“Give me my freedom, my identity”), since it should be his own to possess, embody, and exercise. Transitioning from the individual to the collective, Neves decries, “Siamo figli sfrattati” (“We are evicted children”), kicked out of their homes, literally and figuratively, denounced by their own country in an attempt to maintain a white, male, and Catholic national and international appearance. Italy is Luca’s home: his parents lived there for over 40 years, and his mother is buried there.<sup>69</sup>

The second chorus, almost identical to the first, changes the last line. Instead of “Black Roman Italian, in other words I was born here,” the lyric becomes, “Capisci l’italiano spero, ho detto sono nato qua” (“You understand Italian, I hope, I said I was born here”). While the Italian phrases “capisci” (you understand) and “hai capito” (you understood) are often used interchangeably, it is of particular note that the past tense “hai capito” becomes present “capisci,” noting the immediate and current struggle over identity and recognition. Additionally, Neves ironically and sarcastically utilizes “Spero” (“I hope”), alluding to *seconde generazioni* and the widespread micro-aggression of complimenting their linguistic proficiency. The use of irony and sarcasm usurps ethnolinguistic nationalism and creates a two-tiered critique. First, Neves hopes that those listening to his song understand his Italian. Second, and more importantly, Neves hopes that, in understanding his Italian, listeners understand his plight: an Italian born in Italy who continues to be excluded from citizenship.

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<sup>69</sup> “La persona che mi ha messo al mondo adesso è sepolta qua” (“The person that brought me into this world is now buried here”).

Amir Issaa's verse in "Sono nato qua" adapts many of the same lines and themes from "Ius music" (2014), including "nato un orfano di quest'Italia" ("born an orphan of this Italy") and "la mia gente stanca ormai di lamentarsi" ("my people are already tired of complaining"), highlighting the continued struggle for recognition and calling out the hypocrisy of hegemonic *italianità*. Two years earlier Issaa had rapped "Non c'è frontiera quando la mia gente parla" ("There is no frontier when my people speak"). Now, "La mia gente non ha più frontiere" ("My people don't have frontiers anymore"), which notes that the world has changed and that barriers have already been and continue to be broken. His people, representing a collective consciousness of second generation Italians, are at the forefront of this discourse.

A recurring symbol, already espoused in Issaa's work, frames hegemony as an ideological and structural prison represented by chains. These symbolize the second half of Issaa's verse. "Vorrebbero incatenarmi" ("They want to put me in chains") however Issaa's internal freedom remains intact, thanks in large part to Italian hip hop culture. "They" refers to anyone and everyone that operates under the assumption that Amir Issaa is not Italian and therefore not deserving of the rights and privileges of being an Italian citizen. Moreover, "they" embodies a structure of inequality, one based on fear and subsequently governed by ignorance. Being critical of the Italian education system is consistent with Italian postcolonialism and is why Issaa directs his activism towards schools of all levels. The end of the verse criticizes this system, positing that those with closed minds are the ones stuck in chains.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> This reversal of the narrative and direction of feeling reiterates Toni Morrison's response to Charlie Rose during a famous interview in 1993. When asked about how racism makes Morrison feel, she immediately chastises the direction of the question, throwing it back at Rose, "How do *you* feel? Not you, Charlie, Rose, but don't you understand that the people who do this thing, who practice racism, are bereft? There is something distorted about the psyche. It's a huge waste, and it's a corruption, and it's a distortion. It's like it's a profound neurosis that nobody examines for what it is" (0:52-1:16). Morrison goes on to masterfully dissect morality and moral high ground, concluding that all of the answers to Rose's questions about anti-racism strategies are in



Equally important in this verse is Issaa's condemnation of global white supremacy, including the resurgence of state-sponsored anti-Black racism. Paired with the rise of fascist ideologies and politicians, these global forces demonstrate how "Il mondo torna indietro stile KKK" ("The world is going back to a KKK mode"). In doing so, Issaa opens up a conversation about ultranationalism and xenophobia, paving the way for more artists to do the same. By referencing the Klu Klux Klan<sup>71</sup>, Issaa is drawing a line from the United States to Italy, connecting the dots with respect to racism, xenophobia, and state sponsored violence. He returns to these connections again in "Non respiro" ("I Can't Breathe" 2020), written in response to the public execution of George Floyd.

"Non respiro," from Davide Shorty's 2020 album *Fusion a metà (Halfway Fusion)*, combines lyrics, sounds, and visual language that tell a story and present a call to action. The song, featuring Amir Issaa and David Blank, is a direct homage to George Floyd. Issaa had written a freestyle in the immediate aftermath of Floyd's murder. After posting it online, a collaboration was born between him and Davide Shorty (Issaa 2020). Additionally, much like Kendrick Lamar's "Alright"<sup>72</sup> (2015) in the context of the USA, "Non respiro" is an unofficial anthem to the Italian Black Lives Matter Movement.<sup>73</sup> The phrase "non respiro" ("I can't breathe") brings back memories of Eric Garner, choked to death by a New York City police

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her books. The use of the word "bereft" (deprived or lacking something) coincides with Issaa's characterization of ignorance as a prison.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2txzMkT5Pc>

<sup>71</sup> Founded in the United States shortly after the Civil War and revived by Protestants in the early 20th century (history.com), the Klu Klux Klan is a White supremacist terrorist organization. Anti-Black racism and violence has risen on a global scale, which is exactly what Issaa is talking about.

<sup>72</sup> See Petridis, Alexis. "Kendrick Lamar: Damn review - more mellow but just as angry." The Guardian, 14 April 2017.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2017/apr/14/kendrick-lamar-damn-review>

<sup>73</sup> While the English phrase "Black Lives Matter" is an international slogan, the most common translations into Italian are "Le vite nere contano" ("Black Lives Count") and "Le vite nere importanti" ("Black Lives are Important").

officer on July 17, 2014<sup>74</sup>, as well as countless other victims of racist, colonial violence. David Blank's melancholic chorus opens with images of a victim crucified. "Mamma non respiro" ("Mom, I can't breathe") directly quotes George Floyd himself, as he called out to his already dead mother while being executed. Like Floyd, there are countless victims to this state-sanctioned violence, "innocente troppe volte" ("innocent too many times"), and "vita nera senza colpe" ("innocent Black life"), however Black bodies continue to be mocked, tortured, and exterminated. Blank's chorus takes a personal tone with "Non ce la faccio più" ("I can't take it anymore"), empathizing with Floyd and the greater Black Lives Matter Movement. Issaa himself has called "Non respiro" an international collaboration that represents all discriminated people (Issaa 2020). The song's global reach speaks volumes to its inherent power; its postcolonial lyrics actively humanize Black lives and condemn all forms of white supremacy.

Amir Issaa's verse, a slight re-elaboration of his previous freestyle, recalls images and video of George Floyd's execution, "Mamma non respiro ho un ginocchio sulla faccia" ("Mom, I can't breathe, I have a knee on my face"), referring to the common police practice of forcing a knee onto a person's neck to stop the flow of oxygen to the brain and simultaneously refusing to let up until no resistance is presented.<sup>75</sup> Issaa personifies Floyd, "ghiaccio freddo questo asfalto" ("this asphalt is ice cold"), placing himself on that pavement, creating a sense of solidarity by putting a translation of Floyd's thoughts into first person narration. The coldness of the pavement, a metaphor for how Floyd was treated, can be juxtaposed with when he was killed: in the middle of a warm day in May. References to Abba, a Black youth beaten to death in Milan (*La Repubblica* 2008) and Soumaila Sacko, a human rights activist shot to death in the southern

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<sup>74</sup> See Sanchez, Ray. "Choke hold by cop killed NY man, medical examiner says." *CNN*, 2 August 2014. <https://www.cnn.com/2014/08/01/justice/new-york-choke-hold-death/index.html>

<sup>75</sup> This happens only after the person has lost consciousness, since fighting for one's life is involuntary at that stage.

Italian town of San Calogero (Front Line Defenders), remind listeners that this violence has been and continues to happen in Italy. Issaa, like Floyd, is burdened by this hate-based violence, “Porto sulle spalle il peso dell’odio del mondo” (“I carry the weight of the world’s hate on my shoulders”), centering the knee on George Floyd’s neck and the centuries-old weight of colonial racism that continues to murder innocent people. True to form, Issaa’s last line is a culmination of his artistry,

Siamo tutti uguali, come Allah, come Cristo	We are all equal, like Allah, like Jesus Christ
Odio il razzismo, Amir Issaa, sangue misto	I hate racism, Amir Issaa, mixed blood

The uniting qualities of anti-racism, social justice, and religious plurality are paired with the signature of Issaa’s full name followed by an embrace of the colonial discourse pertaining to blood purity.

Davide Shorty’s verse incorporates language of the Black Lives Matter movement to create an international sound of solidarity and struggle, “Mamma non respiro e può vederlo tutto il mondo” (“Mamma I can’t breathe and the whole world can see it”). Like Issaa’s verse, Shorty begins with the same “Mamma I can’t breathe,” but ends with a global perspective. The whole world seemingly reacted to George Floyd, bringing together movements of racial reckoning from around the globe. Darnella Frazier recorded a video of Floyd’s murder, posted it to Facebook, and then testified during the trial. She gave the world sight through the lens of her camera. Her video was one of the most damning and critical pieces of evidence not only during the trial, but also as international proof. For Shorty, “sembra quasi questa pelle attiri un assassino al giorno” (“it almost seems that this skin attracts an assassin a day”). Black skin, violently objectified, is the object of violence, however they are now reborn, “vite nere perse che risorgono” (“Black

lives lost that rise again”). Using the verb “risorgere” (to resurge / to rise again) refers to the contemporary movement for Black lives and the historical Italian Risorgimento, re-articulating what it means to be free in Italy. Building on Issaa’s verse, Shorty decrees, “Siamo una sola razza ed abbiamo lo stesso volto” (“We are only one race and we have the same face”), however the final part contradicts Issaa’s notion of mixed blood, “il sangue è sempre rosso” (“blood is always red”). Shorty challenges the discourses surrounding essentialism and so-called blood purity, criticizing *jus sanguinis* and its colonial discourse dominated by the conceit that blood belongs to nations.

### **Instrumentation and Musical Strategies**

While lyrics tell stories, defining discourses that can be contextualized and analyzed to understand layers of meaning, rhymes create a linguistic harmony that allows lyrics to be remembered, making sound and voice stick. Musical arrangements provide a platform that organizes lyrics and rhymes, creating cadence, refrain, and inspiring emotional reactions to a myriad of techniques. At the same time, the music adds another layer of negotiation that can enhance and even challenge what the words themselves are saying. Since listening to music is a holistic experience that involves lyrics, rhyme, music, and voice, it is important to consider how the musical instrumentation interacts with rapped and sung words. Texts in their own right, both music and lyrics work together to create a song. Of specific interest is how Issaa’s music highlights, complicates, and harmonizes with the themes discussed previously.

The common musical technique of highlighting specific lyrics gives them a special place amongst the composition. Stopping the whole musical arrangement, the beat, or a quick pause makes a drastic impression on the lyrics, changing their intensity and relationship to the song as a whole. In “Vivo per questo,” the music<sup>76</sup> stops for the last lyric of a verse, “Amo l’hip hop e

<sup>76</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-ktbwJdmss&ab\\_channel=writerteam37](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-ktbwJdmss&ab_channel=writerteam37)

sarò l'hip hop finché vivo" ("I love hip hop and I will be hip hop as long as I live"), accentuating its importance and transforming it into a maxim. These words to live by foreshadow Issaa's relationship with hip hop. This first LP<sup>77</sup> was, in fact, "Solo una tappa e non un punto d'arrivo" ("Only a milestone, not a destination"), paving the way for future albums and collaborations.

Riffs, which are short, repeated, and relatively simple collections of notes and/or chords, exemplify Issaa's earlier work. For example, the music<sup>78</sup> of "Vivo per questo" begins, after an initial introduction to build tension, with mellow flute-like notes accompanied by the beat. This arrangement repeats for almost the entire song except during the third verse in order to spotlight the lyrics, "Niente puoi niente fai niente sei / Mi scivoli addosso come l'acqua sul k-way"<sup>79</sup> ("You can't do anything, you are nothing / You slide off of me like water on a k-way"). Issaa has just mentioned that he wrote his first rap almost jokingly, together with Masito Fresco. The quick insertion of a new rhythm and new beat introduces this first "pezzo" ("piece") within "Vivo per questo," creating a layer of historical connections: to popular fashion, to his past work, and to those that have been with him along the way. A more layered melody and complex beat frame the sounds<sup>80</sup> of "Straniero nella mia nazione." Lower cello-like string notes towards the end of the riff accentuate the higher and faster paced minor chord<sup>81</sup> melody. This demonstrates further development in musical arrangements that can be applied to Issaa's lyrical trajectory. Whereas "Vivo per questo" introduced himself to the world of commercial Italian hip hop, "Straniero nella mia nazione" strikes at the heart of a postcolonial and diasporic aesthetic. The deeper, more

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<sup>77</sup> LP, or long-playing record, refers to an album with usually 25 minutes of play on each side, which is industry standard.

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-ktbwJdmss>

<sup>79</sup> K-way is a clothing company originally from South Africa. They are known for their water-resistant jackets, to which Issaa is referring.

<sup>80</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_rFTVbjLQQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_rFTVbjLQQ)

<sup>81</sup> In music theory, a minor chord consists of a root note, a minor third, and a perfect fifth. My ear puts the chord of "Straniero nella mia nazione" between C minor (C, E flat, G) and C# minor (C sharp, E, G sharp).

frustrated message of the latter works in tandem with the cello and minor chords, emphasizing the struggle. More recently, the sounds<sup>82</sup> of “Non respiro” reflect the somber and powerful story the lyrics tell. Slow, soft trumpets lead into the R&B melody. Hearing the names of Abba and Sacko at the end of lyrics makes them stand out. A pensive pause after the second chorus allows tension to be built before Shorty’s verse, highlighted by “vite nere importanti” (“Black lives matter / are important”). An outro of slow electric piano chords and trumpet sounds elicits further reflection and acknowledgement of the global Black Lives Matter movement, what it represents, and why it is fundamental to the struggle for racial equality.

Unlike the earlier songs “Vivo per questo” and “Straniero nella mia nazione,” “Questa è Roma 2008” opens with the chorus, welcoming everyone to the Eternal City. High, quick piano chords start the music.<sup>83</sup> The beat drops, followed by deep synthesizer sounds, demonstrating a more complex development than earlier Issaa tracks. In this way, the individual parts of the music to “Questa è Roma 2008” have time to announce themselves before becoming part of the whole ensemble. This is also indicative of the lyrics, as Issaa highlights specific aspects of himself and his city all the while rapping to the beat within the frame of five minutes. The music intentionally pauses to accentuate “cresci o riparatì” (“grow up or take cover”), highlighting the reality of living in Rome as a second generation Italian, navigating the Eternal city in all of its glory and challenges.

One such challenge involves the constant microaggressions that second generations face on a daily basis. To illustrate this, the music and music video<sup>84</sup> for “Non sono un immigrato,” begin with an interviewer asking Issaa about his identity. This prologue, that the lyrics abruptly cut off mid-sentence, introduces the chorus of “La gente m’ha confuso con un immigrato”

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<sup>82</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbvpklEM118>

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdzHwiwzG0s>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRroCgIJpJU>

(“People have confused me for an immigrant”) and the main theme of the song. The interviewer supposes that Issaa exists within a liminal space between Egypt (father) and Italy (mother), yet Issaa’s main argument rests on the fact that he is Italian; his *italianità* does not depend on his parents. This stance directly challenges the law of *jus sanguinis*. “Non sono un immigrato” pushes back on that notion, stating that his *italianità* should be considered as valid as someone named Mario. The music is introduced via individual aspects: melody, then beat. This demonstrates a continued development and complexity to musical arrangements and allows each seemingly separate part a spotlight before uniting all sounds into one. Giving each instrument a chance to introduce itself before becoming a part of a greater whole reflects the collective second generation Italian community, which is full of individual voices that should not be treated as a monolith. Instead, like Issaa’s music, each should get their own specific platforms and have access to collectivities. The resulting harmony embraces and celebrates diversity, variation, and change.

Lastly, the sound<sup>85</sup> of the wind and Ubah Cristina Ali Farah’s words create a complementary and dual layer of meaning in “La mia pelle.” Deep, slow piano chords evoke a strong somber feeling, and the music stops to accentuate “mescolati viaggiatori” (“mixed travelers”). The first chorus floats on the rhythm until the beat drops at the start of the first verse. The penultimate lyric in the song, “La mia pelle non la venderò a nessuno” (“I will never sell my skin to anyone”), elucidates consumption, capitalism, and skin as a commodity that historically has been used to barter enslaved people and their unpaid, torturous labor. The weaponization of skin color has created a racialized hierarchy in Italy, one with roots in Italian colonization that was used to justify the invasion of countries such as Somalia and Ethiopia. This colonial practice continues to marginalize Italians of color. As the last chorus ends, unlike previous Issaa tracks,

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<sup>85</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0agrLoxFe\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0agrLoxFe_0)

the music slowly fades away, creating a pensive outro. This meditative state provides a postcolonial space in which to question, reflect, and appreciate the heterogeneity of second generation Italian hip hop.

### **Music Videos: The Power of Visual Culture**

Music videos add yet another layer of meaning and interpretation, turning songs (lyrics, rhymes, and musical arrangements) into dynamic visual arts that tell cinematic stories. The music video<sup>86</sup> to “Questa è Roma 2008” visualizes its themes in complex and exciting ways. A black and white aesthetic fills the screen. This popular aesthetic is also utilized in Fabri Fibra’s “In Italia” (2007) Tommy Kuti’s “#Afroitaliano” (2018), again by Issaa in “La mia pelle” (2012), and in “Bella così” (“Beautiful As You Are”) by Chadia Rodriguez (2020). Separate narrative elements are quickly introduced: a boy playing alone on a spinner in a park, an old woman holding a bouquet of flowers as she walks slowly down a street, and a man running from the police. Emblematic of “Questa è Roma 2008,” these narrative pieces form the whole of the city, representing youth, old age, and adulthood, respectively. Shots of Issaa on a pedestrian bridge unite this collage. The conclusion of each short story in the music video resolves a portion of the narrative, even though the end is far from over. The young boy, who has a striking resemblance to a young Issaa, alluding to his upbringing in Italy, is picked up from the park by a father figure. The frame is filled with hugs and kisses, multiple shots of their familial interactions, and the young boy smiles. This character is similar to Mahmood’s “Soldi” (“Money” 2019) in which the young boy, mostly distant from his father, is used to provide perspective. While “Soldi” focuses on loss, family dynamics, and hypocrisy, “Questa è Roma 2008” displays all the facets of Rome. The police catch up to the man running, force him to the ground, and take him away with handcuffs. There is no clear reason as to why he was running or why he was arrested, leaving the

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<sup>86</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-udDHcYbjFA>



audience to speculate. The old woman eventually places the flowers at the foot of a small monument, the word “Grazie” (Thank you) barely visible. The music video constantly returns to the woman, creating a sense of anticipation about who she is, where she came from, and where she is going. Shots from the perspective of riding on a train frame the narrative, recalling the first stage of Issaa’s relationship to hip hop: tagging trains at night. Trains also signify movement, connections, and traveling from one side of the city to the other. Each cinematic representation adds layers of interpretation and meaning, creating a harmonized relationship between lyrics, sound, and video.

Also in black and white, the music video to “La mia pelle” opens with cars on the freeway, “mescolati viaggiatori,” traveling to their destinations. The camera focuses on one car, zooming in on Issaa inside. A quick medium close up of a Black man’s gaze foreshadows the pensive outro, and Issaa’s car arrives at an abandoned warehouse, accentuating the theme of capitalistic waste. A close up of an Asian man adds a layer of interpretation. Taken with that of a Black man, these fast clips focus on a plural and multicultural gaze that begs the audience to recognize their identities. The camera takes on a role of its own, presenting a low angle shot of Issaa, showing the ceiling of the abandoned warehouse. Issaa’s outstretched arms give a visual to the many references to wind, air, and flying. The visual metaphors become more complex as the camera transitions to a bird’s eye view of Torino.<sup>87</sup>

For Issaa, education is a path towards change; what happens in the classroom is important because it influences development, empathy, and understanding. Since education is at the forefront of Issaa’s continued activism, it is no surprise that the music video<sup>88</sup> to “The Right of Music” takes place in a school. The bell rings, introducing the melody, and the beat drops at the

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<sup>87</sup> Any doubts concerning the location of Torino are thwarted at the end, with a clear view of the Mole Antonelliana.

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZHUw8zd0FrY>

start of the first verse. Issaa walks down some stairs. A quick shot of the wall displays pictures (left to right) of Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Malcolm X, and Rosa Parks. These global icons of the Civil Rights Movement and Indian independence fought against systems of colonial oppression. Their inclusion as heroes champions the song's message and appeals to an international movement towards social justice. Issaa enters a classroom, where young students are running around and throwing things, while others look on and eventually notice him. "Se il futuro è nostro" ("If the future is ours") is heard as Issaa points to a map of Europe at the front of the classroom. The medium shot focuses on the students (the future), a racially diverse group, which represents the lived reality of second generation Italians in school. The far wall displays symbols of world religions (left to right): Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Taoism. Seeing these images together evokes a sense of religious pluralism and coexistence, not seen before in Issaa's artistry that used to imply the incompatibility of Islam and *italianità*. Here, the power of music unites them all. A full shot shows students engaging with the lesson, seemingly transformed into a more inclusive community. In reality, the world has already changed, and these young students have a history of living and learning together.

A short clip shows them eating in a group, laughing and enjoying each other's company, a sign of true friendship. Another clip shows five of them racing one another, all with different phenotypes and all Italian, which is the point of "Ius music" and the greater movement towards a postcolonial *italianità*. A side story shows Giovanni, a young white student, leaving the classroom to write "Ius music" graffiti in the bathroom. Issaa finds him and takes him to the principal's office. Giovanni will have to clean the bathroom the following morning. Although graffiti is a pillar of hip hop, Issaa communicates with this intentional skit that defacing a bathroom is not the right way to fight. Instead, the focus should be on getting a good education

and creating life-long friendships with peers. This skit is also very self-reflexive, as Issaa himself came into hip hop culture by tagging trains at night. While he expresses pride in his past in both “Vivo per questo” and his autobiography of the same name, an added layer to “Ius music” is a conversation with himself. The final scene of the music video, in which a young boy gazes directly into the camera, projects the personal message forward, as if to say, “Now it is your turn to spread the word.”

Additionally, the music video<sup>89</sup> to “Non respiro” embodies a strong sense of social justice, culminating in a powerful display of empathy and understanding. A headshot of a shirtless Black man wearing a necklace, eyes closed, opens the video. More faces take up the screen: different phenotypes, ages, genders, opening their eyes, representing an awareness of what has and continues to happen. They look directly into the camera to raise consciousness, inviting the viewer to open their eyes as well. At the same time, a thick black fabric is slowly wrapped around the many people’s bodies as the chorus begins. Starting from the bottom and working its way to the shoulders, this fabric will eventually erase and consume the entire body, all the while the gaze of each participant pierces the screen. The fact that an anonymous and seemingly invisible force controls the wrapping - as if the fabric itself were a snake - further exemplifies the destructive and structural nature of systemic racism and its many institutional manifestations.

Issaa’s verse starts, and the people in the video begin lip-syncing, creating a symbolic collective sound. Mouths moving in unison embody a community of antiracist activists that mourn and protest the killing of George Floyd. The wrapping stops once the rapping starts, indicating a pause in the process. While symbols of erasure and destruction abound, the wrapping also reminds of mummification, or the act of preservation, as the song and movements

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<sup>89</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GB4MngjiiBY>

for racial equality seek to uncover buried histories and preserve human dignity. The chorus re-starts the wrapping, its powerful, cryptic slowness evokes a haunting thought: George Floyd's breath was choked out of him for over nine minutes, more than twice the length of the music video, which clocks in at four minutes and one second. As the fabric approaches each neck, one can visibly see some participants slowly exhaling and swallowing, anticipating a slight pressure and further vulnerability. At the same time, these seemingly random people become recognizable, as multiple shots create a narrative full of personalities. After only a few minutes these people are familiar; one need only look. The last chorus covers all the faces, erasing individual identity and canceling features, although the eyes seemingly still gaze towards the camera even after they are obscured. Everyone has now been reduced to a living mummy as the camera becomes black, fading into oblivion. "Non respiro" also contains a pensive outro of soft trumpet sounds that evoke the stillness of death and represent a call to action.

Within a postcolonial lens, Issaa's music decolonizes the myth of a monolithic, white Italian identity. He routinely calls out the heroization of fascists and colonialism (Issaa 2020), pointing out his past familial connections with state sanctioned violence. The beauty in his approach to reckon with his own past is an excellent example for a more structural reckoning in all of Italy. Issaa's truth telling strikes at the heart of the movement of second generation Italians, which is why he is considered a seminal voice in the discussion. As a whole, his music establishes a space and place for inclusive *italianità*, authorizing it within the hip hop world and beyond.

In Issaa's body of work, discourses of personal identity, contemporary political contexts, and lived reality actively decolonize hegemonic *italianità*, creating an inclusive and postcolonial environment that embraces second generation Italians. The resulting explosion champions

multiaccentuality, celebrates hybridity, and challenges myths of belonging in Italian society. The practice of naming comes under scrutiny when certain names are used to assimilate and thus negate perceived “other” identities: El Sayed and Amir became, at least for a time, Franco and Massimo, in order to comply with the strict, often unwritten rules of hegemonic *italianità*. Unpacking naming conventions is a site of resistance communicated through hip hop, an established global phenomenon with roots in New York City in the 1970s. Over 40 years strong, hip hop continues to engage in real dialogue with social movements, becoming ever more popular. Analyzing instrumentation, beats, and rhythms showcases how music interacts with lyrics, producing audio experiences that are a summation of both texts. Music videos contain additional visual and cinematic phenomena that affirm and/or complicate music and voice. Issaa’s songs incorporate all these aspects, creating a rich corpus of primary texts for analysis.

Challenging hegemony triggers a myriad of responses, some stronger than others. One instance that merits an explanation happened during a Zoom webinar featuring Issaa on April 23, 2021.<sup>90</sup> The title of the talk, “Amir Issaa, Music as Critique of Racism and Italian Citizenship Policies,” emphasized contemporary racism in Italy based on lived reality, Issaa detailing his own experiences with daily microaggressions. Towards the end of the talk, a participant posted a form of the “Not all white people” trope in the chat, asking Issaa why he keeps saying that Italy is racist, since not *all* Italians are racist, and racism exists all around the world. The crux of the question was, “Why are we talking about racism just in Italy?” Emblematic of whataboutism, statements like these are designed to bring attention away from the topic at hand, and erroneously posit that generalizing racism in a global context somehow negates, or at least dulls the edges of contemporary racism in Italy. This is an extension of the *italiani brava gente* myth

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<sup>90</sup> The webinar was Moderated by Dr. James Gordon Williams, Associate Professor at Syracuse University. He is the author of *Crossing Bar Lines: The Politics and Practices of Black Musical Space* (University Press of Mississippi, 2021).

that leads many Italians to downplay the real violence and racism of Italian colonialism. Issaa explained that his criticism came out of love for his country and his people to create a better, more just society. He practices what he preaches.

## Chapter 2

### Decolonizing Language, Race, Identity, and Sanremo 2019

“Io sono un ni\*\*a made in Italy”

“I am a ni\*\*a made in Italy  
-Tommy Kuti, “Faccio rap” (“I Rap”)

Second generation Italian hip hop artists actively challenge hegemonic notions of *italianità* by purposefully calling out racism, sexism, homophobia, and xenophobia. They pave the way towards a more inclusive conception of citizenship and belonging by celebrating postcolonial Italian identities. Similar to Amir Issaa, discursive strategies revolve around claiming Italian as an intercultural identity, refusing reductive binary systems, and raising consciousness. In fact, *seconde generazioni* re-articulate and authorize postcolonial Italian identities through their lyrics, art, performances, and overall messaging. Discourses build a sense of community and break down barriers by telling stories, calling out assumptions, and championing inclusivity. Lacking an organized and structured response from the Italian political system, *seconde generazioni* create their own sense of belonging with their activism and art.

In this chapter I analyze the musical productions of four prominent second generation hip hop artists in terms of language and race<sup>91</sup> - Karima DueG (1980-), Tommy Kuti (1989-), Ghali (1993-), and Chadia Rodriguez (1998-). Socially conscious lyrics center lived experience, interculturalism, identity, and belonging that humanizes second generation Italians. This unsettles monolithic definitions and creates an inclusive space. Lyrics, music, and visual representations push the second generation movement forward as it gains more recognition and respect. The last section of this chapter offers the results of Sanremo 2019 as a case study of the dynamic and negotiated processes that encompass *italianità*, specifically, how socialization,

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<sup>91</sup> The next chapter is dedicated to unpacking how artists such as Karima DueG and Chadia Rodriguez decolonize gender and sexuality.

language, and accessibility influence the authenticity and validity of it. First, a brief, condensed overview of Italy's political climate at the time establishes a contemporary context. Second, analyzing the discourses of "Soldi" ("Money") provides textual evidence of dynamic negotiation and critique of *italianità*. All of these lead to the main argument: Mahmood's victory was framed as a challenge to hegemonic *italianità* because it rebuked, on a national and international level, Italy's ascendant fascist populism. In reality, and as the previous chapters have discussed, Mahmood represents generations of Italians, new and old.

### **Made In Italy: Negotiating a Collective Identity of *Seconde Generazioni***

Italian hip hop of the *seconde generazioni* is creative, complex, nuanced, powerful, and popular. Tommy Kuti, for example, "ha la facilità di parlarti di problemi che ha vissuto e che bisogna risolvere, con strumentali però che ti fanno ballare" ("has the talent to talk to you about problems that he has experienced and that need to be resolved, with instrumentals though that make you dance," Errico 2018). Rhyme, rhythm, and social justice coalesce into a transformative musical experience. Kuti, for example, raps about the far-right *la Lega* party, criticizing how they practice racism under the guise of nationalism every June 2nd, "Fanculo ai razzisti, quelli della Lega, ogni due giugno su quella bandiera" ("Fuck you racists, those of the Lega, every June 2nd, on that flag").<sup>92</sup> The rhyme and beat of the song frames the criticism and makes it memorable and danceable. Karima DueG, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez exhibit the same type of empowering messages. Their collective power comes from listening to their songs, dancing to them, and hearing them - an emotional experience as much as an audial and/or visual one. This experience explains the rise in popularity, specifically in youth cultures in Italy, that continue to build consciousness with their activism. These artists have released EPs, LPs, singles, written

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<sup>92</sup> Republic Day (La festa della Repubblica) is a national holiday that celebrates Italy becoming a republic after the end of World War II.



books (Kuti, Chadia, Karima DueG), and hosted TV shows (Chadia), therefore greatly contributing to the wealth of content already available. Magazine and newspaper articles more prominently discuss *seconde generazioni* “che spesso si sentono ignorati e non riconosciuti dalle istituzioni, nonostante non abbiano vissuto altre realtà se non quella dello Stivale” (“that often feel ignored and not recognized by institutions, despite not having lived any other reality than that of the boot,” Piantoni 2018).<sup>93</sup> Italy is often the only home many have known their whole lives. Moreover, “L’Italia, che ti piaccia o no, sta andando avanti” (“Italy, whether you like it or not, is moving forward,” Errico 2018), which echoes what postcolonial scholars and hip hop artists themselves have been saying for at least a generation. Tommy Kuti encapsulates this reality at the end of “#AFROITALIANO,” succinctly stating that he is Afroitalian “perché il mondo è cambiato” (“because the world has changed”), reframing resistance as anyone against this change.

The rise in popularity the last decade is also reflected in international media and academia, particularly in the United States. For example, Rachael Allen’s article in the Atlantic (2019) talks of “The Tunisian-Italian Rapper Who Won Over Europe’s Most Anti-Immigrant Country,” referring to Ghali and his exponential popularity, since “even far-right voters are being dragged to concerts by their children” (Allen 2019). Ghali, aware of his younger audience, is “felice di fare musica per ragazzini” (“happy to make music for kids”)<sup>94</sup>, since his message resonates with them and therefore the future of Italy. Academia is also seeing a big push towards diversifying Italian curricula and scholarship. Organizations such as the American Association for Teachers of Italian (AATI); American Association for Italian Studies (AAIS); Italian American Studies Association (IASA); Diversity, Transformation & Italian Studies (DTIS); and

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<sup>93</sup> The boot metaphor here is problematic, failing to take into account the many islands and exclave, however the overall argument is valid.

<sup>94</sup> Lyrics from “Cara Italia” (2018)

the Cosmopolitan Italies Collective have organized webinars, workshops, panel discussions, and continue to provide resources towards these goals. Participants include author Igiaba Scego, rappers Amir Issaa and Karima DueG, activist Kwanza Musi Dos Santos, and director Fred Kuwornu, to name a few. Kuwornu, in collaboration with AATI, also launched Teaching Black Italy in summer 2021. Designed for teachers, this annual summer course offers “pedagogical tools to diversify and decolonize” ([www.blackitalia.info](http://www.blackitalia.info)) syllabi. Its inaugural year had 95 participants, 70 of which were faculty.<sup>95</sup> Implementing these types of workshops, seminars, and training demonstrates a commitment to addressing social issues and opens the door for more academic associations to do the same. It also highlights the role that scholarship can play in movements for social justice.

The Cosmopolitan Italies Collective engaged in this type of scholarship at an online event hosted by the Italian Institute of Culture<sup>96</sup> (IIC) of New York in October 2021.<sup>97</sup> Asked to reflect upon the themes of the event - “diffusione dell’italiano all’estero, italiano motore di innovazione, italiano fonte di creatività, italiano veicolo del Made in Italy” (“Diffusion of Italian abroad, Italian as a motor of innovation, Italian as a source of creativity, and Italian as a vehicle of Made in Italy”) - they took the opportunity to professionally question its motives, specifically the latter. The Italian brand Made in Italy guarantees authentic provenance in four traditional industries, known as the four A’s: abbigliamento (clothing), agroalimentare (food), arredamento (furniture), and automobili (automobiles). Its trademark is internationally recognized and has a strong reputation for quality. Made in Italy focuses on products and systems of production, and while Italian fashion designers have substantial name recognition, the work performed by skilled

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<sup>95</sup> <https://www.blackitalia.info/teachingblackitaly>

<sup>96</sup> Istituto Italiano di Cultura

<sup>97</sup> The panel consisted of Alessandro Giammei, Catherine Adoyo, Laura Ingallinella, and Anthony Sargenti.

laborers rarely gets mentioned. To combat this invisibilization with respect to agroalimentare, activist, union leader, and politician Aboubakar Soumahoro made the short documentary *The Invisibles*<sup>98</sup> (2020), which documents the roughly 200,000 undocumented workers, mostly from the continent of Africa, that are systematically exploited in order to harvest crops in Italy. Called “braccianti” (“a pair of arms”), they became designated as essential workers once the Covid-19 pandemic hit, even though this meant no rights, continued low pay, and inhumane conditions described as modern slavery. Protests in May 2020 demanded “uguale lavoro, uguale salario” (“equal work, equal pay”), declaring that “siamo essere umani, non braccia” (“we are human beings, not arms”). Soumahoro himself states at the end of *The Invisibles*, “Bisogna sapere la fatica, il sudore, lo sfruttamento, che a volte c’è dietro a una forchettata di prodotti che provengono dalle compagne” (“People need to know the exhaustion, the sweat, the exploitation, that’s often behind every bite of food that comes from these fields”). His work decolonizes romanticized versions of Italian food that pervade the globe. Instead of production and consumption, he exposes how big corporations and capitalist exploitation create inhumane living and working conditions. This reality contradicts the international reputation of Italian food, questioning what it means to be Italian and exposing the harsh realities that these workers face every day.

Utilizing Soumahoro’s postcolonial unpacking of agroalimentare and his recentering of human beings in the conversation, the collective *seconde generazioni* are, in fact, made in Italy. Many of them have been born and all of them have been raised in the country. They are native speakers or have learned the language in school. Italy is home, even though they may not be citizens due to outdated and xenophobic immigration legislation. Instead, they are forced to navigate an archaic system designed to exclude them, negating their experiences and invalidating

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<sup>98</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b2qx7utFlo&ab\\_channel=DohaDebates](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b2qx7utFlo&ab_channel=DohaDebates)

their identities. One salient example is Khaby Lame<sup>99</sup>, the most popular TikTokker in the world (Sato 2022). With over 156 million followers<sup>100</sup> (more than double the population of Italy) his popularity continues to grow. Born in Senegal and raised in Italy since he was an infant, he only recently became an Italian citizen (Atkinson 2022). He had previously discussed his lack of citizenship in interviews, explaining that ““Se uno si sente italiano non serve un foglio di carta” (“If one feels Italian, a piece of paper isn’t needed,” Fanpage.it 2021). Additionally, his videos are made in Italy: staged, recorded, and uploaded. These authentic cultural products, a.k.a. *realia*, contain a wealth of knowledge and experience; further scholarship would prove fruitful and beneficial, especially how his videos critique supposed technological innovations.<sup>101</sup>

Just like Khaby’s videos, second generation Italian hip hop is predominantly made in Italy. Tommy Kuti makes this point in the music video to “Faccio rap” (“I Rap”). A fully grown Kuti, dressed as an infant, lays in a cradle, the tag “Made in Italy” hanging off the end. A close up shot emphasizes its placement and message. He identifies himself in the song as a “ni\*\*a made in Italy,” claiming his space within *italianità*. Additionally, he introduces the dynamics of racialization, discussed further in this chapter. The last shot of the cradle’s tag shows another piece of paper, this time with three big question marks in green, white, and red: the colors of the Italian flag. They literally question the future of second generations, calling out the reality in which they live. The quick glimpse provokes ideas of belonging, citizenship, contemporary racism in Italy, and the work that still needs to be done. It also engages the audience to question

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<sup>99</sup> <https://www.tiktok.com/@khaby.lame?lang=en>

<sup>100</sup> As of March 2nd, 2023.

<sup>101</sup> Lasting a few seconds to a minute, Khaby’s most popular videos poke fun at so-called “life hacks.” His genius is in his simplicity: instead of a fancy, complex machine that can slice a lime, try a knife. Instead of using a special tool to separate pizza slices, use your hands. He never speaks in his videos, but his reactions and eye contact speak volumes. They have become memes, t-shirts, hashtags, etc. His comic criticism of technological “innovation” is poignant, hilarious, and profound.

their own assumptions about *italianità*. This is but one brief example of the power of second generation Italian hip hop in constructing discourses about identity, racialization, and activism.

### **Unifying Characteristics**

Artists utilize hip hop to communicate their messages, tell their stories, and decolonize hegemonic *italianità*. Hip hop, historically and contemporarily a diasporic space of sound and visual language, harmonizes “social contestation and artistic expression” (Clò and Zammarchi 24). The conversations evoked by second generation Italian hip hop “negotiate and build a new way of being Italian that challenges Italy’s supposed cultural and racial hegemony” (Angelucci 2). Artists do this by rapping, engaging with audiences, and promoting inclusive *italianità* free from social hierarchies. Albums, singles, mixtapes, and freestyles understand the power of music as a force of change (Giubilaro and Pecorelli 2019) that breaks barriers, changing the world by changing ourselves (Galal 2018). In fact, music is a weapon with life-changing capabilities. Karima DueG refers to Fela Kuti’s conception of music as “un’arma positiva” (“a positive weapon”) in “Africanism” (Sebhat 2014), which samples a speech from Kuti himself. Making things more personal, she writes, “la mia musica è la mia arma” (“my music is my weapon,” Karima 2G 2017) used to unsettle racist and sexist ideologies that pervade nationalist and xenophobic definitions of who is and who is not Italian. Second generation rappers as a whole employ their “artistic entrepreneurship and initiative beyond the narrow boundaries of institutional music industry and political structures. They are interested in building their own transborder contacts and collaborations to bring back home” (Clò and Zammarchi 37). The place and space of home often takes center stage in their music, claiming and reclaiming their socialization, lived experiences, and postcolonial *italianità*.

Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez use the power of music as a positive weapon to decolonize space and place, authorizing their identities within hip hop and the world. This space champions interculturalism, autonomy, self-identification, and holistic belonging, functioning as “a zone in which different languages and cultures converge syncretically, without hierarchies or censorship” (Taronna 325). Within this space, second generation “artists and writers breach the collective imagery of national identity, re-shaping Italian culture and society in a transcultural and translingual perspective” (Taronna 325), pushing for inclusive citizenship and telling the many stories of a reality “ormai consolidata” (“consolidated by now,” Stan 2020). Each artist reflects upon these complex dynamics, centering on inclusion, inner strength, perseverance, and self-acceptance. For example “Alieno” (Karima DueG 2021) posits that “chi ti esclude si esclude” (“those who exclude you exclude themselves”), calling social and political phenomena that, under the guise of protecting Italy from “non Italians,” actually alienate Italians from each other. This has negative effects on the collective second generation, marginalizing identities that do not fit a preconceived notion of what *italianità* entails. “The Way I Am” (Kuti 2018) explains the feeling of living “tra due mondi come Garibaldi” (“between two worlds like Garibaldi”) and the fact that “certi giorni ero escluso da entrambi” (“some days I was excluded from both”), describing a sense of double consciousness. To combat these prejudices in a country “che non ti incoraggia” (“that doesn’t encourage you”), it is important to “fatti strada e fatti furbo” (“make your way and rise up”). Second generation Italians continue to make names for themselves and have learned to not expect institutional help. Speaking truth to power and self-acceptance are paramount to their success. As Tommy Kuti (2018) puts it, “Non sarò nessuno se io non mi accetto” (“I will be a nobody if I don’t accept myself”). One positive result of this whole process is “Tutt\* stran\*”

(Everyone [is] Strange) by Chadia Rodriguez, which creates a welcoming space in which strangeness is a source of pride, community, and freedom. Here, inclusive belonging shines light on the many faces of *seconde generazioni*.

Language shapes inclusive belonging by humanizing marginalized identities, contesting institutionalized definitions, and celebrating diversity. These actions build a second generation consciousness grounded in lived reality. The innovative ways in which second generation Italian hip hop artists harmonize languages, rhythms, and rhymes creates a new sound (Ferrari 2018), one that breaks down barriers and celebrates postcolonial *italianità*. Language itself is “lo strumento fondamentale per l’inclusione” (“the fundamental instrument for inclusion,” Ferrari 171, quoting Issaa 2017) and mutually constitutive with identity (Angelucci 4, citing Ni-Mhurchu 2016). Additionally, multiple languages should not be treated as separate categories based on a nationalistic, monolingual ideology. Instead, they function as “an integrated system” (Angelucci 7, quoting Canagarah 2011) consistent with lived realities not only in Italy, but around the world. These systems do not privilege one language over another because they are not completely separated in everyday life.

This integrated system often utilizes signifyin’ to decolonize language. While no perfect definition exists, signifyin’ “can mean any number of modes of rhetorical play” (Gates, Jr. 184). These “ways of meaning” (Gates, Jr. 100) pull back the curtain on how meanings are constructed, manipulated, implied, and represented. Scholars such as Angelucci (2021) and Pavoni (2019) apply the concept of signifyin’ to second generation Italian hip hop. In this context, signifyin’ “is a form of signification itself” (Angelucci 12) that breaks the strict distinction between signifier and signified in traditional semiotics<sup>102</sup>, often employing ironic or pro tempore definitions. Representation becomes “un’estetica del conflitto, in cui allo scontro tra

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<sup>102</sup> I refer to the works of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.

immagini e tra immaginari corrisponde una battaglia per la definizione della propria identità” (“an aesthetic of conflict, in which the clash between images and imaginaries corresponds to a battle for the definition of one’s own identity,” Pavoni 175). The relationship between words, images, and messaging do not always correspond perfectly and can contradict each other in search of a unifying media presentation. Second generation Italian hip hop artists locate themselves within this struggle over self and collective representation. The multitude of messages, symbols, styles, languages, and sounds reflects lived reality, one of heterogeneity, pluralism, and often conflicting ideas. However, conflict does not invalidate the struggle over representation. Second generation Italians are not a monolith; they include dynamic populations of people that demand recognition, challenge hegemony, and pursue a better life for themselves.

This pursuit results in the authorization of postcolonial Italian identities via inclusive belonging. Multifaceted postcolonial discourses expose “the myth of the homogeneity of Italian society,” highlighting “the inconsistency of the supposedly correspondent relationship between nation and state” (Clini 258). More specifically, “these artists challenge the normative representation of their generation and engage in a process of cultural decolonization” (Ardizzoni 5). Disrupting the mainstream narrative of what it means to be Italian, second generation Italian hip hop artists identify and dissect contemporary racialization in Italy. A remnant of Italy’s colonial past, specifically in the Horn of Africa and Libya, racialization operates within Italian borders, seeking to rid Italy of supposed foreign and cultural invaders. Negotiations on the meaning of “foreign” itself provide new ways of unpacking Italian identity with respect to the false dichotomy of Italian vs. other, especially when hegemonic definitions label people born and/or raised in Italy as “foreign” (Ardizzoni 2020). The pre chorus to “Tutt\* stran\*” (Rodriguez 2021) encapsulates the subject position that results from these historical and contemporary



dynamics, “siamo il domani sì, ma senza un domani, qui siamo tutti uguali, siamo tutti strani” (“we are tomorrow, yes, but without a tomorrow, here we are all equal, we are all strange”). The collective second generation represents the future (and past) of Italy, however without a proper and humane path towards citizenship and full acceptance, they are still treated as outsiders. The solidarity represented in these lyrics demonstrates their revolutionary power and is a primary reason for their growing recognition in popular culture and scholarship.

### **A Brief Introduction to the Artists**

Second generation Italian hip hop artists continue to grow in number. This chapter focuses on four: Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez. While they continue to gain more national and international recognition, it is important to locate them within this chapter. Ghali is the most well-known and arguably most popular rapper in Italy. Tommy Kuti was featured in the Italian reality show “Pechino Express,” and Chadia Rodriguez currently hosts “Sex, Lies, and Chadia” on Discovery+. Karima DueG is active in social justice and academic circles. Brief bios serve to introduce these protagonists before an analysis of their artistry. The following chapter analyzes how Karima DueG and Chadia Rodriguez decolonize gender and sexuality, however they are also included in this chapter because of their focus on language and race.

Anna Maria Gehnyei (1980-), known professionally as Karima 2G and/or Karima DueG, was born in Rome to Liberian parents. Citizenship is fundamental to her identity and she takes issue with other artists who have citizenship but do not fight for the rights of others. Her albums include *2G* (2014) and *Bantu Juke Fever* (2015). Singles include “Africa” (2016), “Police” (2017), “Malala” (2018), “Alzati” (“Get Up,” 2021) and “Alieno” (“Alien,” 2021). Her artistry is located at the intersection of reggae, African music of the 1970s, and electronica (Clini 256).

Lyrics, prior to 2021, were exclusively in Pidgin English spoken in and around Liberia. Primary themes include identity construction, a double sense of belonging, and exposing racism and sexism in Italy (Fabbri 2020). Throughout her music and activism Karima DueG challenges and “reclaims a space of representation which has been denied for too long within Italian public culture” (Clini 256). In her own words, Karima DueG explains that “essendo nera, in un Paese nel quale il nero non può essere italiano, tu non fai, ma tu *sei* politica” (“being black, in a country where a black person can’t be Italian, you are not playing politics, you *are* political,” Galal 2018). By reclaiming her identity and challenging hegemonic *italianità*, she demonstrates resistance via existence. From a theoretical point of view, she bases her work on the scholarship and writings of Stuart Hall, re-articulating his theories of identity, race, belonging, and diaspora into a contemporary Italian context, “ho applicato i suoi [di Hall] studi sugli stessi problemi nella società italiana di oggi, sulle tematiche dell’immigrazione, del terrorismo e della religione in relazione al concetto di razza” (“I applied his [Hall’s] studies to the same problems in Italian society today, on the themes of immigration, terrorism, and religion as they relate to the concept of race,” Karima 2G 2017). Demonstrating how discriminatory language teaches hate is of particular interest, which Karima DueG communicates in her speeches and music.

Language use has always been at the forefront of Italian hip hop, which historically utilized southern languages to resist the “hegemonic imposition of the Italian standard language” (Clò and Zammarchi 25). Karima DueG does the same thing with Pidgin English, which uncovers the colonial relationship between language, identity, geography, and diaspora. Also called Black English, Pidgin English spoken in Liberia is “a new cosmopolitan language practice that can connect Italy and the United States, Africa and the Mediterranean, metropolitan cities and peripheries, and diasporic, migrant and postcolonial subjects, who can express their critique

through music, art, literature, and cinema” (Taronna 325). Reaching a wide audience and speaking directly to people in and around Liberia continues to be of primary importance to Karima DueG. The use of Pidgin English, an intentional and political decision, calls out imperialism and colonialism (Clini 258), as pidgin languages develop at the intersection of English (colonizer language) and indigenous languages (Taronna 309). In an Italian context, Pidgin English challenges the relationship between language and *italianità* by complicating “il concetto di identità italiana” (“the concept of Italian identity,” Fabbri 9). Beyond being a colonial marker, Pidgin English is the language of younger generations (Santoro 2014). It offers “a transatlantic vision of the traces left by the memory of the African diaspora” (Taronna 308). During an interview with Annarita Taronna (2018), Karima DueG explains the utility of Pidgin English in communicating her message, “the use of Pidgin allowed me to convey a subversive potential that I could not have transmitted through standard English.” This subversive potential became even more complex in the summer of 2021. Having spoken about pressures to sing and rap in Italian as well as calling out the problems with linguistic hierarchies in Italy, Karima made a subtle, yet powerful change to her name. Karima 2G, seemingly overnight, became Karima DueG. The phonetic spelling of the number two in Italian, which still signifies the second generation and her issues with this terminology, signified a new trajectory in her artistic development. Unsurprisingly, Karima DueG released her first single in Italian, “Alzati” shortly after this subtle yet profound change. This was followed by the release of another single, “Alieno” in October of the same year. Both songs anticipate her upcoming memoir *Il corpo nero* (*The Black Body*, 2023) and album *Libera* (*Free*), which refers to the past, present, and future of Liberia and Italy.

A second noted artist, Tolulope Olabode Kuti a.k.a. Tommy (1989-), was Born in Abeokuta, Nigeria and raised in Castiglione delle Stiviere, a small town near Brescia in northern Italy, since he was two years old (Parigi 2018). His hometown had little to no experience with people from different countries or backgrounds. Music was not only a sanctuary, but also a place of liberation, “con il tempo, grazie alla musica, ho trovato un modo di emanciparmi, per farmi considerare, per avere una seconda chance, per combattere i pregiudizi che la gente aveva su di me” (“with time, thanks to music, I found a way to emancipate myself, to give myself a place, to have a second chance, to combat the prejudices that people had about me,” Castagneri 2018). Convinced that Italian rap did not exist, Kuti sought to create it. Upon further inspection, he discovered a rich subculture to which he allied himself. He received his Italian citizenship at the age of 14, and a few years later attained his undergraduate degree in Communication Sciences. He is adamant that he completed his degree for his parents, as music has always been his true passion and inspiration (Castagneri 2018). He released his first studio album *Italiano vero (Real Italian)* in 2018.

Kuti is both a second generation Italian citizen as well as a part of the second generation of Italian hip hop artists. Professionally active since 2011, he gained industry recognition when he was featured in the music video for Fabri Fibra’s “Il rap nel mio paese” (“Rap In My Country”) in 2015. He continues to collaborate with Fibra.<sup>103</sup> Kuti created his own label, the now defunct *Mancamelanina (Melanin is missing)* in 2016. This title critiques the absence of Italian rappers of color and insinuates, seemingly tongue and cheek, that melanin deficiency fuels racism. Therefore, melanin can act as a cure for it. Kuti was the first Afroitalian to land a major record deal, signing with Universal Music Italy in the same year (Farina 2017; Ogong’a 2016). Tommy’s modus operandi is to tell “la storia della mia gente” (“the story of my people”) by

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<sup>103</sup> Most recently in “Cliché,” track 5 of *Italiano Vero*.

narrating “le storie dei ragazzi come me” (“the stories of people like me,” “Che cosa significa essere afroitaliano” 2017). Kuti does this by chronicling stories of second generation Italians, revealing their inner struggles, giving them a platform to have a voice, and carving out a public space for them to not only exist, but to thrive. He sees hope in the eyes of Italian youth and dedicates his music to Italian children of African parents (Castagneri 2018). Singing about his life makes him seem like an activist to some, since his music contains strong political messages, but to Kuti, “è solo la mia vita che sento di dover raccontare” (“it’s just my life that I feel the need to tell,” Castagneri 2018). Additionally, Kuti was a mainstay on the 7th season of *Pechino Express*, a reality TV show similar to the *Amazing Race* in which teams of two travel to different parts of the world, completing challenges and breaking language barriers (Parigi 2018; Tedde 2018). Kuti often posts about his experiences on social media, always giving gratitude to the people he has had the pleasure of meeting. This ultimately adds to his likability as an artist and his apparent household name status (Tedde 2018).

Tommy Kuti re-articulates Blackness as “distinctive *of* his Italian identity” (Clò and Zammarchi 24, emphasis mine). Blackness is a part of his *italianità* that has been and continues to be suppressed by Whiteness predicated on anti-Blackness, xenophobia, and Christian supremacy (Clò and Zammarchi 2021). He utilizes the phrase “Non sono straniero, sono solo stranero” (“I am not a foreigner, I am just extra Black”)<sup>104</sup> to call out this hypocrisy (Pavoni 2019). His manifesto “#AFROITALIANO” puts this on full display. Towards the end of the music video, Fabri Fibra, playing the role of a psychiatrist, asks Kuti, “Ma Lei, si sente più africano o si sente più italiano?” (“But sir, do you feel more African or more Italian?”). His response encapsulates his Afroitalian and second generation experience, “Sono stufo di sentirmi

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<sup>104</sup> This phrase plays on the relationship between “straniero” (foreigner) and “stranero” (extra/super black).

dire cosa sono e cosa non sono. Sono troppo africano per essere solo italiano e troppo italiano per essere solo africano. Afroitaliano, perché il mondo è cambiato” (“I’m sick and tired of having others decide what I am and what I am not. I am too African to be only Italian, and too Italian to be only African. Afroitaliano, because the world has changed”). The final phrase is the title of this dissertation: “because the world has changed.” In a few words, Kuti successfully inverts power dynamics, reclaiming autonomy and self-identification. In this context the resistance comes from those that negate his *italianità* based on a racist colonial ideology. Instead, the world has changed, Afroitalians and second generations live their lives in Italy, struggling for more recognition and inclusive citizenship. My inquiry is focused around these dynamics and the ability of hip hop lyrics and music to effectively communicate them.

A third prominent and popular artist, Ghali Amdouni (1993-) a.k.a. Fobia, Ghali Foh, and Ghali, was born in Milan to Tunisian parents. His artistry includes the albums *Album* (2017), *DNA* (2020), *Sensazione ultra* (*Ultra Sensation*, 2022) as well as the hit single “Cara Italia” (Dear Italy, 2018). Michael Jackson is his primary influence; he has also been compared to singer-songwriters Stormzy (England), Stromae (Belgium) and The Weeknd (Canada) in terms of his underground origins and mainstream prominence (Sardo 2017). Ghali’s use of social media, extreme attention to detail, and high quality music videos contribute to his growing success (Clò and Zammarchi 2021). Combining “genuine, heartfelt, often autobiographical lyrics” and incorporating “Italian with Arabic, French, and the language of Tunisian immigrants” creates a multifaceted, linguistic sound (Clò and Zammarchi 33). It is important to note that Ghali uses these languages together, not as separate, distinct entities, but rather to represent an interlingual space that reflects the lived linguistic reality of many second generation Italians. These honest, vulnerable lyrics, according to Ghali, have led him to international success, “We brought a new

sound with a new message and a new vision of rap in Italy. And we did it by bringing my identity - and by being super honest. So when people ask me how I did it, the answer is I was just super honest” (Leitch 2021, quoting Ghali). He demonstrates this honesty in his lyrics and messaging. His “most resonant songs target a broader Italian audience with socially conscious lyrics and pop production” (Leitch 2021). This is on full display in his “personal and introspective” (Clò and Zammarchi 34) first album, sarcastically entitled *Album*.

The last major artist discussed in this chapter is Chadia Rodriguez (1998-), a.k.a. Chadia. She was born in Spain, raised in Torino, and has both Spanish and Moroccan ancestry. She released her first album, *Avere 20 anni*<sup>105</sup> (*To Be 20 Years Old*), in 2019. Chadia has released two singles in anticipation of her second album, “Bella così” (Beautiful As You Are, 2020) and “Tutt\* stran\*” (Everyone [Is] Strange, 2021). She started hosting the talk show *Sex, Lies, and Chadia* on Discovery+ in December 2021. Aimed at destigmatizing sex and allowing for open, honest questions and conversations, she and her guests (some recurring, some new), put simply, talk about “il sesso senza tabù” (“sex without taboo,” [Discoveryplus.com](http://Discoveryplus.com)). This talk show aligns with Chadia’s body of work, specifically her lyrics.

Chadia’s sex positive lyrics that often focus on female pleasure distinguish her from other Italian rappers. Much like Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion (both USA), her lyrics have met fierce conservative backlash in Italy (Redazione 2019), precisely because they challenge heteropatriarchal capitalist conceptions of pleasure. Chadia compares herself to Cardi B, openly embracing her past, “prima del rap mi spogliavo come Cardi” (“before rap I used to strip like Cardi”).<sup>106</sup> Additionally, Chadia was the first female Italian rapper to be featured on a Spotify playlist cover (Redazione 2019), showing some form of recognition. Conscious of the power of

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<sup>105</sup> *Avere 20 anni* is also the title of a 1978 Italian erotic drama film.

<sup>106</sup> Lyrics from “3G” ft. Jake La Furia (2019)

her words and platform, she consistently communicates solidarity with movements for social and structural change. For example, her Instagram post on International Women’s Day 2021<sup>107</sup> exhorts those with a platform to use it in order to create a better society. Calling out the hyper-inflated “like” market, she champions substance over superficiality, because “il dolore non fa distinzioni” (“pain doesn’t make distinctions”). No matter the positionality or privilege, pain still hurts. She goes on to argue that success and popularity in the Italian musical space should necessitate a responsibility to use that power for the marginalized and discriminated against. She understands that transphobia and homophobia manifest into policies and laws that negatively affect the livelihoods of groups and individuals. In this way, Chadia Rodriguez is the premier voice for sex positivity and inclusive sexuality. In this chapter I focus on her discourses about race and language in Italy.

Each artist highlighted above exemplifies second generation Italian hip hop by challenging race and linguistic hierarchies through their music. They also collectively unsettle institutionalized *italianità* and break down monolithic stereotypes about second generation Italians. Together, they create a dynamic space that demands recognition, champions a strong sense of belonging, and pushes for inclusive citizenship. I analyze specific examples of their work in the following section.

### **Discourse Analysis on Major Themes and Strategies**

Having briefly introduced Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez, the rest of this chapter is dedicated to specific examples of how their lyrics, music, and music videos decolonize *italianità* and authorize postcolonial Italian identities. Utilizing a plethora of themes and strategies, these texts present distinct and overlapping categories. First, and consistent with hip hop in general, these artists operate within a contemporary Italian, local, and global context

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<sup>107</sup> [https://www.instagram.com/p/CL\\_27DnARRO/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CL_27DnARRO/)



to reclaim their identities and establish a welcoming space. Second, self-reflexive lyrics demonstrate the decolonial project of signifying'. Karima Due G's "Orangutan" (2014) is one prime example. Third, sociologically conscious lyrics and messaging explain the predicament of second generation Italians with respect to race and class. Lastly, lived experience takes center stage in order to humanize collective and individual experiences, seeking to make them more mainstream and thus part of the national conversation. All of these discourses decolonize language and race. This decolonization creates a dynamic, inclusive, welcoming space for further discussion and debate.

Second generation Italian hip hop reclaims space. As seen previously with Amir Issaa, second generation artists praise hip hop as an artistic space that has allowed them to achieve success, recognition, and be a part of positive change. Ghali exclaims, "amo questo rap game" ("I love this rap game")<sup>108</sup> because it took him "da una stalla a una stella" ("from a pigsty to [being] a star").<sup>109</sup> Beyond praise, songs like "Bitch 2.0" (Rodriguez 2019) turn hateful language into a source of strength and pride via diss tracks that call out discrimination. This strategy is directed outwards, "apri la mente" ("open your mind," Ghali 2017)<sup>110</sup> as a way to encourage inclusion. It also takes the form of a personal declaration, "sono italiano anche senza lo ius soli" ("I am Italian even without jus soli," Kuti 2018).<sup>111</sup> A stronger stance, such as the phrase "No integration"<sup>112</sup> (Karima DueG 2014) challenges the ministry and departments of integration that function as a system of forced, one-directional assimilation in which the "immigrant" must prove themselves "Italian" enough, even though second generation Italians are, by their own

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<sup>108</sup> Lyrics from "Oggi no" (2017)

<sup>109</sup> Lyrics from "Ninna nanna" (2017) and "Oggi no" (2017). It is important to note the word play between pigsty "stalla" and star "stella" in Italian.

<sup>110</sup> Lyrics from "Combo" (2017)

<sup>111</sup> Lyrics from "Forza Italia" (2018)

<sup>112</sup> Lyrics from "Bunga bunga" (2014)

self-identification, Italian. Additionally, the music videos to “Bunga bunga” (Karima DueG 2014) and “Habibi” (Ghali 2017) reclaim otherwise marginalized and forgotten spaces. The setting for “Bunga bunga,” San Basilio, is “one of the angriest and most forgotten ghettos of Rome” (Taronna 319). “Habibi” re-articulates abandoned public spaces, turning them into places to celebrate, dance, and live (Giubilaro and Pecorelli 2019). The physical representations of these spaces in music videos recenter not only the aesthetic buildings, but also the people that live in them. This provides a stage to reclaim identity.

Second generation Italian hip hop artists utilize signifyin’ to decolonize their identities. Lyrics call out structural inequality, exposing racial and sexual animus. They are code aware and self-reflexive, demonstrating a greater understanding of Italian identity politics and social issues. Belonging takes center stage, consistent with the movement of second generations. Lyrics highlight racial animus via animal references, telling people to go “back home,” and ridiculing traditional cuisine, “Monkey, donkey, back to the country, back to the history, eat banana plantain” (Karima DueG, “Bunga bunga” 2014). “Monkey” and “donkey” bestialize Black Italians, turning them into meat for capture/slaughter. These “beasts” must therefore go “back to the country” to eat banana plantains. The interjection of “back to the history” disrupts colonial rhetoric, calling out historical racism that continues to affect Italian society today. Hyena and monkey sounds (Tommy Kuti, “Faccio rap” 2015) mock the violent colonial ideology which dehumanizes the continent of Africa, treating people like animals who live in the “jungle.” For Karima DueG, the jungle imaginary becomes a site of resistance. The phrase “Respect my jungle” (“Bingo bongo” 2014) re-articulates racist rhetoric by reclaiming this colonized space as a point of pride.

The re-articulation of racist rhetoric directly calls out institutionalized racism in Italy. Ghali laments that although politicians cycle through the system, the system itself stays the same, with garbage politics coming from the left and the right. He does this by playing on the words “ministri” (ministers) and “minestra” (soup) to criticize the entire Italian political system<sup>113</sup>, followed immediately by “il cesso è qui a sinistra, il bagno è in fondo a destra” (“the toilet is here on the left, the loo is at the end on the right”).<sup>114</sup> Left and right are a metaphor for Italian politics, and while the left is closer, both need to be flushed. Ghali also challenges Catholic supremacy in Italy, “mi stai chiedendo se sono italiano o musulmano?” (“are you asking me if I am Italian or Muslim?”).<sup>115</sup> This question surmises that Islam is incompatible with *italianità* and therefore one must choose. As seen previously with race, dominant definitions police Italian identity, creating false dichotomies that divide Italians into separate, unequal groups. In turn, a social hierarchy relegates those labeled as “other” or “incompatible” to the margins, further exasperating inequality. Tommy Kuti makes a similar point in “#AFROITALIANO” with respect to race and geography. Additionally, he uses English rhetoric to mock the racialized fear of Black bodies, “sono l’uomo nero però don’t panic, don’t panic” (“I am the black man however don’t panic, don’t panic!”). A learned, panic response seeks to justify the use of violence to neutralize “threats” that anti-Black racism creates. This is also highlighted by Rafè’s introduction to Cécile’s “N.E.G.R.A.”<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, extremist ideologies within this racist hierarchy dictate that second generation Italians are either “terroristi” (terrorists) or “parassiti” (“parasites”)<sup>117</sup> that need to be destroyed, as they are seen as threats to a romanticized, white *italianità*. Second generation Italian hip hop continues to criticize this Whiteness.

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<sup>113</sup> “Cambiano i ministri ma non la minestra” from “Cara Italia” (2018)

<sup>114</sup> Lyrics from “Cara Italia” (2018)

<sup>115</sup> Lyrics from “Ora d’aria” (2017)

<sup>116</sup> Full analysis is in the following chapter.

<sup>117</sup> Lyrics from “Ora d’aria” (2017)

One prime example of signifyin' is "Orangutan" (2014) by Karima DueG (Taronna 309). It subverts racist rhetoric by "utilizing music as a tool for social justice, change, and transformation" (Dabiri 2017). Written in response to the racist backlash following the appointment of Italy's first Black government minister Cécile Kyenge, it gives voice to and visualizes lived reality, creating a piece of art that challenges, celebrates, and documents postcolonial *italianità*. A male Italian politician from the neo-fascist party *la Lega* called Kyenge, amongst other things, an Orangutan, which echoes colonial rhetoric and ideology. Even though Orangutans are the largest arboreal great apes and one of the most intelligent primates, the imagery here seeks to dehumanize Kyenge via animalization, transforming her into an inferior beast. The chorus repeats, to the point of ridiculousness, the word orangutan, splitting up the word to demonstrate its divisiveness. Throwing in phrases such as "who the hell is" and "miseducation" critique Italian institutions. The first line of the song, "Two G Second Generation," shouts out to the collective second generation and immediately pivots to the question of citizenship: who represents the nation, who deserves to represent the nation, and who has access to represent the nation. The phrase "rape is a crime is not a passion" refers to another Italian politician, a woman, who overtly called for someone to rape Kyenge in order to pacify her.<sup>118</sup> This violent mentality is a continuation of Italian colonialism. Second generation hip hop and its socially conscious lyrics make this connection quite clear.

The music video to "Orangutan"<sup>119</sup> visualizes the legacy of racist colonialism and documents the struggle for freedom, connecting contemporary issues in Italy to Apartheid South Africa. Clips of the South African film *Sarafina* (1992) are featured throughout the music video (Sebhat 2014; Taronna 2018). Karima DueG incorporates these clips to connect South African

<sup>118</sup> While this person was kicked out of her political party, I was not able to identify any other sort of accountability.

<sup>119</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKQOltcexX0&ab\\_channel=KarimaOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKQOltcexX0&ab_channel=KarimaOfficial)

history to present day Italy, in which segregated and discriminatory systems colonized and continue to colonize people today. *Sarafina* is a movie about the Soweto student uprising of 1976, when students took to the streets to protest anti-Black racism. “Orangutan” utilizes these clips to historicize the second generation Italian movement and point to the importance of decolonized education. It comes as no surprise that students and youth activists are at the forefront of societal change in Italy that deserve more support. Amir Issaa, to his credit, has also dedicated his activism to education, holding workshops and speaking in schools. This form of education unsettles white-washed histories that continue to churn out racist politicians like the one featured in the music video.

These lyrics and images criticize institutions and ideologies that create, maintain, and justify inequality. “Political oppression can create discrimination, pretending not to see the criminal intention” (Karima DueG, “Africa” 2016). The criminal intention here refers to the crime of oppression that marginalizes groups of people - socially, politically, economically, and/or geographically - to maintain the status quo of hegemonic *italianità*. In doing so, the intention is to create the crime of not being Italian and then policing it in the form of politics and policy. This echo chamber relies on oppressing second generation Italian identities as well as suppressing the history of Italian colonialism, creating an unequal environment.

Understanding how colonialism creates inequality is paramount to dismantling these mechanisms. Second generation Italian hip hop provides a wealth of messages that highlight the relationship between inequality, law enforcement, alienation, and sexual harassment. For example, the anti-imperialist “leave Africa alone...we don’t want your guns and your debt and money” (Karima DueG, “Jambo Bwana” 2014) puts the cause of violence and debt at the hands of colonialism itself, directly contradicting elitist ideologies that blame the colonized for being

invaded in the first place, for the inhumane conditions that colonialism creates, and finally for the aftermath of colonialism. State-sanctioned violence in the form of law enforcement continues this oppressing system, for example by stopping Black Italians because they do not “look” Italian enough. The consequences of negative stereotypes and monopolized state-sanctioned violence - fundamental to colonialism - manifest themselves in the form of the police (Karima DueG, “Police” 2018). Karima DueG writes about being stopped in Italy because she is considered “troppo ben vestita per essere un’immigrata” (“too well-dressed to be an immigrant,” Karima 2G 2017). White supremacist policing misidentifies her as an immigrant, however her attire contradicts this identification, so the police stop her, blaming her for their misapprehension. Since their mistake is supposedly her fault, she must be punished for it. Whitewashed *italianità* encourages these assumptions based on phenotype, and so the police consider themselves well within their right to question her. Intersecting with race, class also plays an important role in this ideology, since economic mobility or success is considered out of place and therefore deserving of being questioned. This reflects a more global situation in which any marginalized group that attains a level of economic mobility is characterized as dishonest, undeserving, and criminal.

The music video to “Police”<sup>120</sup> demonstrates the inextricable link between policing, geography, and environmental justice: where the police are, who they look for, and who are deemed criminals all depend on social, physical, and economic marginalization. A voiceover of a man describing police harassment and getting arrested “for no reason” introduces the catchy and sarcastically facetious “Call the police come on, call the police on me” chorus. Seemingly begging the audience to call the police on her, this reverse psychology criticizes the racial weaponization of law enforcement, encapsulated with the image of a white woman calling the police because she feels “threatened.” In reality, the threatened white woman causes violence

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<sup>120</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmoSmwBBrKg&ab\\_channel=KarimaOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FmoSmwBBrKg&ab_channel=KarimaOfficial)

against people of color. Karima DueG deplores this “new form of imperialism,” declaring that “it’s about power, it’s about domination” and not about safety or justice. “Police” juxtaposes images of overfishing and nuclear testing with green palm trees and serene livable conditions, connecting race, the police, and the environment. At the same time, state-sanctioned violence as a continuation of imperialism pollutes societies, literally and figuratively choking the air out of marginalized populations forced to live in segregated neighborhoods. Again, Karima DueG returns to the importance of education, “what about schools, what about education?” Instead of gambling on the use of force - denoted by clips of Las Vegas in the music video - societies should invest in decolonized education that holistically empowers people to reach their full potential. Karima DueG is very conscious of the link between social justice and economic inequality.

Socially conscious lyrics refer to Italy as the place “dove il presidente ha più gioielli del Papa, ma c’è chi dorme per strada” (“where the president has more jewels than the Pope, but there are those that sleep on the street”) and where “un lavoro non basta” (“one job isn’t enough,” Kuti, “La bella Italia” 2018). These lyrics call out economic inequality, political greed, and the reality that there are enough resources to end poverty in Italy, but no political will to do so. All of this leads to alienation, where the newspaper “parla dello straniero come fosse un alieno, senza passaporto, in cerca di dinero” (“talks about the foreigner as if they were an alien, without a passport, looking for money,” Ghali, “Cara Italia” 2018). The dehumanizing monolith of second generation Italians dictates that they are out of this world, destitute, and therefore a threat to Italy, Italians, and *italianità*. Chadia Rodriguez desires a world without “un cacciatore che ci fischia per come siamo vestite” (“a male predator that catcalls us because of how we are dressed,” “Tutt\* stran\* 2021). She uses the word “cacciatore” which means “hunter, poacher,

predator” to describe the antagonist in search of his animal prey. Bestialization again creates an inhumane hierarchy. Additionally, heteropatriarchal gender expectations and meanings ascribed to attire are to blame, not the clothes that women wear. All of these examples demonstrate how socially conscious lyrics in second generation Italian hip hop unsettle the often suppressed connections between inequality, state-sanctioned violence, harassment, and alienation that began during Italian colonialism and continue to today.

Tommy Kuti’s “Hassan”<sup>121</sup> (2018) sheds light on all these dynamics. The 7th track of *Real Italian*, “Hassan” tells the story of a Senegalese refugee who fled his homeland in search of a better life. Kuti humanizes Hassan, narrating that as a young child “il suo sogno era di fare il calciatore” (“his dream was to be a soccer player”). A popular goal demonstrates a youthful innocence when it comes to the reality of his situation. The song in and of itself describes how xenophobic labor and citizenship laws force many people to turn to other forms of employment to provide for themselves and their families. Often, this is the only choice they have to survive, “arrivato capì che l’unica opzione per quelli come lui è la criminalità” (“upon arrival, he learned that the only option for those like him is crime”). Hassan made a living on the streets, sending money home to his parents<sup>122</sup> when he could. However, “la vita è una merda senza i documenti” (“life is shit without documentation”), and not having access to resources or support. This inequality causes the turn towards criminality in order to earn income. One particular scene in the song demonstrates the tragic irony of Hassan’s situation. Having been sighted by the police, he makes a break for it, “corre e pensa all’ironia” (“running and thinking about the irony”) of his predicament. Here he is, having fled his home country, now being chased by law enforcement. Kuti’s salient, “dove sarà” (“where might it be?”) when referring to Hassan’s freedom contradicts

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<sup>121</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnXO7chtXZM&ab\\_channel=TommyKuti-Topic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnXO7chtXZM&ab_channel=TommyKuti-Topic)

<sup>122</sup> “manda i soldi ai parenti”



the ideology of Italy and other European countries as beacons of democracy and hope. The scene culminates in the crux of the song, which calls out hypocritical inhumane approaches to immigration,

Chi odia gli immigrati ciò che han visto non lo sa Siete fortunati a viver con mamma e papà Dite no all'immigrazione ma poi la verità Se foste nati altrove scappereste come Hassan	Those that hate immigrants don't know what they [immigrants] have seen You are lucky to live with mom and dad You say no to immigration but here is the truth If you had been born elsewhere, you would escape just like Hassan
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Kuti criticizes inhumane anti-immigration policies that take for granted the privilege of living safely with two parents. This privilege blinds people from knowing the plight of those that leave home out of necessity. The hypocrisy is that those same people, the ones against immigration, would leave Italy in a heartbeat if their life depended on it. In fact, Italy has historically been a country of emigration. Millions of Italians left at the end of the Risorgimento, which explains why there are little Italies all over the world. “Hassan” clearly articulates this hypocrisy and calls for immigration policy based on empathy and common humanity.

The whole song is framed by a speech given in 2000 by Pape Diaw, an activist and representative of the Senegalese population in Florence, Italy. His speech questions the myths surrounding immigration, colonization, and responsibility,

L'Europa è stata trecento anni in Africa, ha rubato tutte le sue risorse in trecento anni di	Europe was in Africa for 300 years, it robbed every resource in 300 years of colonization,
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colonizzazione, poi oggi i nostri cittadini non hanno più terre per coltivare, le multinazionali europee hanno confiscato le terre.	today our farmers do not have any more land to cultivate. European multinational corporations confiscated the land.
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Kuti's lyrics begin, tell Hassan's story, and question where his freedom truly resides. The rest of Diaw's speech closes out the track,

E allora, se si sfrutta l'Africa, ai loro contadini gli prendiamo la loro terra, ma queste persone da qualche parte dovranno pur andare? Io penso che è da lì che bisogna ripartire se vogliamo fermare l'immigrazione.	And so, if Africa is exploited, and we take the farmer's land, <i>shouldn't these people go somewhere?</i> I think that this is where we need to start if we want to talk about stopping immigration (emphasis mine).
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Diaw begins by criticizing the European colonization of Africa (Pavoni 173), placing it as the cause of immigration. He opposes imperial rhetoric centered around cultural elitism and racism, and instead represents the colonizers as the true criminals. At the end of the song he begs the question of where exploited people should go. This line garnered a resounding applause. It debunks the dominant myth of "illegal" immigration, i.e. people immigrate to steal land, and tries to understand root causes. In this frame, immigration is the result of colonization. It is the land of the colonized that has been illegally taken.

Second generation Italian hip hop artists, aware of this history, challenge systems of oppression based on race, gender, and sexuality. Artists utilize themes of self-worth, representation, racialization, and the celebration of sexuality to actively decolonize these systems. Marginalized identities, now a site of resistance and pride, become celebrated. Karima

DueG is “proud to be black” (“Bunga bunga” 2014). Tommy Kuti nominates himself, stating who he is and what he does, “Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap” (“My name is Mista Tolu I am Black and I rap,” from “Faccio rap” 2015). Chadia Rodriguez is proudly “araba con gli occhi verdi” (“Arabic with green eyes,” from “Pastiglie” 2019) and has “sangue marocchino” (“Moroccan blood,” from “Bitch 2.0” 2019). The politics of blood (*jus sanguinis*) create false dichotomies that seek to disqualify *italianità*. These examples demonstrate the reclaiming of identity and self-representation by re-articulating racial and ethnic categorizations. Instead of Black or Italian, Arabic or Italian, etc., postcolonial identities are Black *and* Italian, Arabic *and* Italian, etc.

Part and parcel to the celebration of marginalized identities is the understanding of how they are constructed within hegemony. Central to this understanding is the concept of Blackenization - the process of becoming Black - exposed by “Blackenized” (2014). Karima DueG calls out tokenism and racialization in Italy, which are both exacerbated by the Italian education system. “Blackenized” is also a call to collectivize, positing that there is pride and strength in the struggle over identity. “I don’t know if you realize before you get recognize you got to be Blackenized / Blackenized you got to be Blackenized / Blackenized before you get recognize.” Karima DueG communicates her awareness, telling others to do the same. The repetition of “Blackenized” calls attention to the word, not to the point of ridiculousness as seen in “Orangutan” (2014), but to a point of contestation.

Blackenization colonizes identity by invading personal autonomy and self-representation. Recognizing this process re-articulates Blackness from within. Lyrics call out the colonial process of blackenizing the other, creating an identity and then using imperial definitions to control, govern, and ultimately destroy it if deemed necessary. Beyond identifying the process of

blackening, it too becomes a source of pride in Karima DueG's more recent work. Whereas "Blackened" calls out racialization, "Alzati" (2021) re-articulates Blackness into pride and independence, liberated out of the obscurity maintained by institutions. The chorus, "Ti prego alzati / guarda avanti / non sei solo il tuo nome / non fermarti" ("Please get up / Look forward / You are not only your name / Don't stop"), is directed both outwards and inwards, offering a greater sense of introspection. The unshackling of colonial naming conventions liberates postcolonial Italian identities, allowing them to move forward.

The intersections of language, race, and identity came to a head at Sanremo 2019, when Mahmood (1992-) won the 69th annual Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song.<sup>123</sup> Born and raised in Milan by a Sardinian mother and Egyptian father, he quickly became a household name in Italy. His winning autobiographical track, "Soldi," recounts the life of an Italian family living in the periphery, an irresponsible father, and how money objectifies familial relationships (Ghiglione 2019; Obasuyi 2019; Redazione Music 2019). The ensuing scandal surrounding Mahmood's victory immediately caught my attention, specifically the questions surrounding his Italian identity. Social media exploded, with Italian politicians and people alike asking questions such as: Who was this "Egyptian singer" that literally stole the show? Why was this undeserving "immigrant" chosen by cultural elites to represent the best Italian song? How could this song even be considered Italian? (Ghiglione 2019; Monella 2019). Mahmood's victory brought these conversations onto the national and international stages (Ghiglione 2019; Monella 2019; Obasuyi 2019).

### **Ascendant Fascist Italian Politics: February 2018 and the First Conte Government**

The evolution of Sanremo coincides with national-popular Italian culture and identity. Its characteristic heterogeneity demonstrated that there were and are, in fact, many Italies (Facci and

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<sup>123</sup> A detailed description of the contest's history and cultural influence is in Appendix B.

Soddu 2011; Obasuyi 2019). This rich tradition of identification and negotiation, which has always been disputed to a certain degree, was nationally weaponized by the Italian government in 2018 (Ghiglione 2019). In this section I outline the rise of Italy's government formed in February of that year and its assault on Italy's diversity. In short, the administration wanted to turn back the clock and make Italy "Italian" again.

The election of an anti-establishment, Italians-first government in February 2018, together with turmoil resulting from Italy's geographical location as a gatekeeper country, helped re-establish and revalidate dominant ideologies that privilege fascist ideals. Matteo Salvini, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior at the time, is known for his far-right, anti-globalist, anti-immigrant, populist politics. In October 2018 he decreed that "little ethnic shops" adhere to a 9 pm curfew in order to limit their "abuses and irregularities," since they are mostly run by "foreign citizens" (Robinson and Mezzofiore 2018). Salvini is a prominent figure of the *Lega* party, which historically has sought to secede from Italy on the basis of the North's presupposed cultural supremacy. Interestingly enough, The Northern *Lega* changed its name to The *Lega* to align itself not within a national North vs. South dichotomy, but with an international white Italy vs. the world.

Hegemonic rhetoric championed by Salvini paints Italy as a single country with a homogenous, monolithic language and culture that cannot and will not be overshadowed by "non-Italians." The cultural borders are closed. The Italian identity is fixed. Any attempt to change it is construed as a physical and symbolic invasion. This ideology has had profound effects on contemporary Italian society, both formally and informally. For example, a security decree, penned by Salvini and signed into law in the early summer of 2018, doubled the time undocumented people could be detained and eliminated humanitarian grounds for granting

asylum to migrants unless they were specifically running from political persecution or war (Tondo 2019). Political instability, famine, or harsh anti-gay laws did not automatically grant asylum. Another security decree in June 2019, that has since been partially walked back, criminalized NGO ships entering Italian waters without explicit authorization. This culminated in Sea Watch 3 being forbidden to dock on the island of Lampedusa for over two weeks after having saved about 40 people from certain death at sea (Croucher 2019; Q. 2019). Captain Carola Rakete was arrested under the guise of aiding and abetting illegal human trafficking, but the charges were dropped two years later (Deutsche Welles 2021). This was the political environment going into the winter of 2018; Sanremo occurs every February. Before discussing the reactions to “Soldi,” it will be necessary to analyze its discourses.

### **The “Controversial” Best Italian Song of 2019**

Textual analysis and commentary about Mahmood’s “Soldi” (“Money”) highlights and somewhat develops the themes of hypocrisy, specifically a hypocritical father (Mezzanotte 2019; Vites 2019). Michele Mezzanotte (2019) details the many aspects of hypocrisy present in “Soldi.” Starting with an analysis of money as a relation between father and son that makes the former hypocritical, the often repeated question “Come va?” (“How’s it going?”) comes under harsh scrutiny. “Come va?” is deemed “una domanda ipocrita che usiamo quando incontriamo una persona estranea, una domanda che non vuole una risposta sincera, bensì che teme una risposta aperta” (“a hypocritical question that we use when we meet a stranger, a question that does not desire a sincere response, and rather fears an open one,” Mezzanotte 2019) and at the same time tries to appear authentic and welcoming. In actuality, Mahmood’s father uses “Come va?” to obscure his desire for more money, a way to casually start a seemingly sincere conversation, all the while Mahmood has learned to see through this charade. Mezzanotte

positions the quick, two clap applause at the end of the chorus as a mocking hypocrisy of Mahmood's father's own hypocrisy, a way to satirically celebrate their broken relationship. "Soldi," therefore, becomes a song of liberation from hypocrisy through truth telling (Mezzanotte 2019). This power stems from a range of strategies and practices, including postcolonialism and the questioning of institutionalized hierarchies both inside and outside the home and homeland.

The common theme of hypocrisy in "Soldi" reveals a focus on the troubled relationship between Mahmood and his father. This relationship can be extrapolated to signify a metanarrative of the relationship between a country and its inhabitants, with the family as representative of the state.<sup>124</sup> Religious, social, and cultural expectations, which are governed by power, privilege, and hegemonic normativity, often conflict with complex, lived reality. With respect to textual analyses of "Soldi," the salient theme of hypocrisy, while interesting in some respects, fails to fully encapsulate the multilayered, linguistic artistry of not only what the song represents, but who it represents. Therefore my analysis of "Soldi" positions Mahmood's parents - not just his father - as part of his identity. This complicates the singular narrative of a fraught paternal relationship and provides necessary familial nuance to the discussion. While each distinct character can be separated, it is important to understand their relationship to one another. Even though Mahmood's mother takes a backseat with respect to the lyrics of the song, she is an integral part of the music video. Furthermore, "Soldi" has a lot to say about identity, politics, family dynamics, and *italianità*.

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<sup>124</sup> This was a major theme in Chicanx and Latinx Feminist Thought and Literature that I took with Dr. Yajaira Padilla in Fall 2019.

On a purely linguistic and lyrical level, “Soldi” begins at a specific, yet nebulous location - the ghettoized periphery.<sup>125</sup> The artist’s location has been relegated to the outskirts, outside of the mainstream, marginalized into questioning Mahmood’s own identity and *italianità*. Beyond the theme of hypocrisy, the reference to Ramadan challenges the institutionalized and often taken for granted Catholic privilege of Italian society. One of the five pillars of Islam and holiest months of the year, Ramadan, characterized by a month of fasting from dawn until dusk, “is a period of introspection, communal prayer,” and “reading of the Qu’ran” (Britannica 2023). Although Ramadan is only mentioned once, in a brief two-word phrase during the first verse, opponents of Mahmood’s *italianità* weaponize it to disqualify his Italian identity. This is consistent with a colonial and Catholic supremacist ideology. The scene of the first verse continues: Jackie Chan is on TV, representing the internationality of entertainment and the importation of culture into households. Smoking hookah<sup>126</sup>, Mahmood’s father asks him the hypocritical (Mezzanotte 2019) and uninterested question, “Come va?” The question is designed to fill time and space, but does not care for an honest response. On the contrary, later in the song Mahmood rhetorically throws the same question back at his father, since they both already know the answer.

Commentary and reactions generally identify Mahmood’s father as the center of the song, marginalizing and even erasing the role of his mother, who is very much a part of the narrative. It is particularly telling at the end of the second verse:

Menti a casa ma lo sai che lo sa /	You tell lies at home but you know that [she] knows /
Su una sedia lei mi chiederà	Sitting on a chair, she will ask me

<sup>125</sup> “In periferia.” Suburbs in Europe are functionally ghettos, which is the opposite of the white picket fence imaginary of many suburbs in the United States.

<sup>126</sup> “Fuma narghilè”



Mi chiede come va, come va, come va / Sai già come va, come va, come va / Penso più veloce per capire se domani tu mi fregherai / Non ho tempo per chiarire perché solo ora cosa sei	[She] asks me how it's going, how it's going, how it's going / You already know how it's going, how it's going, how it's going / I think quickly to find out if tomorrow you'll cheat me / I don't have time to clarify because I only know now what you are
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When the subject is inferred or implied in Italian, it is often omitted. This is both grammatical and stylistic. In the first phrase, “menti” and “sai” are both in the second person singular form “tu,” and are directed to Mahmood’s father. The “sa” is in the third person singular, and the only other person involved in the narrative is Mahmood’s mother. This assumption is verified in the following verse, with “lei” (she) now asking the question. Interestingly enough, the chorus can be interpreted in three different ways. Since “lei” is the subject of the previous verse, she continues to be the subject at the start of the chorus, with “chiede” in the third person singular (Podcast Italiano 2019). In this case, Mahmood’s mother not only asks him how it’s going, but she also knows the answer, and therefore practices a similar hypocritical strategy. Following this, it is *she* who might cheat him; he already knows what *she* is. Another way to interpret the same lyrics is to think of the last verse ending without knowing what his mother asks of him. The second chorus would refer back to the first, with Mahmood talking to his father. A third, more complex, even anti-grammatical reading would be to fully embrace the dangling (displaced) subject. In all cases *la festa è finita* (the jig is up); there is no more need to hide behind empty questions with superficial answers. The second verse has come to a close.

One dominant focus point of “Soldi” is the beginning of the third and final verse, “Waladi, waladi, habibi ta’aleena,” a phrase in Arabic Mahmood’s father used to say, meaning

“My son, my son, my love, come here” (Redazione Web 2019). Mahmood, who does not speak Arabic, points to his memory of this phrase while growing up and playing in a playground. It fits the narrative of the song about his father, and the words are Italianized in every lyric list that I have found. However, this has not stopped those that oppose Mahmood’s *italianità* - he was born and raised in Milan - to question his authenticity via linguistic purity, declaring that two short lines in Arabic automatically contaminate the winner of the Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song. Debates on language use have great precedence in Italian history.<sup>127</sup>

While Italian is the national language of Italy and compulsory during formal education, local languages are very much a part of national and regional identities. Regionalism pervades Italy within its borders, where *toscanità* or *sicilianità* supersede any notion of *italianità*. Moreover, this linguistic diversity exists within regions and cities. The homogenization of a monolithic Italian identity goes hand in hand with the standardization of Tuscan, painting Italy as a place where Italians speak Italian, and any deviation is a sign of weakness and inauthenticity. Nothing could be further from the truth; however, this ideology is still actively trying to disqualify Italians of color from being Italian and belonging to Italy. Although hegemony would prefer one thinks otherwise, linguistic diversity is inseparable from *italianità* - the first King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele II, spoke French and Piemontese; he “didn’t speak Italian that well” (Foley 2004). A more detailed discussion of linguistic diversity and challenging monolingualism in second generation hip hop, exemplified by Karima DueG, is in the previous chapter.

Opponents of the song and Mahmood’s *italianità* pejoratively labeled “Soldi” a “Moroccan pop song” (Ghiglione 2019). Davide (Podcast Italiano 2019) uses the same terminology to describe the musical style, but in a more descriptive way, even calling out the absurdity of labeling *marocchino* (Moroccan) anything that is not deemed Italian, or Italian

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<sup>127</sup> A description of the *Questione della lingua* (Language Question) is in the introduction.

enough. The multiaccentuality of *marocchino* is worth discussing. It denotes foreignness, referring directly to a place in North Africa and therefore south of Europe. Morocco is close, yet distant, existing in another space and place entirely - the Arab world.<sup>128</sup> Additionally, *marocchino* is a racialized term used to refer to anyone that is not a citizen of the European Union, specifically anyone from the continent of Africa. Together with the racialized “*vu compra*” (do you want to buy), *marocchino* reduces street vendors to a monolithic, static, Black, and non-Italian identity. *Marocchino* can also refer to hashish (hash), a form of compressed and processed cannabis common in places such as Morocco, Lebanon, and Iran (Britannica). Lastly, an espresso drink with steamed milk topped with cocoa powder is known as a *marocchino* (Illy). Commonly served in layers, the darkest color resides at the bottom while the lightest is on top. The color gradient is then interrupted by cocoa powder. While *marocchino* has many uses in Italian and in Italy, each has racialized and/or colorized connotations that are used to maintain a white Italian identity hierarchy, even in subtle, seemingly innocuous ways.

A plethora of layered meanings is also present in the official music video to “Soldi.”<sup>129</sup> A feast for the eyes, ears, and imagination, the video synthesizes the lyrics and music. The first thirty seconds of the music video is worthy of detailed attention. The now familiar introductory riff and beat open to a light blue background, a young boy, shoeless, standing at the center. Mahmood’s name appears above him, followed by the title with credits to the music video’s director, Attilio Cusani. The opening scene and first verse show a brown leather couch with a small table on each side. White sheer full length curtains slightly obscure the back wall of windows. Mahmood, sitting at the center of the couch, looking down, wears black pants, a black button-up shirt on top of a white T-shirt, black and white high-top shoes with white socks, and a

<sup>128</sup> This terminology is also extremely problematic as it creates a monolith of Arab and Arabic speaking regions, countries, communities, and people.

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22IISUXgSUw>

visible gold hoop earring in his left ear. The camera slowly pans towards him. A quick zoom to the small table on the right displays a vase of flowers, presumably a statue of Mary, and two candles, in sync with “beve champagne sotto Ramadan” (“he [his father] drinks champagne during Ramadan.” After briefly returning to Mahmood on the couch, another quick cut and zoom to the small table on the left displays a landline phone sitting on top of a white doily, surrounded by a stack of tape cassettes, a lamp, three candles (two are lit), and an ashtray with an unused cigarette resting on it. In the next shot Mahmood stands behind the same light blue background that introduced the song, a bright blue aura surrounds him. The first thirty-seconds come to a close, paving the way for the chorus.

Ten men, all dressed in black with their faces obscured, stand in front of the light blue background; the lack of a warm blue aura illustrates Mahmood’s absence. Alternating shots of Mahmood standing in front of the blue background and sitting on the couch mark the beginning of a complex series of cuts, with each new round incorporating images previously introduced, all forming a dizzying yet organized narrative with familiarity at the forefront. A veiled woman is seen with a green aura and dark background. She, too, becomes a part of the image rotation. A side shot features the young boy (representing a younger Mahmood) facing the group of ten men, their faces a bit less obscured. All are without shoes. A woman and man are seen talking outside a dark red car; the young boy is in the back, watching and listening in. A quick cut shows the same car, but in front of the blue background with Mahmood sitting in the back. One of the many images in the rotation zooms in on the veiled woman, revealing that she is holding the young boy underneath, protecting both of them. The second verse closes with an old tattoo artist putting the

finishing touches of an excited cobra<sup>130</sup> covering Mahmood's back; the snake has menacing eyes and its tongue out.

Although the song continues to play, Mahmood's mouth does not move in the tattoo scene. That changes at the start of the third verse, when he visually sings the phrases in Arabic and Italian. Shifting back to the young boy in the car, the side door opened, the man, who had been shown arguing with the woman, fist bumps the young boy, revealing the same excited cobra tattoo, smaller and a mirror image of Mahmood's. Another close up shows the man's hands holding the young boy's arms to console him (the man is leaving), focusing on the cobra hand tattoo. Without hesitation a quick cut to Mahmood's completed back tattoo makes the connection clearer. Back to the veiled woman holding the young boy, she is still covered, looking away, towards the future. The young boy, outside the veil, looks back, towards the camera and the past. The last shot of the ten men in black shows them looking down, just like Mahmood at the beginning of the video. The veiled woman holding the unveiled young boy culminates the collection of autobiographical scenes. She walks away while he still looks towards the camera, his face slowly obscuring.

The autobiographical nature of "Soldi," including the young boy, veiled woman, and man, showcases Mahmood's complex *italianità* and his relationship to his parents. The rich collection of layered interactions and symbolism creates a cohesive narrative representing Mahmood's youth and identity. The young boy, representing an adolescent Alessandro, navigates the narrative with help from its instrumentation and visual presentation. The man and woman represent Mahmood's parents, seen together discussing their relationship while a young Mahmood watches. The veil obscures the identity of Mahmood's mother, who protects him while

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<sup>130</sup> When Cobras get excited, the skin around and behind their head expands, resembling a hood, which is one of its most distinguishing characteristics (National Geographic).

looking towards the future (away from the camera), in order to raise him in Milan. After the cobra transfer, childhood innocence, represented by the veil, goes away, revealing the truth about his father's abandonment. Yet the young Mahmood still looks towards the past (into the camera), searching for memories and trying to understand. Mahmood does not call his father by name until the very end, asking where he is, troubled at the fact that he was there just the other day.<sup>131</sup>

Equally important is to take "Soldi" as a whole: a collection of lyrics, music, and visuality, in order to appreciate its discourses and locate them within a contemporary Italian context. Mixing and sampling demonstrate a complex, international and Italian sound that challenges the strict, homogenous tradition of the cantautore and Italian pop music in general (Podcast Italiano). A product of the record industry revolution of the 1960's, "Soldi" becomes an extension and representation of Mahmood's Italian identity, therefore its popularity and accolades<sup>132</sup> reflect Mahmood's *italianità* on national and international scales. This popular, public inclusivity flies in the face of institutionalized white Catholic masculinity and its associations with phenotype, religious iconography, language, and gender. The hegemonic echo chamber's reaction to the success of Mahmood and "Soldi" sought to create a scandal in which Italians like Mahmood were deemed undeserving of being described as "Italian," and where the very thought of celebrating his *italianità* supposedly threatened *italianità* itself.

Having established a historical and contemporary context for Sanremo and Italy as well as taken an in-depth look at the lyrics, music, and video, it is time to return to Mahmood's controversial victory. In order to do this, it will be necessary to review Sanremo's logistics and its voting process. Twenty-four songs enter the five-night festival and are voted on each night. On the last night, three finalists are chosen and voted on until a winner emerges. Three separate

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<sup>131</sup> "Ieri eri qua ora dove sei, papà?" ("Yesterday you were here, now where are you, dad?")

<sup>132</sup> "Soldi" won Sanremo 2019 and finished 2nd overall at the Eurovision song contest, though it did win as crowd favorite.

juries decide the victor (Figure 1). The televote, which can be accessed by anyone with a mobile phone or landline, counts for 50%. The honor jury, composed of eight high profile professionals (a film director, television personalities, actors, and a journalist in 2019) counts for 20%. The remaining 30% comes from the press jury, made up of about 400 accredited journalists associated with the festival (Assante 2019). The televote had Mahmood in third place, with only 14.1%. The public only had access to this information before the winner was revealed. The two other finalists, Ultimo and il Volo, had 46.5% and 39.4% of the televote, respectively. Ultimo had been favored since the beginning of the festival (Cursi 2019). However, both professional juries resoundingly voted for Mahmood, which put him just beyond Ultimo.

Jury	Ultimo	Il Volo	Mahmood
Televote (50%)	46.5	39.4	14.1
Honorary and press (50%)	24.7	11.6	63.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>25.5</b>	<b>38.9</b>

Figure 1. Voting percentages of televote, professional juries, and final result. (Assante 2019; Cursi 2019)

Mahmood's surprising win - he, too, only had access to the results of the televote - provoked a social media explosion (Cursi 2019; Ghiglione 2019; Monella 2019; Obasuyi 2019). Ultimo himself expressed disbelief, taking to Instagram to say, "La gente è la mia vittoria" ("The people are my victory"), alluding to the popular vote. Quick to react, Salvini immediately denounced the verdict on Facebook, questioning the Italianness of Mahmood's song and by association, Mahmood himself. Opponents to Mahmood's victory sought to frame Sanremo as a desperate and outdated liberal ploy to provoke the administration. "Soldi" was labeled a

“Moroccan pop song,” Mahmood himself an “Egyptian singer” and an “immigrant” (Ghiglione 2019). The latter is a well-established racist dog whistle in Italy. Other comments proved more overt, referencing Africa, the burqa, calling Sanremo the Islam festival, and concluding that only “Italians” should sing Italian songs (Monella 2019). A few days after Sanremo, politician Alessandro Morelli of the *Lega* political party introduced a bill mandating radio stations play “Italian” songs at least 30% of the time, citing a similar law in France (Ghiglione 2019). This was a direct result of Mahmood’s win and his increased popularity. Critical reactions to the outrage came pouring in. Marinella Venegoni, a writer for *La Stampa*, a prominent Italian newspaper, remarked, “what bothered people the most was the fact that he didn’t look Italian” and had a foreign-sounding name, “but since no one wants to openly admit they’re racist, they weaponized the popular jury thing” (Ghiglione 2019). Salvini was portrayed as opportunistically exploiting the uncertainties surrounding the vote in order to promote division instead of unity. In short, the mirror of Sanremo shined brightly and clearly on the issues facing Italy (Bianchi 2014; Facci and Soddu 2011; Ghiglione 2019; Lazzareschi 2019).

Mahmood’s win gave visibility to already established yet unrecognized generations of Italians. Opponents perceived that Mahmood’s ascribed/forced multiethnicity, the crime of which he was apparently guilty, disqualified his Italian identity. Hegemonic essentialism requires Italians to be pure; the likes of Salvini reserve the right to define it on their terms. This immediately put Mahmood in defense mode. At the post festival interview, when a reporter asked Mahmood if he missed his home, he responded, “Sono cento percento italiano” (“I am 100% Italian,” Monella 2019; Obasuyi 2019) reaffirming emphatically that he was, in fact, home. He appealed to his socialization to verify his identity, having grown up in and around Milan, seemingly pleading with his own country for acceptance.



Mahmood's victory demonstrates the contentiousness of a singular, monolithic Italian identity that privileges Whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, and Catholicism. The personalization of the song and the birth of the performing artist, together with the popularity and success of "Soldi," validate and authenticate who Mahmood is and who he represents. This flies in the face of institutionalized *italianità* promoted by the likes of Salvini, in which ascribed hybridization dilutes essence and therefore disqualifies *italianità*. Mahmood's Egyptian father and the short phrases in Arabic are framed as contradictory and non-Italian, therefore Mahmood himself, forced to embody only these two aspects, represents the antithesis to Italy's hegemonic homogeneity. Opponents portray this "new" identity as a cultural invasion that must be stopped. Forcing obligatory multiethnicity on Mahmood (who identifies as 100% Italian) with violent language triggers strong emotional responses. While a great portion are produced through social media, this ideology has real world consequences. Racially motivated violence against people of color in Italy tripled from 2017-2018 (Livesay and Pavone 2019). Willie Monteiro Duarte was brutally murdered in September 2020 after trying to stop a fight (Dos Santos 2021; VICE News 2021). Alike Orgochukwu, a street merchant from Nigeria, was murdered in broad daylight. Witnesses captured the attack on their phones; none intervened to try to save Alike's life (Giuffrida 2022). These are not isolated incidents committed by lone wolves; they are representative of structural racism propagated by powerful political actors in order to de-Italianize those perceived as the "other." Even though exclusionary tactics operate under the guise of national unity, in theory and in practice they result in the normalization of a racial, ethnic, and cultural hierarchy. Mahmood's triumph at Sanremo 2019 gives value and authenticity to his *italianità*, is representative of the *seconde generazioni* movement, and emblematic of

Italy's continued heterogeneity. It is not a question of "new" Italians, but rather a question of increased visibility and activism.

Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez exemplify the decolonizing projects within second generation Italian hip hop. Their lyrics, music, videos, and overall messaging challenge racism and xenophobia. They collectively create auditory and visual experiences that break down stereotypes and celebrate postcolonial *italianità*. The result is an inclusive, shared space of common humanity that vehemently opposes top-down, essentialist, divide-and-conquer tactics reminiscent of Italian double colonization. Discourse analysis via close readings of songs provides a deeper look into how these artists utilize lyrics, sound, and music videos to give voice to second generation Italians. Each individual story connects to the greater narrative of struggling to belong in a country that often refuses to acknowledge them. Organizations such as L'Italia sono anch'io (I Am Italy, Too), Rete G2 (Second Generation Network) and Italiani senza cittadinanza (Italians Without Citizenship) continue to fight for inclusive citizenship, pointing to the same experiences that hip hop discusses: socialization, racialization, cultural pluralism, and shared humanity. The rise in popularity of second generation Italian hip hop speaks to the growing movement towards new immigration laws as well as a paradigm shift in terms of Italian identity.

### Chapter 3: Decolonizing Gender, Sexuality, and Sanremo 2016

*“Potrebbe essere qualunque altra parola. Potrebbe essere grassa, brutta, omosessuale, frocio - magari puntinato come nel mio brano. Qualunque parola che spesso e volentieri viene utilizzata per classificare qualcuno e dire che è diverso. Poi io dico sempre, ma diverso da chi? Diverso da cosa?”*

*“It could be any other word. It could be ‘fat,’ ‘ugly,’ ‘homosexual,’ ‘fag’ - perhaps separated by periods like in my song. Any word that is used often and willingly to categorize someone and say that they are different. Then I always say, but different from who? Different from what?”*

-Cécile, during an interview in 2016

While the previous chapter analyzed discourses at the intersections of race, language, and identity, it is equally important to unpack dynamics of gender and sexuality, which have been lacking in scholarship about Italian hip hop in general and second generation Italian hip hop in particular. Michela Ardizzoni, at the end of her article “On Rhythms and Rhymes: Poetics of Identity in Postcolonial Italy” (2020), calls out the dominant masculine perspectives in Italian hip hop research, emphasizing the importance of unpacking gender dynamics, “The gendered component of Italian postcolonial hip hop is indeed an important aspect that future research should pay attention to” (14). Additionally, Ardizzoni provides a starting point to this endeavor, nominating Chadia Rodriguez and suggesting that studying gender may diversify the understanding of how artists negotiate *italianità*, “Despite the overwhelming predominance of male artists, this genre is slowly opening the doors to women rappers like Chadia Rodriguez, and their poetics of identity in postcolonial Italy might have a different imprint” (14). Taking Ardizzoni’s advice, this chapter is dedicated to Chadia Rodriguez, Karima DueG (a.k.a. Karima 2G), and Cécile and how they challenge racism, sexism, and heterosexism in hegemonic *italianità*. The first part of this chapter analyzes discourses that unsettle gender and sexuality stereotypes. Artists such as Karima DueG and Chadia Rodriguez, in addition to rapping about race, language, and identity (Chapter 2), take it upon themselves to integrate dynamics of gender

and sexuality in their lyrics and music videos. Embracing the “Shadow-Beast,” they actively decolonize gender by contesting stereotypes and unmasking sexism disguised as normality. Chadia also challenges heteropatriarchal definitions of sexuality and the stigmatization of female pleasure. The second part highlights Sanremo 2016 and Cécile’s “N.E.G.R.A.” Although eliminated in the first round, a close, cultural reading of her song and music video further contextualizes and complicates the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary Italy.

### **Karima DueG, Chadia Rodriguez, and the Shadow-Beast**

In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) Gloria Anzaldúa reflects upon her rebellious nature, often labeled “lazy” and “wrong,” in which she intentionally disobeys orders, “There is a rebel in me - the Shadow-Beast. It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is a part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed” (16). The Shadow-Beast is an internal entity that abhors oppression of any kind. This includes self-imposed rules that suppress or marginalize identities in order to appease mainstream expectations. The Shadow-Beast “symbolizes the rebellious Self that is resistant to authority and defies familial values” (Acosta 655), and becomes awakened through self-discovery and liberated self-representation. Karima DueG and Chadia Rodriguez awaken “the divine feminine” (Karima DueG, “Alieno” 2021), re-articulating and reclaiming the so-called “strange” and “alien” for themselves.

Karima embraces the alien, calling out to her by name, “Alieno fermati / Alieno guardami” (“Alien stop, Alien look at me”). The alien conducts Karima DueG forward; she and her Shadow-Beast travel together. Slow and soft reverberating synthesizer sounds create an

introspective dream-like sequence where Karima DueG grounds spoken word poetry. She seeks help from the alien, calling out, “Alieno fermati, Alieno insegnami, mostrami, qual è la via?” (“Alien stop, Alien teach me, show me, which is the way?”). Without her, Karima DueG is lost. However, the reciprocity of their relationship shines through, with Karima DueG advising the alien, “La verità sta nella differenza” (“Truth is in difference/diversity”). The truth of diversity reflects contemporary Italian society, an inner truth that is beginning to gain national recognition. Two minutes into the song, the beat drops and the rhythm picks up, establishing a closer harmony between lyrics and sound. “Alieno” saves the chorus for the end, seamlessly transitioning from Italian to English. Karima DueG in fact, has awakened “the divine feminine,” in this song and her transformation from Karima 2G to Karima DueG. The divine feminine is the alien and her Shadow-Beast.

Chadia Rodriguez embraces her Shadow-Beast by challenging gender stereotypes and unsettling sexist ideology. For example, in “Fumo bianco” (“White Smoke”), she raps “non portarmi i fiori ma portami l’erba” (“Don’t bring me flowers, but bring me weed”). This line goes against the assumption that all women love flowers. Chadia refuses to be coddled by this idea and instead communicates what she really wants. The opening track of *Avere 20 anni (To Be 20 Years Old)*, “Fumo bianco,” emphasizes the ephemerality of pleasure and the longevity of pain. While the former lasts only a short while, the latter can remain forever. The metaphor of ephemeral smoke in “Fumo bianco” juxtaposes intense present pleasure, “questa notte sei per sempre” (“tonight you are forever”) with the reality that this pleasure will end, “un giorno sarai niente” (“one day you will be nothing”), resulting in the search for more pleasure. This never-ending cycle of searching, releasing tension, and searching again acts as a drug addiction. Chadia, therefore, smokes to forget, to not have to worry about tomorrow, and to cope with the

reality that one day only smoke will remain. Smoking helps Chadia temporarily forget about past abuse, however physical and emotional scars remain. Additionally, smoking is a metaphor for sex: the lyrics compare the inhalation and exhalation of smoke to breath and orgasm, symbolizing life and death, “L’ultimo orgasmo sarà quasi come morire” (“The last orgasm will be almost like dying”). This death signals the intense culmination of pleasure and relates to the Italian expression “la fine del mondo.” Literally, “The end of the world,” this idiomatic phrase describes the best of the best, a way to signify that if the world ended now, all would be well.

The music of “Fumo bianco” begins with the sound of a clock ticking and an electric piano riff resembling a music box. Playful, haunting, and with a hint of jazz, this exposition, which opens and closes the song, frames its themes and overall feeling. Each verse pauses every 4th beat, creating tension that picks up in the pre-chorus and ultimately is released during the chorus. The music video opens with a close-up shot that slowly zooms out, showing Chadia smoking in white underwear. The imagery is immediately juxtaposed with Chadia sitting in a bath with black water, surrounded by a tree and still smoking. Out of focus and shaking shots disorient the viewer and represent the feelings of pleasure, pain, and addiction. Chadia, the only person featured in the entire video, blows white smoke into the camera at the end, personifying the song as a whole.

Chadia also criticizes gendered pharmaceutical marketing aimed at numbing virtually all aspects of human experience. For example the track “Sister (Pastiglie)” (“Sister (Pills)” 2019), which samples the chorus from “Pastiglie” (“Pills” 1996) by the group Prozac+, criticizes the pharmaceutical industry’s marketing of pills for women. The chorus, sung as a lullaby, describes the preponderance of pills for every situation imaginable,

Pastiglie per viaggiare e pastiglie per dormire	Pills for traveling and pills for sleeping
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Pastiglie per mangiare e pastiglie per sognare	Pills for eating and pills for dreaming
Pastiglie per il bene e pastiglie per il male	Pills for good times and pills for bad times
Pastiglie ad ogni ora in mille mille forme.	Pills at every hour in thousands of forms.

Repeating “pastiglie” (“pills”) brings attention to the word itself, its function, and its usage to describe the myriad of solutions promoted to solve “feminine” problems. The song also challenges extreme Western medicine in which chemical compounds are treated as the ideal and often only way of ridding ailments or acquiring a desired state of mind and body. These states are designed and desired by the heteropatriarchy which grooms women to be heterosexual, submissive, and dependent. The music video displays Chadia’s body immersed in pills, a powerful image that reinforces the message of the song. Another scene shows women playing in a pool of pills, enjoying themselves in a sort of numbing stupor where seemingly all is well.

All, however, is not well. Chadia demonstrates this awareness, conscious of her impact and influence (Redazione Music 2019) in “Sarebbe comodo” (“It Would Be Convenient” 2019). The conclusion of *Avere 20 anni*, it is the only track that had not been previously released as a single. The lyrics of a “una giovane donna libera” (“young, free woman,” Redazione Music 2019) are juxtaposed by a series of guns that slowly enter the scene, pointing to her head throughout the single shot music video, which shows only Chadia’s head and shoulders. A somber electric guitar riff introduces the tone of the song as Chadia begins to rap about her fierce strength while facing oppression. One-by-one, guns slowly enter the scene, fingers on triggers, touching Chadia’s head, all the while her gaze focuses into the camera. Towards the end, eight guns and one knife to the throat surround her. Chadia finishes rapping, closes her eyes, the screen goes black, and then multiple gunshots are heard. The moving image and sounds depict femicide,

the destruction of female identity, and the power to persevere. Provocative and emotionally unsettling, the song and music video capture attention and evoke vulnerability, leaving an impression that lasts well beyond the video's ending.

This is also true with her single “Bella così” (“Beautiful As You Are” 2020), which rhythmically and aesthetically decolonizes femininity by challenging heteropatriarchal notions of how women should look and act. The first verse begins with “Piacere mi chiamo donna” (“Nice to meet you, my name is woman”), which calls out sexism and the gendered repercussions for stereotypes. At the same time, naming herself as such builds a sense of political solidarity. By inserting herself directly into the conversation, she becomes a part of the struggle. The verse continues, describing what it means to be a woman,

Convivo col difetto e con la vergogna se giro con i tacchi e la gonna corta se sono troppo magra o troppo rotonda,	I live with flaws and embarrassment whether I am out in heels and a short skirt or I am too skinny or too round,
--	--

representing impossible and detrimental standards of beauty. In the music video Chadia sings the first verse while other women featured look towards the camera, filling it with their gazes. These powerful looks speak volumes by forcing the audience to engage with them. Each gaze also signifies the systematic silencing of female voices. At the start of the second verse women in the music video lip sync with Chadia, creating a greater sense of community and blurring the line of who speaks/raps. The chorus continues, celebrating what hegemony labels deviant and challenging the oppressive apparatus that governs women's bodies and expression,



Senza vestiti belli addosso anche al buio c'è una luce che ti illumina perché tu sei bella così.	Without beautiful clothes on / even in darkness there is a light that illuminates you / because you are beautiful as you are.
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Here, “belli” (“beautiful”) that describes “vestiti” (“clothes”) is used rhetorically to call out these standards of beauty, whereas “tu sei bella” (“you are beautiful”) decolonizes and re-articulates beauty in a more positive and inclusive way, free from patriarchal standards of beauty. The lyrics and music video demonstrate personal pride, collective strength, and the power of self-representation.

Chadia’s lyrics and music videos criticize standards of beauty as well as decolonize strict heteropatriarchal definitions of sexuality by destigmatizing marginalized identities, celebrating feminine pleasure, and championing sexual freedom. The single “Tutt\* stran\*” (“Everyone [is] Strange” 2021) exemplifies these qualities. The song represents “un inno alla libertà, un’esortazione a essere sé stessi senza timore di sentirsi strani o giudicati” (“a hymn to freedom, an exhortation to be oneself without the fear of feeling strange or judged,” Redazione 2021) where diversity is recognized as a “ricchezza” (“asset,”<sup>133</sup> Redazione 2021). Chadia refuses race, class, gender, and sexuality roles of the passive wife that yearns to satisfy her husband, and instead embraces sexual freedom,

Non sono una tipa all’antica mi piace pure la tua tipa porta lei e porta un’amica <sup>134</sup>	I am not an old-fashioned type I like your lady bring her and bring a friend
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<sup>133</sup> This also recalls Audre Lorde’s writings on diversity as strength.

<sup>134</sup> Lyrics from the single “Mangiauomini (“Maneater”) 2019.

Breaking with heteropatriarchal tradition, Chadia distances herself from the old, instead expressing her polyamorous desire for multiple partners. One way Chadia celebrates sexuality is by featuring public displays of affection in her music videos. For example “Bella così” shows two women kissing. Towards the end of “Tutt\* stran\*,” Chadia kisses another woman and then smiles, displaying the joy of freedom. Her messaging, lyrics, and music videos champion inclusive sexuality and challenge oppressive institutions.

Karima DueG’s lyrics and music videos also champion inclusion by centering Black women in her artistic productions. Two excellent examples of this are “Bunga bunga,” from her album *2G* (2014), and the single “Malala” (2018). The sarcasm of “Bunga bunga” exposes and criticizes the exoticisation of Black female bodies. “Malala” exemplifies the themes of Black female empowerment (Conrad 2022) by calling out dehumanizing hypocrisy and exercising self-liberation.

“Bunga bunga,” arguably “one of Karima 2G’s most sarcastic and desecrating songs” (Taronna 318), not only exposes racial animus and bestialization (discussed in the previous chapter), but also dissects the sexual socialization of Black female bodies. The phrase “Bunga bunga” became popular in Italy in 2010 “to define the alleged sexual parties taking place at Silvio Berlusconi’s villas while he was Prime Minister of the Italian Parliament” (Taronna 318). Karima DueG re-articulates this phrase four years later to highlight its racist and sexist undertones. By inserting “you want” into the lyrics “bunga bunga, bonga bonga,” she calls out racialized, sexualized pleasure propagated by the white gaze, only to destroy any indication that she will give in to this expectation, “you wanna bunga bunga, don’t give a shit.” This strong refutation undermines any assumed authority and centers Karima’s own autonomy. Oscillating

from the personal to the collective, lyrics reference gold, diamonds, and economic inequality, showing the connection between racism, sexism, and capitalism. Towards the end of the song, Karima DueG integrates the names of many countries and cultures in Africa into her lyrics that become even more alive when they are sung, “Liberia, Senegal, Ghana, Gabon, Nigeria, Togo, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Angola, Rwanda, Uganda, Mali, Malawi...” ending with the words “aboriginal” and “indigenous,” going back to the roots of indigeneity within a postcolonial context. Naming these countries documents their collective identities, creating solidarity with them.

The music to “Bunga bunga” exhibits elements of a diss track - a common type of hip hop song that intentionally attacks another artist and/or group. Karima DueG does this to start a conversation about the hypersexualization of Black female bodies. The catchy and interactive dance beat frames this song of protest as an inspiring communal movement, both literally and figuratively. Dancing is often a collective experience of celebration, freedom, and bodily autonomy. The music video incorporates a “transcultural conjunction of performative bodies and music” (Taronna 319) by centralizing a collective Blackness and Black femininity. Close up shots of Karima looking out a window with a birdcage on the right represent her freedom and the cage used by colonialism to imprison her. In general, “Bunga bunga” is an unapologetically empowering song that pulls no punches.

Black female empowerment unites the sounds and themes of “Malala” (Conrad 2022), a single Karima DueG released in 2018. While the lyrics conclude with a socially conscious understanding of the connections between oppression, the environment, and capitalism, “money money economy, Po pollution, Po pollution,” the music video does a lot of heavy lifting in the realm of visual storytelling. The video identifies itself as “inspired by *La noire de*,” a short film

by the Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene. “Malala” tells the story of a Black woman coming to Rome to be a maid to a white Italian couple. Upon entering the house, she is bombarded with Western imperialist representations of the continent of Africa: sculptures, books, and a small statue. These products decorate the house, giving it “character.” Before having time to fully process the scene, Karima’s character puts on her uniform and starts performing labor. She is immediately criticized for how she cleans, not doing it the supposed “right” way, according to the white Italian woman. The color white takes on a dominant place in the narrative, especially in the kitchen: white cabinets, white walls, and white dishes. Karima’s character must keep all of them clean and pure, just like the white couple’s imagination of who she is and what she represents. In this way, Karima the maid maintains a racist and sexist hierarchy in terms of servitude. While Karima works inside the house, other Italians spend time with friends outside, since they have access and can afford leisure time. A transformative scene occurs when Karima looks into the mirror, gazing at herself and realizing her power. She decides to put on “African” clothes and makeup, determined to give the white couple what they really want: an authentic “African” experience. She exits the house, serves them, and sings them her song, quickly putting white pasta and red sauce on the table. This confrontation takes everyone by surprise because it challenges the docile, passive stereotype that pervades the music video as a whole. Karima leaves, liberated and empowered, having usurped a white power dynamic consistent with colonialism.

Cécile’s song “N.E.G.R.A.,” which debuted at the 2016 Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song, demonstrates similar confrontations and acts of liberation. Her entry strongly condemns racism and sexism in Italy, showing Italians (and anyone else watching) what it looks like. The next section contains a case study of Cécile’s “N.E.G.R.A.” I argue that the song, its first-round

elimination, and its themes provide a flashpoint in second generation Italian hip hop, demonstrating the struggle against institutionalized *italianità* and the oppressive forces behind the scenes.

### **Sanremo 2016 and Cécile's "N.E.G.R.A."**

Similar to Facci and Soddu's conceptualization of Sanremo<sup>135</sup> as a cultural arbiter of *italianità*, the festival has been described as a "rito collettivo" ("collective ritual" Proglío 2016; Scego 2016) that annually displays the faulty foundation upon which contemporary notions of Italian identity are fastened. After Sanremo 2016, Igiaba Scego (2016) succinctly equated the contest to "un tassello importante di questa nostra italianità sempre in bilico" ("an important anchor of our always-precarious *italianità*"), highlighting, once again, the inherent fragility of a monolithic Italian identity. Gaia Giuliani (2016) went even further, labeling Sanremo an "affabulazione" ("affabulation") and "dissimulazione" ("dissimulation") parading as a "evento nazionale popolare" ("popular national event"). The superficial spectacle in which every angle and emotional response are precisely calculated, leaving nothing to chance (or change), demonstrates the institutionalized in/out groups that govern *italianità* (Giuliani 2016). Sanremo, therefore, is a manifestation of quintessential "egemonia bianca e maschile" ("white and masculine hegemony" Giuliani 2016) with no room to question, let alone challenge, this paradigm. Cécile's single "N.E.G.R.A." provides context for many of these criticisms. Firstly, however, descriptions of Cécile - both who she is and who she represents - provide an in-depth look at how institutionalized in/out group dynamics frame narratives before they are even experienced.

When it comes to Cécile and her life, two general descriptions are consistent. First, Cécile Vanessa Ngo Noug (1994-) was born in Ostia, raised in Rome, and her mother is from

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<sup>135</sup> A brief history of Sanremo is in Appendix A.

Cameroon (Coveri 2016; Del Prete 2016; Di Somma 2016; Ghiringhelli 2016; Giuliani 2019; Scego 2016). Second, her mother, a central figure in Cécile's ascribed identity, was a professional soccer player and member of the Cameroonian national team, so she entrusted a young Cécile to a lay nun named Elena (Del Prete 2016; Ghiringhelli 2016; *Il sussidiario* 2016; Scego 2016). Elena first introduced Cécile to music and musical instruments (Ghiringhelli 2016; *Il sussidiario* 2016). When describing Cécile's identity, her mother's Cameroonian identity often takes center stage. Coveri (2016) and Scarpone (2016) highlight Cécile's Cameroonian origins. *Il sussidiario* (2016) opts to label her origins as African, echoing a reductive colonial discourse in which the continent of Africa becomes a monolithic, static, and inferior place. Martina Ghiringhelli (2016) states that she “ha origini del Camerun *ma* nasce a Roma” (“has Cameroonian origins *but* was born in Rome,” my emphasis). In this way, Ghiringhelli expresses the very common and exclusionary binary of Italian vs. African, as if her birth becomes less significant because of her mother's ethnicity. This is consistent with *jus sanguinis* ideology that continues to deny - in political and social terms - *italianità* to *seconde generazioni*. “La 21enne camerunense” (“The 21-year-old Cameroonian”) is the lead line to *Corriere del mezzogiorno*'s (2016) article, which becomes subsequently more complicated by the phrase “nata a Roma e madre camerunense” (“born in Rome and a Cameroonian mother”) in the middle of the first paragraph. Again, inherited ethnicity becomes contemporary political identity. Marongiu (2016) outright calls Cécile a “cantante camerunense” (“Cameroonian singer”), failing to point out where she was born. None of these examples describe Cécile as Italian, let alone Roman or Ostian. She was born in Ostia, grew up in Rome, and raps in Italian. There should be no doubt about her *italianità*.

Yet it gets worse. Cécile's song calls out racist objectification, using her body to spotlight how racism and sexism colonize and violate a Black woman's body. Giovanni Drogo's article, "Cecile, Too N\*\*\*\*r<sup>136</sup> for Sanremo 2016?" (2016) exemplifies Cécile's point by taking a hostile racist approach, beginning from the title itself. This deplorable play on words surmises that Cécile's Blackness was the reason for her early exit. Drogo asks, "Si può dire ne\*ro a Sanremo?" ("Can one say n\*\*\*\*r at Sanremo?"). He concludes that since Cécile can say it and sing it, he can say it, too: "Appunto è ne\*ra" ("indeed she is [a] n\*\*\*\*r"). His racist tirade ends by undermining the song's message, "Il testo della canzone è un ottimo pretesto per posare seminuda" ("The song lyrics are an excellent excuse to pose half-naked"). In this way, he further objectifies Cécile's body and words, labeling the latter as a pretext to "show some skin."

Instead of marginalizing her identity, denying her *italianità*, or being overtly (and proudly) racist, the use of inclusive descriptors by Scego (2016), Di Somma (2016), and Giuliani (2019) demonstrate a greater understanding of the hegemonic Italian identification paradigm and the reality of second generation Italians. Scego describes Cécile as "una black italian" ("a black Italian"), using the English words "black" and "Italian," which locates her positionality at the intersection of gender and national identity. Furthermore, Scego writes "noi afroitaliani" ("we Afroitalians"), identifying herself and people like her within a recognizable collective. By doing this, Scego identifies herself within a greater population of Afroitalians. While this terminology, too, risks the possibility of overgeneralizations as well as the common colonial trope of comparing a large continent with a small country, Scego understands the power of an inclusive and collective identity and its function within political movements. These descriptions allow Cécile's place of birth and mother to be two distinct parts of a whole, rather than one

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<sup>136</sup> Cécile stylizes her single as N.E.G.R.A., with the Italian n-word (feminine singular) spelled out. I have decided to translate Drogo's use to show its derogatory inappropriateness to readers.

overshadowing or disqualifying the other, “Born in Rome in 1994 from a Cameroonian mother” (Di Somma 2016). Lastly, Cécile is a “Cameroonian Italian” (Giuliani 224), without the hyphen, both identities spelled out completely. This last description validates her identity and background without injecting a racial hierarchy, authorizing a postcolonial *italianità* freed from the oppressive chains of institutionalized categories.

Pre-show controversy over supposed censorship heightened awareness of Cécile, her identity, and her song entry for the Sanremo festival. Lorenzo Lombardi Dallamano, after having extensive talks with Cécile, wrote and produced “N.E.G.R.A.” (Ghiringhelli 2016), which clocks in at three minutes and thirty seconds. However, the video clip released for the festival was only three minutes, a full thirty seconds shorter. This led to speculation over censorship (Scarpone 2016), given the song’s powerful, direct messaging. Dallamano assured that this cut was due to Sanremo length requirements (Ghiringhelli 2016) and not the national broadcasting company Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), which owns the rights to Sanremo (Del Prete 2016). While all the lyrics eventually appeared in the full cut of the song, mystery still surrounded the edit (Marongiu 2016). Di Somma (2016) does not mince words, calling the lyrics censored. All of this pre-show buzz gave much more attention to Cécile and her song.

Before discussing the results of Cécile’s entry and the subsequent discussion about race and gender in Italy, it is necessary to analyze the lyrics, sounds, music video<sup>137</sup>, and live performance of “N.E.G.R.A.” at Sanremo 2016. Additionally, English language<sup>138</sup>, French language<sup>139</sup> and extended versions<sup>140</sup> add layers of meaning that, while not directly present at Sanremo, contextualize Cécile’s single, which became the titular track of her first studio album

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<sup>137</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5gQSdmMAog>

<sup>138</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdGBAygLFGc>

<sup>139</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifzyJicHSDc>

<sup>140</sup> <https://open.spotify.com/album/2B04SAy1tf3AteSRZ4J6gb>



(2016). After conducting a close, cultural and postcolonial reading (via discourse analysis) of the above, I analyze main themes before discussing Cécile's first round elimination. I conclude by arguing that these dynamics are part of a greater Italian context.

The title of the song and subsequent album paint a provocative picture. "N.E.G.R.A." is both the Italian n-word and an acronym: "Nessuno è giudice razziale assoluto" ("There is no absolute judge on race," Giuliani 225). In terms of word choice, Cécile explains

Potrebbe essere qualunque altra parola.  Potrebbe essere grassa, brutta, omosessuale, frocio - magari puntinato come nel mio brano.  Qualunque parola che spesso e volentieri viene utilizzata per classificare qualcuno e dire che è diverso. Poi io dico sempre, ma diverso da chi? Diverso da cosa?  (Tgevents Television 2016)	It could be any other word. It could be fat, ugly, homosexual, fag - perhaps separated by periods like in my song. Any word that is used often and willingly to categorize someone and say that they are different. Then I always say, but different from who? Different from what?
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Cécile strikes at the heart of how racist, sexist, and exclusionary ideologies permeate notions of *italianità*, understanding the dynamics of institutionalized categories and the power of definitions. Disrupting institutionalized categories is central to postcolonial theory, specifically Italian Postcolonialism, which has unpacked and critiqued, among other things, the concepts of "Italian," "Resurgence," "Citizenship," and *italianità*. Cécile's rhetorical questions "Different from who? Different from what?" call out hegemonic privilege that seeks to maintain a white, Catholic, masculine, middle class, Italian-speaking imaginary. Additionally, Cécile describes her song as a personal exposition of lived experiences,

N.E.G.R.A. parla di molte cose che ho vissuto sulla mia pelle. Però è anche un grido di forza a tutte le persone che, magari, come me, non hanno avuto la possibilità di, davvero di riscattarsi (Tgevents Television 2016).	N.E.G.R.A. talks about many things that I have lived on my skin. However, it's also a scream of strength to all the people that, perhaps, like me, didn't have the possibility to truly redeem themselves.
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Skin is a recurring theme in second generation Italian hip hop. Amir Issaa (Chapter 1) and Tommy Kuti (Chapter 2), for example, dedicate entire tracks to it.<sup>141</sup> Here, Cécile refers to her experiences that she has lived *on her skin*, a reality in which phenotype determines social, cultural, and economic status because racism dominates national politics. Skin color becomes a determining factor in identity not because it possesses any inherent meaning, but because racial categories maintain a social hierarchy emblematic of a caste system: one is born into a racialized, unequal society and has no way out. Cécile looks both inward and outward, speaking in solidarity with people like her. Aware of her platform, she champions personal and collective redemption, centering the recognition of humanity that colonialism stifles. Her music and activism humanize her experience by being brutally honest.

Cécile's entry into the Sanremo Festival, "N.E.G.R.A.," actively re-articulates images of hypersexualized Black women that have been historically silenced. She speaks, sings, and raps truth to power by subverting colonial imagery and its subsequent connotations (Giuliani 2016). Her perspective pulls back the curtain of racism and sexism in Italy, detailing life experiences and her reactions to them. The music video exemplifies this dynamic, visualizing the power of her eye contact, "if they [the viewers] turned their gaze to the curves of her figure while she

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<sup>141</sup> "La mia pelle" ("My Skin" 2012) and "La pelle" ("Skin" 2018), respectively.

sings words of denunciation, they would feel ashamed” (Giuliani 228). The historical and contemporary exoticization of Black Italian female bodies comes face to face with a music video that challenges the violent hypocrisy between racial disgust and sexual pleasure. Furthermore, Cécile’s song depicts the “relation between a (supposedly) white man who wants her because she is black - in keeping with cannibalistic and sexual appropriation - but ignores her when he sees her out in public” (Giuliani 225). That is to say, sexual conquest temporarily suspends racial disgust via an egotistical desire to penetrate her Black body (Di Somma 2016).

Towards the end of her performance on the first night of Sanremo, Cécile unbuttoned her jacket to expose her bare stomach. She then opened up her arms so that her body was the shape of a cross, representing Catholic iconography, sacrifice, and salvation (Di Somma 2016). As a Black Italian woman, her body has historically been sacrificed to maintain a sexual and racial hierarchy within the confines of hegemonic *italianità*. Italian Postcolonialism<sup>142</sup> historicizes and contextualizes these dynamics both diachronically and synchronically, demonstrating their pervasiveness while criticizing a lack of education that continues to thwart a structural reckoning. Cécile’s salvation rests in the power of her music, body, and voice - all of which are suppressed by reductive notions of belonging and citizenship. Di Somma (2016) compares Cécile’s song to “Me gritaron negra<sup>143</sup>” (“They Called Me N\*\*\*\*r”) by the Afroperuvian poet and activist Victoria Santa Cruz (1922-2014). Both champion the “riacquisizione e riappropriazione” (“reacquisition and reappropriation”) of Black bodies (Di Somma 5) by directly calling out racist and sexist institutions that perpetuate colonial ideology and policy.

Cécile, in fact, brought “il suo corpo nero” (“her Black body”) to Sanremo, a first (Scego 2016).

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<sup>142</sup> See the introductory chapter for an explanation of this theory.

<sup>143</sup> While the Spanish word “negro” is still used to indicate the color “black,” the meaning here is much more malicious. Superficial translations lead to “They called me a black woman,” which does not convey the same meaning as in the poem. Here, “negra” has the same connotations in Spanish and Italian, which is why I used the English n-word in translation.

According to Scego (2016), the ultimate result was a missed chance at a true revolution, as the abrupt, first round elimination of “N.E.G.R.A.” thwarted the hope that preceded Sanremo. If “N.E.G.R.A.” had won, it would have represented Italy in the Eurovision song contest, giving Cécile an international stage to show the world the rampant racism and sexism that pervades *il bel paese* (the beautiful country) today. Although she was briefly silenced at the song contest, her artistry, just like second generation hip hop as a whole, unsettles romanticized conceptions of Italy and celebrates historical and contemporary diversity.

Gaia Giuliani (2019) succinctly summarizes the overlapping and complex forces that determined her first round elimination, “Spectacularisation, the laws of the market, public sentiment, and an all-Italian sense of modesty are the non-negotiable lynchpin of the song contest” (227). Teresa Di Somma (2016) offers a detailed reading of this spectacle in the section “Cecile vs. Chiara Dello Iacovo: *white fragility*?” White fragility, a concept popularized by Robin DiAngelo (2018), describes how racial hierarchies are maintained through epistemologies of ignorance and the manipulation of emotional triggers. In her homonymous book, DiAngelo explains how white people generally lack any significant experience with racial reckoning. Over time, this leads to an inability to talk about anything race-related or to process any challenge to racism in the United States. This ignorance is weaponized and turned into racial animus: by and large, many white people learn to trigger in themselves a strong emotional response when faced with direct or indirect racial issues. These include, but are not limited to, chattel slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, and more recently, Critical Race Theory. The emotional response serves two main purposes: to maintain the superiority of white feelings and to ensure hard conversations cease to exist at any level. White fragility at work can be seen in phrases such as “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter,” since they seek to undermine Black Lives Matter and any

conversation about race in the United States. In an Italian context, fragile white discourse is based on the myth of *italiani brava gente* (Del Boca 14). This ideology pervades Italian society, specifically the education system, concluding that since Italians are white and therefore good, any violent colonial atrocity could not have been *that* bad. Authors such as Igiaba Scego, Ubah Cristina Ali Farah, and Gabriella Ghermandi, as well as Italian postcolonial scholars, have shown not only that this is wrong, but also have demonstrated how colonial ideology continues to affect Italian society today, specifically in terms of belonging.

In Di Somma's (2016) comparison of Chiara Dello Iacovo and Cécile, on stage together, waiting to see who will be eliminated, of utmost importance are the differences between both women, their chosen songs, and the power of communication. Each used their bodies during their respective performances: Cécile unbuttoned her shirt, showing her stomach and her skin; Iacovo covered her body in cellophane, an artificial barrier. Di Somma speculates that these two songs and people were put together on purpose to ensure that Cécile would lose. She substantiates this claim with the fact that RAI<sup>144</sup> has complete power in virtually every organizational aspect of Sanremo. White fragility explains the results. Italians are uncomfortable with Cécile's tall, muscular, Black body, preferring Dello Iacovo's shorter, less muscular, white one, "Therefore Chiara Dello Iacovo wins, because her refined white sexuality, sweet and contained, better represents the dominant female form in the beautiful country" (Di Somma 10). Discourse on the G2 (Second Generation) Facebook page criticized Cécile for taking on the topic too head on, using direct and strong language that turned people off. Analyzing more commentary on social media, Valenza (2016) highlights the difference between those applauding

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<sup>144</sup> *Radiotelevisione italiana*, formerly *Radio audizioni italiane*, is a mass media, public national broadcasting company in Italy that began in the 1950s. It broadcasts news, TV shows, talk shows, and a number of national and international events, including the Sanremo Festival and the Eurovision Song Contest.

politically incorrect, confrontational truth in Cécile's lyrics and those arguing that she compromised the quality and elite status of Sanremo. *Il sussidiario* (2016) goes a step further, blaming Cécile for what happened, claiming that her anti-racist and rebellious song became a caricature. These types of reactions are more examples of colonial practices at work, best explained by Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh (2016),

Una linea del colore rigida, impermeabile e mitica, che precede gli stupri razziali (o coloniali) sistematicamente praticati durante la schiavitù (e i colonialismi), e cancella il desiderio 'interrazziale', tra 'bianchi' (non soltanto uomini) e 'neri' (non soltanto donne).	A rigid, impermeable and mythical color line, which precedes the racial (or colonial) rapes systematically practiced during slavery (and colonialism), erases the 'interracial' desire between 'whites' (not only men) and 'Blacks' (not only women).
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Whiteness colonizes *italianità*, rendering invisible and/or dehumanizing those excluded from its membership. Racist and sexist reactions to "N.E.G.R.A." prove Cécile's point, highlighting how Whiteness depends on anti-Blackness and the hypersexualization of Black bodies. As Petrovich puts it, "L'uomo italiano guadagna la propria bianchezza desiderando un corpo femminile nero" ("The Italian man gains his whiteness by desiring a Black female body"). Whiteness needs racial and sexual inequality in order to fulfill its supremacist desires. This is the main argument of "N.E.G.R.A."

Deep bass and R&B sounds (Coveri 2016; Scego 2016) over a hip hop rhythm (Scego 2016) introduce the listener to "N.E.G.R.A." Italian hip hop artist Rafè's frame, which lasts 25 seconds, has a powerful, direct tone, priming listeners for what is to come. The phrase "Sarà perché qualcosa in lei ti fa paura" ("it might be because something in her scares you") is loud

and distorted - symbolizing the contorted fear itself - all the while “Se ti togli i paraocchi... (“If you take off your blinders...”) continues, a bit softer, at the same time. Simultaneously hearing the words “paura” (“fear”) and “davanti” (“in front”) culminates Rafè’s introduction, opening to Cécile’s voice, which combines aspects of rap and R&B. Loud bass sounds constantly build tension directed towards the listener, strengthened by the use of the second person “tu” (you). Rafè raps about taking blinders off, opening one’s eyes, and becoming aware that the power of language externalizes internalized hate. Put another way, the monsters one locates in society are actually of one’s own creation, “I mostri ce li hai dentro e non ce li hai davanti” (“You have monsters inside of you, not in front of you”). The reasons for this, according to Rafè, are clear, “It might be because something in her scares you.” This preamble establishes two major themes of the song. First, racism and sexism weaponize internalized fears, creating external threats. Second, this racist and sexist ideology rationalizes oppression and further racism, citing the fears (and threats) it creates. This process is emblematic of Gloria Anzaldúa’s “Shadow-Beast”, “un essere carnale e non-divino, che, nella società patriarcale, deve essere protetto dalla sua propria sessualità” (“a non-divine carnal being that, in patriarchal society, must be protected from her own sexuality,” Di Somma 2). Applying this to “N.E.G.R.A.,” racism and sexism are supposed solutions looking for a problem, so they contribute to the dehumanization of Black Italian female bodies, creating hypersexualized and monstrous forms at the same time. Cécile calls out the entire system, utilizing colonial language and iconography to subvert romanticized notions of Italian colonialism, which the myths *italiani brava gente* and *il bel paese* seek to maintain. Cécile “is man’s recognized nightmarish pieces, his Shadow-Beast” (Di Somma 2016, quoting Anzaldúa). Monsters created from internalized hate become external threats that must be

neutralized. This may explain why “N.E.G.R.A.” was eliminated in the first round of Sanremo 2016.

Cécile’s first verse calls out racial animus in Italy, “A te che guardi il mio colore come fossi extraterrestre” (“To you who looks at my color as if I were alien”). The use of “extraterrestre” (“alien”) is consistent with Franz Fanon’s in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Proglío 2016).<sup>145</sup> Hegemonic Italian identity fits this precise definition: a closed ideology that excludes people of color, specifically Black bodies, from entering the white gates of *italianità*.

Challenging and unsettling these notions, therefore, is a revolutionary act (Fanon 175). Cécile’s subsequent lyrics give more examples of the daily racism she experienced growing up in Italy (Di Somma 2016). She remembers strange questions, such as, “What color is your blood?” This demonstrates that even at a young age, children internalize the ideology at the heart of *jus sanguinis*, concluding that since Cécile’s color is different from the white Italian imaginary, her blood must be different, too. Capitalism reproduces this same alienation, maintaining a racial hierarchy via the Barbie doll. Cécile recounts that she had to wait until the 1980s to purchase one that looked like her, while white Italians had access since the 1960s. Negating access to representative dolls further alienates Blackness from *italianità*, teaching this hierarchy to children.

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<sup>145</sup> Originally published in French in 1952, *Black Skin, White Masks* calls out the racist dynamics that deculturalize Black bodies, minds, and spirits. The resulting alienation creates an environment in which “The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (Fanon 43). In this way, white people are prisoners of their own neurosis, yet still benefit from racial privilege. Fanon concludes by putting forth a disalienation project that decolonizes middle-class intellectual alienation. He defines a middle-class society as “any society that becomes rigidified in predetermined forms, forbidding all evolution, all gains, all progress, all discovery” (Fanon 175).



Towards the end of the first verse, the phrase that was cut from Sanremo takes on more meaning. Whether or not a result of censorship, the controversy surrounding it makes the phrase stand out:

C'è chi si vanta di ideali dove ne*ri ed omosessuali / indifferentemente sono tutti uguali / cioè diversi e in quanto tali sono da trattare / differentemente dai normali e questo fa paura	There are those who brag about ideals where n****rs and homosexuals / are indifferently all the same / different, that is, in the way they are treated / differently from normal people, and this is scary
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Cécile calls out racism and sexism in Italy, identifying a common alienating ideology. The normalization of difference as inferiority becomes social and political policy, utilized to explain and maintain unequal treatment. The term “difference” dehumanizes and rationalizes dehumanization, which is terrifying. Colonialism has historically dehumanized those labeled as “other,” creating social, political, and cultural institutions tasked with policing identity formations and access to specific identities. Cécile calls out the lack of humanity in her own treatment, alluding to the chorus and main message of the song, “Mi consideri soltanto per un’avventura, ma non consideri la mia natura” (“You only consider me for an adventure, but you don’t consider my character”). This adventure leads to conquest, a desire for power, and an inability for hegemonic *italianità* to recognize humanity.

The chorus directly calls out the hypocrisy in which white masculine pleasure temporarily and superficially subverts white masculine anti-Blackness. Cécile emphasizes the power relationship between “ne\*ra” (“n\*\*\*\*r”) and “nuda” (“naked”); it becomes even more powerful in the music video (*Il sussidiario* 2016). The repetition of “ne\*ra” and “nuda” describes

how nudity and heterosexual desire suddenly relinquish racist disgust, as selfish and self-serving white masculine pleasure takes precedence over maintaining anti-Blackness. All of this, of course, happens behind closed doors, away from the hegemonic white masculine gaze. Repeating these words also creates a strong memory of not only their sound, but their relationship to each other.

The second verse returns to anti-Black stereotypes. “Mi inviti a cena ma soltanto se mi paghi” (“You invite me to dinner, but only if you pay me”) alludes to the Italian stereotype that most Black Italian women are prostitutes, and relationships with them are purely transactional. Money commodifies Black female bodies, turning them into products for consumption governed by prices and transactions. Even the pain experienced by Black women is undermined, “Non preoccuparti della ne\*ra quando è triste prende e danza” (“Don’t worry about the n\*\*\*\*r, when she’s sad she starts dancing”). This lyric connects current treatment and policy to that of the early 19th century minstrel shows in the United States, where Black people were portrayed as simpletons with “primitive” emotions. A product of colonialism in the United States, this ideology continues to pervade Italian society. Di Somma (2016) also refers to the minstrel show context that creates the image of a happy and aloof Black person, emotionally and intellectually ignorant. More recently, Cécile references Mario Balotelli, an Italian footballer, who can only be Italian on the pitch<sup>146</sup> (Proglia 2016). However, even international success did not shield him from racist epithets (Ubha and Mezzofiore 2019) and having bananas hurled at him from the

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<sup>146</sup> In soccer terminology, the pitch refers to the field.

crowd (Doyle 2018).<sup>147</sup> The use of contemporary and personal examples of racial animus in “N.E.G.R.A.” demonstrates the continuation of colonial ideology and practice in Italy.

The second chorus takes on a more powerful tone, reminding the listener of what is at stake, especially the consequences of this double standard. “Ne\*ra” and “nuda” come together again, their sounds closer than before - both begin and end with the same sound and are two-syllables each. The last line,

Ne*ra ne*ra ne*ra	N****r n****r n****r
ma quando mi vedi nuda nuda nuda	but when you see me naked naked naked
non te ne fotte più	you don’t give a fuck anymore

drops the mic on how colonization, in addition to racism, violence, and oppression, relies heavily on indifference to the power dynamics that seek to dominate, alienate, and destroy the so-called other.

The music adds a haunting layer to the chorus, presenting a terrifying reality for Black Italian women, calling out racist and sexist double standards. Hearing the words sung, more than reading them, is a much more intimate, personal experience, one that could make many white Italians uncomfortable.<sup>148</sup> A deep, distorted masculine voice says the phrase, “Don’t worry about the n\*\*\*\*r, when she’s tired she starts dancing,” again engaging in a metanarrative where the distortion of the voice represents the distorted thinking behind ignoring Cécile’s pain and

<sup>147</sup> For more discussion of racism and football, see Podaliri, Carlo and Carlo Balestri “The Ultràs, Racism and Football Culture in Italy” in *Fanatics: Power, Identity and Fandom in Football* (Routledge 1998); Garland, Jon and Michael Rowe *Racism and Anti-Racism in Football* (Palgrave 2001); and Kassimeris, Christos *European Football in Black and White: Tackling Racism in Football* (Lexington Books 2008).

<sup>148</sup> Di Somma (2016) suggests that this “white fragility” (DiAngelo 2011) led to Cécile’s first-round elimination.

surmising that she can be easily distracted by dancing. This added layer, made possible by the power of music, creates a mini dialogue in which Cécile battles with the distortion inside and outside the song. She is well aware of what “N.E.G.R.A.” communicates and understands the political ramifications both nationally and with respect to the Sanremo festival. The distorted masculine sound actively tries to undermine Cécile’s voice, representing a strong critique of Italy that, in many ways, is the result of not only its double colonization, but also, and more importantly, any lack of a substantial reckoning with it (*Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*).

Slowly coming into focus, the first shot of the music video displays a silver vase with purple flowers, Cécile laying in a bed of white sheets, her hair in a bun, smiling, wearing white nail polish. The camera, behind the vase, acts like a voyeur, moving back and forth, trying to steal non-consenting glimpses of Cécile’s body. In fact, “L’interlocutore è il maschio bianco capitalista. L’uomo con il potere” (“the interlocutor is the white male capitalist. The man with power,” Scego 2016), who publicly shows disgust with the Black female body yet privately desires to conquer it. Cécile’s gaze rarely breaks with the camera. While one can look away, directing attention to her bare skin, that would arouse a feeling of embarrassment, since this is exactly the overall message of the song (Giuliani 2016). This first image of Cécile, naked and laying in bed, looking towards the camera, re-articulates Italian colonial iconography (Giuliani 2016; Proglia 2016; Scego 2016). From the end of the 19th century up until the beginning of World War II, Italian soldiers would carry postcards and pictures of naked east-African women who were laying on beds, looking at the camera (Scego 2016). Historically, this practice of taking and coveting half-naked pictures of Black women from countries in Africa permeated Italian colonial ideology; each photo objectified a woman’s body and silenced her voice

(Giuliani 2016). Cécile breaks the silence, calling attention to the continued exploitation of Black women in magazines and tabloids to this day (Giuliani 2016). Additionally, “N.E.G.R.A.” elucidates the relationship between imprisonment and sexual desire, a prominent aspect of rape culture in which masculine pleasure is derived from feminine powerlessness (Giuliani 2016). Consequently, Cécile’s body position is a product of Italian racism and sexism: this is where the white gaze puts her, so here she is on full display (Proglia 2016), as if to say, “Your discomfort is your own creation; here is a mirror to your own violence.” This is precisely what Rafè explains in the introduction.

In fact, violence and colonization are inseparable. Scego (2016) explains that “Lo stupro diventava legale, anzi cosa buona e sana da perpetrare” (“Rape became legal, actually a good and healthy thing to perpetuate”) during Italian colonization. Women from Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Libya were physically and symbolically “carne da macello per gli sguardi concupiscenti dei bianchi conquistatori” (“meat for slaughter for the white male conqueror’s lustful gaze” Scego 2016). Scego’s primary example is Indro Montanelli, an Italian journalist and writer who served two years in the army in Somalia during the 1930s. He leased a young girl named Fatima when she was around 12 years old (Blasi 2020), referring to her as a “‘docile little animal’ whose mutilated genitals ‘resisted his ardor’” (Blasi 2020). Never remorseful for the transaction and rapes, he died at the age of 92 and is still glorified with a monument in Milan.<sup>149</sup> The legacy of this violence continues in Italy today, specifically regarding Black women (Giuliani 2016). Triggered reactions to Cécile’s manifesto attack the song and singer, emblematic of racist and sexist social structures that continue to colonize people of color (Proglia 2016). The entire music video is dedicated to unraveling this history. Everything comes together: the chorus culminates

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<sup>149</sup> His statue is routinely defaced, as recently as 2020 and 2021. Each time, however, it is cleaned (Redazione Anza 2021).

with an explosion of rhythm, beat, voice, and visuals. Towards the end of the video, during the final chorus, Cécile slowly moves her hands, revealing a bit more skin, eventually showing her breasts.<sup>150</sup> She has re-gained autonomy over her body, controlling how it is represented, and by whom. The last scene shows Cécile smiling, arms crossed in front of her, gazing directly into the camera, as the video fades to white. She unapologetically reclaims her power and identity, culminating in this scene.

Although not part of Sanremo 2016, the extended (2016) as well as English and French versions (2017) add more layers of meaning and interpretation. The album's last track, "N.E.G.R.A. - Kuerty Uyop deep joy extended remix," is six minutes and twenty seconds, almost a full three minutes longer than the original. The first two minutes are full of an entirely different musical introduction: strings build up to dance music, creating a nighttime afrobeat sound with drums, deep piano chords, reverb, and a more complex arrangement. A change to quicker piano chords, a temporary suspension of the beat, and a walking-up style bass line offer a more optimistic sound, demonstrating the song's versatility. Rafè's introduction announces a return to the string instruments. Cécile's first verse, characterized by nightclub sounds, reverb, and slow piano chords, dramatically intensifies and changes the tone of the song. Having listened to the original first, it is difficult to process the exact same thoughts and emotions. Instead, a strong celebratory tone contradicts and emphasizes the harsh criticism of Italian racism and sexism. The faster sounds promote a sensation to dance, which feels appropriate and inappropriate at the same time. While listening and reflecting dominate the original manifesto, the extended version almost invites the audience to stand up and move, encouraging a much more active experience, creating an incredible balance between harmonizing sensations and

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<sup>150</sup> Nudity is pixelated in the YouTube video, at least when viewed in the United States.

lyrical prowess. The extended version ends quickly - which sounds like an oxy-moron but is not - representing the genius in not only Cécile and Rafè, but Kuerty Uyop<sup>151</sup> themselves.

The English and French versions of “N.E.G.R.A.” create an additional layer of self-reflexivity as well as challenge linguistic nationalism. While the music video and sounds are the same, each language presents a new and familiar way to experience Cécile. The first part of the chorus employs the same Italian word, “ne\*ra,” paying no mind to maintaining the rhyme with “naked” (English) and “nue” (French). Self-reflexivity and the powerful relationship between black and white dominate the opening scenes in the music video. Cécile, her skin whitened, wears a black hoodie and watches her video to “N.E.G.R.A.” on a white iPhone. Quick shots show Cécile dressed in white, then back to her black hoodie, vigorously wiping off the white on her arm. Instead of Italian colonial iconography in the original video, the process of whitening takes center stage. Culprits include capitalism and the market for products that whiten skin, both chemically and on the surface; colorism that maintains a racial hierarchy within communities of color; and advertising that artificially brightens (whitens) skin in an attempt to make it and whatever product is being sold more desirable. Cécile, fortunately, is able to remove the white from her skin, first from her arm and then her face. Quick full body shots of Cécile dressed in black, then white, then in black with white skin disrupt colonial conceptions of linear time. Purple text in both English or French burst onto the screen, emphasizing words such as “ignorance,” “arrogance,” and “you just don’t give a fuck.” The camera slowly pans out to display Cécile in her black hoodie, no more whitened skin. The whitening has stopped, physically and symbolically. The last scene is a close up of her hand wiping off the white color,

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<sup>151</sup> From their Facebook page, “A former Scottish priest and a professional Italian karateka, both with a huge passion for DJing, met years ago on a street called Kuerty Uyop. They soon realized that their mission was to save the souls of the dance-addicts with a sound that struck them as an uppercut. Their genre is everything that makes your booty shake. They have partnerships in every corner of the world and rarely use the same singer twice. All this, It’s Kuerty Uyop Baby!”

showing residue on the napkin. Removing this substance liberates Cécile’s skin from the confines of white *italianità*, paving the way for *seconde generazioni* to do the same.

While “N.E.G.R.A.” and Sanremo 2016 present an excellent case study to help understand race and gender dynamics in contemporary Italy, Cécile’s track is not widely discussed in the public sphere. An anti-racist song, it refers “ai falsi ideali e alla paura nei confronti del diverso” (“to false ideals and to fear towards difference” Del Prete 2016), shining a bright light on the fact that “Italy is a profoundly racialised imagined community” (Giuliani 243). The union of *italianità* and *nerezza* (Blackness) has a long past, where the former has both hypervisualized and invisibilized the latter (Giuliani 245). “N.E.G.R.A.” is emblematic of this history. Its unapologetic tone (Proglia 2016) that refuses to entertain any sort of superficial romanticization elicits strong interpretations and reactions. The “moral panic” (Giuliani 243) that arose during Sanremo 2016 demonstrates a lack of decolonization that continues to undermine racial progress in Italy.

“N.E.G.R.A.” as a whole unsettles a Whiteness that, by being institutionalized, rarely receives the public criticism it rightly deserves. Additionally,

La canzone di Cecile rompe il tabù dell’indicibilità di come questa bianchezza produca un privilegio che permette a chi ce l’ha di trattare gli altri e le altre come ‘cosa da meno’ (Giuliani 2016).	Cécile’s song breaks the unspeakable taboo of how this Whiteness produces a privilege that allows those that have it to treat others as ‘inferior.’
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This Whiteness *alla italiana* (Italian Style) pervades much of Italian society. Cécile herself, through the power of her words and music, puts this on full display. The pre-show censorship controversy and early elimination has only added to the complexity of this issue. In her own



words, “Ho avuto la possibilità di cantare, e quindi esprimermi, e quindi poter donare agli altri” (“I had the possibility to sing, and therefore express myself, and therefore give to others” Cécile 2016). This revolutionary act successfully decolonizes the relationship between Blackness, femininity, and *italianità*.

Karima DueG, Chadia Rodriguez, and Cécile decolonize gender and sexuality in second generation Italian hip hop. Their lyrics, music videos, and activism celebrate inclusivity, postcolonial identities, and bodily autonomy by challenging racism and sexism in hegemonic *italianità*. Textual and visual analyses demonstrate the utilization of Gloria Anzaldúa’s Shadow-Beast to unmask normalized heterosexism, resulting in themes of empowerment, solidarity, and liberation. A case study of Cécile’s “N.E.G.R.A.” at Sanremo 2016 provides an in-depth look at these dynamics on a national stage, integrating not only discourse analysis, but also dissecting the first round elimination, various reactions, and constructions of Cécile’s own identity. As a whole, these artists negotiate gender and sexuality in *italianità*. Their work deserves more recognition and dedicated scholarship.

## Conclusion

*“Penso che solo attraverso l’abbattimento totale degli stereotipi, potremo finalmente vedere l’altro come membro della nostra comunità, ed è solo riconoscendo l’altro che potremo riconoscere noi stessi.”*

*“I think only through the total destruction of stereotypes that we will finally be able to see the other as a member of our community, and it’s only by recognizing the other that we will be able to recognize ourselves.”*  
-Karima 2G (2017)

The title of this dissertation, “Perché il mondo è cambiato” (“Because the world has changed”), which ends Tommy Kuti’s “#AFROITALIANO” manifesto, repositions resistance from the inside looking out, showing Italy and the world the lived reality of *seconde generazioni* (second generations). Their collective messages include: the world has changed, we are here, we have been here for a long time, and these are our stories. “We” refers to a collective consciousness that continues to be raised by hip hop artists and activists throughout Italy. Grounded in history and challenging colonized definitions of *italianità*, second generation Italians pave the way for more recognition. Hip hop itself has brought these issues to the national stage. Cécile, Amir Issaa, Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, and Chadia Rodriguez are protagonists in this movement that has seen increased visibility. Their work reclaims space, champions inclusion, and authorizes postcolonial *italianità*.

Joseph Sciorra’s 14-year archival project and Enrico Zammarchi’s dissertation (2019) provide two essential starting points for understanding Italian hip hop. Sciorra (2002) emphasizes how hip hop expresses popular memory, social justice, and embraces multilingualism. Zammarchi (2019) analyzes the historical development of hip hop in Italy, tracing its roots and political environment from the underground to more mainstream recognition. Resisting historical and contemporary colonization as well as uncovering hidden

histories ground the birth and development of Italian hip hop. Artists unsettle, challenge, negotiate, and affirm a postcolonial *italianità* through their lyrics, music, and music videos.

The question of *italianità* (Italianness) pervades virtually all of Italian history. The descriptor “Italian” itself conjures up representations of geography, culture, language, and society. While I myself have offered up answers to the question “Who is Italian?”, my aim was also to demonstrate and decolonize how this question was and is answered with monolithic, essentialist, and hegemonic structures. *Seconde generazioni*, in all of their heterogeneity and diversity, share the experience of some sort of xenophobic exclusion due to these ideological structures. While definitions of *seconde generazioni* revolve around the fact that they were born and/or raised in Italy with at least one parent with origins from another country, in reality they are a group of heterogeneous, kaleidoscopic populations (Tamburri 48) united by anti-racism, anti-sexism, and inclusive citizenship. Conceptions of shared consciousness ground my definition of *italianità*, namely that it is the dynamic relation between lived reality, social status, citizenship status, and belonging on individual, collective, local, provincial, regional, national, and international levels. This definition must remain flexible (Tamburri 21).

I then addressed my two research questions formed within this conjuncture: (1) How and why does the Italian identification paradigm contract itself with respect to *seconde generazioni*? and (2) What strategies do *seconde generazioni* hip hop artists exercise to unsettle racism, sexism, and xenophobia in *italianità*? I answered the former in the Introduction and the latter in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. My primary argument became centered on analyzing discourses that continue to negotiate, contest, and decolonize hegemonic notions of who Italians are, including what they look like, which language(s) they speak, and where they come from. Artists utilize

individual and collective storytelling to create solidarity, unity, understanding, thus raising consciousness.

Two theories grounded the way in which I addressed my research questions and formulated my primary argument: Italian postcolonialism and Cultural studies. Using history as a guide, Italian postcolonialism analyzes the structural impacts of Italian colonialism, actively reclaiming invisibilized bodies (Hawthorne 2020) and identities. Centering *seconde generazioni* authors is paramount in this process (Clò 2012). As a result, myths such as *italiani brava gente* (Italians [are] good/decent people) and *il bel paese* (the beautiful country) come under intense scrutiny for their roles in maintaining historical amnesia in both education and research. This theory re-articulates the Risorgimento as an elite, top-down movement designed to consolidate power, officially starting the (inner) colonization of the Italian south. This resulted in further segregation, racialization, and stereotyping that sought to permanently crystallize its imposed subaltern status. Then the Italian government exported this violence to countries such as Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Italian postcolonial scholars understand these two projects to be double colonization. The legacy of this racist and sexist imperialism lives on today.

Popular culture, constructions of identity, and diaspora theory inform my integration of Cultural studies into this project. Popular culture is a mythic arena where discourse manifests imaginations that become identities. Applying Stuart Hall's politics of identity, difference takes center stage. Additionally, self-reflexive subjects decolonize monolithic and essentialist notions based on blood or ethnic "purity." Identity is constituted within representation at specific historical, political, and social formations. Meanings are negotiated in the present moment, even though they are unevenly determined by the past. Diaspora theory helps to unsettle single origin stories and monolithic categorization systems, putting nationalism and colonialism under the

microscope. I applied Italian postcolonialism and Cultural studies to my data set. An example of popular musicology and international cooperation, this set comprises lyrics, instrumentation, and music videos accessed freely via Genius.com, Angolotesti (Lyrics corner), YouTube, Spotify, and Vimeo.

I utilized an intersectional discourse analysis with this data set. Defined as the study of “language in use” (Gee 19; Johnstone 3), discourse analysis unpacks complex, multilayered, and embedded messages in communication that deal with, amongst other things, identity formation. After curating a specific number of songs based on shared lyrical themes, I conducted close, contextualized readings to identify historical and contemporary references to *italianità* as well as self-aware appeals to Italian socialization. While my research is very lyrics-focused, I also introduced analyses on instrumentation and visual language in music videos. All of this happened within an intersectional approach that centered marginalized people and their collective experiences. In this framework, socialization is a combination of multiple, intersecting projects that negotiate and struggle over meaning. Bearing witness to racial, gender, and sexuality inequalities in Italy, second generation Italian hip hop artists celebrate the heterogeneity of postcolonial *italianità*. Simply put: their lives matter.

## **Findings**

My findings are a consequence of the context I defined, the theories I utilized, my data set, and methodology. Considered by North American scholars to be one of the first *seconde generazioni* hip hop artists, Amir Issaa employs multifaceted discursive, musical, and visual strategies within his body of work. In terms of identification, he introduces and re-introduces himself in his tracks, establishing a strong sense of individual identity by using the name that was hidden for 18 years. By oscillating between individual and collective identities, Issaa affirms

*seconde generazioni* solidarity and heterogeneity at the same time. Issaa fully embraces hip hop culture as a family of shared values, experiences, and motivations, and uses it to transform hate into a liberating tool that inspires change by telling the truth. Belonging takes center stage in his artistry as he regularly calls out alienation. Instrumentation, which gradually becomes more complex over time, highlights certain lyrics by pausing and/or changing up the beat. Music videos employ storytelling, visual metaphors, and interviews/skits to create a multifaceted narrative. All of these strategies decolonize monolithic conceptions of a white Italian identity, effectively authorizing and celebrating an inclusive *italianità*.

I positioned the concept of “Made in Italy” at the forefront of second generation Italian hip hop and inclusion. Taking inspiration from Soumahoro’s documentary *The Invisibles* (2020), which documents the inhumane living conditions of migrant workers in Italy, second generation Italian hip hop is written, produced, and performed mostly in the country. It is, in fact and in practice, made in Italy, and therefore should be treated as an authentic cultural product worthy of study. Artists such as Karima DueG, Tommy Kuti, Ghali, Chadia Rodriguez, Mahmood, and Cécile decolonize language, race, gender, and sexuality by humanizing marginalized identities, contesting institutionalized definitions, and celebrating diversity. Their socially conscious lyrics unsettle suppressed connections between alienation, inequality, and violence. Collectively, they raise consciousness and build solidarity by creating inclusive spaces in which each individual story connects to a greater narrative of struggling to belong in a country that routinely refuses to acknowledge them. Mahmood’s victory at Sanremo 2019 put these dynamics on full display. His win rebuked ascendant fascist populism in Italy that tried to frame his victory as a “scandal.” In reality, Mahmood represents generations of Italians that yearn for more recognition.

Chadia Rodriguez, Karima DueG, and Cécile, in addition to decolonizing race and language, also challenge the intersections of racism, sexism, and heteropatriarchal conceptions of pleasure in contemporary Italian society. I presented a case study of Cécile's "N.E.G.R.A." at Sanremo 2016 to explain these strategies. Cécile, like Karima DueG and Chadia, reclaims bodily autonomy by uncovering the hypersexualized and invisibilized relationship between *italianità* and *nerezza* (Blackness). She does this by calling out racist and sexist objectification as well as the violent hypocrisy of racist disgust and sexual pleasure, exposing how Whiteness depends on racial and sexual inequality to fulfill its supremacist desires. As a whole, all of these artists lay bare the grand farce of a monolithic Italian identity, representing not only the growth of second generation Italian hip hop, but of *seconde generazioni* themselves. While the citizenship question has not been resolved, Italy will continue to be a more heterogeneous country.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

In terms of strengths, my project is the first full-length, interdisciplinary study of contemporary second generation Italian hip hop. While discourse analysis is a common methodology to study song lyrics, my integration of intersectionality is novel. Additionally, studying Italian hip hop and promoting Italian women of color diversifies the anglo-dominated and male-dominated realm of hip hop scholarship. More specifically, centering Black Italians is consistent with the Black Mediterranean Project (DTIS; Hawthorne 2022; The Cosmopolitan Collective; *Teaching Black Italy*) that focuses on rebuking white colonial ideology and narratives by elevating marginalized ones. This project challenges not only literary, but also social and cultural "canons" at scholarly and pedagogical levels.

I have identified three limitations to this project. First, the Covid-19 pandemic severely limited travel to Italy. Following guidelines from the CDC and other reputable sources, I did not

leave Arkansas from March 2020-August 2021. Second, Affect theory is virtually non-existent in understanding the popularity of second generation Italian hip hop. Third, this project lacks a critique of capitalism and Neoliberalism to highlight the obscured market dynamics of music, both in Italy and globally.

Since I did not travel during the first 18 months of the pandemic - two month-long summer trips were planned and canceled in 2020 and 2021, respectively - I have relied almost exclusively on YouTube for music videos and Genius.com for lyrics, as it is generally more accurate than Angolotesti.com. In order to supplement the loss of being able to surround myself with hip hop culture in Italy, including going to concerts and the like, I have utilized social media such as Instagram to provide another line of inquiry into the lives and discourses of these authors and artists.

Affect theory and the results of the discursive strategies detailed and discussed in this dissertation are also few and far between. While I do touch upon the popularity and relatability of second generation authors and artists in their music, messages, and methods, I do not adequately go into more detail about the relationship between listening to music, empathy, and activism. That is to say, my primary focus is on the authors and artists themselves within Italian hip hop culture, and not on audience and/or reader response.

Finally, I do not fully discuss market dynamics, capitalist tendencies, or Neoliberalism. For example, I do not explain how the hip hop market determines collaborations or how, in many ways, hip hop has been co-opted to achieve consensus without actually addressing inequities. While all of the limitations above are significant, I find that they do not compromise my project in any structural way. These lines of inquiry will serve as potential future projects as I seek to



continue my scholarly career. Identifying them here also served to ground my current inquiry and ensure that I stayed on topic.

### **Implications for Future Research**

A major consequence of a project of this magnitude during an ongoing and growing movement is the potential for increased scholarship. For example, future inquiries will integrate *Educazione Rap* (Rap Upbringing, 2022) by Amir Issaa, a pedagogical book that brings hip hop into schools, demonstrating the power of written words and a beat. Karima DueG's memoir, *Il corpo nero* (The Black Body, 2023) will further contextualize her life and provide more intimate details about her artistic process. Another avenue concerns *seconde generazioni* and social media, starting with Khaby Lame and his monumental international status making videos that subtly criticize modern innovations. Additionally, fandom and reception theory would further help to unpack the processes of becoming and staying popular. I also plan on further developing a *seconde generazioni* theory of consciousness as well as tracing its development from Giuseppe Conte's two governments (2018-2021) to Mario Draghi's government (2021-2022) to the present day. In October 2022 Georgia Meloni became the first woman prime minister in Italian history. She is also the most far-right leader since Benito Mussolini. Her dedication to, amongst other things, "Dio, patria e famiglia" ("God, fatherland, and family"), presents new and old challenges for *seconde generazioni*, especially in the realm of LGBTQIA rights, nationalism, and citizenship. The time has come for research and pedagogy to reflect these new trends and call out both blatant and covert acts of oppression. The world has changed.

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## Appendix A

### History of the Sanremo Festival of the Italian Song

The annual song Festival highlights the best of Italian singers, songwriters, and songs. The winner receives national and international recognition and represents Italy in the Eurovision Song Contest, a much bigger event with more international recognition. Representing Italy in a European context completely crystallizes the *italianità* of the contestant. Winning Sanremo validates the singer-songwriter, putting them on a path towards further success. The history of the song festival's development is noteworthy. Serena Facci and Paolo Soddu's *Il Festival di Sanremo: Parole e suoni raccontano la nazione* (*The Sanremo Festival: Words and Sounds Narrate the Nation* 2011) frames the festival as a cultural arbiter (Agostini 2007) that is a historical, cultural, and societal mirror to the music of history, thus enriching the understanding of Italy and Italians (Bianchi 2014; Facci and Soddu 2011). This interpretation explains how Sanremo “rivelava, con la leggerezza connessa con una simile estrinsecazione del rito unitario, l'indefinitezza e la problematicità di una identità italiana” (“revealed, with the connected lightness similar to a unitary ritual's expression, the elusive and problematic nature of an Italian identity,” Facci and Soddu 16). A brief history contextualizes the relationship that Sanremo has to *italianità*. Hip hop, introduced in the 1990's, finally began challenging institutionalized definitions of *italianità*.

After World War II, a small Ligurian town on the northwestern coast was chosen as the perfect venue to host a new festival dedicated to the Italian song that would help to reunite the peninsula. Sanremo's escapist beginnings characterized by reassuring and consoling songs sought to sell dreams to the biggest audience possible (Agostini 2007; Bianchi 2014; Facci and Soddu 2011). Light music drifted peacefully along the radio waves. Songs about the tradition of

everyday life sought to emotionally connect Italians with their perceived essence. Dreams of a pluralistic democracy breezed through the air. This was not, in fact, mindless entertainment, but rather a telling way of how Italians decided to deal with the pain of war. Sanremo turned to the past to provide condolences and healing to a country that experienced a civil war in the middle of World War II.<sup>152</sup> This newly formed cultural institution dedicated itself to the Italian song; each was sung by two different singers accompanied by two different orchestras to demonstrate the song's versatility. In the 1960s the record industry fundamentally changed the way songs were produced, disseminated, and marketed. This resulted in the personalization of songs and the rise of the singer-songwriter.<sup>153</sup> Songs were now performed by and belonged to an artist. The performer took shape, both physically and culturally, which forever changed the festival (Facci and Soddu 2011). Sound technology, instrumental arrangements, and broadcasting techniques continued to evolve. This new song was "real, corporeal, concrete, spontaneous, and direct," when it was "not being outright aggressive" (Agostini 403). Sanremo's popularity was rising, giving it more cultural clout and a wider audience. Artists could now make a career for themselves after winning the contest.

The end of the 1960s saw tragedy and scandal, as Luigi Tenco<sup>154</sup> allegedly died by suicide after losing the festival (Bianchi 2014; Facci and Soddu 2011). The broadcast of his death was brief, leaving many viewers bewildered. Club Tenco was formed shortly after in an effort to keep his memory alive. Tenco's death, together with cultural unrest, gave rise to counter festivals

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<sup>152</sup> Fascist Italy entered the war allied with Nazi Germany and Japan. Due to the success of the *resistenza partigiana* (resistance movement), Italy signed an armistice with Dwight D. Eisenhower, effectively changing sides. The armistice was announced via radio by the head of the Italian army, Pietro Badoglio, on September 8th, 1943.

<sup>153</sup> Cantautore. A more direct translation is "singer-author," which I believe gives a better indication of its cultural significance.

<sup>154</sup> An Italian singer-songwriter who, at the age of 28, was found dead in his hotel room in Sanremo. There is still speculation as to the cause of his death.

organized by young singers who had been avoiding Sanremo altogether. The steady decline of the 1970s was turned around by a new boom in the 1980s. The live orchestra, which had been abandoned, returned. Optimism filled the air. Tradition and innovation, seemingly at odds, found common ground (Facci and Soddu 2011). The culmination of the Mafia's Bloody Season in the early 1990s shattered that optimism. Silvio Berlusconi, a prominent TV executive, rose to power. Reality TV became a formidable competitor which required Sanremo to continue to innovate if it wanted to survive. A separate youth category was added in 1984 and hip hop was introduced to the festival in the 1990s. Social and political themes, virtually nonexistent in the 80s, began to emerge. Immigration to Italy, migration within Italy, and the North/South divide became prominent subjects, which produced dialogues that questioned the monolithic category of Italian identity.

Appendix B<sup>155</sup>**“#Afroitaliano” (Tommy Kuti 2018)**

Esulto quando segna Super Mario  
 Non mangio la pasta senza Parmigiano  
 Ho la pelle scura, l'accento bresciano  
 Un cognome straniero e comunque italiano  
 A volte mi sembra di esser qui per sbaglio  
 Sanno poco di me, son loro bersaglio  
 Ciò che ho passato loro non lo sanno  
 E il mio passato mai lo capiranno  
 Mi dai del "negro", dell'"immigrato"  
 Il tuo pensiero è un po' limitato  
 Il mondo è cambiato, non è complicato  
 "Afroitaliano" per te è un rompicapo  
 Non sanno chi siamo in questo Stato  
 Mi vuoi lontano, ho letto il tuo stato  
 Chi non ci vuole vede solo il colore  
 La nostra nazione sta scritta nel cuore

Sono afroitaliano, afroitaliano  
 Sono afroitaliano, afroitaliano

Questi che ne sanno di file in questura  
 Delle mille facce della mia cultura  
 È la melanina ciò che li cattura  
 Io non ho dei dubbi sulla mia natura  
 Quando io rappo è in italiano  
 E anche se parto resto un italiano  
 La prima volta che ho detto "ti amo"  
 Ti giuro, l'ho fatto in italiano  
 Gli 883, la Dogo Gang  
 I cartoni sul 6 con Cristina D'Avena  
 La scena rap, chi era giù con me  
 Quando tutta sta gente non mi conosceva  
 Fanculo i razzisti, quelli della Lega  
 Ogni 2 giugno su quella bandiera  
 Mando una foto ai parenti in Nigeria

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<sup>155</sup> Songs are alphabetized by title. When no lyrics existed, I came up with them myself by listening, pausing, and slowing down YouTube audio.

Mangiando una fetta di pizza per cena

Sono afroitaliano, afroitaliano

Sono afroitaliano, afroitaliano

Ma lei si sente più africano o si sente più italiano?

Afroitaliano, perché sono stufo di sentirmi dire cosa sono o cosa non sono

Sono troppo africano per essere solo italiano e troppo italiano per essere solo africano

Afroitaliano, perché il mondo è cambiato

Sono afroitaliano, afroitaliano

Sono afroitaliano, afroitaliano

<https://genius.com/Tommy-kuti-afroitaliano-lyrics>

### **“Africa” (Karima DueG 2016)**

I go go go go

I go go go go

I go go go go

Where?

I go go go go

Some People want go

Some people want to stay

Some people want to be the same

Some people want to change

Some people got in trouble

Some people find the road

Some people got the chance to

Some people had enough

Some people have to learn

That the race is not the case

Same blood same land

we come from the same place

Born in Africa

We were born in Africa

We were born in Africa

We were born in Africa

Please open your eyes

is time to realize

that you're fighting your own Mother, Sister

Break the law, put a stop to the injustices

Let the children live in peace

Please open your eyes

find yourself in the mirror, there's a hero



who was born in Africa  
 who was born in Africa  
 who was born in Africa  
 Violence brings violence  
 Government keep silence  
 I am saved from the darkness  
 Proud of my blackness  
 Political Oppression can create discrimination  
 Pretending not to see the criminal intention  
 God forgive they don't know what they are doing  
 Just tell them that we all come from the mother land  
 Born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 Please open your eyes  
 Is time to realize  
 that you're fighting your own Mother, Sister  
 Break the law, Put a stop to the injustices  
 Let the children live in peace  
 Please open your eyes  
 Find yourself in the mirror, there's a hero  
 who was born in Africa  
 who was born in Africa  
 who was born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa  
 We were born in Africa

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv7vVzJd3CQ&ab\\_channel=KarimaOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tv7vVzJd3CQ&ab_channel=KarimaOfficial)

**“Alieno” Karima DueG (2021)**

Correre correre correre  
 Raggiungere l'ignoto  
 Lontano da qui  
 Perché scappare via  
 Alieno fermati  
 Alieno insegnami  
 Dimmi ciò sai dell'invisibile  
 Chi ti esclude si esclude  
 Di te nessuno sa dentro l'immensità  
 La verità sta nella differenza

La tua diversità è l'eccellenza  
 Il potere di credere  
 Il resto si trasformerà  
 Cambierai in bene  
 La delusione in soluzione  
 Ringrazia a chi ti teme

Ama il prossimo tuo come te stesso  
 Come nessuno sa  
 Sogni luci di sogni d'argento sogni d'oro  
 Sogni aldilà del tempo  
 No no no la nostra storia non è una fantasia  
 Alieno fermati  
 Alieno guardami  
 Mostrami qual è la via, qual è la via, qual è la via  
 No no non mi nascondo dietro falsi sorrisi  
 False ideologie  
 False alla maschera a chi l'indossa  
 Chi non vive chi non vuole sentire  
 Che ti giudica perché non sa  
 Con te poesia la vera realtà  
 Il tempo passa è il momento di reagire  
 Farsi sentire  
 Talenti nascono desideri si avverano  
 Nulla è impossibile  
 Tu sei tu sai tu hai  
 Tu rimani te stesso  
 Tu sei tu sai tu hai  
 Alieno non fuggire

??? in my brown skin  
 ??? I'm the queen  
 I contemplate I meditate I'm not depressed  
 ??? I must confess  
 ??? When you hear the elevate  
 Realize your mistake  
 The divine feminine I awake  
 I awake I awake  
 The divine feminine I awake I awake  
 Realize your mistake  
 The divine feminine I awake I awake I awake I awake

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIgxyDSaBzE&ab\\_channel=KarimaDueG-Topic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIgxyDSaBzE&ab_channel=KarimaDueG-Topic)

**“Alzati” (Karima DueG 2021)**

Vola alto non fermarti  
 Senza rimpianti la mia via  
 Senza bugie voglio vivere  
 Guardo avanti  
 Indipendente regina nera  
 Fiera di essere ???  
 Di essere me  
 Gloria agli antenati  
 Vivono senza dolore  
 Senza paura di sbagliare  
 Cantano perché io trionferò  
 Mi perdono nelle acque  
 Nel profondo mi ritroverò  
 Nel deserto mi accendo  
 Penso ogni istante a ciò che sarà  
 Lo sa dio quante volte ho pianto  
 Per chi non tiene a me  
 Quante volte ho chiesto aiuto  
 Ma nessuno ha ascoltato  
 Per chi ??? al vento  
 Intenzioni rivolte all'universo  
 Dio, salvami tu da questo tormento  
 Nelle tue mani mi alleva

Ti prego alzati  
 Guarda avanti  
 Non sei solo il tuo nome  
 Non fermarti  
 Ti prego alzati  
 Guarda avanti  
 Non sei solo il tuo nome  
 Non fermarti

Il fuoco brucia il tempo ferma  
 Libera da ogni limite più grande nel regno  
 Hm, sono medicina anche cura  
 Sono natura  
 A testa alta mi alzo

In piedi è più dura  
 Più forte sarò domani  
 Celebro la vita fuori dall'oscurità  
 Sono luce, aria, no, non è più scuse  
 Riconosci seme  
 Su questo suolo scorre sangue nelle vene  
 Dio solo lo sa  
 Dio solo lo sa  
 Dio solo lo sa

Ti prego alzati  
 Guarda avanti  
 Non sei solo il tuo nome  
 Non fermarti  
 Ti prego alzati  
 Guarda avanti  
 Non sei solo il tuo nome  
 Non fermarti  
 Ti prego alzati  
 Guarda avanti  
 Non sei solo il tuo nome  
 Non fermarti  
 Ti prego alzati  
 Guarda avanti  
 Non sei solo il tuo nome  
 Non fermarti

**“Bella così” (Chadia Rodriguez 2020)**

[Intro: Chadia Rodriguez]  
 Chadia

[Strofa 1: Chadia Rodriguez]  
 Piacere, mi chiamo Donna  
 Convivo col difetto e con la vergogna  
 Se giro con i tacchi e la gonna corta  
 Se sono troppo magra o troppo rotonda  
 Mi hanno chiamato "secca" e "balena"  
 Gridato in faccia e sussurrato alla schiena  
 Mi hanno dato della suora, della troia, della scema  
 Senza trucco, senza smalto e crema

Io mi piaccio così (Sì)  
 E se mi va di farlo faccio così (Sì)  
 In fondo le parole sono parole  
 E un giorno spariranno senza rumore

[Ritornello: Federica Carta]

Con i capelli fuori posto  
 Senza vestiti belli addosso  
 Anche al buio c'è una luce che ti illumina  
 Perché tu sei bella così  
 Perché tu sei bella così  
 C'è sempre qualcuno che ti aspetta  
 Ed ai suoi occhi sei perfetta  
 Ed un giorno capirai quanto eri stupida  
 Perché sei bella così  
 Perché tu sei bella così

[Strofa 2: Chadia Rodriguez]

Piacere, mi chiamo Chadia  
 Sono sempre stata una tipa strana  
 Sono cresciuta sola in mezzo alla strada  
 Senza fare la ladra né la puttana  
 Ho fatto una corazza, un'armatura  
 Che mi protegge dalla gente, dalla paura  
 Io non avevo il seno grosso né la statura  
 Il corridoio della scuola era una tortura  
 Mi hanno chiamato povera fischiando  
 In branco, ma da soli poi piangono  
 E mi devono soldi e rispetto  
 Mi guardo gonfiando il petto allo specchio

[Ritornello: Federica Carta]

Con i capelli fuori posto  
 Senza vestiti belli addosso  
 Anche al buio c'è una luce che ti illumina  
 Perché tu sei bella così  
 Perché tu sei bella così  
 C'è sempre qualcuno che ti aspetta  
 Ed ai suoi occhi sei perfetta  
 Ed un giorno capirai quanto eri stupida

Perché sei bella così  
 Perché tu sei bella così

[Post-Ritornello: Chadia Rodriguez, con Federica Carta]

Devi soltanto sembrare te stessa  
 Né una regina né una principessa  
 Solo chi non ti ama ti vuole diversa  
 Perché tu sei bella così, bella così  
 Sarà così per sempre dalla prima volta  
 Ti pagheranno caro tanto chi disprezza compra  
 Se a loro non vai bene in fondo non è tua la colpa  
 Perché tu sei bella così (Yalla)

[Ritornello: Federica Carta]

Con i capelli fuori posto  
 Senza vestiti belli addosso  
 Anche al buio c'è una luce che ti illumina  
 Perché tu sei bella così  
 Perché tu sei bella così  
 C'è sempre qualcuno che ti aspetta  
 Ed ai suoi occhi sei perfetta  
 Ed un giorno capirai quanto eri stupida  
 Perché sei bella così  
 Perché tu sei bella così

<https://genius.com/Chadia-rodriguez-bella-cosi-lyrics>

### **“Bingo bongo” (Karima DueG 2014)**

This is bingo bongo  
 You treat me like a monkey  
 I treat you like a bongo  
 Bingo bongo  
 Bingo bingo I play bango  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 Don't-don't don't mess  
 Don't-don't-don't-don't  
 Mess with my niggas  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 With my niggas with my niggas with my niggas

With my niggas with my niggas with my niggas  
 With my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 My jungle my jungle (jungle jungle jungle)  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 I play with my bango  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 B-b-b-bingo bongo  
 I play my bango  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 (My jungle jungle jungle jungle  
 J-j-j-j-jungle)  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 Bingo bongo  
 I play my bango  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle  
 Bingo bongo  
 I play my bango  
 Don't mess with my niggas  
 Respect my jungle

**“Bitch 2.0” (Chadia Rodriguez 2019)**

[Intro]  
 Chadia

[Strofa 1]  
 Occhiali Valentino, sangue marocchino  
 Fumo spliff, erba, hashish, dammi l'accendino  
 Volo come un colibrì (Ah), cagna con il pedigree (Ah)  
 Chiamami troia che ti rido in faccia che mi vedi i denti col grill (Ah)  
 Bella, nuda, matta, sempre tutta fatta  
 Così tanto TH che ho la voce di Batman

Sui documenti studentessa, sui cartelloni non ammessa  
 Imprenditrice di me stessa, pila di soldi così spessa

Zebbi, che fogli fa 'sta ragazzina del bled  
 Occhiali da sole coi LED  
 Canne da quattro centimetri senza che manco c'ho i dread  
 Yalla, maiale, quante cose che devi imparare  
 Se hai deciso di usare la lingua per farmi del male  
 C'era di meglio da fare  
 Ti insegno l'ABC: amami, baciami, chiavami, stupido  
 Il mondo va così, sciacquati la bocca prima di subito  
 Chadia non piange perché non rovina il suo mascara nero  
 Scemo davvero, grazie che faccio montagne di soldi col 2.0 (Bitch)

[Ritornello]

2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Droga, droga, droga, bitch)  
 2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Yalla, Yalla, Yalla, bitch)

[Strofa 2]

Canne, fogli, paste, Ibiza  
 Supreme x Louis Vuitton e non hanno neanche una Rizla  
 Tabacco super più, imbevilo nell'olio e strizza  
 Easy boy, Chadia non risponde però visualizza (Yah)  
 Nuda perché faccio venire caldo  
 Leggiti le mie iniziali sopra un anello  
 CR come Cristiano Ronaldo  
 Vendevo foto del culo in coppia con la mia socia  
 Non sanno niente di nuovo questi sbirri dei social (Yeah)  
 Chiamami, chiamami, è tanto che non chiudo gli occhi di notte  
 Amami o lamami, in punta di piedi su bottiglie rotte  
 Attenti che ho conservato tutto dentro all'iPhone

Chadia più amara di tutti i vostri Moët & Chandon  
 Tutti che vogliono un pezzo di me, poi sono pezzi di merda  
 Tutti che vogliono un pezzo da me, poi fanno i concerti in caserma  
 Impara che non devi fare il balordo con quelli balordi davvero  
 Non fare la stronza con una stronza 2.0 (Bitch)

[Ritornello]



2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Droga, droga, droga, bitch)  
 2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Yalla, Yalla, Yalla, bitch)  
 [Bridge]  
 Yalla, bambini andate a nanna  
 Prima di nuotare, imparate a restare a galla  
 Se c'hai una canna, falla  
 Appena puoi farlo, sballa  
 Pungi come un'ape, vola come una farfalla  
 Rattattata  
 Yalla, bambini andate a nanna  
 Prima di nuotare, imparate a restare a galla  
 Se c'hai una canna, falla  
 Appena puoi farlo, sballa  
 Pungi come un'ape, vola come una farfalla  
 Rattattata (Bitch)

[Ritornello]  
 2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Droga, droga, droga, bitch)  
 2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Yalla, Yalla, Yalla, bitch)  
 2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Droga, droga, droga, bitch)  
 2.0 bitch, 2.0 (Yah)  
 Soldi, soldi, soldi, soldi  
 Rich (Yalla, Yalla, Yalla, bitch)

<https://genius.com/Chadia-rodriquez-bitch-20-lyrics>

**“Blackenized” (Karima DueG 2014)**

I don't know if you realize  
 Before you get recognize  
 You got to be Blackenized

I don't know if you realize  
Before you get recognize  
You got to be Blackenized

Blackenized you got to be Blackenized  
Blackenized Before you get recognize  
Blackenized you got to be Blackenized  
Blackenized Before you get recognize

Break down these walls  
There's something you don't know  
Colored People still they treat them  
Like they are dogs ya  
Life is a lesson  
My Grandma give me blessing  
You wanna be my enemy or you wanna be my best friend ya

Don't call them  
Ignore them  
Pretend that you don't know them  
You don't know them  
You don't know them  
Pretend that you don't know them  
They don't know me  
I'm a African Queen  
Queen of the Jungle  
No one can't stop me no!

Don't be a victim  
Don't care about the system  
They accuse me, they abuse me, they think that they can use me  
Now Lessen!  
Is Time to take action  
Waiting for a reaction  
Which is the right direction?  
Don't complain your complexion  
I'm doing my thing I'm stronger  
Been waiting for so longer  
Don't be surprise, I talk until I die

My Negros down the road no place to stay no place to go  
 You dunno to be black is not a joke

I don't know if you realize  
 Before you get recognize  
 You got to be Blackenized  
 I don't know if you realize  
 Before you get recognize  
 You got to be Blackenized

Blackenized you got to be Blackenized  
 Blackenized Before you get recognize  
 Blackenized you got to be Blackenized  
 Blackenized Before you get recognize

Time to score kick down the doors  
 How many?  
 Time to score Kick down the doors  
 How many?  
 Time to score Kick down the doors  
 How many?  
 Time to score kick down the doors  
 How many?  
 Kick down the doors  
 How many?  
 Kick down the doors  
 How many?

Blackenized you got to be Blackenized  
 Blackenized Before you get recognize  
 Blackenized you got to be Blackenized  
 Blackenized Before you get recognize

Karima 2G Recognize the Blackness

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2diPwcrFlbs&ab\\_channel=KarimaOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2diPwcrFlbs&ab_channel=KarimaOfficial)

**“Bunga bunga” (Karima DueG 2014)**

Monkey Donkey  
 Back to the Country

Back to the History  
 Eat Banana Plantain  
 Monkey Donkey  
 Back to the Country  
 Back to the History  
 Eat Banana Plantain

DB I'm speaking in Pidgin  
 You want to understand  
 Take the African Degree  
 DB I'm speaking in Pidgin  
 You want to understand  
 Take the African Degree

Piccolo e Nero  
 Look Like Calimero  
 Proud to be Black  
 I don't need your Dinero  
 Full Blood Cool down the rude Boy  
 Change the Law!  
 Mentality Blow!  
 Full Blood Cool down the rude Boy  
 Change the Law  
 Mentality Blow!

Zulu Nation No Integration  
 Represent African Immigrant Population  
 No Gun Karima Number One  
 I hit you and I give you some  
 Berlusconi TV Station gives Bunga Bunga Education

You wanna Bunga Bunga  
 I give you Bonga Bonga  
 You wanna Bunga Bunga  
 I give you Bonga Bonga

When I said Bunga Bunga  
 You said Bonga Bonga  
 When I said Bunga Bunga  
 You said Bonga Bonga

Bunga Bunga  
 Bonga Bonga  
 Bunga Bunga  
 Bonga Bonga

<https://www.musixmatch.com/lyrics/Karima-2/Bunga-Bunga>

**“Cara Italia” (Ghali 2018)**

Fumo, entro, cambio faccia  
 Come va a finire si sa già  
 Devo stare attento, mannaggia  
 Se la metto incinta poi mia madre mi, ah  
 Perché sono ancora un bambino  
 Un po' italiano, un po' tunisino  
 Lei di Portorico, se succede per Trump è un casino  
 Ma che politica è questa?  
 Qual è la differenza tra sinistra e destra?  
 Cambiano i ministri, ma non la minestra  
 Il cesso è qui a sinistra, il bagno è in fondo a destra  
 Dritto per la mia strada  
 Meglio di niente, más que nada  
 Vabbè, tu aspetta sotto casa  
 Se non piaci a mamma, tu non piaci a me  
 Mi dice "Lo sapevo" ma io non ci credo  
 Mica sono scemo  
 C'è chi ha la mente chiusa ed è rimasto indietro, come al Medioevo  
 Il giornale ne abusa, parla dello straniero come fosse un alieno  
 Senza passaporto, in cerca di dinero  
 Io mi sento fortunato  
 Alla fine del giorno  
 Quando sono fortunato  
 È la fine del mondo  
 Io sono un pazzo che legge, un pazzo fuorilegge  
 Fuori dal gregge, che scrive "Scemo chi legge"  
 Oh eh oh, quando il dovere mi chiama  
 Oh eh oh, rispondo e dico "Son qua"  
 Oh eh oh, mi dici "Ascolta tua mamma"  
 Oh eh oh, un, dos, tres sono già là  
 Oh eh oh, quando mi dicono "Va' a casa"

Oh eh oh, rispondo "Sono già qua"  
 Oh eh oh, io T.V.B. cara Italia  
 Oh eh oh, sei la mia dolce metà  
 Aspe', mi fischiano le orecchie  
 Suspense, un attimo prima del sequel  
 Cachet, non comprende monete  
 Crash Bandicoot, raccogli le mele  
 Nel mio gruppo tutti belli visi  
 Come un negro bello diretto a Benin City  
 Non spreco parole, non parlo con Siri  
 Felice di fare musica per ragazzini  
 Prima di lasciare un commento, pensa  
 Prima di pisciare controvento, sterza  
 Prima di buttare lo stipendio, aspetta  
 Torno a Baggio, io non me la sento senza  
 Shakera  
 Il tuo telefono forse non prende nell'hinterland  
 Finiti a fare freestyle su una zattera in Darsena  
 La mia chat di WhatsApp sembra quella di Instagram  
 Amore e ambizione, già dentro al mio starter pack  
 Prigionieri di Azkaban, fuggiti da Alcatraz  
 Facevamo i compiti solo per cavarcela  
 Io mi sento fortunato  
 Alla fine del giorno  
 Quando sono fortunato  
 È la fine del mondo  
 Io sono un pazzo che legge, un pazzo fuorilegge  
 Fuori dal gregge, che scrive "Scemo chi legge"  
 Oh eh oh, quando il dovere mi chiama  
 Oh eh oh, rispondo e dico "Son qua"  
 Oh eh oh, mi dici "Ascolta tua mamma"  
 Oh eh oh, un, dos, tres sono già là  
 Oh eh oh, quando mi dicon "Va' a casa!"  
 Oh eh oh, rispondo "Sono già qua"  
 Oh eh oh, io T.V.B. cara Italia  
 Oh eh oh, sei la mia dolce metà

<https://www.lyricfind.com/>

**“Combo” (Ghali 2017)**

Ehi  
 Cosa ci faccio sdraiato su un'amaca?  
 Forse son stato rimandato in Africa, ehi  
 Metto le radici, qualcuno mi sradica  
 Attento a ciò che dici o qua succede un patatrac  
 Quanti sbatti nell'oceano  
 Frate', là non mi volevano  
 Restare qua ci vuole fegato  
 Apri la mente, apriti sesamo  
 Bididi, badidi, bu, bu  
 Welcome to my mondo  
 (Ah ah ah) Show you things you don't know me  
 (Ah ah ah) Benvenuto al mondo  
 (Ah ah ah) Show me this, your combo  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo, ehi  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo, ehi  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo  
 Jeez, zagadat  
 See that, Mona Lisa  
 All the things you dey do me, can't believe that  
 I like the way you do the dance, gyal, I need that  
 Come before me, my Angelina, oh  
 Lina, mamacita, my African cutie, melanin that  
 She give me dance, give me kiss, I dey feel am  
 Oh my god, she dey give me ginger  
 Your body, you dey give me your body  
 You give it to nobody, only me, your body, oh  
 Your body, you dey give me your body  
 You give it to nobody, only me, your body, oh  
 Welcome to my mondo  
 (Ah ah ah) Show you things, you don't know me  
 (Ah ah ah) Benvenuto al mondo  
 (Ah ah ah) Show me this, your combo  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo, (fammi vedere la tua combo) ehi  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo (dimmi dov'è la tua combo)  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo, (dimmi dov'è la tua combo) ehi  
 Combo, combo, combo, combo  
 (Oshey)

Shabalistica

<https://www.lyricfind.com/>

**“Cuore a destra” (Ghali 2020)**

Aspetta che getto la chewing gum  
 Spengo bene questa siga sopra la lingua  
 Infami a sonagli mi sbirciano  
 San che son figlio di puta di madrelingua  
 Carta, forbice o sasso?  
 Prendi bene la mira, dai, non fare la bimba, devi avere coraggio  
 Potevi dirmelo prima, poi so' io quello pazzo  
 Dove mi metti sto, nomi dalla testa e tutto quello che oggi ho  
 Ho catturato tutti i Pokémon, You Gotta Catch 'Em All  
 Cosa faccio e dove vado e come e quando? Non lo so  
 Mamma che storia è questa  
 O mio dio ho il cuore a destra  
 Fumo in viaggio di nozze  
 Per il nostro divorzio noi faremo una festa  
 Nudo con le mani in tasca, ho perso la strada maestra  
 Non mi importa, ti ho vista  
 Tu mi spari a sinistra, però io ho il cuore a destra  
 E adesso?  
 E adesso? E quindi? E allora?  
 Ancora, ancora  
 Se non corri forte la città ti mangia  
 In questo paese che non ti incoraggia  
 Mangio farfalle per sentirle in pancia  
 Prendo cartelle per sentir la faccia  
 Ghali, dicono "Come ti vesti?" (ah)  
 Lei mi dice "Perché ti rivesti?" (ah)  
 Dimmi i tuoi soldi dove li investi (ah)  
 Baby non ti sc- se mi stressi  
 Dove mi metti sto, nomi dalla testa e tutto quello che oggi ho  
 Ho catturato tutti i Pokémon, You Gotta Catch 'Em All  
 Cosa faccio e dove vado e come e quando? Non lo so  
 Mamma che storia è questa  
 O mio dio ho il cuore a destra  
 Fumo in viaggio di nozze  
 Per il nostro divorzio noi faremo una festa



Nudo con le mani in tasca, ho perso la strada maestra  
 Non mi importa, ti ho vista  
 Tu mi spari a sinistra, però io ho il cuore a destra  
 E adesso?  
 E adesso? E quindi? E allora?  
 Ancora, ancora  
 Poi c'è questa tipa che mi fissa  
 Il privé è troppo pieno, scendo in pista  
 Esco a fumare qualche extra  
 Accendo qui fra', il dj pesta  
 Poi c'è un'altra tipa che mi fissa  
 Finisce che sposo la barista  
 Vi siete imbucate alla mia festa  
 Spari a sinistra, ma ho il cuore a destra  
 Mamma che storia è questa  
 O mio dio ho il cuore a destra  
 Fumo in viaggio di nozze  
 Per il nostro divorzio noi faremo una festa  
 Nudo con le mani in tasca, ho perso la strada maestra  
 Non mi importa, ti ho vista  
 Tu non stare a sinistra, per lei ho il cuore a destra  
 E adesso?  
 E adesso? E quindi? E allora?  
 Ancora, ancora

<https://www.lyricfind.com/>

“Faccio rap” (Tommy Kuti 2015)

Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Ed ho le rime giuste per farti pigliare bene  
 Tu hai le rime giuste per farci pigliare bene  
 Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Mi espando in tutta italia come telecom ed enel

[Verse 1]

Mi chiamo Mista Tolu e sono nato ad Abeokuta  
 La mista nel mio nome fra non sta per la BurbuKa  
 Io amo le signore ho una passione per le cougars

Perche ero già un signore sin dai tempi nell'incuba  
 – Trice udite udite, ho rime hot causan l'otite  
 Sognate lo so, la pelle color melanite  
 Io sono Gia nero intendo proprio come il rio  
 Ma voi sarete niggers solo quando muore dio nietzsche  
 Questa gente prende alla lettera  
 Quel che sente quindi sempre hatera  
 In rete (o) nell' etere (mi) riconosci di fisso  
 Come un gruppo di Italiani a piccadilly circus  
 Uno per il cash e 2 per lo show  
 In francia il tour de france in italia il tour de force  
 Che si trasmette a pelle come l'alfabeto morse  
 E spero in un cambiamento from the corsa the Porsche  
 [Hook]

Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Ed ho le rime giuste per farti pigliare bene  
 Tu hai le rime giuste per farci pigliare bene  
 Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Mi espando in tutta italia come telecom ed enel

[Verse 2]  
 Hey yo people are you listening (Yes we are)  
 Io sono un nigga made in italy (Yes you are)  
 E se mi apprezzi allora linkami stasera sul tuo wall  
 Vi tengo freschi come l'infasil just tell me if you want more  
 Amo quando faccio una live e tutti dicono we like  
 The way you do your things sei sempre il king se hai in mano il mic molta gente qui mi dice T  
 perché lo fai  
 Per sputtanare gli altri mc come se giochi a “non ho mai  
 “Fai tanto il ganja boy ma è la prima tu chiudi hai tanto il swaga boy non ascolti la rap music  
 siete dei Gangsta Voi  
 Su Gta e call of dutyentro nella festa poi sembra un live di Fela Kuti  
 Un po' di weed un po' di culi, tutti free come il Duty  
 Ballano sto pezzo tipo un vecchio il boogie Woogie(e)  
 Per chiunque abbia detto che io non ho contenuti  
 Ho una minchia giapponese il suo nome è me la suki

[Hook]

Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Ed ho le rime giuste per farti pigliare bene  
 Tu hai le rime giuste per farci pigliare bene  
 Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Mi espando in tutta italia come telecom ed enel

[Outro]

Se apprezzate questo flow dite Tolu XXX more  
 Apprezziamo questo flow Mista Tolu XXX more  
 Quale é il nome di quel rapper che fa urlare come XXX  
 Mista Tolu é uno di quei rapper che fa urlare come XXX  
 Se apprezzate questo flow dite Tolu XXX more  
 Apprezziamo questo flow Mista Tolu XXX more  
 Quale é il nome di quel rapper che fa urlare come XXX  
 Mista Tolu é uno di quei rapper che fa urlare come XXX

[Hook]

Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Ed ho le rime giuste per farti pigliare bene  
 Tu hai le rime giuste per farci pigliare bene  
 Mi chiamo Mista Tolu sono nero e faccio rap  
 Ti chiami mista tolu tu sei nero e fai del rap  
 Mi espando in tutta italia come telecom ed enel

<https://genius.com/Tommy-kuti-faccio-rap-lyrics>

### **“Forza Italia” (Tommy Kuti 2018)**

Da dove vengo non si usa l’Italiano  
 Parlano in dialetto pure giù dal kebabaro  
 Mi chiamo Tommy da quando ero dalle suore  
 Non sapevano dire il mio vero nome  
 Rappresento chi è in provincia, chi viene da fuori  
 Chi ha una seconda lingua con cui parla ai genitori  
 Sono italiano anche senza lo Ius soli  
 Ho visto il ventennio Berlsuconi  
 Ho visto i botti di Totó Riina

Fantozzi, bossi, ho visto la lira  
 Al gol di Grosso in quella partita  
 Giuro Han festeggiato pure a casa mia  
 Sono cresciuto tra i paesini  
 Dove la gente la pensa come Traini  
 Parlano al bar come ai comizi di Salvini  
 I miei vicini son convinti che io sia uno dell'Isis  
 Ricordo l'africa e non scordo la cultura  
 Il mio futuro è in Italia  
 Parlo di ciò che ho visto dentro a sta pianura  
 La Tv non ne parla  
 L'Italia s'è desta, l'Italia s'è persa  
 Mi ha dato tutto però poi non mi accetta  
 Non è una storia di sinistra o di destra  
 E' Forza Italia che la mia patria è questa.  
 Sista Awa  
 Cercavo la mia casa  
 Perso a metà strada  
 Fino a quando ho capito

[https://www.angolotesti.it/T/testi\\_canzoni\\_tommy\\_kuti\\_175757/testo\\_canzone\\_forza\\_italia\\_2261432.html](https://www.angolotesti.it/T/testi_canzoni_tommy_kuti_175757/testo_canzone_forza_italia_2261432.html)

### **“Hassan” (Tommy Kuti 2018)**

L'Europa è stata trecento anni in Africa, ha rubato tutte le sue risorse in trecento anni di colonizzazione, poi oggi i nostri contadini non hanno più terre per coltivare, le multinazionali europee hanno confiscato le terre

[Strofa 1]

Al quinto piano di un palazzo popolare  
 Dentro a un monolocale vive Hassan  
 È un clandestino, gira per le strade  
 Lotta col destino mentre è solo in 'sta città  
 Il suo sogno era di fare il calciatore  
 Infatti è per quello che è che partito da Dakar  
 Arrivato capì che l'unica opzione  
 Per quelli come lui, è la criminalità  
 A fare gli onesti si muore di stenti  
 La vita è una merda senza i documenti

Si apposta ai parcheggi, smercia quegli etti  
 Alla fine del mese manda i soldi ai parenti  
 Di ciò che fa lui non va fiero  
 Ora è tardi per tornare indietro  
 Chiama a casa e non può essere sincero  
 La sua coscienza è sporca proprio come il suo dinero

[Pre-Ritornello]

La city, gli eccessi, la malinconia  
 Gente che arriva, gente che va via  
 Stretta è la foglia, larga è la via  
 Dite la vostra che ho detto la mia

[Ritornello]

Oh Hassan, cerchi la tua libertà  
 Tra i vicoli di 'sta città, dove sarà, dove sarà?  
 Oh Hassan, cerchi la tua libertà  
 Tra i vicoli di 'sta città, dove sarà, dove sarà?

[Strofa 2]

È fermo in coda, posa come un monumento  
 Sogna una vita nuova ottenendo un documento  
 Ogni giorno passa in collocamento  
 Ma con 'sta crisi è una perdita di tempo  
 E nella city è una di quelle notti  
 Hassan è in giro a fare il suo mestiere  
 Ha due palline, becca due bambocci  
 Mentre fa l'affare salta fuori il borghese  
 Scappa dai poliziotti, ha la fame negli occhi  
 Corre e pensa all'ironia  
 Uomini onesti, affari loschi  
 Il destino a volte gioca di follia  
 Chi odia gli immigrati ciò che han visto non lo sa  
 Siete fortunati a viver con mamma e papà  
 Dite no all'immigrazione, ma poi la verità  
 Se foste nati altrove, scappereste come Hassan

[Pre-Ritornello]

La city, gli eccessi, la malinconia  
 Gente che arriva, gente che va via  
 Stretta è la foglia, larga è la via

Dite la vostra che ho detto la mia

[Ritornello]

Oh Hassan, cerchi la tua libertà

Tra i vicoli di 'sta città, dove sarà, dove sarà?

Oh Hassan, cerchi la tua libertà

Tra i vicoli di 'sta città, dove sarà, dove sarà?

[Outro]

E allora, se si sfrutta l'Africa, ai loro contadini gli prendiamo la loro terra, ma queste persone da qualche parte dovranno pur andare? Io penso che è da lì che bisogna ripartire se vogliamo fermare l'immigrazione

<https://genius.com/Tommy-kuti-hassan-lyrics>

### **“Habibi” (Ghali 2017)**

Mi piace fumare con lei della flora

In altre città d'Europa

Tenerla da dietro e sbanfare l'aroma

Mentre cucina qualcosa

Di appetitoso, bere vino rosso

Guardare dei documentari, eh

Sull'universo e su come funziona

È la via di Carlito

Ma con un lieto fine

Come andare in paradiso

Ma senza morire

È una rosa senza spine

Fuck energie negative

Tra i tuoi amici ci son delle spie

Alla faccia di chi lo va a dire

Ah, Willy Willy

Ah, Nari Nari

Fumiamo i casini

Beviamo i problemi

Fammi un applauso con i piedi

Ora che sono ancora in piedi

Qua non ti ascoltano quando hai sete

Ti stanno addosso quando bevi

Habibi

Habibi, habibi, habibi  
Habibi, habibi, habibi  
Habibi  
Habibi  
Scusa bras la3jouza  
Ma ma se, ma ma ma ku sa  
Quando torno tardi tu sei la mia scusa  
Tu sei il mio rifugio se 'sta porta è chiusa  
Volevo fare il pilota  
Stare in alta quota  
Ma in questi anni di volo  
Non voglio stare da solo, no  
E quindi hostess  
Sono sporco qui, sì  
Non lasciarmi così, no  
Davanti a tutti così, ehi  
Tu da sempre sei il mio sogno lucido  
Ho da sempre voluto il tuo numero  
Che tu fossi la mia babysitter  
Che tu fossi la prof di recupero  
Sono settimane che ti provo a chiamare  
Fai la presa a male, posti foto col cane  
Scrivi e dici che è il tuo unico amore  
Così non vale, baby, così non vale (Non si fa così, eh)  
Ah, Willy Willy  
Ah, Nari Nari  
Fumiamo i casini  
Beviamo i problemi  
Fammi un applauso con i piedi  
Ora che sono ancora in piedi  
Qua non ti ascoltano quando hai sete  
Ti stanno addosso quando bevi  
Habibi  
Habibi, habibi, habibi  
Habibi, habibi, habibi  
Habibi  
Habibi

<https://www.musixmatch.com/>

## “Il disco di Tommy” (Tommy Kuti 2018)

[Strofa 1]

Nel mio disco dico il cazzo che mi pare  
 Primo rapper nero di 'sto cazzo di stivale  
 I miei colleghi ora vanno a comandare  
 Gli rubo il lavoro perché già lo fanno male  
 Faccio rap senza parlare di spaccio  
 Suona fresh, ma ogni pezzo ha il suo messaggio  
 Anche gli hater che mi chiedono come faccio  
 E i familiari che mi vedono come pazzo  
 L'Italia è guidata da vecchi, Letterman Show

Per questo che la radio non trasmette l'hip-hop (stronzo)  
 Ho uno stile mio, guarda, non seguo le mode da mo'  
 Il mio flow rimbambisce la gente, Pokémon Go  
 Mi son giocato tutto come Baldini

Sogno l'assegno SIAE della Nannini  
 Ai concerti tutti quanti fanno "ooh", ma non sono bambini

Col cappello e con gli occhiali, porto macello nei locali  
 Temo nobody, mi sfidi, scompaio  
 Sono l'uomo nero però don't panic  
 Don't panic!

[Bridge]

Il prete c'ha in mano il rosario e aspetta che Cristo ritorni  
 Ma ogni cristiano aspetta che esca il disco di Tommy  
 Zanotti ai piedi, ma indossano la maglia di Tommy  
 In orario anche i treni da quando in Italia c'è Tommy

[Ritornello]

Il disco di Tommy, il disco di Tommy  
 Il disco di Tommy, il disco di Tommy  
 Il disco di Tommy, il disco di Tommy  
 Sia bianchi che negri che aspettano il disco di Tommy

[Strofa 2]

La cosa bella è che quelli che mi apprezzano  
 Aspettano il disco di Tommy  
 E quelli che mi odiano



Aspettano anche loro il disco di Tommy  
 Però sapete cosa, non so se siete pronti  
 Però una cosa che, di cui potete essere certi  
 È che leggo tutte le vostre conversazioni del cazzo eh  
 Tutti pettegoli: "Tommy non lo merita"  
 Rappano come se avessero un handicap  
 Cattivo sul beat tipo sbirro in America  
 Rompo le casse, Crash Bandicoot

Questo è il nuovo singolo che non passa in radio  
 Rapisco Linus così me lo passa in radio

L'italiano medio non capisce il mio linguaggio  
 Guarda Capatonda e prova a fare il macho  
 È l'era dei rapper tronisti, c'è chi ha cominciato coi lifting  
 Mi immagino Biggie che piange dal cielo e dice: "What is this?!"  
 Preferisco i purini ai puristi, ma 'sti nuovi artisti son tristi  
 Non chiudon le rime e hanno pure il coraggio di fare dei dischi  
 Scrivo il cazzo che mi pare, loro alla cazzo di cane  
 Becco sempre un rapper in ogni cazzo di talent  
 Fare il rapper lol, sport nazionale  
 Grazie al cazzo che Diprè vuole rappare  
 Prendo e non chiedo, voglio stare longevo  
 La mia ascesa è un'impresa come quella del Chievo  
 Io sono online anche se mi scollego  
 Sono super sciallo finché non mi dici negro  
 (Oh, ma hai detto negro?)  
 [Bridge]

Il prete c'ha in mano il rosario e aspetta che Cristo ritorni  
 Ma ogni cristiano aspetta che esca il disco di Tommy  
 Zanotti ai piedi, ma indossan la maglia di Tommy  
 In orario anche i treni da quando in Italia c'è Tommy

[Ritornello]  
 Il disco di Tommy, il disco di Tommy  
 Il disco di Tommy, il disco di Tommy  
 Il disco di Tommy, il disco di Tommy  
 Sia bianchi che negri che aspettano il disco di Tommy

**“Ius music” (Issaa 2014)**

[Strofa 1]

I miei fratelli sono afro fieri, maghreb e cinesi, filippini con i piedi qua e il sangue da altri paesi, chi ha la madre che lavora nelle case di ignoranti che abbandonano le loro sole in braccio alle badanti. Gente stupida rimasta ancora al medioevo, li sveglio di notte sono l'incubo dell'uomo nero e se il futuro è il nostro lo vogliamo in esclusiva, stanchi di elemosinare diritti e metterci in fila, Da Palermo a Torino scoppierà un casino, se l'Europa è un'altra storia se Roma non è Berlino, è la paura di qualcosa che ormai vive qua vicino e non ti salverai in Padania non esiste in nessun libro, Non sono un G2 italiano col trattino, una Fiat uno col bazooka sul tettino è la storia di un normale cittadino impazzito era clandestino adesso è un assassino

[Ritornello]

Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Non c'è frontiera quando la mia gente parla  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Orfano di quest'Italia un superstite resto a galla

(Preside) Avanti!  
 Preside?  
 (Preside) Prego  
 Giovanni, racconta al preside cosa hai fatto  
 (Giovanni) Signor preside, ho scritto sul muro del bagno  
 (Preside) Domani mattina che non ho la prima, pulisci tutto

[Strofa 2]

La mia non è una razza la mia è una tribù quelli sempre al centro del mirino è questa la mia crew, la mia gente stanca di essere accusata di essere considerata il pericolo dentro casa  
 Amici laureati fermati da uno con la terza media umiliati e maltrattati, e non c'è scusa quando l'ignoranza parla se qua l'essere Italiano è solamente sulla carta, Se ti senti fuori luogo in questa situazione, e diventi uno straniero nella tua nazione, stessa lingua stessa rabbia stesso cibo, siamo nella stessa merda non sono io il tuo nemico, siamo scacchi nella stessa battaglia noi orfani  
 superstiti fratelli d'Italia, oltre i muri le frontiere e i confini Balotelli faccio gol e sono tutti felici

[Ritornello]

Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Non c'è frontiera quando la mia gente parla

Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Questa è Ius Music, Ius Music (ehi)  
 Orfano di quest'Italia un superstite resto a galla

<https://genius.com/Amir-issaa-ius-music-lyrics>

**“Jambo bwana” (Karima 2014)**

Stay real tight Italian jeans  
 Sa-salami wine and cheese  
 Getting physical with young ladies  
 Cook the pasta is ready

Jambo bwana hakuna matata  
 Jambo bwana hakuna matata  
 Jambo bwana hakuna matata  
 Jambo bwana hakuna matata

Bring ? twenty-five years contract  
 Drink champagne ? the dishes ? pay  
 Businessman bring the money  
 Bring the mamma the cash do not touch her body

Stay real tight Italian jeans  
 Sa-salami wine and cheese  
 Getting physical with young ladies  
 Cook the pasta is ready

Jambo bwana hakuna matata  
 Jambo bwana hakuna matata  
 Jambo bwana hakuna matata  
 Jambo bwana hakuna matata

Malindi malindi wai  
 Malindi malindi  
 Malindi malindi wai

Malindi malindi

No prostitution no colonialism  
 No destruction no imperialism  
 No drug no coke no heroin  
 No hash hash no amphetamine

Leave Africa alone leave Africa alone  
 We don't need your dirty money  
 We don't want your guns and your dirty money  
 Dirty money  
 Dirty money

**“La bella Italia” (Kuti 2018)**

[Strofa 1]

Dove il Presidente ha più gioielli del Papa  
 Ma c'è chi dorme per strada  
 Gente che emigra in disparate regioni  
 Per disperate ragioni

Dici "arrivo alle 3", però il treno non passa  
 E il tuo capo s'incazza  
 Un lavoro non basta  
 Sogno un cambiamento, ma la legge non passa  
 "Non c'è futuro", lo dice ogni TG  
 Non sei nessuno se non passi in TV  
 C'è chi è finito dentro per due grammi di weed  
 Però se ti rapino esco dopo due G  
 Ti lamenti quando vedi volti nuovi  
 Ma se ne vanno tutti e restiamo in pochi  
 I terremoti, la terra dei fuochi  
 Tutti alla moda e in fissa per i televoti  
 [Ritornello]  
 Io sono al verde, vado in bianco, ho il conto in rosso

Resto o scappo? Io ti lascio ogni ricordo  
 La bella Italia  
 Sono al verde da tanto ormai  
 Vado in bianco, but I'm alright  
 Spesso parto, ma poi ritorno  
 La bella Italia, la bella Italia

La bella Italia, la bella Italia

[Strofa 2]

C'è chi odia il tricolore e tutto ciò che rappresenta  
 Chi invece è nato altrove ed italiano lo è per scelta  
 C'è chi usa la testa, c'è chi studia e inventa  
 Mentre vengon tolti tutti i fondi alla ricerca  
 Hit estive con tre parole  
 Quasi sempre sole, cuore e amore  
 Le veline, le bionde e le more  
 Quasi sempre con un calciatore  
 Le spiagge, il Colosseo, Giulietta e Romeo  
 I dipinti di Giotto e le teorie di Galileo  
 Balotelli e la doppietta all'Europeo  
 I paesaggi che ci invidia il mondo intero  
 Dante Alighieri, i beni UNESCO  
 Vip e ministri tra seni di escort  
 L'odio è represso, il dissenso è inespresso  
 Di prima mattina tutti in fila per l'espresso

[Ritornello]

Io sono al verde, vado in bianco, ho il conto in rosso  
 Resto o scappo? Io ti lascio ogni ricordo  
 La bella Italia  
 Sono al verde da tanto ormai  
 Vado in bianco, but I'm alright  
 Spesso parto, ma poi ritorno  
 La bella Italia, la bella Italia  
 La bella Italia, la bella Italia

<https://genius.com/Tommy-kuti-la-bella-italia-lyrics>

**“La mia pelle” (Issaa 2012)**

[Intro]

(Cristina Ali Farah) Barlumi di luce quando ti sogno. Tentavo all'inizio, bolla di sapone  
 trasportata dal vento di ritrovare il caso e i miei percorsi. Dentro una pelle che le mie ? cortegge  
 ? scudo  
 Nulla rimane uguale. Quante lingue ho dovuto imparare. Quella, per entrare dentro la gente. La  
 mia storia è una ragnatela di segno sulla pelle, come dicono siamo spugne a noi mescolati,  
 mescolati viaggiatori

[Ritornello]

E non pensavo che finisse così  
 Dal giorno che ho messo piede qui  
 Sto lottando, e non mangio, se abbasso il mio sguardo  
 La mia pelle mi ricorda chi sono, un bastardo con qualcosa di nuovo  
 Sto lottando e, questo affanno mi dà la forza per farlo  
 [Strofa 1]

La mia pelle è del colore della terra e cambia quando è sotto il sole  
 Che ho un inchiostro su un'agenda  
 Quando scrivo queste frasi, è come terapia  
 È un uomo che si sente libero scrivendo una poesia  
 Quando incrocio le mie mani lo faccio per pregare  
 Il mio pensiero va alle vite in bilico là in alto mare  
 E se sono qua io ringrazio mio padre  
 Che ha lasciato tutto e ha trovato il coraggio per scappare  
 Io figlio delle ambizioni della vita, scrivo su questa panchina  
 Sogno bizze e ? costa i  
 Che non guardo più la tv, non credo a ogni giornale  
 Da quando leggo questi libri ho iniziato a pensare  
 E vado in giro con la faccia di chi non ha più paura  
 Sono un uomo con tutto il mondo chiuso in queste quattro mura;  
 Sogno l'Africa, l'America, l'Australia  
 Sogno di essere un gabbiano in volo, parte di quest'aria

[Ritornello]

E non pensavo che finisse così  
 Dal giorno che ho messo piede qui  
 Sto lottando, e non mangio, se abbasso il mio sguardo  
 La mia pelle mi ricorda chi sono, un bastardo con qualcosa di nuovo  
 Sto lottando e, questo affanno mi dà la forza per farlo

[Strofa 2]

La mia pelle è del colore delle dune  
 La mia storia, mille sole e mille lune  
 Cresciuto guardando il cielo e i suoi pianeti

L'estate ascoltavo il vento e i suoi segreti  
 Giro intorno al sole solo coi miei piedi  
 Giocando tra le nuvole da quando ho pochi mesi  
 Volo libero, rincorro i miei pensieri con il cuore  
 Che batte forte come per gli atleti  
 La mia pelle del colore della sabbia  
 E lo stesso della carta sui muri di questa stanza  
 Nel mio sangue c'è anche quello di mia mamma  
 Un bastardo da quand'ero nella pancia  
 Di lottare non ho smesso mai un minuto  
 Ho i segni addosso di ogni dramma che ho vissuto  
 La mia pelle non la venderò a nessuno  
 E mi ricorda tutti i giorni che sono il numero uno!

[Ritornello]

E non pensavo che finisse così  
 Dal giorno che ho messo piede qui  
 Sto lottando, e non mangio, se abbasso il mio sguardo  
 La mia pelle mi ricorda chi sono, un bastardo con qualcosa di nuovo  
 Sto lottando e, questo affanno mi dà la forza per farlo

### **“La pelle” (Tommy Kuti 2018)**

La storia della mia gente  
 È sulla mia pelle

La casa è piena, invece il frigo è vuoto  
 Andare a scuola e sentirsi fuori luogo  
 I cugini in ogni angolo del globo  
 Ogni anno un trasloco, crescere con poco  
 Condividi quel poco che hai  
 Il profumo di jollof rice  
 Arrivo con l'African time  
 Gli amici l'han capito, è una vita ormai  
 E la mia nonna che parla solo yoruba  
 "Non fare l'italiano che sei nato ad Abeokuta"  
 Rispetta chi più grande, non uscir la notte  
 Non rispondi ai tuoi perché sai che son botte  
 Tornare giù per rimanere all'infinito

Sentirmi come se non fossi mai partito  
 È fratello ogni amico, lei sta in quello che scrivo  
 Africa cucita addosso come un vestito

La storia della mia gente  
 Lo so bene, non la scorderò mai  
 È sulla mia pelle  
 Per sempre ormai, per sempre ormai  
 La storia della mia gente  
 Lo so bene, non la scorderò mai  
 È sulla mia pelle  
 Per sempre ormai, per sempre ormai

Colazioni la domenica con uova e yam  
 Andare in chiesa obbligati da mamma e papà  
 Il pastore con la predica, quella vita frenetica  
 Feste in cui veniva ogni Africano della mia città  
 Il vino che sgorga, il cibo è una bomba  
 Balli Awilo Logomba, finché il vicino è alla porta  
 Prendi un brutto voto ed è guerra in famiglia  
 I tuoi che minacciano: "We'll send you to Nigeria"  
 Gli anziani li chiami sempre "zio" o "zia"  
 Saluto gente che non sa chi io sia  
 Mamma guarda ancora Nollywood  
 Poi papà per cena vuole sempre il suo fufu  
 Le telefonate coi parenti che son giù  
 Anche in mezzo ai guai dici sempre: "Life is good"

La storia della mia gente  
 Lo so bene, non la scorderò mai  
 È sulla mia pelle  
 Per sempre ormai, per sempre ormai  
 La storia della mia gente  
 Lo so bene, non la scorderò mai  
 È sulla mia pelle  
 Per sempre ormai, per sempre ormai

Lo so bene, non la scorderò mai  
 Per sempre ormai, per sempre ormai  
 Lo so bene, non la scorderò mai



Per sempre ormai, per sempre ormai  
 La storia della mia gente  
 È sulla mia pelle  
 La storia della mia gente  
 È sulla mia pelle

<https://testicanzoni.rockol.it/testi/tommy-kuti-la-pelle-146849948>

**“Legge del taglione” (Articolo 31 1993)**

[Intro]

Impari a frequentare certe compagnie  
 Fotti, fotti, fotti, fotti, fotti  
 Poi anche questo genere di musica che suona con l'Alessandro un certo rap che non è neanche  
 nel mio genere

[Strofa 1: J-Ax]

Due del pomeriggio, la sveglia suona, mi sveglio  
 La testa mi fa male, ormai è normale, ho poca fame  
 Mangio qualcosa con lo scopo  
 Di gustarmi meglio la sigaretta che fumerò dopo  
 Mi metto qualcosa scendo, scendo  
 Ho freddo alla testa, dalla tasca il mio cappello prendo  
 Vado verso la fermata del bus dormendo  
 Mi devo svegliare, il volume del Walkman aumento  
 Che palle questo bus non passa mai no  
 Cologno Monzese periferia di Milano lo so  
 Un mezzo ogni ora è già tanto  
 Mi siedo, aspetto tanto tempo  
 Passano due tipi in motorino, li guardo, shh  
 La marmitta fa un casino bastardo  
 Facce color merda da lampada UV-A  
 Capelli lunghi e oleosi con la C-o-d-a  
 Quello che guida mi guarda storto  
 Tira uno sputo e mi manca di un pelo  
 Per un secondo rimango stupito, allibito  
 Poi non resisto al suo invito e gli mostro il terzo dito  
 Mi vedono, tornano indietro all'istante  
 Con quel loro mezzo assordante  
 Scendono, vengono verso di me, penso sono fatto  
 DJ stacco

[Scratch]

Sei fottuto, adesso son cazzi sai?

[Strofa 2: J-Ax]

Secondo atto della storia ascolta il fatto che ti narro esatto

Com'è successo in questo cesso di quartiere sciatto

Mi alzo di scatto, e mi preparo all'impatto

Mi sono già addosso, mi difendo come posso

Si mettono uno dietro, e uno davanti, classica tecnica da

Conigli, mi esplode un dolore caldo nel labbro

E sento in bocca quel sapore dolciastro

Altri tre o quattro colpi in testa e mi si annebbia la mente

E la mia rabbia s'accende, non vedo più niente

Non sento più niente, un altro colpo

Ma nemmeno più so se lo prendo o lo do

Non riesco più a muovere un braccio

Alzo un ginocchio di scatto

I gioielli di famiglia di uno dei due schiaccio

Urla! L'altro stacca dal motorino la catena

Non lo vedo neanche e me la pesta diretta sulla schiena

Cado sull'asfalto, piovono calci sulla mia faccia

Il tacco di uno stivale la testa in terra mi schiaccia

Provo a rialzarmi ma non ho speranza

A quanto pare non ne ho ancora abbastanza

Perdo sangue in abbondanza

Ma non ha importanza

Non gliela voglio dare vinta è questa la sostanza

Ma ormai è finita, e fieri se ne vanno

Li guardo dal basso e giuro a me stesso che la pagheranno

Legge del taglione, penso mentre mi rialzo

Loro erano in due, tornerò con altri quattro

E questa è la mia morale

Come un quadro ti dipingo in rima una situazione reale

La mia, ragionaci tu, io ti do la mia opinione

Niente di più, non sono un esempio di virtù

E di virtù non parlo tanto

Canto solo la mia vita, e questo è quanto

[Scratch Dj Jad]

Questo è quanto

**“Lo straniero” (Sangue Misto 1994)**

Io sono il numero 0  
 facce diffidenti quando passa lo straniero in sclero, teso vero  
 vesto scuro, picchio la mia testa contro il muro  
 sono io l'amico di nessuno stai sicuro  
 resto fuori dalla moda e dallo stadio  
 fuori dai partiti e puoi giurarci, io non sono l'italiano medio  
 ma un cane senza museruola  
 la N E la doppia F A Passaparola  
 chico canta che ti passa, ma non mi passa piu'  
 testa bassa, la repressione  
 mi butta giu' schiaccia  
 quando lo sbirro mi da' i pugni nella faccia  
 per me lo stato e' solo stato di minaccia  
 quando vedo il tunisino all'angolo che spaccia  
 la nera presi a schiaffi del magnaccia  
 io so che e' tutto made in Italy percio'  
 non chiedermi se canto Forza Italia o no...

Rit.:

None none... la mia posizione e' di straniero nella mia nazione...  
 Non parlate alla straniero e lo guardate male  
 e ogni singolo secondo la tensione sale  
 e' Sanguemisto e non rispetta piu' il confine  
 viene da dove era stato cacciato fuori come un cane  
 e ora non ci sto, non ci credo e non ne voglio piu'  
 solo disprezzo per lo stato e le divise blu  
 Schivo come Neffa a 0 grado di fiducia  
 quando la terra brucia  
 e' allarme rosso per le strade, non sei piu' al sicuro  
 tu stavi chiuso in casa ed e' crollato il muro  
 quindi adesso e' tutto pronto per lo scontro,  
 con chi viene da fuori e non ci sta piu' dentro  
 quello che mi han dato da quando sono nato l'ho pagato  
 e ho visto ogni 2 anni una strage di stato  
 e' un rompicapo, ma dubbi sui mandanti non ne ho  
 sono lo straniero questo e' quel che so...

Rit.:

none none... la mia posizione e' di straniero nella mia nazione...  
 Io quando andavo a scuola da bambino  
 la gente nella classe mi chiamava marocchino,  
 terrone "Muto! Torna un po' da dove sei venuto!"

E questa e' la prima roba che ho imparato in assoluto...  
 La seconda e' che sei fatto nell'istante in cui ti siedi  
 quando sento la pressione dalla testa ai piedi  
 la situazione per me non cambia: era merda e resta merda  
 per i cani della strada, razza bastarda  
 alla sbarra sott'accusa ed ogni giorno c'e' un buon motivo  
 e la giuria ha gia' detto ed il mio verdetto e' negativo  
 straniero nella mia nazione  
 perche' qualcuno vuol metter fine alle storie di un guaglione...  
 La tensione in strada sale a 1000  
 vivo questa situazione sopra la mia pelle  
 giorno dopo giorno, notte dopo notte resto all'erta  
 guardo le mie spalle anche se la strada e' deserta  
 stesso film, stessa storia:  
 Neffa ha gia' salvato quindi resta in memoria  
 e un guaglione mette a fuoco il suo pensiero  
 resto fuori perche' io sono lo straniero.  
 Rit.:  
 None none... la mia posizione e' di straniero nella mia nazione...

[https://www.angolotesti.it/S/testi\\_canzoni\\_sangue\\_misto\\_7907/testo\\_canzone\\_lo\\_straniero\\_287424.html](https://www.angolotesti.it/S/testi_canzoni_sangue_misto_7907/testo_canzone_lo_straniero_287424.html)

### **“Malala” (Karima 2018)**

Socialize around  
 Meet the wrong guy  
 Rome say hi, say why why  
 Socialize around  
 Meet the wrong guy  
 Rome say hi, say why why

Mango  
 Malala Malala Malala  
 Lama ehi lama ehi la lai mala

Get into the fire  
 To the fire to the fire  
 Get into get into get into the fire  
 Straight down the middle to the fire  
 To the fire  
 Na na na na na, na na na na na mango

Imba Malala  
 Lama ehi lama ehi la lai lala  
 Sosa Malala  
 Lama ehi lama ehi la lai lala  
 Imba Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 Sosa Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala

Who is behind them?  
 In the building  
 Someone is spying me  
 Can't you find them  
 No time on my hands  
 Don't wanna be late  
 112 calling through  
 Who is behind them?  
 In the building  
 Someone is spying me  
 Can't you find them

Imba Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 Sosa Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 Imba Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 Sosa Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala

Socialize around  
 Meet the wrong guy  
 Rome say hi, say why why  
 Socialize around  
 Meet the wrong guy  
 Rome say hi, say why why  
 If you wanna catch me  
 You don't get me  
 Find me I'm here  
 I'm bumping my head  
 Don't need exclusion  
 Come to a conclusion  
 Money money economy  
 Po pollution Po pollution

Imba Malala

Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 Sosa Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 Imba Malala  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala  
 (Lala ehi la, lala ehi la  
 Lala ehi lala ehi la lai lala)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDV\\_mWwo\\_Uo&ab\\_channel=KarimaOfficial](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iDV_mWwo_Uo&ab_channel=KarimaOfficial)

**“Mangiauomini” (Chadia Rodriguez 2019)**

Chadia (Chadia)  
 Capelli biondi senza le mèches  
 Uno, due, tre, quattro, conto il cash  
 Fanno gli spessi, ma sono trash  
 Dopo che chiavo li chiamo Flash  
 Non ho bisogno che paghi la cena  
 Portami sull'altalena  
 Lasciamo la luce accesa  
 Baby, non sono Maria Maddalena  
 Non sono una tipa all'antica  
 Mi piace pure la tua tipa  
 Porta lei e porta un'amica  
 E poi che Dio ci benedica  
 Vengo da una via con le case rotte  
 Ora voglio una doccia di banconote  
 Meglio che ci penso da sola  
 Rotoliamo dentro alle lenzuola  
 Senti il beat, senti il beat  
 Muoviti, muoviti, muoviti  
 Muovi la testa, muovi la testa  
 Fino a che vomiti, vomiti  
 In giro mi chiamano la mangiauomini, uomini, uomini, uomini  
 In giro mi chiamano la mangiauomini, uomini, uomini, uomini  
 Droga, sex, money, flex  
 Zero tipa, zero ex, zero pare, zero stress  
 Mangiauomini, uomini  
 Droga, sex, money, flex  
 Zero tipa, zero ex, zero pare, zero stress  
 Mangiauomini, uomini  
 Chadia ne ha fatte di brutte cose

Brutta roba, come cosa?  
 Zitto e fuma e metti Coma\_Cose  
 La mia pussy manda in overdose  
 Fanno la fila sui social (seh)  
 Per vedermi nella doccia  
 Tutta liscia come Kojak (seh)  
 Fare piovere una boccia  
 Sono io l'uomo di casa  
 Bro, questa cosa mi gasa  
 Faccio una canna che è una pianta grassa  
 Tu se mi cerchi prova a chiamare la Nasa, yah  
 Se hai animali da cortile  
 Se hanno qualcosa da dire  
 Gli farò stringere le palle (come?)  
 Come l'ormone femminile (yeah)  
 Senti il beat, senti il beat  
 Muoviti, muoviti, muoviti  
 Muovi la testa, muovi la testa  
 Fino a che vomiti, vomiti  
 In giro mi chiamano la mangiauomini, uomini, uomini, uomini  
 In giro mi chiamano la mangiauomini, uomini, uomini, uomini  
 Droga, sex, money, flex  
 Zero tipa, zero ex, zero pare, zero stress  
 Mangiauomini, uomini  
 Droga, sex, money, flex  
 Zero tipa, zero ex, zero pare, zero stress  
 Mangiauomini, uomini  
 In giro mi chiamano la mangiauomini, uomini, uomini, uomini  
 In giro mi chiamano la mangiauomini, uomini, uomini, uomini  
 Droga, sex, money, flex  
 Zero tipa, zero ex, zero pare, zero stress  
 Mangiauomini, uomini  
 Droga, sex, money, flex  
 Zero tipa, zero ex, zero pare, zero stress  
 Mangiauomini, uomini

<https://www.musixmatch.com/>

**“Mi gritaron negra” (Santa Cruz 1978)**

Tenía siete años apenas  
 Apenas siete años

Qué siete años?  
 No llegaba a cinco siquiera!  
 De pronto unas voces en la calle  
 Me gritaron negra!

Negra, negra, negra, negra!  
 Negra, negra, negra!

¿Soy acaso negra? Me dije (Sí!)  
 ¿Qué cosa es ser negra? (Negra!)  
 Y yo no sabía la triste verdad  
 Que aquello escondía (Negra!)

Y me sentí negra (Negra!)  
 Como ellos decían (Negra!)  
 Y retrocedí (Negra!)  
 Como ellos querían (Negra!)

Y odié mis cabellos y mis labios gruesos  
 Y miré apenada mi carne tostada  
 Y retrocedí (Negra!)  
 Y retrocedí

Negra, negra, negra, negra!  
 Negra, negra, negra!  
 Negra, negra, negra, negra!  
 Negra, negra, negra, negra!  
 Y pasaba el tiempo  
 Y siempre amargada  
 Seguía llevando a mi espalda  
 Mi pesada carga  
 Y como pesaba!

Me alacé el cabello  
 Me polveé la cara  
 Y entre mis entrañas  
 Siempre resonaba la misma palabra

Negra, negra, negra, negra!  
 Negra, negra, negra!



Hasta que un día que retrocedía y retrocedía  
Y que iba a caer!

Negra, negra, negra, negra!

Negra, negra, negra!

Negra, negra, negra, negra!

Negra, negra, negra!

Negra, negra, negra, negra!

Negra, negra!

Y ¿qué?

Y ¿qué? (Negra!)

Sí! (Negra!)

Soy! (Negra!)

Negra (Negra!)

Negra soy (Negra!)

Sí! (Negra!)

Soy! (Negra!)

Negra (Negra!)

Negra soy

De hoy en adelante no quiero

Alaciar mi cabello (No quiero!)

Y voy a reírme de aquellos

Que por evitar, según ellos

Que por evitarnos algún sin sabor

Llaman a los negros gente de color

¿Y de qué color? (Negro!)

Y que lindo suelo (Negro!)

¿Y qué ritmo tiene?

Negro, negro, negro, negro

Negro, negro, negro, negro

Negro, negro, negro, negro

Negro, negro, negro, negro

Negro, negro, negro, negro!

Al fin, al fin comprendí (Al fin!)

Ya no retrocedo (Al fin!)

Y avanzo segura (Al fin!)

Avanzo y espero! (Al fin!)

Y bendigo el cielo  
 Por que quiso Dios  
 Que negro azabache fuese mi color  
 Y ya comprendí (Al fin!)  
 Ya tengo la llave  
 Negro, negro, negro, negro  
 Negro, negro, negro, negro  
 Negro, negro, negro, negro  
 Negro, negro, negro, negro  
 Negro, negro, negro, negra soy!

<https://genius.com/Victoria-santa-cruz-me-gritaron-negra-lyrics>

**“N.E.G.R.A.” (Cécile 2016)**

In un mondo che si muove più lentamente della gente che lo abita  
 Cecile, Rafé, show  
 se ti togli i paraocchi la visuale vedi  
 che i mostri ce li hai dentro e non ce li hai davanti (sarà perché qualcosa in lei mi fa paura)  
 se ti togli i paraocchi la visuale  
 che i mostri ce li hai dentro e non ce li hai davanti

A te che guardi il mio colore  
 come fossi extraterrestre  
 alla mamma che mi nota e stringe i figlia a sé  
 a chi all’asilo mi faceva già strane domande  
 come ad esempio che colore avessi il sangue  
 a chi commenta di nascosto e crede non lo senta (non ho niente ma c’è troppa differenza)  
 a chi ha la Barbie con la pelle bianca dei sessanta  
 la mia io l’ho aspettata sino al 1980  
 c’è chi si vanta di ideali dove né gli omosessuali  
 indifferentemente sono tutti uguali  
 cioè diversi in quanto tali sono da trattare  
 differentemente dai normali e questo fa paura  
 chiudo bocca e occhi nella notte oscura  
 e hai paura perché sono troppo scura  
 mi consideri soltanto per un’avventura  
 ma non consideri la mia natura perché sono

N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a  
 ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda vado bene anche se sono

N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda  
 non te ne frega più  
 N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a  
 ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda vado bene anche se sono  
 N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda  
 non te ne fotte più

Se ti togli i paraocchi la visuale vedi  
 che i mostri ce li hai dentro e non ce li hai davanti (sarà perché qualcosa in lei mi fa paura)  
 se ti togli i paraocchi la visuale  
 che i mostri ce li hai dentro e non ce li hai davanti

Mi inviti a cena ma soltanto se mi paghi  
 alla fermata ti sorrido e non mi caghi  
 è da una vita che combatto contro i vecchi  
 nemmeno Harry Potter vince contro questi maghi  
 dell'ignoranza pieni di ignoranza  
 conta l'apparenza  
 però in fondo manca la sostanza  
 quanta indifferenza e piango sola di dentro alla mia stanza  
 non preoccuparti della n.e.g.r.a. quando è triste prende danza  
 luoghi comuni deleteri ancora più tristi dei cimiteri  
 ero bambina che sembra ieri ancora credevo nei desideri  
 già percepivo disagi reali e seri e chi mi creava distanze tu  
 altro che Balotelli, altro che i buuh

N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a  
 ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda vado bene anche se sono  
 N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda  
 non te ne frega più  
 N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a  
 ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda vado bene anche se sono  
 N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda  
 non te ne fotte più

N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a, N.e.g.r.a ma quando mi vedi nuda, nuda, nuda  
 non te ne fotte più  
[https://www.angolotesti.it/C/testi\\_canzoni\\_cecile\\_3\\_117874/testo\\_canzone\\_negra\\_2029768.html](https://www.angolotesti.it/C/testi_canzoni_cecile_3_117874/testo_canzone_negra_2029768.html)

**“Ninna nanna” (Ghali 2017)**

Nuba, nuba, nuba, vedo jnoun (ahahah)  
È la mia bolla che diventa igloo  
È un occhio nero che diventa blu (sto)  
È il dito medio che rimane su  
Uoh uoh-uh, bella!  
Sono uscito dalla melma  
Da una stalla a una stella  
Compro una villa alla mamma  
E poi penserò all'Africa  
Figlio di una bidella  
Con papà in una cella  
Non è per soldi, giuro, wallah  
Io sono fuori, Brexit  
Fluttuo come un backflip  
Non sono un politico  
Io non cerco consensi  
Fuck ciò che pensi  
Terzo occhio, Tensing  
In giro come i gipsy  
Turista in mezzo ai prezzi  
Il fine giustifica i mezzi  
C'ho stile anche sui mezzi  
Ragazzi a pezzi, tutti a pezzi  
Torniamo a casa in carro attrezzi  
Il mio non è rap, è un raptus  
A Milano mi senti dal bus  
Sto sopra i tetti, actus  
Vengo dal niente, cactus  
Sto perdendo la rotta  
E in più ho la bussola rotta  
Ma grazie a Dio c'ho una casa  
E un amico che mi ci porta  
Non sai come ci rimango quando  
Mi chiedi la foto e non saluti manco  
Rambo, Django  
Vedo diamanti in questo fango  
Buona, sa di mango  
Io volevo giocare a basket  
Sto sbuffando, Casper

Spero non passino i Ghostbuster (giù, giù, giù)  
 Quanto mi manca il Blockbuster!  
 Ninna nanna, ninna ninna, oh, uoh-oh-oh  
 Questo flow a chi lo do? Uoh-oh-oh  
 Con i sogni dentro al biberon, yeah  
 Rollin', Rollin', Rollin', Rolling Stones  
 Ninna nanna, ninna ninna, oh, uoh-oh-oh  
 Questo flow a chi lo do? Uoh-oh-oh  
 Con i sogni dentro al biberon, yeah  
 Rollin', Rollin', Rollin', Rolling Stones  
 Nemico pubblico: Jacques Mesrine  
 Non ascolto il tuo disco, tu blateri  
 Sotto il tavolo, in privè c'ho i capperi  
 Fumo alberi, occhi japanese  
 Questo è il moonwalkin' dei gamberi  
 Se non fanno felicità, dammeli  
 Anche gli UFO, fra', cercano il grano  
 Coi cerchi nel grano, spaventapasseri  
 Mi fumo il tuo budget  
 Mi scopo 'sta scena, diffondo 'sta merda  
 Fra' è un blitz nelle case  
 Milano Carthage  
 Mama ueldek rajel  
 Prendimi il cuore in bagher, fanculo le armi  
 Viva spade laser  
 Sul delta del Gange  
 Zombie ballan valzer  
 Zio, voglion conoscerti se fai successo  
 Ma poi quando finisce, dimmi ch'è successo?  
 Io non lo so manco se volevo questo  
 Oh mio Dio, Michael, sono troppo Jackson  
 Io volevo giocare a basket  
 Sto sbuffando, Casper  
 Spero non passino i Ghostbuster (giù, giù, giù)  
 Quanto mi manca il Blockbuster!  
 Ninna nanna, ninna ninna, oh, uoh-oh-oh  
 Questo flow a chi lo do? Uoh-oh-oh  
 Con i sogni dentro al biberon, yeah  
 Rollin', Rollin', Rollin', Rolling Stones  
 Ninna nanna, ninna ninna, oh, uoh-oh-oh

Questo flow a chi lo do? Uoh-oh-oh  
 Con i sogni dentro al biberon, yeah  
 Rollin', Rollin', Rollin', Rolling Sto, uo-oh  
 Ninna, nanna  
 Ninna, nanna  
 Ninna, nanna  
 Ninna, nanna

<https://www.musixmatch.com/>

**“Non respiro” (David Blank ft. Davide Shorty and Amir Issaa)**

Urlo senza voce, senza peccato messo in croce  
 Mamma non respiro, no non ce la faccio più  
 Innocente troppe volte, vita nera senza colpe  
 Mamma non respiro, no, non ce la faccio più  
 Mamma non respiro se ho un ginocchio sulla faccia  
 Vivo al centro del mirino da quando sto nella pancia  
 La mia gente stanca vittima della sua rabbia  
 Ostaggi della fame angeli in cielo come Abba  
 Mamma non respiro è ghiaccio freddo questo asfalto  
 Ti stringo mentre prego pensando a Soumaila Sacko  
 La coscienza chiama stai sicuro che rispondo  
 Porto sulle spalle il peso dell'odio del mondo  
 Per i miei fratelli pronto a scendere giù in guerra  
 Meglio morire lottando che vivere steso a terra  
 Pagine sbiadite, questo libro va riscritto  
 E quando verranno a prendermi sai che non starò zitto  
 Per mia mamma e soprattutto per mio figlio  
 Per mio padre El Sayed che è scappato dall'Egitto  
 Siamo tutti uguali, come Allah, come Cristo  
 Odio il razzismo, Amir Issaa, sangue misto  
 Urlo senza voce, senza peccato messo in croce  
 Mamma non respiro, no non ce la faccio più  
 Innocente troppe volte, vita nera senza colpe  
 Mamma non respiro, no, non ce la faccio più  
 Mamma non respiro  
 Ah, mamma non respiro e può vederlo tutto il mondo  
 Mentre incontro il mio destino ma non sono pronto  
 Gente congelata intorno  
 Sai non sono il primo e neanche l'ultimo suppongo

Sembra quasi questa pelle attiri un assassino al giorno  
 Mirano alla testa si persino quando corro  
 Girotondo e adesso lotto fino all'ultimo secondo  
 E sono morto affinché tutti se ne accorgano e ricordino  
 Che il male è dietro l'angolo e privo di senso logico  
 Non si può fermare il nostro amore verso il prossimo  
 Ed i fatti lo dimostrano, mentre i bambini ascoltano ed assorbono  
 Vite nere perse che risorgono  
 Vogliono giustizia perché vite nere importano  
 In ogni posto e ad ogni costo  
 Siamo una sola razza ed abbiamo lo stesso volto  
 La mia città mi ha insegnato che è tutto porto  
 E che al di là del nostro corpo il sangue è sempre rosso  
 Urlo senza voce, senza peccato messo in croce  
 Mamma non respiro, no non ce la faccio più  
 Innocente troppe volte, vita nera senza colpe  
 Mamma non respiro, no, non ce la faccio più  
 Urlo senza voce, senza peccato messo in croce  
 Mamma non respiro, no non ce la faccio più  
 Innocente troppe volte, vita nera senza colpe  
 Mamma non respiro, no, non ce la faccio più

<https://www.lyricfind.com/>

**“Non sono un immigrato” (Issaa 2008)**

[Intro]

(Intervistatore) Mi dici che cosa significa vivere a Roma, Tor pignattara, essere figlio di un egiziano e di una donna italiana? Nella condizione che vivi te-

[Ritornello]

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Mi danno dello straniero per il mio cognome

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione

[Strofa 1]

Non mi devo integrare io qua ci sono nato  
 Io non sono mio padre non sono un immigrato  
 Non sono un terrorista non sono un rifugiato  
 Mangio pasta e pizza io sono un italiano  
 Mi chiamo Amir come te ti chiami Mario  
 Non vengo dal deserto col turban e il dromedario  
 Non ho una bancarella io non vendo paspetti (?)  
 Non sono un clandestino non faccio il lavavetri  
 Chiamami fedele perché il mio sangue è impuro  
 Non mi devi accettare io sono già il futuro  
 Io non mi vesto male non mi sento sfigato  
 Non sono un ricercato non mi chiamo bin Laden  
 Sono cresciuto qua sotto le vostre case  
 Mi chiami per votare per fare il militare  
 Mi chiedi i documenti te li mostro tranquillo  
 Italiano dal cognome fatti a capirlo

[Ritornello]

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Mi danno dello straniero per il mio cognome

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione

[Strofa 2]

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Sui giornali hanno scritto che sono musulmano



Non vengo in trasmissione per fare più colore  
 E la prossima volta lo ammazzo il conduttore  
 Ancora che mi chiede se mi piace il kebab  
 Se mi piace il cuscus se faccio il Ramadan  
 Lasciatemi cantare perché ne sono fiero  
 Io sono un italiano un italiano vero

Non faccio il muratore non vendo gli accendini  
 Io sono andato a scuola insieme ai vostri figli  
 La mia generazione è il tuo incubo peggiore  
 E non puoi controllarla dal nome o dal colore  
 Con gli occhi da cinese capelli da africano  
 Ci prendiamo le strade da Palermo a Milano  
 Figlio di un'albanese figlio di un egiziano  
 Figlio di questa terra sono un nuovo italiano  
 [Ritornello]

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Mi danno dello straniero per il mio cognome

La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 La gente m'ha confuso con un immigrato  
 Con la faccia da straniero nella mia nazione  
 Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione

? mi hanno lanciato con il rap per l'immigrato, quindi prima articolo da uscire sul giornale era proprio "Amir: rap immigrati," sono nato qui in Italia, mi sento italiano, non sono immigrato, sono figlio di un immigrato, è un discorso ben diverso

Se il futuro qui è la seconda generazione

<https://genius.com/Amir-issaa-non-sono-un-immigrato-lyrics>

**“Oggi no” (Ghali 2017)**

Cash nel salvadanaio

Happy Days passa in radio  
Boulevard paga il notaio  
È sold out il mio armadio  
Sto nel vocabolario  
Sto Records è il mio bario  
Cavalco l'hype come con la mountain bike  
Io e i miei amici, qua, sembriamo Jackson Five  
Nelle metro e sugli sdrai facciamo sempre freestyle  
"Ciak, si gira", video online  
La tua etichetta sta creando un Frankenstein  
Non avere gli occhi rossi se mi vedi in homepage  
Che io c'ho gli occhi rossi e sono perso nel gate  
Da una stalla a una stella tutta sopra uno skate  
Ehi, quanto amo questo rap game  
Oggi no  
Io non posso scendere  
Il mio manager dice che  
Il disco deve vendere  
Mille mila copie non passarmi a prendere  
Devo ancora scrivere un bel po'  
Mille mila storie, woo ohh  
Woo uh woo ohh  
Woo uhh ohh  
E quante cose cambiano  
Le compagnie si sfaldano  
Le interviste chiamano  
E i fan cantano in arabo  
Nota di classe, saltavamo la verifica  
Mai stati primi in classe ma siamo primi in classifica  
Super-mega-ultra che storia  
Tolgo il microfono a chi canta "Vittoria"  
Fumo e vado in paranoia e dimentico i testi  
Ma questi li sanno a memoria  
(Propositi per settembre?)  
Mmhmm, farmi la patente  
In metro troppa gente, smettere di fumar per sempre  
"Ma il disco dici che vende"  
Mmhmm, dipende  
"Cosa?"  
Dipende

"Da cosa?"

Dipende

Oggi no

Io non posso scendere

Il mio manager dice che

Il disco deve vendere

Mille mila copie non passarmi a prendere

Devo ancora scrivere un bel po'

Mille mila storie, woo ohh

Woo uh woo ohh

Woo uhh ohh

<https://www.musixmatch.com/>

### **“Ora d’aria” (Ghali 2017)**

[Strofa 1]

Ciao a tutti, pianeta Terra

Compagni di banco, compagni di cella

Compagni di calcio, compagni di guerra

Tu non puoi comprarmi, dormo anche per terra

Luci natalizie ricordano che stiamo bene e insabbiano le notizie

Oggi niente armi, spade laser per milizie

Stelle e strisce

Ma vedo solo stelle che si fanno strisce

Casa tua è casa mia

Tanto poi ci estingueremo come i dodo

Polizia, polizia

Prima arrestano mio padre e poi mi chiedono la foto (Oh)

Obiezione vostro onore ma io alzo il volume

Nella mia gang pelli chiare pelli scure

Sapevi che l'AIDS si cura e il cancro pure

Solo che noi siamo troppo poveri per quelle cure?

[Ritornello]

Ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria

Ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria

[Strofa 2]

È la mia ora d'aria

Se vuoi accoltellarmi fallo ora: aiah  
 Sono stanco, serve un cambio  
 Ho il cielo in una stanza, ma sta diluviando  
 Aspettiamo gli alieni, ma come puoi  
 Avvicinarti se ci scanniamo tra noi?  
 Essere umani o essere schiavi  
 È il dilemma, ma nel dubbio buttan via le chiavi  
 Il cielo è ancora nero, fra', sopra Baghdad  
 Fare guerra per la pace: ma come si fa?  
 È un po' come scopare per verginità  
 Fratelli a digiuno già prima del Ramadan  
 Certe cose non le dimentico mai  
 Come la Giamaica di Selassié  
 Come gli elefanti dell'apartheid  
 E baby tu che piangi per i like  
 No woman no cry, no woman no cry  
 E non facciamo festa se non c'è il Wi-Fi  
 Una volta emancipati torniamo operai  
 Maresciallo, quando il mare è calmo tutti marinai

[Ritornello]

Ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria  
 Ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria

[Strofa 3]

Il tuo modo di amarmi è strano  
 Qualunque sia il colore stringimi la mano  
 Passa l'indiano con le rose ma io e te che siamo?  
 Mi stai chiedendo se sono italiano o musulmano? (Eh?)  
 Non capisco 'sti contratti, non li ho mai capiti (Eh?)  
 A me le firme piaccion solo sui vestiti (Eh?)  
 Nefertiti nella TV dicono: "Zero uccisi né feriti"  
 Dio proteggi Siria da 'sti meteoriti  
 Siam cresciuti coi fumetti e dove son gli eroi?  
 Ora fumiamo perché l'inferno è dentro di noi  
 O siamo terroristi o siamo parassiti (Noi)  
 Ci vogliono in fila indiana tutti zitti (Shh)  
 Spera sia solo un segnale di fumo indigeno  
 Che quella lama sia solo un coltellino svizzero  
 Che ore sono? È ora d'aria, manca ossigeno

Sono solo un Pikachu selvatico-libero

[Ritornello]

Ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria

Ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria, ora d'aria

### **“Orangutan” (Karima 2014)**

Two G

Second Generation

Citizen Right Who represent the Nation

Two G

Second Generation

Citizen Right Who represent the Nation

Orangutan

O Orangutan

O Orangutan

O Orang (who the hell is?)

Orangutan

O Orangutan

Orang Orangutan O Orang (Miseducation)

O Orangutan

O Orangutan

O Orangutan

O Orangutan

I love animals bears and wolves

Mr Calderoli come and seat in my zoo

Greenpeace protect the seas

DRC Congo Kinshasa

Black is my Skin

Smile take my Picture

Don't you ever Compare me

Begin the game boy

I'm a super Model

Here come the big show

Smile take take take my Picture

Don't you ever Compare me

Begin the game boy  
 I'm a super Model  
 Here come the big show  
 Different culture spicy food  
 Tribal Traditional  
 What is your Rule

Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orang (who the hell is?)  
 Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 Orang Orangutan O Orang (Miseducation)  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan

Housekeeper wash the clothes and cleanna  
 Pig Pissin you na smell the Urina  
 Reflect on the use of Communication  
 Rape is a Crime is not a Passion  
 No Where we go  
 Government Shut Down  
 No Where we go  
 Goverment Shut Down

Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orang (who the hell is?)  
 Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 Orang Orangutan O Orang (Miseducation)  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan  
 O Orangutan

<https://www.songlyrics.com/karima/orangutan-lyrics/>

**“Pastiglie” (Chadia Rodriguez 2019)**

[Intro]

Chadia

[Strofa 1]

Sister staccala dal blister  
Vogliamo spaccare, finire sulle riviste, yah  
Nata per fare successo fuori dall'ombra  
Nata per fare del sesso dopo una bomba  
Uno per i flus, due per il kush  
Araba con gli occhi verdi, odore di fumo e babaganoush, ah  
Non andavo mai a scuola (Oh yeah)  
Sognavo già i fogli viola (Oh)  
Volo come un Piper, fuori per il lusso  
Socie tatuate come un gangster russo  
Canne già fumate, ostriche col guscio  
Quante ne comprate? 10 grammi è giusto, yah  
Paste per qualsiasi cosa sia  
Basta che c'hai i fogli che trovi tutta una farmacia  
In strada perchè in strada il grano balla  
Alza il volume a palla  
Pasta viola, verde, rossa o gialla  
Yalla

[Ritornello]

Pastiglie per viaggiare e pastiglie per dormire  
Pastiglie per mangiare e pastiglie per sognare  
Pastiglie per il bene e pastiglie per il male  
Pastiglie ad ogni ora in mille mille forme

[Strofa 2]

Sister staccala dal blister  
Siamo più selvagge di tutte queste altre artiste  
Con le mani in pasta  
Insieme nella vasca  
Nude quanto basta  
Con pile di euro in tasca

Viviamo così, tutte fatte di THC  
 Quanto tempo passi a guardarmi su instagram  
 Così tante chiappe che perdi la vista fra  
 Occhi stretti, Steve Aoki  
 Vieni a letto a fare giochi  
 Mi hanno detto che ti droghi  
 Mal di testa, prendi un OKI  
 Portami fuori per strada, un brindisi alla mia squadra  
 Una pasta colorata che ci svolta la serata  
 La regina degli eccessi  
 Fabbrica dei miei successi  
 Nella disco tutti lessi  
 Porta a letto tutti i sessi  
 Paste per ragazzi persi  
 Colorano gli universi  
 Oxy, Lexy, vanno giù come la Pepsi

[Ritornello]

Pastiglie per viaggiare e pastiglie per dormire  
 Pastiglie per mangiare e pastiglie per sognare  
 Pastiglie per il bene e pastiglie per il male  
 Pastiglie ad ogni ora in mille mille forme

[Bridge]

Pasta viola per non farti sentire sola  
 Paste blu te lo fanno salire su  
 Paste rosse con lo sciroppo per la tosse  
 Pasta gialla, questa è quella che ti sballa  
 Pasta viola per non farti sentire sola  
 Paste blu te lo fanno salire su  
 Paste rosse con lo sciroppo per la tosse  
 Pasta gialla, questa è quella che ti sballa

[Ritornello]

Pastiglie per viaggiare e pastiglie per dormire  
 Pastiglie per mangiare e pastiglie per sognare  
 Pastiglie per il bene e pastiglie per il male  
 Pastiglie ad ogni ora in mille mille forme



**“Police” (Karima 2017)**

[Man speaking]: When I speak to a police officer, when you speak to a police officer ? arrest you for no reason

Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me

Chinese man in the road  
 They give you gold  
 This is what you call globalization  
 What about schools what about education

Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me

Nobody knows the trouble I see  
 Hands up I'm drunk call the police  
 Is about power is about domination  
 Control corruption temptation

Now so they say now so they do  
 Now so they say now they so they do

Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me

Plastic all over the country  
 Drink some coke firestone  
 The salary is gone  
 Win win win win win  
 Win win win win win win win  
 Win win win win win win win  
 Call the police

Blim blim blim blim blim  
 Blim blim blim blim blim blim blim  
 New form of imperialism

Win win win win win  
 Win win win win win win win  
 Win win win win win win win  
 Call the police

Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me  
 Call the police come on call the police on me

No one trusted the police  
 (Laughing)

**“Questa è Roma 2008” (Issaa 2008)**

[Ritornello]  
 Questa è Roma  
 I campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri  
 Questa è Roma  
 I rioni lo stadio le bombe le spade sotto al fiume le strade e le sponde  
 Questa è Roma  
 I campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri  
 Questa è Roma  
 I rioni lo stadio le bombe e se è Roma che te chiama te non te nasconde

[Strofa 1]  
 Vengo da Roma la città eterna che splende sotto il sole è fuoco che riscalda esplode se incrocia  
 queste parole  
 Me li bevo sti infami come bocce de splugen sono io il verdetto che te incastra e non se discute  
 Nato in mezzo al fango sputo ed esce fango ogni giorno io ne mangio e ancora in piedi rimango  
 sò mafia e spaghetti qui western Italiano si la gente se spara e non c'è Lucky Luciano o Al  
 Pacino dentro a un film con i chili de coca  
 Pischelli che s'ammazzano pe un pezzo de roba da Torpigna a Magliana qui hasta manana si  
 questa è la realtà più cruda cresci o riparati  
 Giro con la gente che ha rispetto e rispetto chi ha preso calci in bocca è ancora qui e non ha  
 smesso

Pe chi è pronto a tutto vuole affrontà tutto chi vuole facce fuori qui vuole affrontà un lutto

[Ritornello]

Questa è Roma

I campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri

Questa è Roma

I rioni lo stadio le bombe le spade sotto al fiume le strade e le sponde

Questa è Roma

I campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri

Questa è Roma

I rioni lo stadio le bombe e se è Roma che te chiama te non te nasconde

[Strofa 2]

C'ho Roma sotto ai miei piedi città de suore e preti città de malandrini carrozzieri e panettieri

Ho il controllo da T.P. fino a sud giù al Torrino se li affari li controlla il mio socio santino

Chiamo Cream passa i beats sale su dal litorale a Piramide è la punta oggi arrivo puntuale se mi sveglio è giù in fermata c'è una rissa per il bus sono scontri manco fosse tra Irriducibili e Cucs

Questa qui è la mia città me la vivo per davvero ogni giorno un quarto d'ora prima di arrivare in metro e troppa gente si riempie la bocca di storie che non vive tanto a loro non je tocca

Io posso riconoscere i quartieri dalle facce e c'è chi per vivere qui è pronto a fare carte false questa è Roma città de papi e parazzi ne tengo il nome in alto i mezzo a troppi succhiacazzi

[Ritornello]

Questa è Roma

I campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri

Questa è Roma

I rioni lo stadio le bombe le spade sotto al fiume le strade e le sponde

Questa è Roma

I campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri

Questa è Roma

I rioni lo stadio le bombe e se è Roma che te chiama te non te nasconde

[Strofa 3]

Puoi beccarmi sempre in giro con i beats sempre in loop mentre scrivo un altro pezzo un altro stronzo va giù so

Fiero più leale più reale di chi qua ne parla ma la strada non la vive così

Ci sta gente che non esce mai dal proprio palazzo e quando passo mi guarda con la faccia da cazzo ho le chiavi della mia città la prendo la chiudo e non passi senza il mio permesso qui te lo giuro

[Ritornello]

Questa è Roma i campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri  
 Questa è Roma i rioni lo stadio le bombe le spade sotto al fiume le strade e le sponde  
 Questa è Roma i campetti le bische i quartieri le guardie i coatti le troie i mestieri  
 Questa è Roma i rioni lo stadio le bombe e se è Roma che te chiama te non te nasconde

<https://genius.com/Amir-issaa-questa-e-roma-2008-lyrics>

### **“Ricchi dentro” (Ghali 2017)**

Papà come mi diverto  
 È tanto che non ti sento  
 Mamma, dai, sincera ti aspettavi tutto questo?  
 Eravam già ricchi dentro  
 Mio dio che bello dirti "Te l'avevo detto!"  
 È tanto che non ti sento  
 Mamma, dai, sincera ti aspettavi tutto questo?  
 Eravam già ricchi dentro  
 Mio dio che bello dirti...  
 Mio padre era un grande farabutto  
 Mia madre per crescermi ha fatto di tutto, non male  
 Quel ragazzino farà brutto (Sto)  
 Cresciuti prima del dovuto  
 Successo è come una Ferrari, bisogna mantenere il turbo  
 Fatti strada e fatti furbo  
 Parli troppo fammi un riassunto  
 Anche quest'anno voto "Boh" (Voto "Boh")  
 Ai miei figli cosa dirò? (Cosa dirò, boh!)  
 Dimmi qualcosa che non so (Che non so, boh!)  
 Tuo figlio è in un reality show (Oh, o no?)

Papà come mi diverto  
 È tanto che non ti sento  
 Mamma, dai, sincera ti aspettavi tutto questo?  
 Eravam già ricchi dentro  
 Mio dio che bello dirti "Te l'avevo detto!"  
 È tanto che non ti sento  
 Mamma, dai, sincera ti aspettavi tutto questo?  
 Eravam già ricchi dentro  
 Mio dio che bello dirti...

Non sai quante ne ho passate, mai, tante  
 Ho sempre dovuto combattere, Highlander  
 È il momento di togliersi le maschere  
 È il momento di non battere le palpebre  
 Scusa chi sei? Comment tu t'appelles?  
 Dov'eri quando non avevo tasche, eh?  
 Al mare mi facevo mille castelli  
 In città mi son fatto mille vasche  
 Casa nuova spacca tutto (Sto!)  
 Ma sulla vecchia non ci sputo  
 L'unica che ha avuto anche se ha un buco  
 No grazie, non mangio prosciutto  
 Ma siamo in mano a dei maiali  
 Un buco in testa come Tuco Salamanca  
 Grosso da farci entrare un bruco una salamandra  
 Respirare bene è il trucco

Papà come mi diverto  
 È tanto che non ti sento  
 Mamma, dai, sincera ti aspettavi tutto questo?  
 Eravam già ricchi dentro  
 Mio dio che bello dirti "Te l'avevo detto!"  
 È tanto che non ti sento  
 Mamma, dai, sincera ti aspettavi tutto questo?  
 Eravam già ricchi dentro  
 Mio dio che bello dirti...

[https://www.angolotesti.it/G/testi\\_canzoni\\_ghali\\_153668/testo\\_canzone\\_ricchi\\_dentro\\_2189028.html](https://www.angolotesti.it/G/testi_canzoni_ghali_153668/testo_canzone_ricchi_dentro_2189028.html)

### **“Soldi” (Mahmood 2009)**

[Intro]  
 Ah

[Strofa 1]  
 In periferia fa molto caldo  
 Mamma, stai tranquilla, sto arrivando  
 Te la prenderai per un "bugiardo" (Mhm-mhm)

Ti sembrava amore ma era altro  
 Beve champagne sotto Ramadan  
 Alla TV danno Jackie Chan  
 Fuma narghilè, mi chiede: "Come va?"  
 (Ah-ah)  
 Mi chiede: "Come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 Sai già come va, come va, come va

[Pre-Ritornello 1]  
 Penso più veloce per capire se domani tu mi fregherai  
 Non ho tempo per chiarire perché solo ora so cosa sei  
 È difficile stare al mondo  
 Quando perdi l'orgoglio  
 Lasci casa in un giorno  
 Tu dimmi se

[Ritornello 1]  
 Pensavi solo ai soldi, soldi  
 Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi  
 Dimmi se ti manco o te ne fotti, fotti  
 Mi chiedevi: "Come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 "Adesso come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 (Uh)

[Strofa 2]  
 Ciò che devi dire non l'hai detto  
 Tradire è una pallottola nel petto  
 Prendi tutta la tua carità  
 Menti a casa ma lo sai che lo sa  
 Su una sedia lei mi chiederà (Ah)  
 Mi chiede: "Come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 Sai già come va, come va, come va

[Pre-Ritornello 2]  
 Penso più veloce per capire se domani tu mi fregherai  
 Non ho tempo per chiarire perché solo ora so cosa sei  
 È difficile stare al mondo  
 Quando perdi l'orgoglio  
 Ho capito in un secondo  
 Che tu da me

[Ritornello 2]

Volevi solo soldi, soldi  
 Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi  
 Prima mi parlavi fino a tardi, tardi  
 Mi chiedevi: "Come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 "Adesso come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 (Uh)

[Bridge]

Waladi, waladi habibi ta'aleena  
 Mi dicevi giocando, giocando con aria fiera  
 Waladi, waladi, habibi, sembrava vera  
 La voglia, la voglia di tornare come prima

[Pre-Ritornello 3]

Io da te non ho voluto soldi  
 È difficile stare al mondo  
 Quando perdi l'orgoglio  
 Lasci casa in un giorno  
 Tu dimmi se

[Ritornello 3]

Volevi solo soldi, soldi  
 Come se avessi avuto soldi, soldi  
 Lasci la città, ma nessuno lo sa (Ah)  
 Ieri eri qua, ora dove sei, papà? (Ah)

Mi chiedi: "Come va? Come va? Come va?"  
 Sai già come va, come va, come va

<https://genius.com/Mahmood-soldi-lyrics>

**“Sono nato qua” (Luca Neves ft. Amir Issaa 2020)**

[Intro]

Oi oi oi, ehi ehi, sono nato qua, sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci (non capisci) sono nato qua  
 (sono nato qua, sono nato qua)

[Ritornello]

Non sa cosa passo non lo sa la Lega  
 La verità è nascosta, il nodo non si slega  
 Non sa cosa passo non lo sa la Lega  
 La mia vita è un inferno sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Romano italiano nero ovvero sono nato qua  
 Non sa cosa passo non lo sa la Lega  
 La verità è nascosta, il nodo non si slega  
 Non sa cosa passo non lo sa la Lega  
 La mia vita è un inferno sono nato qua

[Strofa 1: Luca Neves]

Tra cinque anni sono trentacinque  
 Mi avete tolto le ali per troppi anni  
 Senza un'identità nonostante nato qua  
 Dimmi dove vuoi mandarmi  
 Sò cresciuto a Trigatoria  
 Siediti tranquillo Roma city è la mia storia  
 La mia furia prende piede  
 Ormai so bene in quanti siete  
 Nel lasciarci con la sete qua  
 Dammi la mia libertà  
 Dammi la mia identità  
 È tutto un giro d'interessi qua  
 Siamo figli sfrattati sono figlio di emigrati  
 Stanno più di quarant'anni qua  
 Dimmi dove vuoi mandarmi?  
 Non puoi cambiare  
 Ormai Roma city è la mia città  
 Dimmi dove vuoi cacciarmi  
 La persona che mi ha messo al mondo adesso è sepolta qua!

[Ritornello]

Non sa cosa passo non lo sa la Lega  
 La verità è nascosta, il nodo non si slega  
 Non sa cosa passo non lo sa la Lega  
 La mia vita è un inferno sono nato qua



Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Romano italiano nero ovvero sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Capisci l'italiano spero ho detto sono nato qua

[Strofa 2: Amir Issaa]

Sono nato un orfano di quest'Italia  
 Che uccide suo fratello e poi si fa un piatto di pasta  
 E la mia gente non ha più frontiere e scappa  
 Il mondo torna indietro stile K.K.K  
 Sono un uomo fuori da qualsiasi razza  
 Meglio sotto terra che un'identità falsa  
 E la mia gente stanca ormai di lamentarsi  
 Studiare e lavorare senza poi realizzarsi  
 È il rispetto che qua devi guadagnarti  
 Un permesso di soggiorno per sentirti come gli altri  
 E se mia madre ha fatto tutto per salvarmi  
 Ninna nanna sottovoce per non disturbarli  
 E adesso questi vorrebbero incatenarmi  
 Schiavi della storia è la paura ad ammazzarli  
 È dare il potere in mano ad ignoranti  
 Il loro unico orizzonte è il muro che c'hanno davanti

[Ritornello]

Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Romano italiano nero ovvero sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Tu non capisci sono nato qua  
 Capisci l'italiano spero ho detto sono nato qua

<https://genius.com/Luca-neves-sono-nato-qua-lyrics>

**“Straniero nella mia nazione” (Issaa 2006)**

[Verso 1]

Nato in Italia Amir scritto sulla sabbia prendi il mio nome e lo traduci principe d'Arabia una voce che strilla da Roma fino a Taba in questa società fredda cerco aria più calda figlio dell'amore e del cuore di due persone un mix di sangue culture razze e religione so' qui come portavoce scendo in missione contro la disperazione che affligge troppe persone seconda generazione guardo mio figlio è la terza e te provi a sfiorarlo te salta la testa se non lo capisci che hai trovato la ricchezza noi pietre preziose in mezzo a tutta sta monnezza scrivo con la fame di chi non si rassegna prendo il vostro odio e lo trasformo in questa penna s.o.s. bilancio negativo se me chiamano straniero nel posto dove vivo

[Ritornello]

S.o.s bilancio negativo se me chiamano straniero nel posto dove vivo s.o.s. pronto all'esecuzione se me chiamano straniero nella mia nazione s.o.s. bilancio negativo se me chiamano straniero mi giro e gli sorrido s.o.s. pronto all'esecuzione se me fanno sentì uno straniero nella mia nazione

[Verso 2]

Lo porto dalla strada e tutto il mondo è la mia casa ezaiac hola chico que pasa non lo puoi fermare s'espande a macchia d'olio te vota Amir figlio di un immigrato al campidoglio voglio fare i soldi come tutti i presidenti glielo dico in aula in faccia a tutti i presenti in un mondo dove il segreto è come ti presenti non fidarti di nessuno te mejo che me senti resto in bilico su un filo precario firmo un patto col diavolo e divento un mercenario questo è Amir l'ultimatum scritto con la bile e nun me clicchi nun me quitti hai finito le pile l'oro che porto al collo me l'ha dato mio padre e più voi dite cazzate più lui continua a brillare fiero del mio nome e del mio sangue meticcio adesso mi basta questo per sentirmi il più ricco

[Ritornello]

S.o.s bilancio negativo se me chiamano straniero nel posto dove vivo s.o.s. pronto all'esecuzione se me chiamano straniero nella mia nazione s.o.s. bilancio negativo se me chiamano straniero mi giro e gli sorrido s.o.s. pronto all'esecuzione se me fanno sentì uno straniero nella mia nazione

<https://genius.com/Amir-issaa-straniero-nella-mia-nazione-lyrics>

### **“The Way I Am” (Tommy Kuti 2018)**

Non seguo le mode non le ho mai capite  
 Coloravo sempre fuori dalle righe  
 Ste parole avvolte tra le rime  
 Van per chi è blocco e ne vuole fuoriuscire  
 Ho qualche fra che si vive la Haise

Fa un lavoro manuale in stile Lupin  
 Nel quartiere sai la sfida qual è  
 Farsi che vita non decida per te  
 Mamma che diceva non uscir con Zakaria  
 Perché i soldi io non so come li fa  
 Andavo al liceo abitavo in quella via  
 Lati opposti di questa società  
 Stavo tra due mondi come Garibaldi  
 E certi giorni ero escluso da entrambi  
 ho capito che pesano i fatti  
 Quindi fanculo ciò che pensano gli altri

It's just the way I am  
 Non so fare a meno di essere me stesso  
 It's just the way I am  
 Vengo da lontano dalle vie del centro  
 It's just the way am  
 Sai quanto ho sofferto per quello che ho adesso?  
 It's just the way I am  
 Dico ciò che penso Fallisco e ritento

Per i bianchi ero quello strambo  
 Per i negri ero il nero bianco  
 Non bravo a calcio, leggevo un sacco  
 Leggevo un sacco altro che spaccio  
 Chi è in quartiere vuole andarsene  
 Questa star del rap vogliono entrarci dentro  
 Ho amici in carcere, i miei fratelli che gurdan me Devo dar l'esempio  
 Io sono come voi, io non son come vuoi  
 Sto tra gli antieroi  
 So il dialetto ma poi  
 Ho mamma che parla con l'Infinito  
 Intendo il verbo non certo Leopardi  
 gente che parla e punta il dito  
 Li ignoro perché ho problemi più grandi

It's just the way I am  
 Non so fare a meno di essere me stesso  
 It's just the way I am  
 Vengo da lontano dalle vie del centro

It's just the way am  
 Sai quanto ho sofferto per quello che ho adesso?  
 It's just the way I am  
 Dico ciò che penso Fallisco e ritento

Cercavo la luce nel buio quando mi ero perso  
 Ho chiesto aiuto all'uomo nello specchio  
 Ho guardato dentro, poi l'ho scoperto  
 Non sarò nessuno se non mi accetto

[https://www.angolotesti.it/T/testi\\_canzoni\\_tommy\\_kuti\\_175757/testo\\_canzone\\_the\\_way\\_i\\_am\\_261434.html](https://www.angolotesti.it/T/testi_canzoni_tommy_kuti_175757/testo_canzone_the_way_i_am_261434.html)

**“3G” (Chadia Rodriguez ft. Big Fish and Jake La Furia 2019)**

Chadia  
 Metto un rossetto che sa di soldi  
 L'unica cosa che mi ricordi  
 Che questo Gucci puzza di falso  
 Come le cose che mi racconti (ya)  
 Bevi il Lexy, bimbo sexy  
 Tu non hai una lira, bro, cazzo flexi? (oh)  
 Nata e cresciuta in mezzo alla merda  
 Oggi Madrina come Griselda  
 Io sono un sacco pieno di soldi  
 Voi siete sacchi pieni di sperma (haha)  
 L'unica pezzo di figa ad avere una vera cover sopra Spotify  
 Pensami tanto che tanto è la tua mano l'unica figa che scoperai (ya)  
 Giro con Louis Vuitton sulle lenti (oh)  
 Apro un Dom Pérignon con i denti (oh)  
 09, biberon da due e venti (oh)  
 Nell'iPhone sento il click degli agenti (oh)  
 Quando mi stai sopra voglio che mi guardi  
 Come mi guardava la gente che c'era al party  
 Prima del rap io mi spogliavo come Cardi  
 Per questo so come far svegliare questi bastardi (ya)  
 Esco di casa tipo "Levati dal cazzo"  
 Tutti si girano per strada quando passo  
 Faccio una canna che mi manda nello spazio  
 Io non vado a dormire, io collasso

3 g, fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G  
 Fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G  
 La Furia stappa questo champagne  
 Dritto sulla tua cervicale  
 Non faccio spaccate come Van Damme  
 Perché c'ho i soldi dentro le palle  
 Che fine di merda fanno gli artisti  
 Soldi vanno tutti nella FIMI  
 Prima dovevi vendere i dischi  
 Oggi devi comprare gli streaming  
 Dire minchiate che sale l'hype e salgono i like  
 E nessuno sa dire più un cazzo al mic  
 Fanno solo le foto alle nuove Nike  
 E 'ste tipe che parlano solo se bevono e fottono  
 Sembra di stare al night  
 Dagli due righe ed un cazzo nel culo che stringono i denti come col bite (yeah)  
 Papi Chulo ha fatto reggeaton  
 Ma non è vestito come un maricón  
 Sono in dritto come un ferro carico  
 M950 Calico (Calic-, boom)  
 Sempre tutto nero, nero come Jack Black (oh)  
 Soldi meglio in nero, nero, nero, cash black (oh)  
 Retro Jordan 6 con gli imboschi per gli sghei  
 Macchie di materiale bianco sopra le Postepay  
 Ho una foto della tua tipa, me l'ha mandata lei  
 Scusa, c'è il mio cazzo sennò te la posterei (yeah)  
 Esco di casa tipo "Levati dal cazzo"  
 Tutti si girano per strada quando passo  
 Faccio una canna che mi manda nello spazio  
 Io non vado a dormire, io collasso  
 3 g, fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G  
 Fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G

3 g, fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3 g  
 Fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G  
 Esco di casa tipo "Levati dal cazzo"  
 Tutti si girano per strada quando passo  
 Faccio una canna che mi manda nello spazio  
 Io non vado a dormire, io collasso  
 3 g, fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G  
 Fai portare 3 g  
 Ho fumato 3 g  
 Sto qui, fermo come quando hai spento il 3G

<https://www.musixmatch.com/>

**“Tutt\* stran\*” (Chadia Rodriguez 2021)**

Io vorrei amare chi mi va  
 Come fosse tutta chimica  
 Io vorrei sentirmi apposto  
 Col mio corpo puro e ritoccarlo in clinica  
 Yeah, fare tardi con le amiche  
 Senza avere un cacciatore che ci fischia  
 Per come siamo vestite, da bandite  
 C'è qualcuno con cui fare a metà?  
 Della camera da letto del tempo  
 La ricetta della felicità  
 Se magari ci richiudono dentro, yeye  
 Siamo animali di città  
 Facciamo quello che non si fa  
 Perché siamo il domani  
 Sì, ma senza un domani  
 Qui siamo tutti uguali  
 Noi siamo tutti strani  
 Siamo tutti strani  
 Tutti strani

Noi siamo tutti strani  
Tutti strani  
Tutti questi latin lover  
Non sanno fare più l'amore  
Cercano l'algoritmo dell'algoritmo  
Ma intanto il mondo si muove  
Metti il gel sopra le mani  
Manteniamoci lontani  
Con le mascherine addosso  
Per stare abbracciati sui divani  
Se vuoi stare qua  
Il primo comandamento  
È non importa di che colore sei fuori  
Importa di che colore sei dentro  
Siamo animali di città  
Facciamo quello che non si fa  
Perché siamo il domani  
Sì, ma senza un domani  
Qui siamo tutti uguali  
Noi siamo tutti strani  
Siamo tutti strani  
Tutti strani  
Noi siamo tutti strani  
Tutti strani  
La libertà ha sempre lo stesso sapore  
E di normalità ogni giorno si muore  
Siamo schegge impazzite  
Viaggi senza direzione  
Abbiamo tutto scritto in faccia  
Non ci serve darci nome  
Siamo tutti strani  
Tutti strani  
Noi siamo tutti strani  
Tutti strani

<https://www.lyricfind.com/>