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[Which Kind of Mediterranean do We Want?]

Changing European Cultures and Postcolonial Perspectives [1]

Abstract: In this paper, taking the analysis of European collective memories marked by the experience of modern totalitarian regimes as a starting point, I apply the notion of "cultural trauma" (generally deployed for the analysis of the Holocaust experience) to investigate the articulation between the colonial and the postcolonial periods in European history. The central hypothesis brought about by this paper suggests that this situation is connected to the partial or total lack of re-elaboration of the European colonial past. The absence, in Europe, of a collective elaboration of the colonial responsibilities facilitated the emergence of new forms of postcolonial racism, that is, the progressive racialization of labor and migration. Such an analytical perspective is today at the center of the so-called "postcolonial studies". I believe that today a thorough discussion about Europe and the Mediterranean space cannot be developed without seriously taking this perspective into account.

Keywords: Colonialism/Postcolonialism, Racism, Cultural trauma, Mediterranean.

> *Une pensée inspirée par les jeux du soleil et de la mer peut être injuste dans ses jugements ou excessive dans son lyrisme. Elle ne peut pas être une pensée morte.*
>
> Albert Camus (1938), *Essais*

I would like to start by sharing with you my personal experience, the situated experience of a European and Italian citizen who lives in southern Italy, in a region that represents, from a European perspective, a remote southern province of the Union. Looking at Europe from this position, I feel awkward, sometime angry. These feelings relate to the numerous unfulfilled promises that characterized the processes through which the European Union has been formed, a set of unfulfilled promises which, at times, gives me a sense of extraneousness toward the European Union as a whole. Two main issues provoke this feeling: on the one hand, the way trans-Mediterranean migration fluxes are dealt with at both European and national levels and, on the other hand, the everyday experience of discrimination existing between southern and northern regions of Italy. As Franco Cassano evidences, these issues are strictly connected: «The rejection of the Mediterranean sea [...] is not only the rejection of the other, of the one that lives on the other side of the sea, but also a sort of rejection of the Italian *Meridione* as a whole...» (2000: 55, my translation). Both phenomena seem to share a common denominator: a widespread racism derived from a traumatic past whose wounds have never been elaborated or healed. This racism is often legitimated by specific social and political narratives, which are explicitly and implicitly proposed by numerous political actors. This makes racism became one of the constitutive aspects of the Italian cultural and political public discourse

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(Dal Lago 2010). The social construction of race interacts with a number of variables, including gender, class, sexuality, religion, nationality, and citizenship, and can mix with other forms of discrimination such as sexism, xenophobia, religious intolerance, economic exploitation, and legal discrimination. The thoughts I will present here refer partly to the Italian context, a context in which postcolonialism «includes the processes of racialization, gendering, and cultural transformations engendered […] by the legacy of colonialism, emigration, and global migrations» (Lombardi-Diop, Romeo 2012: 2). Within this framework, length limits will oblige me to leave aside the analysis of a very important factor for the study of the Italian context, the so-called "*questione meridionale*" (the Southern question) and the centuries-long racial discrimination of southern Italian populations connected to it. This phenomenon has been discussed, among others, by Schneider in *Orientalism in One Country* (1998). However, even if my experience is mainly connected to the Italian context, I will consider Europe in its entirety.

The preamble to the European Constitution (2004) states that «Europe, reunited after bitter experiences, intends to continue along the path of civilization, progress and prosperity, for the good of all its inhabitants, including the weakest and most deprived». The text of the constitution is grounded on enlightened and transparent democratic principles which, however, have hardly gone beyond being the expression of mere goodwill. This has not only been the consequence of the contingent enforcement of implicitly undemocratic policies but, rather, the result of the interaction between a number of cultural and structural factors: European colonialism has produced a series of gaps and fractures between the North and the South, Europe and the rest of the world, which still endure (Duby 1997; Blanchard, Bancel, Lemaire 2005). In my view, the public debate on European colonialism and imperialism, the elaboration of collective memories about them, and the recognition of the responsibilities involved in these episodes of European history have been scarce – for long periods practically inexistent – in most European countries (with important differences, often connected to the specificity of each country's colonial history). If we are to discuss European identity, then, I think we have to consider colonialism as a European rather than national experience. In this respect, I agree with Beck and Grande who underline that «the European Union is also the post-colonial Europe, the Europe which confronts itself. Europe conquered, subjugated, colonized and exploited the rest of the world. It is the subject, not the object, of the colonial lust for power» (2007: 34). The enduring silence that surrounds the memory of the colonial experience can be conceptualized as a "colonial unconscious" (Ponzanesi 2012). In this perspective, racism can be seen as a vital component of the European present, it is a structure of perception, an identity keystone, a belief, a passion. It is, more than else, a latent as much as omnipresent ingredient of European knowledge and culture. Colette Guillaumin (1972; 2002), comparing racism with the Freudian concept of unconscious, sees it as an ideological construction which reveals the hidden aspects of a given social formation. Ideologies are like uncensored dreams, they unmask the obsessions hidden beyond the surface of a specific culture. As Jeffrey Alexander puts it, one of the main assignments of cultural sociology is «to bring the unconscious cultural structures that regulate society into the light of the mind» (Alexander 2003: 3-4).

Taking the analysis of European collective memories marked by the experience of modern totalitarian regimes as a starting point, I apply the notion of "cultural trauma" (generally deployed for the analysis of the Holocaust experience) to investigate the articulation between colonial and postcolonial dimensions in European history. This exercise suggests that the absence, in Europe, of a collective elaboration of colonial responsibilities facilitated the emergence of new forms of postcolonial racism, such as the racialization of religion, labor and migration. Today, migrants are stigmatized precisely because they are migrants. Their inclusion is selective and runs parallel to the process that transforms them into "clandestine". It is a process of inclusion that implicitly obeys to unwritten rules that privilege "white" rather than "colored" migration (Mezzadra 2008; Curcio, Mellino 2012; Mellino 2012). Moreover, as Valérie Amiraux underlined, the racialization of Islam creates new frontiers by «reconstituting internal racial and religious borders inside the EU which, ironically, represent or are thought to represent the achievement of a social, political and economic space devoid of territorial borders» (Amiraux 2012: 218). New internal frontiers, new external frontiers: the Mediterranean sea has problematically been transformed into an armed border, into a deterritorialized boundary that Europe uses to delocalize its border-control operations, in countries such as Libya or Morocco. This transformation sanctions the existence of a well-structured system of discrimination (Cassano, Zolo 2007; Chambers 2007). «Those borders […] – the Mediterranean as a whole – are

becoming the shadow line of our country […]; on one side there is respect for people, on the other only disgrace» (Caminiti 2002: 181, my translation). As Caterina Resta writes: «Today the Mediterranean sea, whose bottom has given back, over the past centuries, inestimable archeological finds, has transformed into a 'maritime cemetery' of nameless dead» (2012: 81, my translation). Between 1988 and today at least 18.673 people have died along the borders of "fortress Europe", 2352 only in 2011 the year of the "Arab springs" (fortresseurope.blogspot. it). As Gabriele del Grande underscores, today's generation is «the first global generation in Europe: Schengen, Ryanair and the Erasmus have performed miracles. But during the same years, the implementation of foolish and irresponsible policies have transformed the Mediterranean sea into an abyss of death» (2008: 83, my translation).

As numerous scholars have underscored, the creation of the European Union is based on a paradox. Europe has in fact been built against the image of a savage Other, that is, not only an external Other, who exists beyond the European frontiers, but the Other who «inhabits the concepts and categories that define Europe's unity and homogeneity from the beginning» (Ellena 2010: 136, my translation; Chambers 2004). The postcolonial approach – which analyses «the retroactive effect colonies have had on European colonial nations» (Mezzadra 2008: 59, my translation) – enlightens these phenomena. Achille Mbembe suggests that Europe should write its autobiography «taking the Other as a starting point, so as to respond to the questions that he poses to the European continent as whole» (2010: 87, my translation).

I. The histories and collective memories of most European societies are marked by the totalitarian regimes that defined the emergence of European modernity. Hannah Arendt (1951) considers totalitarianism as a radically original form of power which abhors all sort of legality and is based on ideology and terror. She looks at imperialism as the incubator of twentieth century's totalitarianisms, and considers colonial racism as the forerunner of Nazis' anti-Semitism.

In the nineteenth century, imperialism was used as an excuse for national governments to export capitals, power, and undesired minorities (criminals, refugees, vagabonds, impoverished peasantry, and members of the political opposition), as well as greedy and violent traders, in areas of the world considered as lawless. As Ennio Flaiano commented while writing about Italian colonists: «Well, Africa is the storage for all sort of human dirt. One goes there to stretch its conscience» (1947; 1990: 71, my translation). The European conquest of Africa and Asia had a fundamental role not only in the industrial revolution's economic success, but also in shaping the cultural universe surrounding it. The control of other people's lands and goods had a central role in the development of European modernity and capitalism. The history of colonialism has been defined by a number of practices: trade, negotiation, sack, war, genocide, slavery, and rebellion. Even if, as a number of historians demonstrated (Bayart 2010; Cooper 2005; Calchi Novati, Valsecchi 2005), some ethnic groups, professional categories and individuals managed to benefit from the economic and political transformations that colonialism introduced, most profits ended up in European hands. Violence became systematic in the exploitation of people and resources (Casement 1933). As mentioned above, Arendt considers imperialism as a fundamental step in the process that brought to the emergence of Nazism, and sees colonial violence as the synthesis between racism, massacre and bureaucratic administration. In Europe, racism and bureaucracy developed independently of one another, but in Africa their encounter provoked unimaginable atrocities. Between the nineteenth and the twentieth century the European imaginary assumed a binary form: progress, modernity, industrialization and scientific development in the West; primitivism, savagery, and darkness in the colonial territories, territories that in 1930 amounted to the 80% of the earth's surface (Loomba 1998). In 1955, Aimé Césaire warned: «all this wreckage, all this waste, humanity reduced to a monologue, and you think that all that does not have its price? The truth is that this policy cannot but bring about the ruin of Europe itself, and that Europe, if it is not careful, will perish from the void it has created around itself» (1955, English translation 1972: 22). Well before Nazis' criminal policies for the massacre of European Jew and Roma people, in the nineteenth century colonial authorities planned and realized the extermination of entire populations in Africa. As Edgar Morin emphasized, «Nazism is but the last stage» (2005; 2006 Italian ed.: 87, my translation). Biological racism and colonialism developed in parallel. Europe's "civilizing mission" and the "extinction of inferior races" – the conquest through massacre – are complementary phenomena. It is important to remind here that the racial laws approved in Germany and Italy in the 1930s, and primarily targeted to the Jews,

were already applied in most colonies and were seen as acceptable measures to deal with extra-European people (Traverso 2002; De Napoli 2009). As far as these forms of violence targeted colonial subjects, most European citizens, politicians and public opinions were keen to accept them. In fact, the racist ideology grounding imperialist politics had naturalized indigenous people, depriving them of their human attributes. To kill a native did not have the same meaning than killing a human being. As Aimé Césaire denounces in his *Discours sur le colonialisme* (1955), the scandal that Nazism brought before European nations' eyes comes from the fact that Hitler decided to apply to European citizens the same policies that, until then, had been implemented only against colonized people. Césaire invited his readers to look at fascism as a form of intra-European colonialism, a phenomenon that emerged at a point in history in which most extra-European territories had already been occupied.

It is important to understand that colonial racism, rather than being mere propaganda, was a widely shared collective ideology. As Edward Said has exemplarily shown (1978), colonial racism, and the representation of the Other it was based upon, deeply shaped Western discourses of the self, and much scholarship in social sciences with it (Jedlowski 2012). The awareness of the role that these representations played in the history of European modernity obliges us to reexamine the European forms of self-representation that appeared during the colonial time, and which still influence the way we think about and represent ourselves. The legacy of these representations and of the discourses they helped to shape often prevents the development of a pluricultural and Mediterranean European conscience.

It is also important to remind here that colonial racism had a strong sexist component. The conquest, in many cases the rape, of the native women symbolized colonial invasion and control. Colonial publications and postcards used to play with the ambivalent attraction that the native, often black, female body played on the colonists' imaginary. This ambivalence can be found today in the way white European men structure their relationship with immigrant prostitutes (Dal Lago, Quadrelli 2003; Giuliani Caponetto 2012). We deal here with a set of colonial legacies still very much present in today's practices in the West. Nevertheless these legacies are widely dismissed. This is, in my view, what makes them dangerous: the removal of the colonial past, in fact, is one of the main causes behind the emergence of new forms of racism against immigrants and foreigners, that is, against those that were once the "natives". «No longer external but internal, the foreigner, the stranger, the immigrant, like the space between our words – silent but essential for meaning – becomes integral, central, to another conception of the world we all inhabit» (Chambers 2008:121).

II. In the preamble to the European constitution, Europe is described as «a special area of human hope». This definition is possible because the Nazi-Fascist totalitarianism and the Holocaust have been constructed as collective traumas, and their memory has been elaborated in order to become part of a self-critical European memory. In similar ways, even if with profound differences, the experience of the Stalinist totalitarianism is going through a process of elaboration, and its legacy has been the object of public debate during and after the 1989 transformation. The same cannot be said for the third component of European experience of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, colonial imperialism. Considering how relevant migration fluxes from ancient-colonial territories have become, and how profound are the social transformations that they are generating, we need to address this removal carefully.

In order to engage in the creation of a collective European memory, we need to face also the most negative aspects of European history (Grande 2009). After the violence of the totalitarian experience, Europe has been able to reaffirm its civilization only after accepting to carry the responsibility for its past. However, this attitude, which can be defined as a «cultural memory of self-interrogation», and which Gérard Namer (1993) considers as a specifically European attribute, seems to be incomplete, selective, somehow clumsy. Contemporary European memories hardly show any trace of colonial history. The connection between contemporary European nations and their imperial and colonial history is faded (Mbembe 2010). Unlike what happened with the Holocaust, during and after the decolonization process, the colonial experience has not been defined as a *cultural trauma*. «For Europeans, colonial memory has almost nothing traumatic (except for those who, when independence was declared, had to leave the occupied territories). The evil is not even banal: it is simply not there. The trauma belongs entirely to the

others» (Jedlowski 2009b: 41-42, my translation). The conflicts existing around the construction of a collective memory about the Algerian war, for instance, are the results of unhealed wounds (Brazzoduro 2012). In his monumental work of selection and definition of French national places of memory, Pierre Nora excluded the places referring to the colonial experience (Nora 1984-1992; Grande 2012b).

In order to discuss the interaction between memory and trauma in relation to totalitarianism, I would like to take Jeffrey C. Alexander's work as a starting point (2003). He considers a cultural trauma as a social construction. It is not a wound, but, rather, a dominant discourse resulting from a process of collective construction. In Alexander's perspective, collective and individual traumas are different. The process of construction of a cultural trauma corresponds to the creation of the public memory about it. A traumatic event has to be constructed as evil. In this sense, as Alexander underlines, what counts is the representation of the traumatic experience that is produced. In order to produce such a representation, a number of mediations has to take place, mediations which are based on the interaction between different spheres (such as religion, aesthetics, law, mass media and the national bureaucracy). To transform traumatic events into cultural traumas, powerful "entrepreneurs of the past" are required. They have to be able to transform specific cases of "extreme suffering" into symbols that can be recognized beyond the sphere of their initial signification. Symbols that are powerful enough to motivate the creation of collective rituals of remembering. The fact that non-Jew victims could be left out of the collective representation of the Holocaust makes the arbitrariness of cultural trauma construction evident (Alexander 2003). It is however necessary to underline that Alexander – in transforming the memory of the Holocaust into a metaphor of the absolute evil, a sort of universal moral – takes Auschwitz away from its specific historical setting, cutting its deep connection with Western rationality, bureaucracy and social production of indifference away (Baumann 1989; Rosati 2009). As Gilroy underlined, when trauma becomes part of a universal and official ritual of commemoration it risks to become self-referential. This dynamic «may also undercut the active capacity to remember and set the prophylactic powers of memory to work against future evils. The effects of trauma may be modified if not moderated by the passage of time» (Gilroy 2000: 25; Jedlowski 1997). Furthermore, it is possible to criticize Alexander for underestimating the possible articulation between universal values and local allegiances: even if the genocide of the Jews can be universally recognized as an icon of the absolute evil, this does not mean that its significance is the same in all contexts. Beck and Grande, who underline the need to "rethink Europe" in cosmopolitan terms, have highlighted the importance of a "contextualized universalism". In their view, the fact that the Holocaust is today seen «as a beacon warning against the omnipresent modernization of barbarity" is not enough to prevent the emergence of similar acts. They ask themselves, then, how to «combine recognition of difference with the idea of European integration?» (2007: 9).

The separation of cultural trauma from individual wounds, and its ritual transformation into the symbol of the absolute evil, however, have not made Europe «a special area of human hope», as the preamble to the European constitution would want it to be. Metamorphosed into a universal signifier, disconnected from any specific individual story, the trauma of the Holocaust risks, as Annalisa Tota puts it, to become one of those «Western spectacles, through which we pretend to observe the world in order to save it» (2007: 21, my translation).

Beyond these critical remarks, however, it is possible to take Alexander's work and his notion of "cultural trauma" as a starting point to propose a hypothesis that can help us bringing together two aspects of the colonial legacy: on the one hand, the victims' collective and individual wounds in relation to their history and, on the other hand, the "perpetrators" (us, the ex-colonizers)' lack of memory, their/our need for a work of mourning.

This hypothesis obliges us to ask the following question: in what terms can colonialism be considered as a trauma? And whose trauma is it?

It is important here to underline that, within the context of this analysis, I focus on the issue of colonial crimes and on the consequences they had among colonial subjects as a way to question ourselves, as European citizens and ex-colonizers (Siebert 1992). In order to contribute to an «archeology of trauma» (Beneduce 2010), I intend to investigate the controversial phenomenon of European racism, a phenomenon whose gravity and intensity are different in each European country but whose analysis is fundamental for this discussion (Balbo 2006). Firstly, it is important to underline that, in Europe, institutional racism is barely recognized and tends, on the contrary, to be part of most people's common sense (Dal Lago 1999; Bartoli 2012). While the affirmation of the Holocaust

trauma as part of European collective memory has made anti-Semitism a taboo, colonial racism is still very much alive as a form of impudent and shameless postcolonial racism. One of its multiple forms, islamophobia, is even often legitimized as a form of "right reaction" to a presumed Islamic invasion. The intimate connection between anti-Semitism and islamophobia, two forms of racism based on the racialization of religion, is hardly acknowledged. In this sense, I suggest to engage in a little exercise proposed by Monica Massari: to replace the word "Muslim" with the word "Jew" in some of the countless statements that have appeared on Western media since the September 2011. One would get a set of «unpronounceable sentences» (2006: 125, my translation). This does not mean that the danger of anti-Semitism in Europe has been overcome. On the contrary, anti-Semitism and racism are based on similar cognitive and psychological structures: the racist individual intimately tends to be also anti-Semitist and, let's not forget it, sexist. The strategies that try to contrast these phenomena inevitably attack each of these tendencies. In this sense, the elaboration of the Holocaust as a cultural trauma and the consequential public denunciation of anti-Semitism are important steps in this process.

Individual trauma, collective trauma. Roberto Beneduce, trying to dig into an archeology of trauma (2010), underlines that, for the victim, trauma can hardly transform itself into an experience (Jedlowski 2009a). Adopting an ethno-psychiatric and anthropological approach, Beneduce focuses mostly on individual traumas, without undermining the importance of historical and geopolitical contexts. His patients are victims of torture, refugees, and migrants who arrive «from those regions of the world where the madness of history and the individual suffering are inexorably interlaced» (Beneduce 2010: 17, my translation). These regions are ancient European colonies were the violence of the colonial past has been passed on from generation to generation, from those who experienced the anti-colonial struggle to those who went through countless postcolonial bloodshed. Nevertheless, the existing literature on trauma and on its intergenerational transmission focuses mainly on the genocide of the Jews rather than on postcolonial traumas. Many African countries, which were once colonies and are today independent nations, witnessed an endless escalation of violence, in most cases targeting mainly women and children. Many of the women that have been raped and tortured during civil conflicts, and who are witnesses of these collective and individual traumas, arrive in Europe as asylum seekers (Taliani 2011). As Alessandro Triulzi underscored, within these contexts memory often plays a central role in creating the basis for future violence: «when collective memories about traumatic experiences become an obsession [they can] dominate and determine the behaviors of collectivities which, seeing themselves under threat, anticipate their enemies by exercising violence preventively» (Triulzi 2005: 7, my translation). Frantz Fanon had already emphasized the dangerous effect that colonial violence can have on the victims' descendants (Cherki 2011:135; Fanon 1961). However, it would be misleading to consider colonialism as the only responsible of present genocides and massacres: this would deprive, once again, the subaltern subject of its autonomous agency and responsibility. At the same time, not to take into account the way colonial past influences the present world would be equally misleading (Mbembe 2000; D'Haen 2007). In countries like Congo or Cameroun, the wounds history has left open are still profoundly alive, and people willing to activate a process of mourning and remembering put their life at risk. The martyrs of anti-colonial struggles, such as Lumumba, Moumié, Cabral, Mondlane, Um Nyobé and many others, have been silenced: even long time after their death it was forbidden to mention their name in public, almost as if they had never existed. «In this way, the independent state tried to escape the question that had once been asked to Cain: 'what have you done to your brother Abel?'. At the bedside of the independent state lies the *head of a dead relative*». Achille Mbembe's sinister metaphor (2010: 38, my translation) reminds one of the conflicts existing between those who wait for justice and those who violently impose the oblivion.

Grounding his analysis on his clinical experience with refugees and migrants coming from conflict regions, Beneduce highlights the risks of applying universal models to the study of trauma (and healing). For us to rethink our colonial past in self-critical terms, Beneduce's approach appears to be more convincing than Alexander's one, because it highlights the importance of connecting individual experiences to the social structures of memory, *les cadres sociaux de la mémoire* (Halbwachs 1950; Grande 2012a). This perspective, which centers on specific individual stories, has the potential of helping us develop the awareness of, and respect for, our colonial and postcolonial experience. To learn about the victims' traumatic experiences is the first step for us to be able to recognize the colonial past, for us to activate a process of self-critic construction of the colonial memory (Jedlowski, Siebert

2011). In order to overcome, once and for all, this «tenacious rejection of any kind of awareness» (Mbembe 2010: 171, my translation; Gilroy 2000).

The traumatic event is not immediately manifest, it has a specific temporal structure: it occupies something like a latency, a temporal gap in the linear course of history. Most of the times, for those who suffered it, violence remains unintelligible. The victim often seems to be confused, silenced. Victims' lived experience shows the conflict between the duty to remember and the need to forget. At the same time, the definition of the *victim* itself, a definition that tends to portray it as a passive receiver rather than as an active subject, should be reformulated. As Paul Gilroy puts it: «The intellectual challenge defined here is that histories of suffering should not be allocated exclusively to their victims. If they were, the memory of the trauma would disappear as the living memory of it died away» (2000: 114). Simona Taliani denounces «the dehistoricization of the refugee [that makes it] the emblematic figure of an universal humanity that lacks awareness» (2011: 10, my translation). This makes us understand the importance of interconnecting the analysis of collective traumas with that of specific individual experiences. In the way migrants are generally portrayed, we can observe a tendency toward generalization similar to the one Taliani evidences.

Furthermore, Sandro Mezzadra, underlines the ambivalence of migrants' condition, that is, «the tension between a reality of oppression and a never-ending search for freedom» (2006: 126, my translation). An emblematic example in this sense is that of Nigerian women brought to Europe to prostitute themselves: while locked up in a situation defined by symbolic violence, physical coercion and sexual abuse – both in Nigeria and in Europe, but also during the trip to Europe by land, through countries such as Benin, Mali, and Libya – these women are still in most cases able to express their will to free themselves from slavery (Achebe 2004; Taliani 2012). Implicitly, but often also explicitly, these victims ask for the recognition of their perpetrators' moral and historical responsibilities. But, in most cases, their claims are left untreated. In order to make a first step toward less unbalanced relationships with those that come to Europe in search for better life and equal justice, Europeans should develop stronger solidarity and deeper sense of responsibility (which implies a deeper knowledge of colonial and postcolonial contexts). Furthermore, we should begin a process of public recognition of colonial wounds as historical traumas. As a matter of fact, as Iain Chambers underscored, we, rather than them, are the problem: «This 'emergency' is not constituted by immigration – itself the product and generator of 'our' modernity – but by xenophobia, for it is 'we' who feel ourselves to be the 'victims' and who are in many ways the real problem» (2008:122).

III. Now, let's go back to the initial questions: what is the connection between the lack of elaboration of colonialism as a trauma, the more or less open legitimization of racism, and the arrival of large numbers of migrants in Europe today? While analyzing the elaboration of the past in post-Nazi Germany, Adorno emphasized that «the psychological mechanisms that regulate the repression of worrying and unpleasant memories serve purposes which are inherently connected to the present reality» (1963: 128-129, my translation). The exploitation of ex-colonial subjects (today's extra-European migrants), the ethnic racialization of labor, and the criminalization of migration are connected to those that Adorno considers as purposes «inherently connected to the present reality». In this sense, the transformation of the Mediterranean sea from an *espace mouvement*, as Fernand Braudel famously named it, into a frontier, is a painful symptom of a dangerous disease (Gatti 2007; Gatta 2012). Mediterranean countries' position within the larger European context needs to be reworked, through both a re-elaboration of the colonial trauma and a revitalization of the "Southern thought" (Cassano 1996). Camus's *pensée de midi*, obliges Europe to accept the responsibility of its promises. Camus sought in the Mediterranean countries «the fountains of life where Europe, exhausted and ashamed, will one day go back to quench its thirst» (Camus, quoted in Pastura 2013, my translation). Europe's future, then, cannot but be strictly connected to the future of its South.

But today, the image that the Mediterranean space offers is anything but reassuring: its northern coasts are at the margins of European development, and its southern shores are in perennial conflict among themselves and with Europe, in relation to the regulation of migration fluxes. The sea itself is today an armed frontier that separates Europe from Africa and the Middle East: «today we see Europe separating itself from the 'cradle of Europe'»

(Matvejević 2007: 436, my translation; Resta 2012). The existence of such a frontier is antithetical to the creation of a pacific Euro-Mediterranean space (Pepicelli 2004). Even if, because of the Arab springs, the future political transformations in this area are hardly predictable, the hopes that the Conference of Barcelona (1995) created seem to have faded away. The Barcelona Declaration – a declaration whose intents were not binding – marked an important step in the history of Mediterranean politics: it represents in fact the first multilateral agreement that Mediterranean Arab countries signed with the European Union. Its effects, however, have been profoundly reduced by the implementation of the "neighborhood policy" in 2003, which instead privileged bilateral agreements between European and other Mediterranean countries (Gallina 2007; Zolo 2007). Euro-Mediterranean partnerships have boosted the creation of international organizations working on inter-Mediterranean relationships, but have not been able to modify the asymmetry of the political and economic interactions that continue to exist between Northern and Southern countries of the Mediterranean area. These are partnerships that are unable to go beyond a merely rhetorical expression of goodwill (El Kenz 2007). Neoliberal orientations seem to prevail in European foreign politics (Bicchi 2003). Furthermore, it is worth underlining that, while most research data evidence the tendency toward a feminization of migration (Lutz 1997; Salih 2003; Garofalo 2012), most Euro-Mediterranean agreements do not mention women's rights explicitly, and most partnership agreements tend to overlook the need for funding gender politics. The increasing presence, in Europe, of Muslim female migrants or "second generation" women imposes us to urgently rethink issues of citizenship in relation to the debate that opposes religion and secularism (Amiraux 2007, Badran 2007; Pepicelli 2007; Siebert 2007; Giolo 2011). As Ruba Salih emphasizes, «Muslim women's bodies today are public spaces over which different agendas of modernity, secularism, liberalism and religiosity are inscribed» (2009: 413).

Very little has been done, until today, to create the "shared prosperity" the Barcelona Declaration pointed at. The persistence of asymmetric relationships, connected to the unhealed wounds of the colonial past, seems to be the main factor preventing the implementation of larger and stronger collaborations between Mediterranean countries. Europe preaches a peaceful coexistence, but wants it to be a "hierarchical coexistence" (Mezzadra 2006: 156, my translation). Globalization processes have accelerated migration, generating multiple contaminations which, in turn, have created hybrid cultural formations (Schmidt di Friedberg 2003). These contaminations also used to characterize the colonial era: in a way, they are a legacy of the colonial time which could be used to fight colonial leftovers from within. It is for this reason that racists always target all forms of racial mixing with particular violence. The humiliation provoked by racial discrimination limits the positive effects of hybridization. The asymmetry of power provokes resentment and foments extremism. As Franco Cassano underlines, «the deconstruction of hostility cannot avoid a specific nodal question, that is, the suffering that the experience of being subaltern generates» (2007: 93, my translation). And, I would add, if Europe does not recognize its colonial responsibilities, it is hard to imagine the possibility of a postcolonial Europe sincerely regretful of its colonial crimes. Edgar Morin has well stressed this point: «as for Europe, what we have to avoid at any cost is good conscience. The work of memory has to make our own obsession with savagery come to the surface: exploitations, slave trade, colonialisms, racisms, Nazi and Soviet totalitarianisms. This obsession has to mix with our idea of Europe, in order for savagery to become part of European conscience» (2005; 2006 Italian ed.: 90, my translation; Gilroy 2000).

IV. What kind of Mediterranean do we want, then?

Colonialism is easily considered as an isolated phenomenon, something that happened far back in the past. An episode that took place when modernity was at its beginnings, rather than something that sits at the very heart of it. Colonialism, racism and fascism are generally perceived as separated entities, disconnected episodes of the past, which should not concern our present. Our (or better, mine) alienation is due to these ways of thinking, feeling, perceiving the past (Siebert 2012). Here, we are dealing with a cognitive question which has profound historical roots: for instance, the inability to see "white" as a color, the tendency to consider it as a non-color. Whiteness is the result of a historical process of racialization which conditions our experience: «Colonialism makes the world 'white', which is of course a world 'ready' for certain kinds of bodies, as a world that puts certain objects
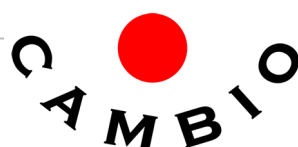
within their reach. Bodies remember such histories, even when we forget them» (Ahmed 2007: 153-154). In Italy, this *color-blindness* is part and parcel of a specific representation of Italianness which creates «an ideological and discursive tool for national identification and self-representation before, during, and after colonialism» (Lombardi-Diop 2012: 176; Romeo 2012). This spontaneous "cognitive map" prevents Italian citizens to become aware of their privileges vis-à-vis migrants and non-white Italians. The illusion that makes us consider whiteness as an independent variable in European identity is a sign of alienation. It marks our refusal to see the discriminations upon which our society is built. Within this framework, migrants and non-white Europeans are accepted within the European social fabric, but only as the expression of an irremediable difference, a difference that keeps them in "their place": a bunch of poor devils, who came out of nowhere, and who are destined to go back to where they came from. In European common sense, white ethnic homogeneity is considered as the condition sine qua non for the existence of the nation-state, and heterogeneity is seen as a peculiarity of the colonial past. As a result, social discriminations and exclusions are believed to be the consequence of economic disparities and cultural and religious difference – racism is almost never taken into account as the cause of these phenomena (Lombardi-Diop 2012).

In order to bring these issues to the surface, we need to deconstruct our knowledge and our cultural heritage. As Paul Gilroy suggests: «there is a strong suggestion that our understanding of the relationship between the civilizing process and the catalogue of barbarity that is secreted in the pages of its heroic narrative will need to be rethought so that it takes the modern dynamics of the colonial world more comprehensively into account» (2000: 66). We urgently need to decolonize ourselves. As Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in the preface to Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*, we have to kill the colonialist that scrapes a living in each of us, we have to recognize the material aspects of mental and psychic processes that drive our society, we have to understand the symbolic violence inscribed in all discrimination, and in all forms of racism. To learn what it means to "decolonize the mind" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986) we can listen to those who experienced colonialism as victims. Achille Mbembe underlines that, in order to achieve these goals, a serious epistemological and aesthetic work is needed, something postcolonial studies have tried to encourage. Taking Frantz Fanon's work as a starting point, postcolonial thinkers underlined that, in order to heal the wounds provoked by racist discrimination, people have, first of all, to know themselves: «The knowledge of the self and a renewed preoccupation for the self have since become the preliminary conditions for distancing ourselves from all those cognitive schemes, discourses and representations that the West employed in order to control the idea of the future» (Mbembe 2010: 56, my translation). In 1961 Fanon pushed Europeans to rethink their relationship with the self by underlining the subversive capacity of that ideal of *equality* that anti-colonial struggles had proposed: when the colonized subject understands that «his life, his breathing and his heartbeats are the same as the colonist's», this discovery provokes in him "a fundamental jolt" (Fanon 1961, English translation 2004: 10). Now, we are the ones who need this jolt. But we are often far from such a knowledge of ourselves. Colonial trauma and (post) colonial alienation are hardly seen as the product of human interaction – an interaction defined by the lack of reciprocal recognition (Siebert 2003). We are not disposed to identify our responsibilities in these historical processes, our racism does not make us ashamed. As Sartre used to say, there is an ethical dimension to shame, it is something that defines our humanity. We have not been able to go through a work of mourning for the deaths and the wounds we provoked. We have to assume our responsibilities in provoking the pain that other people have lived and still live, we have to fight against the racism that still exists within ourselves and in the society that surrounds us, in order to contrast the institutional racism that defines most European contexts.

> As Bertolt Brecht wrote in 1933, in exergue to his poem *Germany*:
> *Mögen andere von ihrer Schande sprechen,*
> *ich spreche von der meinen.*
> (Others can speak about their own shame/ I'll speak about mine).

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