Immigrants as Reverse Anthropologists

Thresholds of Belonging and Hierarchies of Migration in the Experience of Italo-Pakistani Social Workers

Sara Bonfanti

Abstract: This article explores nationhood and migration through a policy-adjacent ethnographic lens, observing the centre from the margins. It focuses on two Pakistani-born young men, Abbas and Nadeem, who work as social workers in an Italian refugee shelter. As children of migrants, they straddle roles of care and control within the asylum reception system. Their narratives reveal the paradox of being 'domesticated' into Italian society while instrumentalised in disciplining newly arrived migrants. They negotiate complex migrant temporalities and clashing perceptions of Italian-ness—both their own and that of native hiring managers. Can 1.5-generation migrants act as 'reverse anthropologists'? And how can the ethnographer acknowledge their contributions as co-analysts of the field? The article examines these tensions and the fragile reciprocity of perspectives they enact.

Keywords: host(ile) society, Italy, Pakistani migration, reflexivity, refugee shelters

> 'I have forgotten that life threats are still honed in Gujarat […] or else I never knew as it did not touch me.' (Nadeem)
>
> 'Same as we never thought of how difficult it could be to *secure* our place in Italy!' (Abbas)
>
> 'So, how do you come to terms with two places that never fully claim you?' (Sara)

This article considers the recent changes in immigration trends to Italy since the 2000s, seen from the perspective of long-term residents with a migrant background. While transnational labour migrants have settled in this southern European nation from the 1990s (reuniting their families and often staying up to naturalisation, with the establishment of large minority communities, ISTAT Censis 2021), in the last decade thousands of refugees have reached the country asking for international protection (Della Puppa and Sanò 2021). Besides, since the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, Europe has witnessed a profound shift in its approach to forced migration,[1] marked by increasingly securitised policies and a fragmentation of reception systems (Bonfanti 2020). This analysis is grounded in a collaborative research framework co-developed with two key interlocutors, Abbas and Nadeem,[2] whose embedded perspectives within the asylum reception system were central to co-producing both the ethnographic material and the analytic lens of this study. Abbas and Nadeem are two Italo-Pakistani young men who were brought to Italy respectively as infant and teen and underwent different experiences of 'emplacement' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2013). Hired for doing social work together, they act as 'culture brokers' (Dennis 1994) in a refugee centre where dozens of Pakistani asylum seekers are sheltered, waiting for their cases to be processed. If a reception facility for forced migrants, sat at the periphery of a mid-size Italian town, is the stronghold of national sovereignty and immigration politics, what kind of reflexivity can Nadeem and Abbas cultivate in a tightly controlled domestic environment where they are at once members of the majority/host society and of the ethnic group pleading for welcome?

Anthropology in Action, 31, no. 2 (Summer 2024): 24–37 © The Author(s)
ISSN 0967-201X (Print) ISSN 1752-2285 (Online)
doi:10.3167/aia.2024.310203

The two friends and colleagues engage in complex negotiations with both their Italian–white/'native'—recruiters and their co-ethnic—brown/immigrant—beneficiaries, feeling the strain of crossing boundaries and navigating politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006). Ruminating on their job every night, they consider their double positionality in a contested social arena and highlight the criticalities of the migrant reception system in Italy, not only for Pakistanis, at different ages of migration (Roberston 2015). Despite an adequate salary, the cognitive and emotional contradictions they have endured for months are such a heavy burden that they eventually resign and pause their lives. After years since their last visit to the homeland, they decide to travel back to their native villages and see what historical transformations have come about. As 'reverse anthropologists', emigrants/immigrants turn their gaze sideways, adjusting their focus across intersecting realities—yet the image often comes out blurred, distorted by the motion of migration. Drawing on Roy Wagner's (2018) proposition, migrants may be conceptualised as 'reverse anthropologists': subjects who, through their embodied dislocation and cross-cultural navigation, generate situated knowledge and critically engage with the cultural logics of host societies. Elaborating on Jacques Derrida's (2002) notion of hos(ti)pitality—a neologism that underscores the tension between hospitality and hostility—this article adopts the concept to unpack the ambiguous positioning of migrant social workers within the Italian asylum apparatus. It offers a fruitful lens to examine how practices of care are entangled with bureaucratic discipline, revealing the contradictions embedded in institutional responses to forced migration.

Given these introductory remarks, the rest of the article is structured as it follows. First comes a short historical review of (im)migration trends in Italy and of the legal structures addressing them, underlining 2015 as a watershed in reframing new migrants across Europe as 'refugees by default'. Presenting the case study, the provision of shelter for asylum seekers in northern Italy today, a methodological note accounts for the peculiar collaboration between the first author and her informants in the field, who are (children of) Pakistani immigrants as well as the front workers for incoming refugees in the name of the Italian state. The third section describes crucial moments in the daily interaction between (migrant) social workers and (asylum-seeking) beneficiaries, interrogating policies of recruitment, co-living arrangements and the ambiguity of giving refuge under pending verification. The fourth section reflects on the complex social identity of naturalised migrants and their cross-eyed views of the guest-host relationship, including an evaluation of the Italian reception system. The concluding paragraph reasons on the *reverse anthropology* that post-migrants can share and apply into practice as they actively navigate the treacherous 'politics of welcome' in Europe today.

Although this article was conceived after the anthropologist's appointment in a large-scale ERC project on transnational migration[3] had ended, it echoes some of those reflections: 'Home, as a metaphor for ordering social life in a bounded space, plays a huge part in the perception and the execution of moving and settling' (Bonfanti and Massa, 2021: 2). Following William Walters (2004), much has been written about 'secure borders, safe heavens and *domopolitics*', and models of evermore restrictive nationhood have flourished (Colombo 2018). Yet, like Nicolas DeMaria Harney and Paolo Boccagni (2022: 1) argue: 'Looking at immigrant and refugee inclusion in terms of hospitality being claimed, negotiated, and possibly denied, […] opens an extensive conceptual terrain for social research that is more connected to foundational lived cultural idioms, and contextually more sensitive, than approaches based only on policy frames […].' Abbas's and Nadeem's practical engagement with the Italian reception system solicits the development of a 'differential consciousness' (Sandoval 1991) towards home and abroad, migration and asylum seeking (based on their multiple positionalities and critique of the social structures where they are embedded): an emotional cognition which allows to see the centre from the margins while challenging its very hierarchy. Written by their friend-and-researcher and debated at every step, this article discusses the ethnographic reflections that underpin a reciprocity of perspectives: of the social workers among themselves, of their status of insider/outsider which flickers between community identification and national acculturation, and of the role of informants-collaborators that the trained anthropologist invites them to take.

Italy at the Turn of the XXI c: Time Lapse of an Immigration Country

From the Seventies to the 2010s

Contrary to other western European countries which had seen rising inflows of immigrants throughout the past century after WWII, following the decolonisation process and the opening up of global neoliberal markets (notably France and the UK, but also

Spain and Portugal), Italy became an immigration destination relatively late. On one hand, the Italian colonial enterprise (to date underestimated and watered down as a benign modernisation of the poorest Horn of Africa; see Andall and Duncan 2005; Lombardi-Diop and Romeo 2012) had borne a relative negligible number of immigrants from Somalia and especially Ethiopia and Eritrea, a few of them on study visas, many (young women) traded as maids at the disposal of their white patrons. On another, large-scale industrialisation and recovery from economic stagnation did not come into the picture until well into the seventies, so that the push and pull factors of international labour migration did not take off until the eighties. The author still remembers the sincere curiosity with which new neighbours from North Africa, Morocco in particular, were met by the locals. Discrimination was not on the radar yet, or at least it had been a low-scale constant attitude in northern Italy addressing co-nationals from the south. 'Internal migration', that is, people leaving the southern regions of the country to relocate in the north seeking work in factories or public offices, was part and parcel of the post-war reconstruction and economic boom era and preceded and then merged with the ensuing 'transnational mobilities' (Riccio 2016). In a decade or so, with the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the progressive enlargement of the EU, a rise in international migratory movements took over the Italian peninsula: public biases framed a new social category of foreigners, that of 'extra-communitarians', and phantoms of xenophobic racism appeared, in conjunction with episodic crime news and timely financial backlashes (Sciortino and Colombo 2004). Abbas and Nadeem recalled the aftermath of the 2008 recession, which had first hit the United States and then spread to Europe, putting low-income working populations under strain; job losses and housing insolvency yielded a deterioration in social integration for thousand immigrants, including their families which had settled in the country ten years earlier.

The 'Refugee Crisis' and its Containment

The summer of 2015 made another breakthrough in representing international migration and in reframing immigration politics across Europe. The literature abounds in analysing the effects of countless media portrayals which emphasised the gap between previous economic migrants and current forced ones (Chouliaraki and Zabroski 2017); while people's displacements were undeniable, immigration policies became narrower at accommodating different migration needs and experiences. As my informants commented, 'channels became funnels', emigration was dubbed as fleeing, and mass emergency responses were introduced to face the 'refugee crisis' (painted as unstoppable floods, to which 'the business of anthropology' somehow contributed; Cabot 2019). In Italy, national immigration politics turned as exclusionist as possible, in tune with chronic political unsteadiness and the rise of populist right parties (Cervi et al. 2020). On the grounds of humanitarian laws, specific immigration policies were created which could give aid to those seeking refuge in the country, within the limits of incoming quotas. Over the past seven years, forced migratory movements have shifted their leave and arrival points, as well as their corridors (thousands of people continue to die in the Mediterranean Sea, and the 'Balkan route' has become ever more dangerous; Mirca and Collins 2021). Once a refugee reaches a free port, according to the Dublin regulation for asylum in the Schengen area, they should have a right to remain in the country appealing against transfer in another EU member state. The reality is more complex, since many States which border the southern periphery of Europe, Italy included, resent the pressure of incoming flows, swinging between securitisation and humanitarianism (Colombo 2018). Meanwhile, the asylum seekers themselves may wish to be transferred elsewhere from their country of entry, hoping for better standards of treatment and fairer legal handling.

While the EU laid out a master plan for facing this apparent new migration era, each country put theory into practice. Over the years, also according to tighter or looser party-led political intentions, the Italian reception system morphed into differently named programmes: SPRAR transformed into SIPROIMI and then into SAI.[4] Those various acronyms do little justice to a general consistence of the projects which rest behind them. Two were the cornerstones of such initiatives: EU funds were allocated to social co-operatives, which were selected nationwide through competition notices, and their mandate was to provide first accommodation and further services conducive to social integration for the asylum seekers for the quickest time necessary to process their request. In order to avoid large, unmanageable reception centres which had been in the limelight of social protest (calling to memory the notorious CPTs, temporary reception centres, which were almost detention camps for irregular migrants arrived via sea fare; Hom 2015), a scheme of 'widespread hospitality' became the golden rule: decadent hotels or unoccupied rental houses in mid to small size Italian localities seemed

the best bet for preventing social conflicts (among the guest refugees, as well as with the local population; Campomori and Ambrosini 2020). The recent pandemic escalated the crucibles of proper SAI procedures and safe accommodation, for guests and hosts alike (Filippi and Giliberti 2021). It is in this scenario that, in May 2020, Abbas and Nadeem went to live with half a hundred of newly arrived asylum seekers in a CAS[5] residence (a refugee shelter) just a short drive from Venice.

Methodological Notes

This article is the outcome of close collaboration between the author and two of her *research participants*. It is difficult to reduce Nadeem and Abbas to the categories of key informants or ethnographic partners, as our ongoing relationship has moved fluidly between friendship, collaboration, and mutual reflection—blurring the lines between fieldwork and shared life experience.[6] While continuous informal sharing among the three parties has taken place since 2020, both online and in person, three in-depth interviews were recorded and discussed thereafter (one with each in May and November 2021, and another in April 2022 in the guise of a focus group with both interlocutors). If long quotes from those interview transcripts make the core of this article, interpretative arguments have been just as much co-construed. This writing process accounts for the teamwork developed among us over a few years. For the purpose of this article, we reasoned over my friends' recent engagement in a work setting which was their last resort when other job opportunities dwindled. Being familiar with my research practices, they were keen on acting as informants from that 'bubble of mistrust', like Abbas called it, where they had gone to make a living, compensating for my own impossibility to visit the residences where the social workers lived with the asylum seekers, primarily due to COVID-19 lockdowns. (As I shall recall later, by the time I could have travelled there, my collaborators left the job to go back to Pakistan on a life-changing journey).

The breadth of our discussions was also part of a conference panel at the 2022 annual meeting of the SIAA (Italian Society for Applied Anthropology) titled 'Migrant Generation 1.5 or the Outpost of Italianness', held in Italian and focused on regimes of nationhood. A different readership, wider and international, is to be reached by this article targeted for *Anthropology in Action*. The journal's vision made the author rethink the premises of this case study not as much as a reflection on the politics of belonging for migrants in Europe but rather as an enquiry on the engagement of anthropology with practice, and specifically with social work, which incidentally questioned the Italian acculturation of Pakistani-born research collaborators (Garau 2014). This interlocution shifted my understanding of Pakistani migration altogether, as it has been shaped also through encounters with asylum seekers whose trajectory and positionality differed markedly (Bonfanti 2020). This framing destabilises the traditional researcher/informant binary and foregrounds the epistemic agency of mobile subjects.

Contrary to what comes routine in anthropological practice, building a rapport with a participant or informant with the research purposes in mind (Marcus 2001), Abbas and Nadeem happened to be in the field as practitioners and co-construed this ethnographic text ex-post, through a dialogic exchange we sustained for about two years (Lassiter 2005). Their collaboration developed an 'analytic auto-ethnography' (Anderson 2006) to which I contributed as an enquiring partner. Within a social field of heightened reflexivity for the two migrant social workers, my presence further problematises the gendered nature of the field, where both informants and all their beneficiaries seeking asylum were young men. The author holds no doubt that her access to information was somehow limited by her marginal position as a white woman. Furthermore, as the three of us held our conversations almost exclusively in Italian (occasionally in English), the nuanced depth of exchanges between mother tongue Urdu speakers was only available to her through translations. Yet, the circular procedure of drafting, sending for review to her research partners and revisiting this article accordingly, is the author's attempt at giving public restitution of multiple voices, beyond the monographic standard (Bell et al. 1993). Although the voices of refugees themselves compare as ethnographic snippets throughout the article, I acknowledge that they are excluded from factual participation in *crafting* this text (McGranahan 2020). We would need another publication project to compensate for this lack of engagement, beyond our *commitment* to be accountable to the asylum seekers who prompted this joint reflection, and the social work which made it compelling. After all, 'If a faithful record, a full communication, of the experience is impossible, this is no excuse to reduce the effort to preserve in the text, and to convey to others, what one believes to be crucial in that experience', Dwyer 1987: xix, as quoted in Lassiter 2005: 92).

(Children of) Immigrants as Reverse Anthropologists

Reception Staff

'You shouldn't ask us how they hired us, rather *why we applied* in the first instance!' Nadeem replied ironically, as I enquired about his and Abbas's 'new job'. That underemployment and NEET rates are alarmingly high among the youth in Italy is not a novelty to many (children of) immigrants who navigate the same crucibles as their peers, on top of an extra disadvantage due to their perceived 'foreignness' (whether this translates into subtle racial discrimination or not). Many of this generation also pay the price of dropping out of school at an early age, oftentimes not being able to pursue further study, and thus offering themselves on the job market as unqualified or low-skilled labour (Colombo et al. 2009; Ricucci 2014). Paradoxically, such embodied conditions make the prerequisite for '*un operatore di successo*', a successful staff in the reception system for asylum seekers.

> We had just entered the first lockdown, and, when W. called me up saying that there might be a job suited for me, not an easy one but good money [and no-one wanted it then, also because of the health alarms spreading], I thought I would take the chance. I had already worked as a trainee cultural mediator in Genova when I finished [secondary] school. […] They [the recruiters from the co-op] gave me an interview online, and in two days I was set to move and get started. […] Not that my experience counted much after all, I was just *the perfect match for their needs*.

Nadeem and Abbas were not underqualified at all. The first had completed nautical training in high school, but, contrary to his parents' desires, he preferred studying art history to working for the Navy. The latter had struggled through high school but had since become an acclaimed independent film-maker with a flair for shooting social documentaries. They regarded themselves as middle class and liberal or unorthodox Muslim (Sunni and Sh'ia respectively). Engaged in social activism, they had met through the NGO 'Il Grande Colibrì',[7] which started as an association to defend gay people from discrimination, and widened its support to civil rights altogether, including those of LGBTQI+ migrants. Cultural mediation competence (Youmbi 2011) was an informal learning they underwent throughout their teenage years, and 'it was high time to make it [become] *work*!' as Nadeem emphasised.

Three were the essential skills required by the advertised post: multi-language proficiency (in Italian as well as in a language spoken by one of the refugee minority groups), sheer flexibility (being at disposal 24/7, in case of emergencies), and 'coming from a migrant background' (which apparently serves as a shortcut to encourage trust from the newly arrived). The recruiters were adamant in saying that no 'Italian native' would serve their purpose (nor had anyone ever applied for such a position in any case) and that an adult young man was the ideal candidate. This gender and age specificity was an unspoken preference, considering that the asylum seekers involved in that reception programme were in large part males aged 20 to 40, and that the staff would live in the same housing facility with their beneficiaries. The daily chores consisted of making sure that the asylum seekers could comply with their rights and duties, that is, they had their food provided, their health screened (including COVID-19 testing, eventual care and quarantine, vaccination in due course), and their paperwork done and assessed at the police quarters on a regular basis. Abbas and Nadeem had a flat for themselves on the top floor of a four-store condominium. Forty-four asylum seekers were hosted in eleven more apartments. That close-living arrangement between social workers and beneficiaries was functional to the smooth carrying out of the daily ménage in a SAI residence as envisaged by the hiring managers; it was a matter of trust and constant co-presence which operated between intimacy and surveillance (see Harney and Boccagni 2022).

Everyday Struggles

The double positionality that staff with a migrant background took on with regard to their recruiters and beneficiaries, between two opposite identifications (now representing the national state, then belonging to some cultural otherness), condemned them to experience what Nadeem called 'a floating sense of identity'. He went as far as framing the perception that asylum seekers held reception staff migrant workers as their 'alter ego'. The reciprocity of perspectives evoked by Wagner (2018) as a tactic of cognitive self-awareness was in fact assumed by both parties involved. That perceived ambivalence emerged during minor everyday interactions when the asylum seekers might pretend that their 'integrated counterpart' spoke on their behalf. How could the reception workers make sure that the operating rules were respected and the expected procedures ran smoothly while at the same time responding with fairness to the refugees' demands or

complaints? Abbas singled out four specific grounds for dispute.

First, general housework was expected from all 'guest residents', no paid cleaners were hired. Since the law made clear that the residences hosting the asylum seekers were not to be intended as 'hotels' but rather as provisional homes, the beneficiaries were disciplined to keep their domestic space clean and tidy, out of gratitude for the houses provided. While these young men were not particularly skilled at housekeeping, as my informants reported, their own supervisors stressed that 'maintaining one's place spot-on' was a matter of deservingness and cultural training so that the beneficiaries could prove that they were doing their best to fit in the country where they had sought refuge (see Holmes and Castañeda 2016).

Second, food groceries and preparation did raise many concerns. On one hand, with particular reference to 'staples', the shopping list had to be agreed upon by each and every guest weekly, taking into consideration the specific eating habits of different social groups. Food is a potent elicitor of home memories, and mealtimes served as a time for 'convivial disintegration' (Meissner and Heil 2021) for the guest residents 'to be at ease with one's lot' and forsake cultural domestication. As Nadeem explained:

> I am not stereotyping, it is a matter of fact that East Africans wanted more rice and South Asians more flour, but you sure understand that. In other reception centres [like the one in Genoa where I used to work], the beneficiaries have their meals served twice a day in a canteen, pasta dishes are on the menu mostly, and that was often another reason for complaints. Some even held conspiracy theories: they believed that they were being served *tranquillisers* in their meals, you know 'so the refugees don't fire up and break it all down'!

At least, since they were in charge of cooking their own meals to share with their flatmates, the asylum seekers did not fantasise over being doped by the local staff in order to be kept 'out of trouble'. Despite their lives and flights having often involved danger, once they reached the destination country where they were asking for asylum, refugees tend to be portrayed and treated as much vulnerable as dangerous or abusive; all at once subjects who need (international) protection might pose a threat to national security or even exploit the system. Their cultural otherness and social profiling in terms of age, gender and ethno-religious background particularly disadvantaged Black (or Brown, like South Asians self-identify) and Muslim young males, who were the majority in the reception programmes operated by Abbas and Nadeem.

Third, routine health checks (blood tests in particular) were another matter of concern for both reception providers and recipients. The first were in charge to maintain public sanitation in the residences where asylum seekers were hosted, ensuring that guests were overall healthy and not affected by diseases which could also be transmitted outside. The latter were often wary of medical procedures that might be unfamiliar to them (or at least not properly communicated due to language barriers), once more dreading mass mistreatment under the mandate of healthcare.

Last but not the least, the so-called pocket money that asylum seekers receive daily for their personal expenses turns out to be the most contested piece of the reception jigsaw. While misinformed public opinion believes that each beneficiary 'gets paid' 32 euros a day, this is the sum which is corresponded per each guest to the co-operative that manages their provisional accommodation (thus it serves to cover renting fees, utilities and food). Xenophobic political campaigns have repeatedly navigated this fake news, which rings out alarmingly every now and then (Pasqualetto and Perocco 2021), with even more vigour since Meloni's vision of Italy being 'no longer' a safe haven for migrants benefitting of Italian social welfare.[8] That is the same reasoning that fuels comments of disdain from passers-by whenever asylum seekers might beg outside shopping malls. At a national level, begging is legal in Italy (provided it is not enforced on children), and, although some city mayors have passed controversial prohibitive laws, 'poverty is not a crime', as a 2012 human rights slogan proclaimed. A proud civil right defender, Abbas made his view clear:

> Leaving a young man idling with two euros a day in their pocket is not a recipe for wellbeing. Even if it was just for buying themselves a drink or a packet of cigarettes, could anyone blame those youths for begging a decent survival? […] You don't need to be a *Christian* to think sensibly. It doesn't cost one much to empathise with them, does it?

Hos(ti)pitality in a SAI Residence

Derrida's theorisation of the shared etymology between hospitality and hostility (Derrida and Defourmantelle 2002) has long been popularised to address migration and integration, by alluding to state sovereignty and the recognition of Others (Faist 2009). Seeing host/ing and hostility as intrinsically mutual, as I argued elsewhere with reference to transforming a

stranger into a friend or a foe by the communication ritual of providing shelter or welcome (Boccagni and Bonfanti 2023), also applies to the multiple entanglements of positionality that myself, Abbas and Nadeem maintained with regard to their social work environment. On top of our friendly collaboration, my informants were in fact co-guests with the refugees hosted in the accommodation provided by the asylum reception system in Italy. The material condition shared by providers and recipients clashes with the symbolic distance between the two parties; although with a migrant background, the two Italo-Pakistani young men felt as if they stood on the other side of the hos(ti)pitality dynamics, belonging to the receiving country and its bureaucracy long-arm. Besides carrying out their social work, Abbas and Nadeem performed as my 'proxy in the field', acting with the ethnographic (un)consciousness that being (children of) migrants themselves allowed. In particular, their appreciation of social identity complexity (Vertovec 2021 came with the disturbing recognition of speaking the same mother tongue (Urdu) and belonging to the main social group (Sh'ia Islamic) among the hosted refugees, which might give them the advantage to 'make familiarity' with the beneficiaries but at the same time use that closeness instrumentally, for maintaining the hierarchy demanded by the social organisation of those SAI shelters. The paradox of that 'forced intimacy' is revealed in a heated exchange between them:

> It feels uneasy to work by building *trust* with your beneficiaries, because you can access their life worlds, the way they think and act, understand why they react in certain ways… well, not always, […] and then use that confidentiality in order to keep them in check, under control. (Nadeem)

> Right, as if they were potential foes for the State, instead of friends like we were asked to make, and sometimes we did. […] I often think we were deceiving them… and I had to shake off this feeling of alienation every time. (Abbas)

I couldn't help seeing that similar considerations always affect ethnographic work and the relationship between researcher and researched, but that my collaborators were in fact misaligned with the classic dynamic 'ethnographer-as-guest' and 'informants-as-hosts'. They were literally flickering in and out of opposite roles, and the alienation they felt was a metaphor of their struggles for coming to terms with the ethics of being *reverse anthropologists in practice*.

Ethnographic (Un)consciousness

Reflexivity

Although an ongoing process of mirroring oneself in the eyes of the other punctuates the daily interactions between (long-term 'migrant') social operators and (asylum seeking) beneficiaries, there are times when the differences in status and experience come forth as moments of revelation.

Nadeem is the first to make an argument for this ambivalent feeling of being another and yet close to the many refugees whom he has met and aided throughout their stay in a reception facility. The kind of subjectivity he invokes is only partially reliant on foreignness or ethnicity, while it is tightly linked to the structural dimension (political and economic) where their respective patterns of international migration are embedded (Robertson 2015):

> See, I am the outcome of a *gentler, more benign integration*. I mean, my father might have had his toils 20 years ago, and yet he came with his means [on a tourist visa, then expired until a sanatoria decree was issued], got a job, a residence permit; […] and the whole story, you know. Travel and regularisation were easier then, and it didn't take long to reunite his wife and three children. […] Myself, I see the privilege of my upbringing. […] *Us* second generations have had all sorts of challenges, sometimes petty discrimination, but we were sent to school, given chances… by the time I was twenty, I never felt out of place in Italy. [Acquiring] citizenship came later, but in fact there is little to compare how *we* [referred to Abbas and their Italo-Pakistani peers at large] have made our way in this country as children of immigrants and how *they*, today's refugees, are being controlled and their odds to stay limited severely.

Abbas adds that the gaze of the asylum seekers on the social operators with a migrant background, like himself and Nadeem, is loaded with a basic misunderstanding, on the assumption that the operators had themselves been refugees not long earlier:

> Quite a few of the asylum seekers have questioned me sometimes for not following through their hardships. How does it come that you seem to have forgotten this all? *Don't you remember that you also came here this way?* […] They looked at me in disbelief, that I had come so well *out of the tunnel* and thought that, by securing my place in Italy, I had also healed from the bad memories and trauma of seeking refuge. Which of course I never had! […] Then you don't want to go up close and personal too much, comparing your life chances with theirs, or firing false expectations.

This apparent equivocation depends on the temporal disjuncture that separates the journeys of economic migrants since the late XXc (and their offspring), and it also hints to a desire for identification with their 'case managers' that the (current) asylum seekers are experiencing. As Abbas went on, responding to such comments never came easy. While he knew his personal condition was different, his status due to another migration story (and immigration history), just like Nadeem had explained, the (migrant) social worker felt the need to reassure his recipients that they could also 'come out of that tunnel'. Other, more restrictive, politics and policies affected them, yet the granting of asylum or international protection were, likely, an instrument to achieve freedom (Bonfanti 2020).

A Critique of the Asylum Reception System from Within

Abbas and Nadeem had no specific background in international and humanitarian law, but their supervisors provided all the staff hired with preliminary classes on the legal grounds for asylum seeking in Italy and shovelled them with reading materials, from informative handouts to free copies of the journal *Diritto, Immigrazione & Cittadinanza* (published by ASGI[9] – Italian Association of Immigration Jurisprudence).

> There is a huge gap in how things should work, and instead how they go. […] When you're actor and spectator 24/7 inside one of these residencies for asylum seekers, then you understand the inner-workings of the reception system and see all its faults. […] We may not be able to change things, but we take up the chance: we're asked to be 'solutions provider', we respond with meeting people's needs and doing our tasks. But we have grown our own *objections*.

Three were the criticalities that both emphasised.

First, the length of the process for releasing (or denying) permission of asylum to the petitioners: on average, it takes 18 months for such a request to complete its course, which means that the refugee has to put their life on hold and hope for the better. This *limbo* has been theorised in the literature (Bendixsen and Eriksen 2018) as 'active waiting' (Ghorashi et al. 2018), where aspirational outcomes are pursued within the limits to freedom that the status of pending asylum entails. Those months are replete with ongoing visits to the police quarter, in the presence of legal personnel who are in charge of data inspection and of interviewing the asylum seekers in order to record their stories, witness their sorrow and assess their impossibility to return 'home', eventually stamping their permission to stay in the country.[10] To date, there are two different schemes for offering legal protection to forced migrants in Italy: political asylum ('*asilo*') for those who are formally recognised as refugees (having suffered personal persecution in the country of provenance), and special protection ('*protezione sussidiaria*') for those who can demonstrate a well-founded risk of facing similar harm upon return . Both last five years and can be renovated upon the permanence of one's impossibility to return to their country (refugees can then eventually apply for Italian citizenship).

Second, if one's long-term reception in the country is not to be taken for granted, and it is released ad interim anyway, what kind of accommodation can refugees expect to find once in Italy? To this key question which I provocatively posed them, my friends and informants unanimously replied 'one that is *precarious* and that makes people *feel so*'. The two social workers made clear that it is only a '*posto letto*', lit. a bed (place), that the asylum seekers are given and compete for. Moreover, breaking down the two pillars of the SAI system, that is, (First) Reception and (Social) Integration, they claimed that the latter and presumably most important part is highly lacking. The compulsory Italian classes, which should run three days a week, always come short. While, once signed up at the relevant office for (un)employment, the asylum seekers are entitled to receive some (voluntary) job offers, these rarely occur. It is not clear whether this is due to bureaucratic hitches or to a certain mistrust from those hiring towards 'people who are supposed to be transient, unskilled, not capable of speaking the language, […] and overall *stranger, Black, or "illegal"*', as Abbas enunciates. If patent racist attacks are rarely reported by their in-house refugees, deviant behaviours and public discourse do not necessarily follow one another: in fact, 'status discrimination permeates the air they breathe'.

Third, Abbas and Nadeem complained about the inadequacy of mental health care offered to the recipients in the context of asylum. According to my informants, many of the guest residents suffered from PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), a condition which prevented them from interacting successfully in the new hosting environment and was under recognised or untreated by the social services.

> We are no psychologists, thus we can't dish out diagnoses. But we have seen and heard first-hand, every day, the distress suffered by many, most (if not all) of our *brothers*. Outbursts of anger, nightmares and wailing, […] and we have recorded tonnes of stories that cut deep through their wounds. As they

> are seeking asylum, it feels like a double-edge sword to open up: some are very conscious of their words and wonder if saying too much will serve them to be granted protection and stay, or if it will see them embarking on a repatriation flight!

Ethno-psychiatry as an academic discipline has existed in Italy since the 1950s, but its development in public ethno-clinical practices dates back to the eighties, right when international mass immigrations took off (following Giordano's review of the pioneer work carried out at the Centre Frantz Fanon in Turin; Giordano, 2011). While basic psychological counselling is offered to refugees today upon their arrival and registration, most interactions with an ethno-clinician occur during the evaluation of life interviews which can(not) warrant one's request for asylum. As a result, only a fraction of those who may need them do in fact follow regular therapies for PTSD or other mental health issues that may be due to previous hazards or current ordeals. In-house social staff themselves recognise that they would benefit from some psychological consultancy, given that, in terms of spatial and relational closeness, the domestic intimacy they develop with the guest residents can be very demanding if not even draining.

Exit (and Re-Entering) Strategies

Eighteen months passed since Abbas and Nadeem took up that post as social workers in one of the largest SAI reception centres in northern Italy. 'Notwithstanding the adrenal fatigue', as they recognise with a grin, incorporating the language of the personnel on site, their minds and bodies have both gone through a roller-coaster together with their beneficiaries, and yet they admit having done 'a decent job'. One had even become 'housing manager' for the entire region; the other has followed on as 'appointed referent' when the residents had health concerns to put forward. Despite the appearance, neither of them believed there was a career to make out of those jobs. Co-operatives were frail organisations, as much as the fate of the people they were supposed to cater for.

That roughly coincided with the same length of time that their first guest residents have spent waiting for asylum. Of those 44 young men, 21 were given international protection (according to the formulae already explained), 12 had their cases still pending, 10 had been refused legal protection and were differently handling their situation (most applied for 'reconsideration after rejection', a few were in the process of repatriation), and one left without leaving traces behind. Likewise, Abbas and Nadeem felt the call for fleeing that ' suffocating bubble' of hardships and hopelessness. They had saved a little money, and now that COVID-19 lockdowns were being lifted, they wished to resume freely moving around and ultimately 'go back [to their] homeland'. So-called return visits appear frequently in the lives of transnational migrants (Duva, 2004); as for them, this was a leisure activity long forgotten. Nadeem had not returned to Pakistan for five years, evermore engaged in his daily life as a young Italian man with an/other cultural background. Abbas had visited the country three years earlier, on a shooting trip with his film crew, purposely avoiding his hometown due to personal reasons and family conflicts.

Their desire to travel back home, they argued, was a mix of nostalgia for memories reactivated after many conversations with their 'co-ethnic' beneficiaries (loosely identified, as the South Asian diaspora is as wide as diverse in its demographics), and of novel curiosity for seeing which changes had *their* lands undergone since moving to Europe. 'I didn't even know there were so many different 'ethnicities' in Afghanistan, which is just a stone's throw away from my kinsmen's village. […] Our guest residents taught me so much about a place I used to call *home*!' exclaimed Nadeem pointing to his thirst for learning more about a culture which he was supposed to embody and 'carry in his DNA' according to the Italian understanding of 'migrant descent'. Whatever their national passport (one already holding double nationality, the other still on a long-term visa in Italy), planning a journey across Pakistan came as a result of that immersive and critical gaze they happened to foster in the destination country of their parents where they had themselves come of age. Contrary to other post-migrant experiences, when second generations choose to move back to the homeland as a form of social resistance (Yildiz and Hill 2017), in my informants' view, their country of origin was to be discovered afresh, as *reverse anthropologists* with all the complexity that this entailed. Following Clyde Kluckhon (2017), isn't anthropology 'the long route to come home', the lifelong adventure that helps break down prejudices and cultural conflicts?

From January to April 2022, Nadeem and Abbas travelled Pakistan far and wide. The photos which they shared via WhatsApp saw them caught up in the 'wedding season' in their hometowns and gave evidence to their fitting-in across radically different networks: posing with the avant-garde artists in Lahore and having luncheon in the backyard with their own families. Their well-planned tour touched upon iconic locations they had learnt about while living and growing up in the Italian diaspora, from

the colonial Pak Tea House to the tribunal which condemned the first woman to death upon charges of blasphemy in the country.[11] They held on to the splendour and misery of the homeland they much loved and, at once, couldn't help but scorn. Reflexivity and critical thinking interlaced with *homesickness*, nuanced with regret for failing Pakistan with the same nostalgic devotion most of their parents used to. Rather than a *double absence* like Abdelmalek Sayad (1999) convincingly argued, for second generation Italo-Pakistanis, swinging with formal legal status and affective belonging, being (children of) migrants meant observing either (and both) 'centre from the margins', with an embodied anthropological view spanning different degrees of consciousness in the tapestry of life. Since then, both Nadeem and Abbas have relocated to Central Italy, where they continue to engage in migrant solidarity and intercultural practice on multiple fronts. Their involvement now spans local administrative politics and the co-editing of a community-based online newspaper focused on minority issues, civic inclusion, and representation—further extending their roles as cultural mediators and public intellectuals in the making.

Conclusion

'Reverse anthropology' is an expression first used by Roy Wagner in his 1981 book *The Invention of Culture* to describe Melanesian attempts at interpreting the foundations of modern Western society vis-à-vis those attempted by Western anthropologists in order to interpret Melanesian societies. The relationship between the indigenous and the observer is a matter of reciprocity of perspectives which is never equal. In the case discussed here, further complexities arose: who is the native and who is the researcher, but also which hos(ti)pitality is provided and for whom (Harney and Boccagni 2022)? Naturalised migrant social workers who operate 'for the benefit of asylum seekers' (like their white native hiring managers preached) under the aegis of national sovereignty squint their eyes. They are not indulging into cultural comparisons but inhabit that 'third time-space' which refuses to construe radical alterities, where instead migrant temporalities count insofar as they establish who has (or lacks) access and membership to the local society. Actively operating in that productive liminality, fieldwork becomes 'homework', as differences between the ethnographer and the subject under study are broken down (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996). Abbas and Nadeem feel the strain of shifting subject/object, guest and host positionalities, which, rather than being tactical, end up being self-transformative (Wagner 2018).

Migration studies have contributed to reconceptualise the project of a global anthropology *chez nous*: where cultural diversity is not located on far-away exotic islands, but lives within the reach of one's neighbourhood in any world city (Geldof 2016). The advent of post-migrant societies in Europe today provides novel scenes to look at the anthropological enterprise as a human condition, whose double gaze is embedded in the lives of millions with a migrant background (which may go back in time for *n* generations). Different ages of migration and structures of feelings decentre received notions of security, hospitality and solidarity in the heart of Europe (Agier 2018). Making a distinction between the descendants of immigrants and the newly arriving refugees means to look at the interstice of cultural diversity with an awareness of political history, informed by postcolonial critique (Bhambra 2017). While the anthropologist may theorise on this apparent gap, considering how migrants themselves interpret the predicaments of contemporary human mobilities and the (in)effectiveness of the border regimes looking from their point of (dis)advantage provides a much-needed reverse perspective that challenges the strongholds of western powers and national domopolitics.

To conclude, us three research partners wondered whether this article makes a contribution to 'applied anthropology': as argued by Roger Bastide (1971), weren't the migrant social workers doing their job as *homo moderator rerum*? Wasn't their reflection a theoretical exercise on the practices (and underlying values) that keep up the reception system for refugees? The author hopes that this collaborative piece of writing may contribute to a debate in 'public anthropology in changing times' (Borofsky and De Lauri 2019), insofar as it encourages broad conversations on urgent social issues, possibly fostering a fairer recognition of migrants' rights, whatever their status, journeys and destination. Last, acknowledging research partnership, without falsely inflating co-authorship, also means to recognise that the flat hierarchy here built on mutual interlocution does not even out the multiple positionalities that migrants as reverse anthropologists play. On the contrary, it withholds a more nuanced approach to thinking, working and writing along the continuum of self-and-other cultures (Tedlock 2009) beyond the very paradigm of centre and margins.

Acknowledgements: I am deeply grateful to Wajahat Abbas Kazmi and Sajawal Nadeem Chaudhry, whose intellectual generosity and long-standing commitment as Italo-Pakistani social workers in a refugee reception have profoundly shaped the ethnographic reflections presented in this article. Through countless conversations and shared experiences in the field, they helped me critically reframe the notion of 'immigrants as reverse anthropologists', offering situated insights and challenging assumptions from within. While the writing and analysis remain my own, this work would not exist without their dialogic engagement, trust, and friendship.

Dr. **Sara Bonfanti** is a social anthropologist, expert on South Asian diasporas and multi-site ethnography. Keen on participatory approaches, her interests include kinship, ethical pluralism and media cultures, seen through intersectionality and visual methods. She recently collaborated within the comparative ERC HOMInG project, publishing the volumes *Ethnographies of Home and Mobility*, Routledge (2021) and *Chronicles of Global Migrants*, Berghahn (2023). Email: sara.bonfanti@edu.unige.it; ORCID: 0000-0003-0211-2017

Notes

1. The term 'forced migrants' is used in anthropological scholarship to encompass a broad spectrum of people displaced across borders due to conflict, persecution, environmental collapse, or structural inequality. It challenges narrow legal categories such as 'refugee' or 'asylum seeker' by foregrounding the politics of displacement and the social conditions that constrain voluntary mobility (Stankovic et al. 2021).
2. In contrast to standard anonymization practices, the names 'Abbas' and 'Nadeem' are not pseudonyms but the real second names of the interlocutors, used with their full informed consent. As argued by Weiss (2021), anonymization is not always ethically necessary nor desirable, particularly when participants choose visibility and wish to be acknowledged for their intellectual contributions. This decision reflects a collaborative research ethic and respects their agency in shaping how their narratives circulate in academic discourse.
3. ERC HOMInG, investigating the 'home-migration nexus': https://homing.soc.unitn.it/.
4. SPRAR – Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees was institutionalised in 2002 with the agreement of the national association of municipalities; SIPROIMI – Protection System for Beneficiaries of International Protection and Unaccompanied migrant minors was introduced in 2018 with a restrictive scope; SAI – Reception and Integration System took over in 2020 opening up the spectrum of cases to consider.
5. CAS – Emergency Reception Centres, established by Prefectures in 2015 to face the 'refugee crisis', were intended to be limited to the time strictly necessary for the transfer of the applicant in secondary reception centres. In fact, CAS still represent over 66% of the facilities where asylum seekers are accommodated.
6. I had met Abbas at a march against 'honour crimes' among Punjabi minorities in 2019 (Bonfanti 2022), co-opted him into participating in my research with the South Asian diaspora in Italy, and then co-directing an ethnographic film. His partner Nadeem started to join us as a shooting assistant and has turned into a friend thereafter.
7. See www.ilgrandecolibrì.com.
8. Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has implemented policies aimed at reducing irregular migration to Italy and limiting migrants' access to the country's welfare system. As of 2024, a notable initiative is the agreement with Albania to process asylum seekers outside Italy's borders. Under this plan, Italy has established centres in Albania to house migrants intercepted at sea while their asylum applications are reviewed. This strategy is intended to deter irregular migration and alleviate pressure on Italy's domestic resources.
9. See here for downloadable info: https://www.asgi.it/pubblicazioni/.
10. National statistics reveal that in 2020 13,647 requests for asylum were processed, of which 12.6% accounted for special protection; the approx. ratio of approval/rejection was 7:1 (ISTAT Censis 2021).
11. Although held in jail for years, the verdict was never executed, and Asia Noreen Bibi (an outcaste Christian) was set free and fled to Canada with the aid of human rights campaigners (including the Italian branch of Amnesty Int.). Abbas himself took an active part in supporting her case, also publishing a book on the woman's perilous story (both in English and Italian; Kazmi 2018).

References

Agier, M. (2018). *L'étranger qui vient: Repenser l'hospitalité* [The foreigner who comes: Rethinking hospitality] (Paris: Média Diffusion).

Andall, J. and D. Duncan (eds.) (2005), *Italian Colonialism: Legacy and Memory* (Oxford: Peter Lang).

Anderson, L. (2006), 'Analytic Autoethnography', *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4: 373–395, https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241605280449.

Bastide, R. (1971), *Anthropologie appliquée* [Applied Anthropology] (Paris : Payot).

Bell, D., P. Caplan, and W. Karim (eds.) (1993), *Gendered Fields: Women, Men, and Ethnography* (London: Routledge).

Bendixsen, S. and T. H. Eriksen (2018), 'Time and the Other: Waiting and Hope among Irregular Migrants', in *Ethnographies of Waiting: Doubt, Hope and Uncertainty*, (ed.) M. K. Janeja and A. Bandek (London: Routledge), 87–112.

Bhambra, G. (2017), 'The Current Crisis of Europe: Refugees, Colonialism, and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism', *European Law Journal* 23, no. 5: 395–405, https://doi.org/10.1111/eulj.12234.

Boccagni, P. and S. Bonfanti (2023), 'Introduction: Stranger, Guest, Researcher – A Case for Domestic Ethnography in Migration Studies', in *Migration and Domestic Space: Ethnographies of Home in the Making*, (ed.) P. Boccagni and S. Bonfanti (Cham: Springer), 1–19.

Bonfanti, S. (2020), 'A suon di porte: traiettorie abitative di un richiedente asilo pakistano in Italia. Un approccio biografico' ['To the sound of doors: Housing trajectories of a Pakistani asylum seeker in Italy. A biographical approach'], *Studi Emigrazione* 220: 599–617.

Bonfanti, S., & Massa, A. (2021), 'Introduction: Unlocking Doors'. In A. Miranda-Nieto, M. Massa and S. Bonfanti, *Ethnographies of Home and Mobility*, (London: Routledge), 1 –14.

Bonfanti, S. (2022), 'Resistant Vulnerability: Voices of Feminist Dissent from the Panjabi Minority in Italy', *DiGeSt - Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies* 9 (2): 54–69, https://doi.org/10.21825/digest.84673.

Borofsky, R. and A. De Lauri (2019), 'Public Anthropology in Changing Times', *Public Anthropologist* 1, no. 1: 3–19, DOI:10.1163/25891715-00101002.

Cabot, H. (2019), 'The Business of Anthropology and the European Refugee Regime', *American Ethnologist* 46, no. 3: 261–275, https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.12791.

Campomori, F. and M. Ambrosini (2020), 'Multilevel Governance in Trouble: The Implementation of Asylum Seekers' Reception in Italy as a Battleground', *Comparative Migration Studies* 8, no. 1: 1–19, DOI:10.1186/s40878-020-00178-1.

Cervi, L., S. Tejedor, and M. Alencar Dornelles (2020), 'When Populists Govern the Country: Strategies of Legitimization of Anti-Immigration Policies in Salvini's Italy', *Sustainability* 12, no. 23: 10225, DOI:10.3390/su122310225.

Chouliaraki, L. and R. Zaborowski (2017), 'Voice and Community in the 2015 Refugee Crisis: A Content Analysis of News Coverage in Eight European Countries', *International Communication Gazette* 79, no. 6–7: 613–635, DOI:10.1177/1748048517727173.

Colombo, E., L. Domaneschi, and C. Marchetti (2009), *Una nuova generazione di italiani. L'idea di cittadinanza tra i giovani figli di immigrati* [A new generation of Italians: The idea of citizenship among the young children of immigrants] (Milano: Franco Angeli).

Colombo, M. (2018), 'The Representation of the "European Refugee Crisis" in Italy: Domopolitics, Securitization, and Humanitarian Communication in Political and Media Discourses', *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 16, no. 1–2: 161–178, https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2017.1317896.

Della Puppa, F., and G. Sanò (2021), 'The Prism of New Mobilities: The Mobility Trajectories of Refugees and Asylum Seekers outside the Italian Reception System, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 26, no. 5: 503–527, https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2021.1943211.

Dennis, P. A. (1994), 'The Life of a Culture Broker', *Human Organization* 53, no. 3: 303–308, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44127185.

Derrida, J., and A. Dufourmantelle (2002), *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, (trans.) R. Bowlby (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press).

Duval, D. T. (2004), 'Conceptualizing Return Visits: A Transnational Perspective', in *Tourism, Diasporas and Space* (London: Routledge), 64–75.

Faist, T. (2009), 'The Transnational Social Question: Social Rights and Citizenship in a Global Context', *International Sociology* 24, no. 1: 7–35, https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580908099153.

Filippi, D., and L. Giliberti (2021), 'Italian Reception Policies and Pandemic: From Exclusion to Abandonment', *Dve domovini* no. 54, DOI:10.3986/dd.2021.2.10.

Garau, E. (2014), *Politics of National Identity in Italy: Immigration and 'Italianità'* (London: Routledge).

Geldof, D. (2016), 'Super-Diversity and the City', in *Social Work and the City*, (ed.) C. Williams (London: Palgrave Macmillan), 127–149.

Ghorashi, H., M. De Boer, and F. Ten Holder (2018), 'Unexpected Agency on the Threshold: Asylum

Seekers Narrating from an Asylum Seeker Centre', *Current Sociology* 66, no. 3: 373–391, https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392117703766.
Giordano, C. (2011), 'Translating Fanon in the Italian Context: Rethinking the Ethics of Treatment in Psychiatry', *Transcultural Psychiatry* 48, no. 3: 228–256, DOI: 10.1177/1363461511403029.
Glick Schiller, N. and A. Çağlar (2013), 'Locating Migrant Pathways of Economic Emplacement: Thinking beyond the Ethnic Lens', *Ethnicities* 13, no. 4: 494–514, DOI:10.1177/1468796813483733.
Harney, N. D. and P. Boccagni (2022), 'Calibrating Home, Hospitality and Reciprocity in Migration', *Anthropological Theory* 23, no. 3: 14634996221118140. https://doi.org/10.1177/14634996221118140.
Holmes, S.M. and H. Castañeda (2016), 'Representing the "European Refugee Crisis" in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death', *American Ethnologist* 43, no. 1: 12–24, DOI:10.1111/amet.12259/full.
Hom, S. M. (2015), 'Becoming *ospite*: Hospitality and Mobility at the Centre of Temporary Permanence', in *Italian Mobilities*, (ed.) R. Ben-Ghiat and S. M. Hom (London: Routledge), 102–124.
Kazmi, W. A. (2018), *Asia Bibi: A Christian Woman's Plight through the Eyes of a Muslim*. Independently published. Available on Amazon Kindle.
Kluckhohn, C. (2017), *Mirror for Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life* (London: Routledge). [1st edition: 1949].
ISTAT, LV Rapporto Censis (2021), 'Sicurezza e Cittadinanza', in *La società italiana nel 2021* [Security and Citizenship, in *Italian society in 2021*] (Roma: Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali).
Lassiter, L. E. (2005), 'Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology', *Current Anthropology* 46, no. 1: 83–106, https://doi.org/10.1086/425658.
Lavie, S. and T. Swedenburg (1996), 'Between and among the Boundaries of Culture: Bridging Text and Lived Experience in the Third Timespace', *Cultural Studies* 10, no. 1: 154–179, https://doi.org/10.1080/09502389600490501.
Lombardi-Diop, C. and C. Romeo (eds.), (2012), *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (New York: Palgrave).
Marcus, G. E. (2001), 'From Rapport under Erasure to Theaters of Complicit Reflexivity', *Qualitative Inquiry* 7, no. 4: 519–528, DOI:10.1177/107780040100700408.
McGranahan, C. (ed.) (2020), *Writing Anthropology. Essays on Craft and Commitment* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).
Meissner, F. and T. Heil (2021), 'Deromanticising Integration: On the Importance of Convivial Disintegration', *Migration Studies* 9, no. 3: 740–758, https://doi.org/10.1093/migration/mnz056.
Minca, C. and J. Collins (2021), 'The Game: Or, "The Making of Migration" along the Balkan Route', *Political Geography* 91: 102490, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102490.
Pasqualetto, M. and F. Perocco (2021), 'For Dignity, Against Racism: The Struggles of Asylum Seekers in Italy', in *Stuck and Exploited*, (ed.) F. Della Puppa and G. Sanò (Venezia: Ca'Foscari), 215–235.
Riccio, B. (2016), 'From Internal to Transnational Mobilities: An Introduction', *From Internal to Transnational Mobilities* (Bologna: Emil), 7–18.
Ricucci, R. (2014), *Second Generations on the Move in Italy: Children of Immigrants Coming of Age* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books).
Robertson, S. (2015), 'The Temporalities of International Migration: Implications for Ethnographic Research', in *Social Transformation and Migration*, (ed.) S. Castles, D. Ozkul, and M. A. Cubas (London: Palgrave), 45–60.
Sandoval, C. (1991), 'US Third World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World', *Genders* 10: 1–24.
Sayad, A. (1999). *La double absence. des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* [The double absence: From the illusions of the emigrant to the sufferings of the immigrant] (Paris: Seuil).
Sciortino, G., and A. Colombo (2004), 'The Flows and the Flood: The Public Discourse on Immigration in Italy, 1969–2001', *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 1: 94–113, DOI:10.1080/1354571042000179209.
Stankovic, S., J. Ecke, and E. Wirtz (2021, December 22), 'Forced Migration', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190854584.013.468.
Tedlock, B. (2009), 'Performativity, Cultural Memory and Reverse Anthropology', *Etnofoor* 21, no. 2: 105–114, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25758165.
Vertovec, S. (2021), *Super-Diversity: Migration and Social Complexity* (London: Routledge).
Wagner, R. (1981), *The invention of culture*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).
Wagner, R. (2018), 'The Reciprocity of Perspectives', *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 26, no. 4: 502–510, https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12573.
Walters, W. (2004), 'Secure Borders, Safe Haven, Domopolitics', *Citizenship Studies* 8, no. 3: 237–260, https://doi.org/10.1080/1362102042000256989.

Weiss, E. (2021), 'Pseudonyms as Anti-Citation', in C. McGranahan & E. Weiss (eds.), 'Rethinking Pseudonyms in Ethnography', *American Ethnologist website*, 13 December, https://americanethnologist.org/online-content/collections/rethinking-pseudonyms-in-ethnography/pseudonyms-as-anti-citation/.

Yildiz, E., and M. Hill (2017), 'In-between as Resistance: The Post-Migrant Generation between Discrimination and Transnationalization', *Transnational Social Review* 7, no. 3: 273–286, DOI: 10.1080/21931674.2017.1360033.

Youmbi, R. S. (2011). 'Identità e ruolo del mediatore linguistico-culturale in Italia', *The Journal of Cultural Mediation* 1: 7–16.

Yuval-Davis, N. (2006). 'Belonging and the Politics of Belonging', *Patterns of Prejudice* 40, no. 3: 197–214, https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220600769331.