

FICTIONAL NARRATIVES AND THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE: EXPLORING
MIGRATION EXPERIENCE IN ITALY THROUGH THE VOICES OF SOMALI
WOMEN WRITERS

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ABSTRACT

FICTIONAL NARRATIVES AND THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE: EXPLORING MIGRATION EXPERIENCE IN ITALY THROUGH THE VOICES OF SOMALI WOMEN WRITERS

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Master of Arts, Migration Studies

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This thesis analyses fictional works of Somali migrant women in Italy through postcolonial and poststructuralist feminist lenses. The analysed texts are *Far From Mogadishu* (1994) by Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, *Little Mother* (2011) by Cristina Ali Farah, and *Adua* (2015) by Igiaba Scego. The thesis aims to uncover the ways fiction reflects the experiences of immigrants and discuss the implications of migration policies in the fictional works. It draws on the theoretical and conceptual insights of the fields of Migration Studies, Political Science, International Relations, and Literature. This interdisciplinary approach provides a platform for engaging with the complexities of migration and the multifaceted identities it engenders. The analysed narratives, which are based on historical and political events, promote a more in-depth comprehension of the migrant experience. They also act as advocates for a more individualistic perspective within the field of Migration Studies alongside broader structural analysis. This research contributes to the literature on migration, gender, and postcolonialism while emphasizing how critical it is to give marginalized communities' voices more weight in literary discourse.

Keywords: Somalia, Italy, Women Migrant Writers, Postcolonialism, Poststructuralist Feminism

ÖZ

KURMACA ANLATIMLAR VE GÖÇMEN DENEYİMİ: SOMALİLİ KADIN YAZARLARIN SESLERİYLE İTALYA'DAKİ GÖÇ DENEYİMİNİ KEŞFETMEK

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Bu tez, İtalya'daki Somalili göçmen kadınların kurgusal eserlerini sömürgecilik sonrası ve yapısalcılık sonrası feminist mercekle aracılığıyla analiz etmektedir. Analiz edilen metinler Shirin Ramzanali Fazel'in *Far From Mogadishu* (1994), Cristina Ali Farah'ın *Little Mother* (2011) ve Igiaba Scego'nun *Adua* (2015) adlı metinleridir. Tez, kurgunun göçmenlerin deneyimlerini nasıl yansıttığını ortaya çıkarmayı ve göç politikalarının kurgusal eserlerdeki yansımalarını tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır. Göç Çalışmaları, Siyaset Bilimi, Uluslararası İlişkiler ve Edebiyat alanlarının teorik ve kavramsal içgörülerinden yararlanır. Bu disiplinler arası yaklaşım, göçün karmaşıklığı ve onun doğurduğu çok yönlü kimlikleri çalışmak için bir platform sağlamaktadır. Tarihsel ve politik olaylara dayanan analiz edilen eserler, göçmen deneyiminin daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasına yardımcı olmaktadır. Çalışılan eserler, Göç Çalışmaları alanında daha geniş yapısal analizin yanı sıra daha bireysel bir bakış açısının savunucusu olarak da hareket etmektedir. Bu araştırma, göç, toplumsal cinsiyet ve postkolonyalizm literatürüne katkıda bulunurken, ötekileştirilmiş toplulukların seslerine edebi söylemde daha fazla ağırlık verilmesinin ne kadar kritik olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Somali, İtalya, Göçmen Kadın Yazarlar, Postkolonyalizm, Postyapısalcı Feminizm



To my beloved mother...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFIS	:Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration <i>(L'Amministrazione fiduciaria italiana della Somalia)</i>
EMN	: European Migration Network
EU	: European Union
IOM	: International Organization for Migration
IR	: International Relations
UN	: United Nations
UN DESA	: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
OHCHR	: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis begins with a fundamental question: Can fictional works provide valuable insights into the migrant¹ experience, specifically focusing on the often-overlooked narratives of women migrants? This question emerged from a profound curiosity about the interdisciplinary nature of Migration Studies and its potential to reveal hidden dimensions of human mobility. My exploration spans diverse fields, including Literature, Gender Studies, Identity Studies, Political Science, and Migration Studies. However, as I delved into the existing literature, I discovered a notable gap—a dearth of research that bridges these fields while centring on literary works authored by women migrants.

The significance of this research lies in its ambition to weave together the narratives of migrant women, exploring their lived experiences through the lens of Literature. The interdisciplinary approach chosen here provides a platform for engaging with the complexities of migration and the multifaceted identities it engenders. The study analyses the reflections of political and social instances regarding migration in fictional works of migrant women writers. When building the study, the first step was to select a case study that could serve as the focal point of this interdisciplinary exploration. Rather than attempting to encompass the entirety of literary works by women migrants, a narrower focus was required for a more profound and coherent analysis. This led to the critical question of which migrant group to

¹ Migrant is an umbrella term for all migration experiences (IOM). In this thesis it is predominantly used to refer to long term international migration. As per the 1998 United Nations Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration, an international migrant is described as an individual who alters their typical country of residence. An international migrant who changes their normal place of residence for at least one year is categorised as a long-term migrant (UNDESA 2012).

investigate. The recent example of Syrians fleeing to Europe in 2015 has been widely discussed and studied, so instead I wanted to focus on a group that has similar experiences but is overlooked in academia. Also, I wanted a migrant group that migrated to a country in which they were a past colony of as I would like to analyse the colonial ties and migration together. The Somali migrant community emerged as an ideal choice, characterised by a substantial migration history and deep historical ties with a host country, Italy. In order to understand the migration from Somalia to Italy, important background information is necessary.

The Somali refugee crisis is one of the most prolonged mass displacement situations in the world, as it started over 30 years ago (UNHCR 2023). Somalia was a colony of Italy from the late 19th century to the end of World War II, and after that, Somalia stayed under British and Italian influence until 1960 (Tripodi 1999, 1). After years of colonial rule and Western administrations, the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian administration (*L'Amministrazione fiduciaria italiana della Somalia*) (AFIS) and British Somaliland merged, and the independent Somali Republic was formed in 1960 (Gundel 2002, 256). However, political corruption, competition, and economic problems caused by the effects of the Suez crisis were raised soon after (Gundel 2002, 257). In 1969, Mohamed Siyad Barre staged a coup d'état and ruled the country until 1991 (Tripodi 1999, 2). This caused migration to neighbouring and Western countries (Rousseau 1998, 390).

However, this period was not part of the Somali migration/refugee crisis. The civil war broke out in the country in 1991, causing people to flee. Since then, the mass displacement continued due to political instability, drought, climate crisis and clan wars (UNHCR 2023). The number of refugees, primarily women and children, passed one million in 2012 (Mahecic 2012) and has continued to increase. Moreover, while

nearly a million Somali people live in neighbouring countries such as Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia, there are 3.8 million internally displaced people in Somalia currently (UNHCR 2023). As the displacement continues for decades, numerous people have spent most of their lives in refugee camps, whilst children have been born and spent their whole lives in those camps (UNHCR 2023). Also, the long-lasting crisis caused people to migrate to countries worldwide, creating a Somali diaspora.

Therefore, for people who want to migrate to Europe, the first stop happens to be Italy primarily because of its geographical closeness and colonial ties (Saggiomo 2017, 17). Lampedusa, an island in Italy, is one of the closest places to the Horn of Africa, where most migrant ships and boats land (L. Davies 2013). The island witnessed several tragedies of migrant ship/boat wrecks, including the 2013 Lampedusa boat tragedy (Kington 2013). Over 100 African migrants, mainly from Somalia and Eritrea, have died (L. Davies 2013). This tragedy is considered one of the most significant migrant shipwrecks, which took attention from all over the world and drew attention to the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

However, despite the long-lasting humanitarian crisis, the tragedies Somali people face during migration, and the large diaspora they have, the Somali migrant experience remains relatively unexplored within academic circles. The subject is mainly studied as a local migration crisis in the neighbouring countries (Lindley 2022). Other studies focused on international or country-level analysis of the outcomes of Somali migration (Lindley 2022, N. K. Warfa 2006, Gundel 2002). Therefore, studies focus on the healthcare, psychological state, and adaptation process of Somali migrants (N. S. Warfa 2012, Bhui 2003, Tiilikainen 2011). However, there needs to be more literature concerning studies on individual experiences. Thus, I chose the Somali migrant community in Italy as the subject of the study as the two countries have colonial ties.

The humanitarian crisis Somali people face is one of the most prolonged crises in the world, and this significant group's migration experience is understudied in the literature.

With the Somali migrant community identified as my primary subject, my attention shifted towards the literary voices within this community. A thorough investigation into the landscape of Somali women writers in Italy revealed a wealth of scholarly material (Curti 2007, Luraschi 2009, Simone 2017). Italy's historical ties with Somalia, shaped by postcolonial history, have made it a significant destination for Somali migrants, often serving as their initial stop in their migratory journeys. Furthermore, many Somali migrants in Italy possess proficiency in Italian, a legacy of colonialism, enabling them to express their experiences through Italian literature (Novati 2008).

I selected three novels by Somali women writers in Italy to ensure a comprehensive examination. The novels are *Far From Mogadishu* (1994) by Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, *Little Mother* (2011) by Cristina Ali Farah, and *Adua* (2015) by Igiaba Scego. The first novel *Far From Mogadishu* (1994) tells the migratory experience of a Somali woman who fled her country after the 1969 coup d'état and moved to Italy. Written in the first person, the book tells the story of the main character's trip in a disjointed fashion. The second book *Little Mother* (2011) is a story that explores the reality of Somali immigrants, especially those uprooted by the country's civil war and President Mohamed Siad Barre's overthrow in 1991. It revolves around two cousins Barni and Domenica Axad. Lastly, *Adua* (2015) explores the life of Adua, a Somalian woman, as she sets out on a difficult journey from Somalia to Italy. The novel, which takes place in a comparatively recent era, intertwines Adua's experiences and hardships to highlight the complicated reality that migrants must contend.

These novels are selected because of their migration theme and diverse publication timelines, spanning from the 1990s to the 2010s. This temporal variation serves as a prism through which I can analyse the narratives, considering the distinct political and social contexts in which they were written. The narratives traverse a vast period, from the late 20th century to the 2010s, allowing me to explore how these works reflect the evolving dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging over different historical periods. Furthermore, these fictional works narrate the migratory experiences of Somali women from their unique perspectives, a critical aspect in comprehending the thoughts and sentiments surrounding migration. Consequently, these novels allow me to examine the experiences of Somali women and acquire a nuanced understanding of migration experiences at the individual level in a fictional narrative.

In light of this comprehensive approach, I have formulated the following research questions to guide my study: First, how do the narratives of Somali women writers in Italy reflect and respond to the nation's migration policies² and integration³ processes? Secondly, how do the selected novels shed light on the evolving dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging over different historical periods? Thirdly, what insights can be gleaned from the intersection of gender studies and postcolonial theory in analysing migrant literature? And finally, to what extent can fiction serve as a valuable source of knowledge for understanding individual experiences within Migration Studies? These research questions guide my exploration into the migrant experiences woven into the narratives of Somali women writers in Italy. As Ranciere

² Therefore, migration policies are another important aspect of migration. Migration policies encompass a set of governmental regulations and strategies designed to manage the flow of people across national borders. These policies can take various forms, including immigration laws, visa regulations, border control measures, and initiatives related to refugees and asylum seekers. The overarching objectives of migration policies may vary among countries and regions, ranging from economic considerations to demographic management and humanitarian concerns (IOM 2019).

³ Integration, which refers to the social, economic, and cultural inclusion of migrants into the host society. Integration policies aim to facilitate the smooth transition of newcomers into their new environment while preserving their cultural identities (Migration Data Portal).

(2004, 9) emphasises, aesthetics is not a mere area of virtuality, but it “acts as configurations of experience that create new modes of sense perception and induce a novel form of political subjectivity”. Through women writers’ voices, I seek to comprehend the multifaceted aspects of migration and contribute to the broader discourse on the power of fiction as a lens through which to understand the individual narratives within the complex mosaic of Migration Studies.

I conduct a discourse analysis of the novels using postcolonial theory and a poststructuralist feminist lens, focusing on identity, home and gender as well as emphasising the significance of individual experiences. The theories apply both to International Relations and Literature fields. My chosen title, “Fictional Narratives and the Migrant Experience: Exploring Migration Experience in Italy through the Voices of Somali Women Writers”, encapsulates the essence of this research. It emphasises the significant role of literature in understanding the nuances of the migrant experience and particularly the often-marginalised voices of women migrants. The versatility of literature makes it possible to examine literary works authored by migrant women that delve into the intricacies of the migration experience. This interdisciplinary approach enhances Migration Studies and contributes to the broader literary landscape by offering a novel lens through which to examine individual experiences in the context of migration. As stated above, there are various aspects of Migrant Literature as it is an interdisciplinary area. However, its significance for Migration Studies, International Relations and Gender Studies remains unstudied. Thus, through my chosen novels — yet to be read together in this way—may inform, instruct, and relate to Political Science and International Relations fields in interdisciplinary ways.

The structure of this thesis unfolds through five distinct chapters, each dedicated to shedding light on various aspects of my research questions. Following

this introductory chapter, Chapter 2, titled “Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks and Methodology” provides a detailed examination of the research methods employed in this study. I elucidate fundamental definitions of migration terms, laying the groundwork for a precise understanding of the terminology crucial to this field of inquiry. Moreover, I explain the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis. I explain the use of postcolonial theory and poststructuralist feminism in the study. Also, I delve into the discussions on the concepts of “home”, “identity”, and “gender identity” in the literature and lay the ground for my take on these concepts in the study. These concepts appear in each selected novel and also examined theoretically within the chosen theories. Moreover, the concepts help to understand the individual migration experience. Therefore, I examine Migration Literature and its place in this research, alongside the theories and concepts. I delve into the rich literary landscape shaped by migration experiences, offering insights into the creative works that have emerged in this context. In Chapter 3, “Colonial Ties and Migration Policies”, I focus on Italy-Somalia relations and examine the evaluation of migration policies in Italy.

In Chapter 4, “Analysis”, I conduct a discourse analysis of the stated three novels in the light of the discussed theories and concepts while considering the political and historical background. I analyse the selected novels through three primary thematic lenses: home, identity, and gender identity. These thematic explorations will interweave sub-themes and motifs such as families, culture, traditions, belonging, alienation, language, and economic struggles. Chapter 5, “Conclusion”, serves as the final chapter, where I consolidate my research findings and provide a comprehensive summary of the results. Furthermore, in the last chapter, I reflect on the broader implications of my research and its potential contributions to the existing body of literature in Migration Studies.



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

This section provides a framework for the theories and concepts used for the thesis. I employ a post-colonialist and poststructuralist feminist lens to analyse *Far From Mogadishu* (1994) by Shirin Ramzanali Fazel, *Little Mother* (2011) by Cristina Ali Farah, and *Adua* (2015) by Igiaba Scego. I employ postcolonial theory because it is an ideal lens to explain the ties between Somalia and Italy and the migratory moves from the former to the latter. Moreover, the theory helps to understand the complex nature of migration and takes migrants as an agent. Postcolonialism is “an engagement with, and contestation of, colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies” (Gilbert 1996, 2). Also, it analyses the complex relationship between the coloniser and the colonised (Leela 1998, 4). Thus, postcolonialism does not only focus on the period after colonialism, but it questions the effects of colonial powers by examining the pre-colonisation, colonisation, and post-colonisation period and uncover the influence left after the end of colonialism (Childs and Williams 2014, 20-22). This is inherently related to migration, and the migrant has been addressed by prominent postcolonial scholars Bhabha (1994) and Said (2000). However, the connection is overseen in Migration Studies, and a precious tool to understand migrant identity and social and political ties are not studied enough (Mains, et al. 2013, 132). In this section I underline the key elements of the theory and then explain its connection to the Migrant Literature. This study aims to contribute to Migration Studies by using the postcolonial lens to understand the migrant experience.

Moreover, I use poststructuralist feminism to understand the migrant women's experience better. Poststructuralist feminism defends that gender is a complex term which includes cultural, political, historical, and social constructions (Davies and Gannon 2005). The multi-layered nature of gender identity shows that it is not only one factor in creating an identity but also a product of several factors such as race, ethnicity, and social status (Crenshaw 1989, 140). Poststructuralist feminism also defends that several layers and factors play a role in the ways women are oppressed and discriminated against. All these factors are called intersectionality, and their roots and mechanisms are questioned (Crenshaw 1989, 140). Furthermore, this lens questions how gender is represented in the other's stories, how the gender discourses interact with discourses of race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism and how they affect the power structures (Davies and Gannon 2005, 313-314). Besides, poststructuralist feminism analyses history to untangle the change of gender concepts throughout time and space to understand the discourse and structures which constructed the understanding of gender (Gatt 2016). Thus, poststructuralist feminism is an appropriate lens to question the gendered problems migrants face and dwell on the mechanisms of the gender dynamics they experience in their lives. Thus, I benefit from it while analysing the novels I choose alongside the postcolonial theory to emphasise the gender aspect of the work. Moreover, after explaining the theory I focus on its connection with the Migrant Literature. Hence, I employ a poststructuralist feminist lens to identify better and analyse women's narratives, the oppression they face, and the intersectionality of women's migrant identity and its reflections on the studied novels.

After explaining postcolonial theory and poststructuralist feminism and how they will be used in the context of migration and the Migrant Literature, I elaborate on

the key terminologies of migration and clarify their usage within the context of this study. It is crucial to acknowledge that the interpretation and significance of terms related to migration can vary significantly from one source to another. This lack of uniformity can complicate understanding the intended meaning when encountering these terms in various studies. First and foremost, migration and migrants refer to international migration and migrants in this thesis, and other essential terms are conceptualised in this regard, too. If there are specific situations, such as forced migration or asylum-seeking, they will be referred accordingly. To understand the operation of the stated terms, I shall explain crucial terms of the field. Moreover, before moving to the methodology, I explain the concepts of “identity”, “gender identity”, and “home”.

2.1.a. Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonialism emerged in the 20th century as imperial powers started losing control of their colonies, and these colonies gained their independence (Mishra 2005). The decolonisation process of past colonies and the formation of new states started the post-colonialist period. However, it is essential to note that postcolonialism encompasses the pre-colonialist era, the colonial era, and the postcolonial era in itself, as all the dynamics have played a part in the development of the political and social situations in the postcolonial states (Ashcroft 1989). Therefore, postcolonialism defends that it is impossible to fully comprehend the world and political, social, economic, and international mechanisms without considering the narratives of postcolonial subjects and minorities in general (Elam 2021). Their struggles and contributions to world history and their place in today's world cannot be overlooked.

In the academic area, the postcolonial theory emerged in the 1970s (Williams 1994, 5). The postcolonial studies benefited from different areas such as Marxism, Psychology, History, Philosophy, and Literature (Koh 2015, Elam 2021, Susan P. Mains 2013, Robbins 2005) and from various scholars like Walter Benjamin, Lacan, Sartre, and Foucault (Williams 1994, 9-14). Postcolonialism uses multiple research tools and analysis methods, such as deconstructivism, discourse analysis, content analysis, fieldwork, and interviews (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995). While gaining insights from various disciplines, the post-colonialist theory differs from other areas by combining the analysis of objective material conditions and their subjective effects and using historical, cultural, and political analysis of the studied subjects (Young 2001, 7). This attribute enables scholars from various fields to employ and use the theory in their research. Postcolonial theorists argue that those Western powers did not simply lose their powers after the colonial period, but, on the contrary, they continued to construct the contemporary world order (Young 2001, 8).

Moreover, postcolonial studies analyse the complex relationship between the colonised and the coloniser to unfold the social, historical, and political dynamics that build and pursue the dichotomic, unequal dynamics between the two (Williams 1994). Moreover, the theory takes a close interest in the narratives of postcolonial subjects and compares these narratives to mainstream narratives of the West (Larsen 2005). While starting in the Literature area by examining the texts written by postcolonial subjects, the postcolonial theory became widely used in the International Relations (IR) field in the 1990s as a critical theory of IR (Wilkens 2017).

The prominent scholars in the field are Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak. Edward Said's, a Palestinian American literary critic, prominent work *Orientalism* (1978) is regarded as the pioneering work of the theory

(Williams 1994, 6). Said conceptualised and coined essential terms for the area, like “the Orient” and “the other”. These terms refer to the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. The term “orient” is constructed by whom Said calls “Orientalists” mainly the Western scholars, and the term attributes characteristics like weak, uncivilised, and inferior to the Western (Said 1978). Moreover, Said analyses the power dynamics and the knowledge construction of the West in his work. Scholars argue that the West constructed the Orient, the periphery, the minority, and the migrant by labelling them the "other", and their perspective does not show the reality (Burney 2012). The constructed stereotypes and identities of “the other” only benefit the Western-oriented world (Gandhi 2007). The postcolonial perspective makes it possible to see beyond these constructed worldviews and listen to the other for once. Moreover, in his work *Reflections on Exile* (2000), Said explores what it means to be in exile, how it affects identity, and possible contributions of exile literature to understand and critique social and political realities as well as the impact of colonialism on literary representations.

Another prominent figure of postcolonialism is Frantz Fanon. His work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1968) is considered an early example of postcolonial studies; however, it is not considered the first work of post-colonialist theory. Fanon argues that the colonial narrative is learned and engraved into minds. However, when a colonial intellectual questions the view deconstructs colonial teachings and ideologies and alienates themselves from the colonial understanding, this individual can shatter the mainstream beliefs and get into the narratives of the other (Fanon 1968). Thus, he questions the inherent teaching of the West, the coloniser, and how to shatter these constructed realities by creating a new one apart from the colonial beliefs.

Likewise, Spivak (1988) argues that current narratives are Western-oriented and questions whether the “subaltern” voice can be heard. Spivak defines “the subaltern”

as individuals residing on the peripheries, often representing a system's silent or silenced core affected by epistemic violence. These are men and women found within the illiterate peasantry, Aboriginal communities, and the most marginalised sectors of the urban sub-proletariat (Spivak 1988, 305). Spivak refers to a large group as subalterns. However, in her essay, she specifies the subaltern as female postcolonial subjects as males have been attributed dominant roles, and the women face double oppression, double burden, as postcolonial subjects as well as being women under the gendered division of labour (Spivak 1988, 306). Spivak employs deconstructivism to uncover the power structures, historical aspects, and colonial discourse on subalterns. The author argues that the subaltern cannot raise their voice in the existing power structures nor find a place and representation in this structure (Spivak 1988, 313).

Bhabha takes postcolonialism from the aspect of identity. He contributes to the field with concepts of “third space”, “hybrid identity”, and “mimicry”. Bhabha argues that identities are not fixated but rather hybrid, and created in “the third space”, which he depicts as an undefined ambivalent place that "constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation" (H. K. Bhabha 1994, 37). Bhabha's concept of the third space recognises the complex and dynamic nature of cultural interactions, acknowledging that identities are not fixed but constantly shaped through negotiation and hybridisation (H. K. Bhabha 1994, 37). The hybrid identity created in the third space shows the complex relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. This identity consists of aspects from both. This idea has been influential in academic discourse and understanding the lived experiences of individuals and communities navigating the complexities of postcolonial, diasporic, and multicultural contexts (Easthope 1998). Also, Bhabha states that transnational literature is a source for analysing the hybrid identities of postcolonial subjects and migrants (H. K. Bhabha 1994, 12). Lastly,

"Colonial mimicry refers to a desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite" (H. Bhabha 1984, 126). The mimicry is ambivalent and normalises the colonial power so that it may be regarded as a subversion (H. Bhabha 1984, 126).

Another prominent figure of postcolonial theory is Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Mohanty criticises neoliberalism and defends that a transnational feminist approach that acknowledges and addresses the interconnectedness of women's struggles across different contexts is necessary (Mohanty 2013, 969). Mohanty critiques the homogenizing tendencies of Western feminist discourses which neglects "differences among women, notably of race and geographical context" (Winter 2020, 83). Mohanty argues that Western Feminism often portrays Third World women "as a homogeneous 'powerless' group often located as implicit victims of particular cultural and socio-economic system" (1988, 67). She argues that such representations are a continuation of colonial attitudes, perpetuating a form of cultural imperialism (Mohanty 1988, 67). Mohanty emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of women's experiences that considers the intersecting influences of race, class, gender, and colonial history (Al-Wazedi 2020, 155). Her contributions have significantly shaped postcolonial feminist thought, highlighting the importance of intersectionality and the imperative to dismantle Eurocentric narratives within feminism.

Postcolonialism is inherently connected to migration, and the postcolonial theory, by its nature, comes as an insightful lens for understanding migration as a phenomenon and migrants as individuals. However, this significant connection has been underseen in the literature. "Despite the material links between colonialism, postcolonialism and migration, social scientists generally have been slow to address this intersection" (Mains, et al. 2013, 132). Mayblin and Turner (2020) explain this gap in the literature

with Spivak's sanctioned ignorance' which is not necessarily deliberate malice but rather an institutionalised way of thinking that excludes specific analyses or considerations from the discussion. One contributing factor to this ignorance is the immediate urgency of contemporary migration issues and crises, which constantly demand attention and responses from policymakers and scholars. This focus on the present, or "presentism," within migration studies and policy formation tends to sideline historical perspectives (Mayblin and Turner 2020, 26).

While the field may not profoundly engage with history, historical influences still quietly shape many analyses. Claims of "unprecedentedness" often inform the discussions, assuming that because a phenomenon is evident and challenging to manage, it must be entirely new. However, this perspective overlooks the historical context and continuity of migration patterns. While the number of migrants crossing borders may be increasing due to population growth, it does not mean that such movements are entirely unprecedented. Although some analyses briefly acknowledge historical contexts, particularly regarding the emergence of rights or changes over time, colonialism is often mentioned only cursorily, if at all. There are several studies on ties between postcolonialism and migration in social sciences. However, unfortunately, "the core of migration studies, which is highly influential in international policy-making circles, appears to remain largely unaffected by this work" (Mayblin and Turner 2020, 28-30).

My research here integrates postcoloniality and its appearance in fictional works of migrants to show how deeply these postcolonial ties are engraved into the culture and seen in fictional works as well as how fiction reflects the effects of policies on individuals. Migrant literature is a robust and diverse genre that explores the experiences, challenges, and triumphs of individuals who have left their homelands for

better opportunities or to escape adversity. It encompasses a wide range of voices and narratives, reflecting the rich tapestry of human migration across the globe. Migrant literature often delves into the complexities of identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity as individuals navigate the tensions between their past and present, their native and adopted cultures. Through the written word, migrant authors provide a platform to shed light on the universal themes of human displacement and resilience while offering readers a window into the unique and often untold stories of those who have embarked on journeys of self-discovery and adaptation in unfamiliar lands. Literature is an essential tool for understanding the migration journey, but it has yet to be a prominent part of Migration Studies (Gallien 2018).

As postcolonialism has often been seen as a theory rooted in literature field, it is not surprising to see that the postcolonial aspects of migration are frequently highlighted in the field of literature. While "Migrant Literature" covers a wide range of writings, the term itself is contested. The term "Migrant Literature" is relatively new. It started to be used more commonly in the 1990s with the rise in Postcolonial Studies. Deepika Bahri defined postcolonial literature as a "historical product" (Gui 2014, 159). Previously, instead of Migrant Literature, Exile Literature and exile writers were used to define literary works written by migrants. Exile is also a term that is widely discussed and used in postcolonial studies. Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000) is the most famous. This term presents the inherent connection between migration and postcolonialism. When discussing an exiled writer's situation, it was often assumed that this condition alone was enough to define the core premise of their work. Exiled writers were frequently seen as having a unique perspective, straddling two worlds and providing an "objective" viewpoint due to their sense of detachment and alienation. They were often ascribed the status of a neutral

observer, and this positioning within the modern literary tradition dictated the discourse around their exile (Mardorossian 2002).

Their status as literary authorities existing between two cultures often led to the belief that they served as a bridge and constructed a binary logic between “here” and “there”, which could be romanticised rather than critically examined. However, the shift from exile to migration challenges this binary logic by emphasising movement, fluidity, and mixing cultures, races, and languages. The world inhabited by the character is no longer seen as a fixed "here" and "there" but is constantly evolving due to displacement. Because of this displacement, the migrant's identity undergoes radical shifts that alter their self-perception, leading to ambivalence towards their old and new existence. They can no longer nostalgically remember the past as a fixed and comforting anchor in their lives, as the contours of their identity continually shift in response to the ongoing journey and encounter with different cultures and languages (Mardorossian 2002).

Thus, aesthetics is not apolitical. Aesthetics encompasses historical, political, and social issues. Aesthetics is not separate from socio-political issues, instead it informs them. In the era of globalisation, aesthetic works and Migrant Literature being a part of it help us to understand the dynamics of migration, the psychological state of the subject, and the subject's place in society. The change in theoretical studies, the shift from traditional realist or modern literary theories to the rise of postcolonial theory, remarks the change of analysis of literary works by migrant writers. The term Migrant Literature shows this change, too. It comprises the new analysis methods focusing on identity, historical ties, and the overall psychological state of the subject. The new term takes the migration experience of the subject into the centre. The term “migrant literature” suggests that it will primarily focus on topics related to migration

and the culture and heritage of the host country. However, while the portrayal of the migration journey and the challenges of adaptation are central to this genre, migrant literature can exhibit significant diversity, both in terms of themes and structure (Pourjafari and Vahidpour 2014).

Creative literature plays a crucial role in illuminating migration's intricate and often ambiguous realities, providing a more authentic portrayal of human emotions and perspectives compared to conventional academic research. Migration is depicted as an ongoing process that continuously shapes individuals' identities and their relationships within society. Rather than being solely a result of past circumstances, migration is integrated into broader life narratives. Literature can reflect and influence societal values and beliefs, contributing to the formation of personal and collective identities. In today's diverse world, migration and its consequences are prominent themes in literature, emphasising the need for collaboration between social scientists and literary scholars to comprehend this multifaceted phenomenon (King, John and White 1995).

The migrant literature genre covers a handful of themes and motifs which are connected to postcolonialism. At the heart of migrant literature lies the theme of identity and the profound sense of belonging. Authors in this genre often explore characters' inner conflicts as they navigate the complex terrain of self-discovery. The migrant's identity is intrinsically tied to their homeland, yet it evolves as they adapt to their new surroundings. This tension between preserving one's cultural heritage and assimilating into the host culture forms the cornerstone of many migrant narratives (Case 2018). Cultural conflict is another recurring motif in migrant literature. Characters find themselves caught between their country of origin's customs, values, and traditions and those of their adopted land. This cultural dissonance leads to a sense

of hybridity, where individuals must navigate the intricate space between two worlds. The blending of cultures results in a unique and ever-evolving identity that is both a testament to human resilience and an embodiment of the globalised world (Ponzanesi and Merolla 2005). Migrant literature invites readers to explore the intricate processes of assimilation and acculturation. Characters must adapt to their new cultural surroundings while preserving elements of their original identity. These narratives depict the challenges and triumphs of navigating between two worlds and offer valuable insights into the human capacity for adaptation and resilience (Walkowitz 2006).

Migrant literature often delves into the experiences of exile or forced migration, portraying the profound sense of loss and alienation that accompanies leaving one's homeland. Characters in these narratives grapple with the trauma of displacement, the rupture of familial and societal ties, and the quest to rebuild their lives in foreign lands. These stories serve as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Their memories hold an essential place in migrant literature (Arabindan-Kesson 2019). I benefit from postcolonial theory by adopting concepts of “the other”, “orient”, “subaltern”, “third space”, “hybrid identity”, and “mimicry”. As I analyse three novels for my study regarding identity, gender identity, and home, I benefit from those concepts and try to find the connections between postcolonialism and migration. Postcolonial studies mainly focused on power dynamics, being a subject, the power-knowledge nexus and knowledge production, literary works, and the prominence of gender and race as constitutive aspects of the other. In this thesis, I focus on the fictional writings of African women migrants in a European country. I analyse their writings to find the effects of postcolonial ties, being the other, and their struggles to find a voice and a representation in the Western-

oriented male-dominant world in their narratives. Thus, I use the postcolonial theory as a lens for my study.

2.1.b. Poststructuralist Feminism

After exploring postcolonialism, it is crucial to examine poststructuralist feminism as the second lens of my research. This thesis focuses on the experiences of female migrants, so one central axis of this study is gender and its relationship with migration. Thus, Poststructuralist feminism provides significant insights for the study. Poststructuralist feminism is used in terms of its place in International Relations field. I employ poststructural feminism as it is used in Hansen's categorization of feminist ontologies. By categorizing feminist ontologies, Hansen provides a comprehensive map of the diverse philosophical underpinnings and methodological approaches within feminist theory. In IR, according to Hansen, the post structuralist feminism emphasises the importance of discourse. "To poststructuralists, the ontological and epistemological emphasis on discourse also means that the idea of 'the authentic' experience is itself a particular discursive construction rather than something that can be uncovered 'in reality'" (Hansen 2010, 23). The poststructuralist feminist analysis in IR examines how various discourses shape subjects and authorize certain actions while silencing others (Hansen 2010, 24). Also, the poststructuralist feminism critiques the power dynamics embedded in language and knowledge production and emphasise the fluidity and performativity of gender roles (Hansen 2010, 24).

Poststructuralist feminism challenges the notion of gender as an inherent or fixed attribute, instead viewing it as a product of discourse and language. Rejecting the idea of essentialism, it critiques the assumption of a predetermined essence of gender beyond linguistic constructs. Drawing from theorists like Derrida, Lacan, and

Foucault, it employs deconstruction, psychoanalysis, and theorisation of subjectivity to unveil the constructed nature of identities and the role of discourse in shaping political power dynamics. Poststructuralist feminism asserts that power and discourse are intertwined, viewing epistemes and scientific paradigms as products of discourse and political power, thus highlighting the linguistic determination of the political and social realm (Koložova 2021, 100).

In the light of post-structural studies, post-structural feminist theory suggests that there are ways that gender can be described while keeping patriarchal and essentialist claims on it (Frost and Elichaooff 2014). Butler, one of the prominent scholars of the field, defines gender as “the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (1990, 33). Feminist poststructuralist research seeks to transcend existing understandings of gender and identity. Rather than merely documenting differences between men and women, it aims to diversify possibilities and challenge binary categorisations. This involves exploring subjectivities that defy traditional gender norms and recognising power as socially constructed and contextually situated. Discursive practices play a central role in maintaining normative orders but can disrupt them, unveiling new perspectives and knowledge. In analysing gendered discourse, it's crucial to avoid rigid adherence to scientific principles and evidence-based practice, which can constrain academic inquiry and limit the exploration of alternative viewpoints (Davies and Gannon 2005, 313).

The theory uses discourse and content analysis to study discourses, narratives, and structures. It emphasises written works as it argues that knowledge is constructed and can be traced in written works as they include both language and a context,

discourse created by the writer's surroundings. Exploring the written texts helps uncover patriarchy's constructed mechanisms and questions its essence (Frost and Elichaooff 2014). Scholars probe the ways gender is represented in others' stories, how the gender discourses interact with discourses of race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, and how they affect the power structures (Davies and Gannon 2005, 312). The prominent field scholars are Kimberlé Crenshaw, Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous.

Moreover, poststructuralist feminism defends that identity has a complex mechanism. This mechanism is called intersectionality and was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her work on Black feminism. In her work, Crenshaw argues that Black women are often excluded from both feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse. She contends that these frameworks are based on a limited understanding of oppression, which fails to capture the intersection of race and gender accurately. Crenshaw highlights that simply including Black women within existing analytical structures is insufficient to address their experiences of marginalisation. She asserts that the intersectional expertise, which encompasses the overlapping effects of racism and sexism, cannot be adequately discussed without taking intersectionality into account (140).

In its essence, intersectionality recognises the interconnected nature of various systems of power, oppression, and identity. Post-structural feminists acknowledge that individuals occupy multiple social positions simultaneously, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability, and these intersecting identities shape their experiences of privilege and marginalisation in complex ways. In a poststructuralist framework, intersectionality emphasises identity categories' fluid and contingent nature, viewing them as socially constructed and subject to discursive formations. This perspective

underscores the importance of analysing power relations not as isolated phenomena but interwoven networks of domination and resistance. Through intersectional analysis, poststructuralist feminism seeks to uncover the diverse ways power operates within discourses and institutions, highlighting the need for nuanced, context-specific approaches to social justice advocacy and activism (Collins 2015, 1-3).

Moreover, intersectionality intersects with migration in complex ways, revealing the overlapping and multitude of identity, power, and oppression experienced by migrant individuals and communities. Migration is not a uniform experience; it is shaped by various factors such as race, gender, class, nationality, and legal status. Intersectional analyses of migration highlight how these intersecting identities and statuses intersect to shape migrants' experiences of marginalisation, discrimination, and exclusion in host countries (Bürkner 2012, 189-191).

Poststructuralist feminism is highly concerned with women's discourse and writings. Poststructuralist feminist scholars question how gender roles are found in women's writings and how women's discourse is affected by patriarchy. Their analysis aims to uncover the mechanisms of intersectionality and power in those writings. Scholars of the field are highly influenced by Julia Kristeva's arguments on the topic. Julia Kristeva does not define her writings as feminist, but her work has contributed to feminist research significantly. She builds upon Lacanian theory, particularly the notion of the phallogocentric symbolic order, arguing that women lack full language access in the feminine sense. However, she expands upon this by asserting that women's language need not be exclusively tied to writings by women. Her theory of subjectivity acknowledges language's dual nature, incorporating both feminine and masculine aspects. Kristeva's feminist standpoint is evident in her critiques of Lacanian theory, particularly regarding the maternal function, which she believes

opens possibilities for treating psychosis often overlooked in traditional psychoanalytic analysis.

Additionally, Kristeva emphasises the dilemma faced by women concerning the symbolic order, suggesting they must navigate between assimilation into a phallogocentric system or retreat into a valorisation of a silent, submerged body. Her contributions to feminist theory include focusing on the significance of the maternal and preoedipal in subjectivity formation, the reintegration of the body into discourses in the human sciences, and the recognition of a subject-in-process as an alternative to traditional notions of a unified subject. Kristeva's work underscores the complex interplay between language, subjectivity, and gender, offering valuable insights for feminist scholars grappling with questions of identity, power, and representation (Tandon 2008, 81-83).

One of the prominent field scholars, Luce Irigaray, like Kristeva, has questioned women's identity and writings. Her works delve into gender-related philosophy, exploring sexual differences without alienating men. She highlights a language barrier between genders, revealing previously unrecognised or misunderstood dynamics. Irigaray rejects the male symbolic order to emphasise difference, which is often considered a radical feminist stance. She critiques Freudian theory for its male-centric perspective on sexuality, advocating for a reevaluation of female sexuality on its terms. Irigaray proposes a uniquely feminine writing practice to construct a positive representation of women, challenging the phallic nature of language. She associates feminine representation with the metaphor of the specular mirror, which distorts masculine discourse. Rejecting the visual bias in psychoanalysis, Irigaray prioritises touch and resurrects aspects of Western culture, symbolising

feminine conditions in her quest for a mother-daughter bond equivalent (Tandon 2008, 88-89).

Another important concept of the field is “the laugh of Medusa”. The concept originates from Hélène Cixous's work of the same name. In her work, Cixous celebrates the power of women's writing as a means of liberation from patriarchal structures. She uses the myth of Medusa, a figure from Greek mythology known for her deadly gaze that turned men to stone, as a metaphor for the fears and anxieties surrounding women's voices and creativity. Cixous urges women to reclaim their voices, their bodies, and their desires, rejecting the patriarchal narrative that seeks to silence and control them (Cixous 1976).

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display - the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth. (Cixous 1976, 888)

“The Laugh of Medusa” represents a subversive act of defiance and empowerment, challenging dominant discourses and asserting women's agency in the realm of literature and beyond. The prominence of women's writing emphasised by post-structural feminism supports and helps the aim of this thesis. I try to show the importance of migrant women's experiences in the field of migration studies, and this understanding matches my efforts. The field of Migrant Literature and the works of postcolonial women writers in Italy, share a common artistic agenda. They focus on portraying a nation where the colonial past and postcolonial present are central, challenging the notion of a monolithic national identity and advocating for dialogue instead of historical revisionism. Their transnational narratives feature protagonists

who grapple with questions of belonging and construct individual identities that consider their life's entirety. They use Italian, but their language differs from the Italians' in that they use words in their native languages. In this sense, they all employ a 'minor, transnational' Italian language, which may include reappropriating Italian borrowings from the colonial era or blending multiple languages (Di Maio 2019).

Migrant Literature often serves as a lens through which broader societal issues are scrutinised. Scholars explore how these literary works shed light on immigration policies, integration, discrimination, racism, and social inclusion. By dissecting the narratives presented in migrant literature, researchers contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between migrants and their host societies (Curti 2007). When we look at the studies on migrant literature in Italy, including Somali Italian literature, we see that it has often been overlooked by scholars due to its 'minor' status, its association with a non-major colonial power and language, and its primarily female and minority authorship. Nevertheless, works like Ali Farah's *Little Mother* (2011) and other Somali Italian literary texts call for recognition and connections, seeking their rightful place in the literary and cultural history of Italy, Europe, Africa, and the contemporary global world (Di Maio 2019).

As migrants cross borders and build relations with the constructed knowledge and structures of both their homeland and the receiving country, they are influenced by both. The poststructuralist theory questions this complex relation by considering international migration as transnational migration and emphasising cross-border dynamics (B. S. Yeoh 2014). Also, poststructuralist theory analyses history to untangle the change of gender concepts throughout time and space to understand the discourse and structures which constructed the understanding of gender (Gatt 2016). Therefore, the poststructuralist feminist theory is an appropriate theory to question the gendered

problems migrants face and dwell on the gendered mechanisms and dynamics their lives are built upon. So, I benefit from this theory while analysing the novels I choose alongside the postcolonial theory to emphasise the gender aspect of their work.

Thus, by using postcolonialism and poststructuralist feminism as conceptual lenses, this thesis focuses on the fictional works of African migrant women writers in Italy and their resonance with immigration policies. It offers a multifaceted exploration of gender and migration dynamics. By delving into the literary creations of these immigrant women, it uncovers a distinct narrative that has often been overlooked in migration studies. This interdisciplinary endeavour, spanning Migration Studies, Political Science, International Relations, Literature, and Gender Studies, paints a more comprehensive picture of how the immigrant experience intersects with identity, culture, and the socio-political landscape. Through the lens of these writers, it reveals the intricate relationship between fiction and reality, shedding light on how literary narratives can mirror the struggles, daily lives, and integration processes of migrants while also highlighting the unique gender perspectives within these narratives. This thesis contributes to the broader discourse on migration by providing a novel and nuanced perspective on the convergence of literature, policy, and gender within the context of immigration.

2.1.c. Concepts

2.1.c.i. Identity and Gender Identity

After discussing the theories, it is necessary to understand the main concepts of the discourse analysis. Identity is “the set of meanings that define individuals as occupants of roles in society, members of groups or social categories, or unique persons with characteristics that identify them” (Burke and Stets 2022, 1). Identity is

one of the most commonly studied constructs in the social sciences. Identity as a concept has been a helpful tool for social sciences as it benefits the analyses of social and political transformations. Identity studies in social sciences analyse individual and group identities to uncover social and political dynamics that have two-way relations. Formation and transformation of identity and the dynamics that play a part in those processes have been prominent research topics for social sciences in general and Migration Studies in particular. Transnational bonds shape the stated processes and are unique. Moreover, group identities are significant for Migration Studies as the construction of “us and them” affects research areas of migration such as integration, belonging, assimilation, and multiculturalism (Barbera 2014).

As stated above, identity is constituted of a series of factors. The most apparent factors affecting identity formation in migratory experience are ethnicity, race, gender, class, religion, political stance, culture and language (Brettel and Sargent 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to notice the transnational nature of these factors. Migrant as a subject constructs their identity with values, language, and culture they gathered from two or more cultures depending on the experience. This situation causes identity studies in Migration Studies to analyse several layers, relationships, interconnected values, and institutions (Kofman 2005). Migrants became part of diasporas, minority institutions, non-governmental organisations, and local organisations. Thus, participation in those groups also contributes to identity formation as belonging and social ties are substantial (Madsen and van Naerssen 2003).

After explaining identity in general, we should define gender identity, too, as it's a prominent part of my research. Gender identity, a fundamental component of one's identity, is significant in the mosaic of human self-perception. Unlike broader identity constructs, gender identity pertains explicitly to an individual's deeply felt

sense of being male, female, both, neither, or anywhere along the diverse spectrum of genders. It encompasses a multifaceted interplay of biological, psychological, and sociocultural factors, shaping how one perceives and experiences their gender. Gender identity goes beyond the physical attributes typically associated with sex, delving into the realm of personal understanding and expression, often transcending societal norms and expectations. In essence, it is the innermost sense of who one is about their gender, a complex and deeply personal facet of human existence (Wood and Eagly 2009, 109).

The term intersectionality is crucial when explaining identity and gender identity in particular. As discussed in the previous section, intersectionality is one of the significant concepts of poststructuralist feminism. This perspective highlights that an individual's social identities, including race, class, sexuality, and others, profoundly shape their beliefs about and experiences of gender. Consequently, feminist researchers emphasise the necessity of centring intersecting identities in examining gender. Understanding gender within the context of power relations embedded in social identities is crucial, as it acknowledges the various ways in which systems of privilege and oppression intersect and impact individuals' lives. By recognising the intricate interplay of multiple identities, the intersectionality perspective deepens our understanding of gender identity and its manifestations within diverse social contexts (Shields 2008, 301-302).

In Migration Studies, identity and gender identity can be explained by their transnational nature, as briefly referred above. Transnationalism refers to people's social, cultural, and identity-related ties with places, institutions or other people exceeding national borders (Vertovec 1999). This understanding relates to international migrants as transnational migrants or members of 'transnational communities', and their activities and identities as examples of 'transnationalism'" (Al-

Ali and Koser 2002, 1). Transnational understanding breaks the assumption that the nation-state is the unit of analysis and puts the transnational sphere in its place. Studies taking the nation-state as the unit of analysis focus on the processes of assimilation, integration, and outcomes of migration for nation-states. On the other hand, studies taking the transnational sphere as their unit of analysis take migrants as transnational actors and investigate identity from a multi-dimensional perspective rather than seeing it as fixed to one place (Anthias 2009). In this way, transnationalism questions the concept of identity, home and belonging (Brettell 2006).

Furthermore, transnational studies examine the overlooked aspects of migrant identity. Transnational studies emphasise the significance of gender, race, and culture (B. S. Yeoh 2014, Briggs 2008, Olwig 2003). Mobility experience builds a bridge between two cultures. Migrants, the subject of this experience, gain knowledge of both cultures and, as a result, create a new, unique culture and identity. Transnationalism is crucial in understanding the identity formation of both first-generation and the following generations, as the migrant identity concerns both the receiving and sending countries and is created by the complex relations between them (Duff 2015). Thus, the notion of "transnational migration" helped to extend and enrich the field of migration studies in general and the understanding of identity, gender, and what home means to migrants. The transnationalist perspective opens new studies in the political, social, and economic lives of migrants (Al-Ali and Koser 2002).

In Italy, the academic study of migrant literature has gained prominence, paralleling the growing importance of this literary genre on the global stage. Scholars and researchers have recognised the need to understand and analyse the narratives of migrants within the Italian context, acknowledging that these voices contribute significantly to the evolving Italian identity. These academic endeavours encompass

various topics and themes related to migrant literature, offering valuable insights into the complexities of migration and its impact on literature and society.

One central focus of academic studies on migrant literature in Italy is examining how migrant authors negotiate their identities through their writing. This entails exploring how these authors navigate the terrain of cultural hybridity, linguistic diversity, and the juxtaposition of multiple identities. By closely analysing the works of migrant authors, scholars aim to decipher the intricate processes through which individuals construct and express their identities in the face of migration (Curti 2007). Another vital aspect of academic studies on migrant literature in Italy is the examination of the socio-political dimensions of migration.

Furthermore, Italian scholars of migrant literature are keenly interested in the interplay between language and identity. As a host country, Italy presents a unique linguistic context where migrants must negotiate between their native languages, the Italian language, and any other languages relevant to their backgrounds. This multilingual environment is a rich source of exploration for researchers, as it raises questions about language preservation, language acquisition, and the role of language in shaping cultural identities (Portelli 2006).

The diasporic experience of Somali women involves a longing for their homeland and a reassessment of time, leading to repression. However, scholars suggest this repression can lead to positive identity changes by opening up to new influences. Despite facing coercion and marginalisation, they resist by reinterpreting their life stories and adopting transnational forms of acknowledgement. Yet, their social and symbolic capital hinders the full adoption of a distinct diasporic culture. They face various barriers, including economic dependence, cultural values, nostalgia, and social expectations (Decimo 2007, 112-113).

Also, gender and women's experiences are essential themes in migrant literature. Migrant literature often explores the gender theme, delving into how both male and female migrants navigate unique challenges. These narratives often examine how gender intersects with issues of identity, power dynamics, and cultural adaptation. Female migrants may face problems related to agency and empowerment in patriarchal systems while male migrants may grapple with shifting expectations of masculinity in new environments. In essence, migrant literature sheds light on how individuals negotiate their identities amid cultural displacement, highlighting the significance of gender dynamics in this process (Willis, Toscano and Brooks Nelson 2019).

When we look at the migration studies in Italy regarding gender, we see that Italy has become a focal point for research in the field of gender and migration, reflecting a growing awareness of the critical role of gender in shaping migration experiences and policies (Pojmann 2006). Researchers have recently explored various themes and areas within this field. One prominent area of study centres on labour migration, particularly in sectors such as domestic work and caregiving, where migrant women constitute a significant portion of the workforce. Investigations delve into working conditions, vulnerabilities, and rights of female migrant workers from Eastern Europe, North Africa, and Asia (Andall 1992, Baldassar 2011, Sarti 2010, Scrinzi 2016). Human trafficking, especially for sexual exploitation and labour, has garnered attention as Italy serves as a destination country (Andrijasevic 2020). Studies delve into the dynamics of trafficking and efforts to combat it, along with support for survivors. Family reunification processes also feature in research, focusing on the gender dimensions of legal and social aspects of reunification and its implications for women's integration (di Belgiojoso 2018, Bonizzoni 2015).

Studies explore the intersectionality of gender with other identity markers, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, shaping the experiences of migrant women. In this context, research on African women migrants in Italy has shed light on the intricate interplay of race and gender within the migration experience. These research efforts tackle the unique challenges, vulnerabilities, and opportunities African women face as they journey from their home countries to Italy. Researchers emphasise the intersectionality of race and gender, recognising that these women's experiences are shaped not only by their gender but also by their racial identities (Lucht 2011). This intersectional lens allows for a nuanced exploration of the discrimination, stereotyping, and disparities they encounter in the host society, whether in terms of access to employment (Andall 2017), education (Fullin 2011), or healthcare (Sosta 2009). Moreover, studies highlight the resilience and agency of African women migrants, showcasing their contributions to Italian society and their roles in challenging migrant stereotypes and advocating for change. The intersectional perspective in these studies not only advances our understanding of the experiences of African women migrants in Italy but also informs policies and interventions that seek to address the specific and interconnected challenges they face due to their race and gender.

2.1.c.ii. Home

First off, we should examine if the most common understanding of home is a house or a place or, more broadly, a country. One of the most studied discussions on the home is by Heidegger and Levinas on whether the home is associated with a homeland or may be created in another place (Tijmes 1998, Banker 2022, Benesch 2022, Eubanks 2011). Heidegger states that humans do need a homeland, dwelling

"Heimat". A home is a place, a root for humans. Conversely, Levinas believes that humans can create their roots in any place and build a home. There is no need for a homeland to have a home.

Home can be made anew. Both believe there is a need for a place for a home to exist. Another home view is that it is a territory that differs from others by the presence of a collection of habits, family members, and belonging. Home constitutes one's identity, so it is the identity itself (Wise 2000). A more holistic view includes both identity and place as elements forming home (Richardson 2019). This view suggests that home is constructed by objects, individual values, communities, locations, and identity (Richardson 2019). Thus, home as a concept can be studied from various aspects. It may encompass a place, several places or move from one to another; it may be the equation of objects or loved ones or values, or it may conclude each of these aspects.

In Migration Studies, the home has been mainly studied as a one-sided relation. It was widely believed that migrants' homeland is their home, and they always dream of returning. The receiving country has yet to be considered in this equation. However, more recent studies which take transnationalism theory have expanded this view since the 1990s. The concept of home is central to transnationalism, as it explores how individuals construct a sense of belonging that transcends geographical boundaries. Transnationalism theory provides a lens through which researchers can understand how people navigate, negotiate, and maintain connections in an increasingly interconnected world (Ahmed 1999).

Transnationalism questions the traditional understanding of home for migrants. It takes the relationship between migrants and both their home country and host country into consideration. It does not accept that migrants adapt and accept the host

country's social, cultural, and political norms. Instead, transnationalism suggests that the social, political, cultural, and economic relations of migrants have exceeded national borders and have a much more complex mechanism than previous studies suggested (Teo 2011). According to transnational understanding, migrants have complex boundaries with sending and receiving countries. Therefore, the description of the home is transformed. Scholars argue that home is not grounded in a geographical sphere anymore. It may exist cross-borders (Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Also, wealthy cultural and social knowledge migrants gain constitutes their home as well as elaborate race, gender, and class play a part in forming their home (Nyman 2009).

The diasporic interactions also add to the formation of the home. Diasporas and other transnational communities are considered prominent actors in the elaborate notion of home. Diasporas exist in both the political and economic spheres as they build a bridge between sending and receiving countries. The political and financial activities of migrant communities influence both nations and migrants as individuals. Economic conditions and political identities of migrants play crucial roles in their formation of home (Adamson 2002). Therefore, in this thesis I analysed home and its meanings from various points of view.

In Migration Studies, home assumed more prominence in research when individualistic studies became more widely discussed. Transnationalism and identity studies enriched studies of home which became a recurring motif in migrant literature. Characters often wrestle with a deep nostalgia and yearning for their place of origin. The idea of home transcends geographical boundaries and becomes a powerful symbol of emotional and spiritual attachment. Authors capture the bittersweet longing for a distant homeland and the complex emotions it evokes (Willis, Toscano and Brooks Nelson 2019). Thus, home may be a place, a feeling, a part of identity, a reflection of

communities, or a complex concept encompassing all the above. Thus, this thesis will conceptualise home as a transnational space as, for migrants, home exists beyond borders and differs from the classical understanding of a fixed place.

2.2. Methodology

This part of the chapter outlines the research design and methodological framework employed in this study. The overarching aim is to explore the narratives of Somali women writers in Italy and their reflections on the nation's migration policies, integration processes, gender dynamics, and identity formation. The research design encompasses both qualitative and interdisciplinary approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research questions.

2.2.a. Research Questions and Aim of the Study

1. How do the narratives of Somali women writers in Italy reflect and respond to the nation's migration policies and integration processes?
2. How do the selected novels shed light on the evolving dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging over different historical periods?
3. What insights can be gleaned from the intersection of gender studies and postcolonial theory in analysing migrant literature?
4. To what extent can fiction serve as a valuable source of knowledge for understanding individual experiences within Migration Studies?

This study aims to delve into the multifaceted intersection of migration policies, integration processes, and the experiences of Somali women writers in Italy. The primary focus is examining how the narratives crafted by these writers reflect and respond to the nation's migration policies, shedding light on the challenges and

opportunities Somali women face in the context of migration. By closely examining selected novels, the research seeks to unravel the evolving dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging over various historical periods. Additionally, the study aims to contribute to the broader academic discourse by exploring the insights that emerge from the intersection of gender studies and postcolonial theory in analysing migrant literature. Furthermore, the study aims to assess the extent to which fiction can serve as a valuable source of knowledge, offering a unique perspective on individual experiences within Migration Studies. Fictional writings by migrant writers encompass central themes such as ambiguity, shifting identities, the meaning of home, multiculturalism, culture shock, and belonging. As such, Migrant Literature touches upon important terms and discussions of Migration Studies. In this thesis too, whilst analysing the narratives of the select pieces, I will focus on the concepts of “identity”, “gender identity”, and “home” as well as exploring the political and social atmosphere reflected in the novels.

Moreover, they reflect the historical and political atmosphere of the period described in the fictional works. The autobiographical elements in the fictional works of migrants enable to reflect upon how historical and political contexts and incidents affect individuals and how they view these and the world around them. Through the research questions, the study aspires to provide a nuanced understanding of the intricate connections between literature, migration, and identity formation, particularly within the context of Somali women writers in Italy.

2.2.b. Data Collection

2.2.b.i. Selection of Novels

Three novels authored by Somali women writers residing in Italy were selected for comprehensive analysis. The novels were chosen intentionally for their diverse publication timelines, spanning from the 1990s to the 2010s, to account for the distinct political and social contexts in which they were crafted. All the novels were originally written in Italian and translated into English. They also include Somali expressions. Moreover, these imaginative pieces of literature vividly depict the journeys of Somali women, offering distinctive insights into their migration experiences. This becomes particularly crucial in unravelling the complex web of emotions and perspectives associated with the overarching theme of migration. As a result, delving into these novels provides me with a valuable avenue to explore and analyse the intricate discourse of Somali women, allowing for a nuanced comprehension of migration experiences on a personal level within the realm of fictional narratives. Also, the appearance of concepts of “identity”, “gender identity”, and “home” makes the novels ideal to analyse them with postcolonial and poststructural feminist theories.

2.2.b.ii. *Far from Mogadishu*

Far from Mogadishu (1994) by Shirin Ramzanali Fazel narrates the story of a Somali women's migration from Somalia to Italy after the coup d'état in Somalia in 1969. The novel is written from a first-person point of view and follows the main character's journey through a fragmented narrative. The story consists of eight parts and several chapters. It is written in short chapters and has a poetical use of language. The book's chapters do not follow a linear timeline; they go back and forth between past and present. The form of the novel emphasises the content as it highlights the

fragmented identity and the transnational journey of a migrant. Through this fragmented narrative, Fazel invites readers to delve into her multifaceted identity, her experiences as a Somali woman in Italy, and her poignant reflections on the changing landscapes of her homeland.

One critical aspect that makes *Far from Mogadishu* significant in contemporary literature is its contribution to the decolonisation of Italian memory. In Italy, as in many former colonial powers, the colonial past often remains unexamined or glossed over. In this fictional work, Fazel touches upon the subject by examining the Italian influence in Somalia. She highlights the unseen marks of colonisation, such as Italian being taught in schools in Somalia, Italian names given to restaurants, and the remaining Italian culture in Somalia. Moreover, she depicts the juxtaposition of the memories of the coloniser and the colonised by narrating the thoughts of Italians on Somalia, which are close to none through the main characters' experience. Italians do not even differentiate Somali people from other migrants from Africa or know anything about the country at all.

In contrast, the main character has grown up learning about Italy all her life. Thus, this literary work builds a bridge between real life and fiction, gives voice to the postcolonial migrant as a narrator and brings up an alternative narrative to the mainstream narrative. As Italy's colonial past has been covered in recent years, the mainstream narrative has covered the colonial past, and the voices of postcolonial subjects remain unknown (Conforti 2020, 32-33).

Moreover, the novel focuses on identity, belonging and home. The protagonist grapples with her identity as both Somalian and Italian. She navigates the complexities of a life lived “in-between” two countries, never fully belonging to either. The concept of home conveyed in “Far from Mogadishu” suggests that home transcends physical

location, as it can exist and be absent in multiple places at once and depicts it as a transnational place. This highlights the understanding that home is a continuous process of navigating, building, and reshaping emotional connections within and across various spaces (Conforti 2020, 35). Also, the author's narrative reflects the dual sense of belonging that often characterises the immigrant experience. She mourns the transformation of her homeland, Somalia, from a place of cherished childhood memories to one of destruction and chaos. Simultaneously, she struggles to embrace an Italian identity in a country that sometimes fails to welcome her fully.

The novel recounts her journey from Mogadishu to Italy. This narrative unfolds in fragments, vividly portraying her life in Mogadishu and Rome while eschewing traditional chronology. The fragmented narrative structure of the book mirrors the fragmented identity of the protagonist. The story is divided into small subsections, each with separate titles, and recounts autobiographical experiences based on the emotions they evoke. This approach adds depth to the storytelling, allowing readers to explore the author's experiences through emotion. Thus, the novel appears as an ideal choice for this study as it tackles the concepts of home identity and tells the story of a woman migrant from her voice. The novel is historically accurate, focuses on the individual experience of a postcolonial subject, and shows the difficulties a woman faces along the road of migration.

2.2.b.iii. *Little Mother*

Cristina Ali Farah, born to a Somali father and an Italian mother, draws from her background, spending her formative years in Mogadishu, Somalia, with intermittent visits to family in Italy. Her journey of fleeing the country during her teenage years due to the civil war significantly influences her portrayal of the

characters and the themes within the novel. *Little Mother* (2011) by Cristina Ali Farah is a poignant narrative deeply rooted in the Somali immigrant experience, particularly those displaced by the civil war and the fall of President Mohamed Siad Barre in Somalia in 1991 (Di Maio 2011, xvii).

The novel is divided into nine chapters narrated by a diverse range of interconnected Somali narrators. The central narrative explores the friendship between two cousins, Barni and Dominica Axad, both grappling with exile in Rome. The nonchronological narrative elegantly traverses their childhood in the 1970s to their lives in the present day, where Dominica Axad, a biracial individual, becomes a mother, further intertwining the threads of the Somali diaspora experience. Ali Farah skilfully employs a conversational narrative style, rich with dense imagery, drawing on her background as a poet. The use of imagery enhances the thematic depth of the narrative, often subtly foreshadowing more significant themes within the novel.

The conversation-based storytelling conveys the intricacies of the characters' lives. Also, language acts as a tool to highlight postcolonial relations. Language evolves beyond mere communication to become fertile ground for meaningful artistic innovations and, ultimately, a battleground for defiance. The language once imposed by colonial powers morphed into the voice of postcolonial expression through imaginative manipulation and cultural blending (Di Maio 2011, xviii-xix). The original text is written in Italian but has several Somali expressions. In the English version, the novel's translators strategically choose to italicise certain Somali expressions, providing a glossary at the end of the book. This decision enhances the text's authenticity, preserving the foreignness while allowing readers to comprehend the linguistic nuances, particularly those coined during the Italian colonisation of Somalia.

Moreover, the translators astutely mirror the subject-less sentence structure of Italian, replicating the conversational tone and adding depth to the novel's linguistic richness (Bellesia-Contuzzi and Offredi Poletto 2011). Ali Farah's *Little Mother* presents a nuanced depiction of the Somali diaspora, illustrating the challenges of identity and belonging that the Somali immigrants face. The narrative vividly portrays the struggle of these individuals to reconstruct their identity and find a sense of home outside Somalia, overcoming physical and psychological wounds. The novel revolves around dual identity, family, community, motherhood, and womanhood.

2.2.b.iv. Adua

Adua (2015) by Igiaba Scego is a compelling novel that delves into the life of a Somali woman, Adua, as she embarks on a challenging journey from Somalia to Italy. Set in a relatively recent period, the book weaves together Adua's experiences and struggles, showcasing the complex realities migrants face. Adua's narrative is interwoven with her father's experiences in Italy during the Italian Colonial rule, adding depth to the storyline. The novel begins by depicting Adua and her sister's upbringing as nomads in Somalia, and their life in Mogadishu after their father's return. Adua grapples with the constraints of city life, yearning to return to the wilderness she once knew. Her father's oppressive behaviour further fuels her desire to escape, prompting her to leave her homeland with aspirations of becoming a movie star. However, the harsh realities she encounters and the people she meets leave lasting traumas, altering the course of her dreams. Eventually, Adua relinquishes her aspirations, opting for marriage to a Somali man and settling into an office job. The aftermath of the civil war prompts her to contemplate her roots and the decision either

to return Somalia or sell her family house in Mogadishu. This juncture also brings to light challenges in her marriage, forcing her to confront life-changing decisions.

Throughout the book, Scego intricately addresses significant themes, including the first and most apparent struggles faced by women, gender-based violence, power relations of coloniser and the colonised, societal expectations, the yearning for a sense of home, questions of identity and language, and the broader experiences of migration. Though distinct, the narratives of Adua and her father provide a powerful lens through which to examine these universal themes, ultimately delivering a poignant exploration of the human experience. By juxtaposing Adua's journey with that of her father's experiences in Italy, she not only provides a multi-generational perspective but also underscores the enduring challenges faced by migrants over time. Adua's longing to return to her nomadic roots and aspirations to be a movie star symbolise the tension between tradition and modernity. In *Adua*, Scego's writing is characterised by its lyrical and evocative prose, which allows readers to immerse themselves in the complex emotions and struggles of the characters. The narratives of Adua and her father are connected with monologues from the father to Adua which are written in a poetic tone.

The novel's examination of post-civil war Somalia and Adua's contemplation of whether to return or to sell her family home also reflects the broader themes of displacement and the longing for a sense of belonging. This internal struggle is emblematic of the dilemmas many immigrants face who are caught between two worlds. Different periods in the novel make it possible to analyse the changes in a political and social environment and the thoughts towards migrants over time. Also, the story poses the different nature of men's and women's migration experiences by giving the fathers' and Adua's experiences. This way, it presents the gender-based

struggles migrants face more clearly. This aspect of the novel makes it an ideal choice for this study as it tries to unfold the gendered migration experience, analyse the women's individual experiences, and broaden them, making them more apparent in the literature.

2.2.c. Theory and Analysis Method

In this study, I employ a critical discourse analysis methodology to investigate the narratives of Somali women writers in Italy as depicted in three selected novels. Drawing upon postcolonial and post-structural feminist theories, this research explores how these narratives reflect and respond to the nation's migration policies and integration processes. Critical discourse analysis serves as an interdisciplinary and interpretative tool, enabling the unveiling of power relations inherent within discourse. This methodological approach is particularly suited to examining literary works, news, speeches, advertisements, and other forms of discourse, making it apt for this study's multi-lensed and interdisciplinary nature. By applying postcolonial and post-structural feminist lenses, I seek to interrogate the political, social, and historical dynamics of power that shape and influence the experiences of migrant women in Italy, as depicted in the chosen novels. Through this analysis, insights can be gleaned into the evolving dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging over different historical periods and the intersection of gender studies and postcolonial theory in the analysis of migrant literature. Additionally, this research seeks to ascertain the extent to which fiction can serve as a valuable source of knowledge for understanding individual experiences within Migration Studies. In the analysis, each novel examined through how immigration policies are reflected in fictional works and centers on the ideas of

“identity”, “gender identity”, and “home”. Since the study mainly follows the novels' narrative flow, the examination of the aforementioned concepts likewise does so.

In conclusion, this chapter introduces and elaborates on the theoretical and conceptual framework as well as the methodology of the thesis. The postcolonial and poststructural feminist theories employ the discourse analysis method and they appropriately explain the postcolonial ties that may be seen in migratory flows. Moreover, both theories explain the gender based struggles and experiences. The “identity”, “gender identity” and “home” concepts are applicable to study with the stated theories as these concepts are often analysed by them. Moreover, the stated research questions constitute the structure and the main aspects of the study. In the next chapter, building upon the theory, I explain the political and historical ties between Italy and Somalia.

CHAPTER III

COLONIAL TIES AND MIGRATION POLICIES

This chapter focuses on the colonial ties between Italy and Somalia as well as evolution of the migration policies in Italy with an aim to understand the background of the Somali – Italy relations as well as highlight the colonial history, which constitutes an essential component of the thesis as this study builds on the insights of postcolonial theory. First, I discuss the colonial ties between Somalia and Italy, then move onto the migration policies in Italy to discuss these policies and their repercussions for the Somali people. This chapter provides the historical and political context, actors and policies necessary for conducting the discourse analysis of the selected novels.

3.1. Italy And Somalia

Once we delved into the theoretical foundations and explore the research about gender and literature in Migration Studies, our next step is to examine the postcolonial connections between Somalia and Italy. Additionally, we should analyse the evolution of migration policies within Italy. Gaining insight into the historical connections and current situation between Italy and Somalia is pivotal, as it sets the stage for our forthcoming discourse analysis. Furthermore, an in-depth examination of Italian migration policy processes is essential to grasp the migration dynamics and their impact on the political and social context within our novels.

As of 2022 there are 6388 male and 1982 female, making a total of 8370 Somali residents in Italy whose migration status is unclear (I.Stat 2022). Somalis were the

second biggest refugee group with 9284 people after 11345 Eritreans in Italy in 2012 (UNICEF 2013). They were the third biggest refugee and migrant group in Italy, following the Syrians and Eritreans, according to data from 2015 (T.N. 2015). The most recent data, dated 2023, shows a decrease in the number of Somali refugees in Italy compared to 2015. Data from August 2023 shows that 288 refugees came to Italy from Somalia in the stated year (UNHCR 2023). Due to a lack of available data, we cannot know the exact number of Somali migrants and refugees residing in Italy in previous decades, especially before the 1980s. However, the numbers have changed throughout the years according to political and social incidents. Somalia's colonial past under Italy makes Italy a destination or trans country for Somalis for a long time.

We need to examine the postcolonial ties between Italy and Somalia to understand the migration waves from Somalia to Italy and the effects of those ties on the migration experience. Italy's colonial past is primarily overlooked in contrast to other European countries like England and France. In both colonial and postcolonial studies, Italy's case was studied extensively in the 1990s. The lack of empirical data and interpretative studies affected the gap in the literature, too. Italy's colonial presence was less apparent than in other countries mentioned above, and it has yet to be considered either in Italy or outside the country except for a handful of studies (R. Ben-Ghiat 2008).

The first research was conducted in 1952 when Giuseppe Brusasca established a research committee to investigate and publish findings on Italian colonial activities. The committee, chaired by Francesco Caroselli, had members with close ties to colonial governance. Angelo Del Boca criticised the committee for producing biased work that portrayed Italian colonialism positively. In the post-World War 2 decades, Italian research on colonialism was nationalistic and isolated, with fundamental

English-language studies left untranslated. Fabio Grassi's specialised study on Italy's presence in Somalia was published only in 1980. However, a 1989 conference on Italian Colonial Politics was a turning point, and since then, studies on the topic increased (Tripodi 1999).

Several aspects of Italian colonialism make it distinct from other colonial powers. Italy lost its colonies after World War II, and the colonies came under the rule of other colonial powers (R. Ben-Ghiat 2008). The 1947 Peace Treaty required Italy to formally relinquish all its colonies, including Libya and its previous territories in the Horn. Moreover, Italy was an emigration country until the late 1970s, and it affected the postcolonial existence as Italy only interacted with its past colonies through migration in the last decades of the 20th century (R. Ben-Ghiat 2008). While Italy lost its colonies in the Horn of Africa, the influence of Italian rule left marks in several areas such as tradition, language, and political sphere (Novati 2008).

The general belief is that Italy was a colonial power during the Mussolini era who ruled the country as a dictator from 1922 to 1943. However, Italy's colonial past goes way back from this period. (R. Ben-Ghiat 2008). Italy colonised countries in the Horn of Africa, like Eritrea and Somalia, in the 19th century. The first colonial activity of Italy started in 1837 with Italian activity in Eritrea. After that, Italy continued its colonising acts in Africa and these acts in Africa affected Eritrea, Zanzibar, Ethiopia, and Somalia (Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 2016).

Within Somali-Italian relations, exploring the colonial legacy and the phenomenon of migration from Somalia to Italy has been a prominent theme. These ties trace back to the late 19th century when Italy embarked on its colonial expansion into Africa, encompassing much of the Horn of Africa. Italy's first connection with Somalia was in 1889 (Birioni 2017). Italy gained power over Obbia and Mijjertein

(parts of Somalia) in exchange for arms and money. In the same year, Italy gained control of four Benadir ports in southern Somalia from Britain. Italy attained control of other parts of the territory in 1893 and purchased them in 1905. Eritrean soldiers were placed in Somalia in 1907, and Italy officially declared Somalia a colony in 1908 (Ben-Ghiat and Fuller 2016).

This colonial rule persisted for several decades, with Mogadishu serving as the principal city of the colony. During this period, Mogadishu witnessed a demographic influx as individuals from smaller towns and Italians were relocated to the city. Moreover, the colonial era left an indelible mark on Somalia's educational system and language, as Somalians were exposed to the Italian language and culture in schools throughout the early 20th century.

The British administration interrupted Italy's control over Somalia during World War II from 1941 to 1949 (Calchi Novati 2008). However, Italy's ties with Somalia endured. Italian administration was reinstated in 1950 under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, maintaining its presence as "The Italian Trusteeship Administration in Somalia" until Somalia achieved independence in 1960. From 1950 to 1960, Italy's Trustee Administration in Somalia played a vital role in the region's political landscape by preparing the first democratic elections in 1954 and acting as an advisor after that (Tripodi 1999). Consequently, the influence of Italy on Somalia persisted, leaving an enduring imprint on facets such as cuisine, language, and culture (Calchi Novati 2008).

After 1960, Somalia had a democratic rule for nine years. 1969 marked a significant turning point with a military coup in Somalia led by General Siad Barre, which brought an authoritarian regime to power. Under Siad Barre's rule, the country experienced both periods of stability and brutal repression. His regime collapsed in

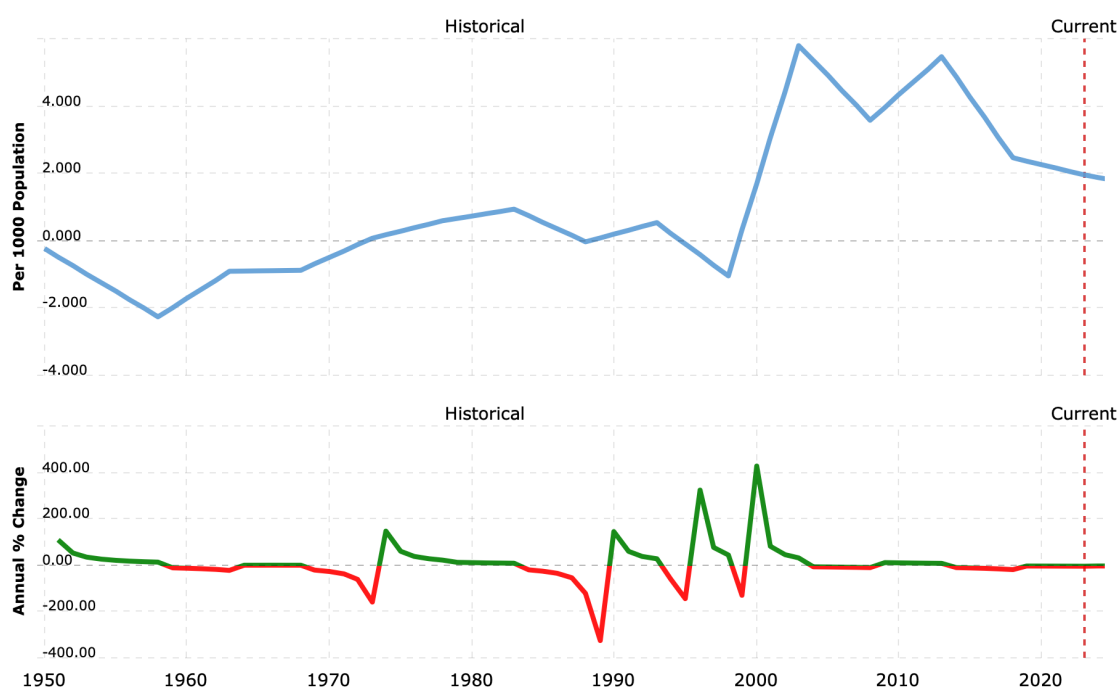
1991, leading to the outbreak of the Somali Civil War and the disintegration of central authority. It resulted in a substantial exodus of Somali people seeking refuge abroad (Tripodi 1999).

Italy emerged as an attractive immigration destination for Somalis, owing to its historical colonial ties and its position as a gateway to Europe. These enduring connections between Italy and Somalia have played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of migration and the intercultural dynamics experienced by Somali immigrants in Italy. There are still migrants and refugees coming from Somalia to Italy. They have diaspora groups, produce art, and have their foundations. The most prominent figures of the Somali diaspora in Italy are writers Christina Ali Farah and Igiaba Scego, football player Ali Said Faqi, and journalist Nadia Eghbal.

3.2. Italy's Migration Policies

After detailing the postcolonial ties between Somalia and Italy, let us delve into the evolution of Italy's migration policy formation. This will help us gain insights into the political landscape of migration and observe how migration policies have evolved over the years. Italy is an exceptional case due to its rapid transition from an emigration country to an immigration country, a phenomenon widely discussed in the literature (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009; Bonifazi et al. 2009). The dramatic change in Italy's migration graphic requires attention and analysis of how the situation affected the formation of migration policy.

Figure 3.1. Italy Migration Trends (MacroTrends 2023)



Italy began experiencing immigration from overseas in the late 1970s and 1980s when Western European countries ceased accepting workers from non-European countries (Calavita 2005). Consequently, Italy is classified as a quasi-new immigration destination (Caponio and Graziano 2011). The first positive migration-emigration balance dates back to 1973 when northern European countries closed their borders to international migration after the oil shock. Additionally, southern countries like Italy and Spain needed a labour force due to the strict migration policies of northern European countries. Italy's post-World War II economic development, aligning it with other European powerhouses like Germany and France, increased job opportunities, attracting migrants from Africa, Asia, and Latin America (Calavita 2005, 3). This growth in migration created a need for comprehensive legislation.

Moreover, Italy's ageing population and the increasing employment of Italian women generated new demands, such as the elder care industry and the labour force

to support it. By the mid-1980s to the 1990s, the number of migrants had surged, with a significant proportion lacking valid residence permits. Although minor regulations were introduced in 1977 and 1982, it was not until 1986 that comprehensive migration laws were enacted (Zincone 2011).

Italy's first comprehensive law on international migration took effect in 1986. The initial laws were primarily focused on labourers, emphasising the economic aspect of migration. Migrants were treated as temporary guests rather than permanent residents, and the laws lacked comprehensive provisions for permanent status or integration. Scholars have addressed this issue in the literature, with Zolberg describing it as a “wanted but not welcomed syndrome” where migrants were seen as a workforce but not fully integrated into the community (Calavita 2005).

The history of Italy's migration policies is complex, influenced by numerous factors, including the political perspective of the ruling party, Italy's fast-changing political landscape, and the need to align with EU regulations. Italy's migration policies differ from other EU countries and are often studied in conjunction with Spain (Finotelli and Sciortino 2009), as both countries share similar migration patterns and policies. Studies exclusively focused on Italy often address economic and security aspects, with regulations and laws primarily concentrated on economic migration, rights, entry requirements for labour migration, and issues related to irregular migration⁴ (Caponio and Cappiali 2018, 107).

Italy's migration laws have undergone significant changes since the 1970s, reflecting the country's transformation from a nation of emigration to one of immigration. This transition began in 1974 when Italy recorded a positive migration

⁴ Irregular migration/migrant refers to individuals who enter or stay in a foreign country without the requisite legal authorisation, bypassing official immigration processes (IOM 2019).

balance. However, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that Italy started to be recognised as an immigration destination. The initial regulations in response to this shift were Bill 694 of 1980 and Bill 1812 of 1982. However, these early laws provided limited solutions for addressing irregular migration or effectively regulating the influx of migrants. The first comprehensive migration law, commonly known as the "Foschi Law," was enacted in 1986. This law primarily focused on the economic aspects of migration and lacked provisions for the social integration of migrants (Caponio and Cappiali 2018, 110).

A more detailed piece of legislation, the "Mortelli Law" (Law number 39 of 1990), followed. It addressed aspects such as refugee status, entry requirements, and documentation. Still, it fell short of fully considering the social rights and integration of migrants. At this point, Italy's migration regulations were predominantly national decisions, with limited alignment with EU laws, as the European Union had yet to establish unified laws on migration (Caponio and Cappiali 2018). The landscape began to change after the Maastricht Treaty 1992, emphasising common interests among EU member states. This paved the way for introducing the "Dini Decree," law decree number 489 of 1995, although it did not ultimately pass into law. A significant milestone came in 1998 with the enactment of Law Number 40, called the "Turco-Napolitano Law." This law introduced regulations for the integration and social rights of migrants and marked a departure from treating immigration as an emergency. Concurrently, Legislative Decree Number 286 of 1998 provided detailed definitions for the legal status of foreigners in Italy. The political climate shifted in 2002 when a right-wing party came to power in Italy and adopted an anti-immigration stance, echoing a broader anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe. This shift resulted in the rearranging of the "Bossi-Fini Law" (Law number 189 of 2002), which is often

regarded as a pivotal moment in Italy's approach to migration. However, some scholars argue that despite its seemingly strict provisions, this law did provide regulations for irregular migrants (Abbondanza 2017).

The “Bossi-Fini Law” came into force when a left-wing government was in force, but the law was revised under a right-wing government in the same year. It introduced stringent measures such as fingerprinting for visa applicants, making family reunification difficult, and tightening restrictions on political asylum and citizenship acquisition. It also established detention centres for illegal immigrants and criticised extraterritorial camps. In response to exclusionary legal and media

0.2

Figure 3.2. Italian Migration Laws (Abbondanza 2017)

Table 4. Summary of Italian migration laws.

Law	Year	Scope of the Amnesty	Government in Charge	Political Context
Law No. 943 of 1986, 'Foschi Law'	1986	118,000	2 nd Craxi government	<i>Pentapartito</i> , a large, centrist and pro-European coalition
Law. No. 39 of 1990, 'Martelli Law'	1990	222,000	6 th Andreotti government	<i>Pentapartito</i> coalition, in charge during the creation of the Schengen Area
Law Decree No. 489 of 1995, 'Dini Decree'	1995	250,000	Dini government	<i>Governo tecnico</i> , a government of experts supported by a large coalition, in charge following the Maastricht Treaty and influenced by the increase in both regular and irregular immigrants, including seaborne ones
Law No. 40 of 1998, 'Turco-Napolitano Law'	1998	217,000	Prodi government	Centre-left coalition government, guided by the country's entry into the Schengen Agreements and by the Treaty of Amsterdam
Law No. 189 of 2002, 'Bossi-Fini Law'	2002	646,000	2 nd Berlusconi government	Centre-right coalition government, in charge following the Nice Treaty and influenced by the coalition's composition and the increase in both regular and irregular immigration, including maritime arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers
Law No.102 of 2009	2009	222,000	4 th Berlusconi government	Centre-right coalition government, formed one year after the signature of the Treaty of Lisbon and influenced by the coalition's composition and the increase in maritime arrivals. It produced the agreement with Libya and introduced the 'crime of clandestine immigration'
Legislative Decree No. 109 of 2012	2012	23,000	Monti government	<i>Governo tecnico</i> supported by a large, multipartisan coalition. It temporarily reached an agreement with the Libyan NTC

narratives, migrants have turned to writing, particularly in literature, to challenge these narratives and assert

their perspectives. Migrant writers critique and revise prevailing narratives embedded in law, initiating a dialogue with the Italian public and exchanging perspectives on Italy and its identity (Benelli 2013).

Subsequently, Italy's migration legislation increasingly aligned with EU laws and international agreements. Legislative Decree number 241 of 2004 implemented European Union directives, and in 2008, Italy ratified the Lisbon Treaty, addressing the necessity due to Italy's non-ratification of the 2004 constitutional treaty. The global economic crisis of 2008 significantly impacted Italy's migration policies, prompting the adoption of stricter measures focused on border control and regulations related to irregular migration. Law No. 102 of 2009 was signed a year after the Treaty of Lisbon. It aimed to regulate maritime arrivals to Italy. After this law, the latest regulation on migration is the 2012 legislative decree. The 2009 and 2012 regulations concerned migrations from Libya to Italy (Abbondanza 2017). Thus, it is clear that Italy's approach to migration has evolved over the years, influenced by both domestic and international factors.

In 2015, the "immigrant crisis" in Europe, marked by a significant influx of refugees, once again brought the issue of migration to the forefront of EU politics. This crisis profoundly impacted Italy, as it found itself on the frontlines of the Mediterranean, receiving a large number of arrivals. In the wake of this crisis, Italy's migration policies underwent a notable transformation, with a growing emphasis on alignment with EU laws and regulations. As a result of the immigrant crisis, Italy began to collaborate more closely with other European Union member states and institutions to address the challenges posed by irregular migration and asylum

seekers. The Minniti Decree passed in April 2017, aimed to bolster public security, particularly concerning nomads and undocumented migrants in Italian cities. It sought to streamline the asylum application process, differentiate between asylum seekers and illegal migrants, and prevent duplicate applications, aligning with the guidelines of the Dublin Convention (Ambrosetti and Paparusso 2018, 166).

However, it is essential to note that Italy, like other EU member states, continues to grapple with migration's complex and evolving challenges. Political debates and public discourse on migration remain significant in Italian society, reflecting the ongoing discussion on balancing humanitarian considerations, security concerns, and social integration.

“The Security Decree” and “Follow-up Security Decree” are two primary legislative measures the right-wing Conte I government introduced in 2019 to strengthen Italy’s security. On the other hand, some contend that, rather than serving the intended objective, these orders unintentionally increased the rate of unauthorised immigration. "Humanitarian protection," a sanctuary historically provided to disadvantaged migrant groups unable to meet conditions for subsidiary protection or refugee status, was abolished by the Security Decree, which was put into effect by Law 132/2018. Instead, it instituted "special permits" with variable durations for particular groups, placing migrants legally vulnerable. The decree also reorganised the receiving system, giving large, communal reception centres precedence over smaller, integrated structures. In addition, it lengthened the time that undocumented migrants were held at Repatriation Centers. The Follow-up Security Decree, implemented by Law 77/2019, aimed to tighten sanctions on NGO ships rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean, granting the Interior Minister authority to restrict their entry into Italian waters. These measures faced widespread opposition, with mayors

and civil tribunals challenging their implementation and the European Court of Justice ruling against specific provisions. President Sergio Mattarella expressed concerns about the decrees' impact on maritime rescues and disproportionate fines. Despite opposition, the decrees remained largely intact, contributing to a significant increase in undocumented migration and a rise in rejected asylum claims (Geddes and Pettrachin 2020, 236-238).

Debates on migration and migration policies in Italy focus on the rise of right-wing parties and racism (Krause 2022, Musarò and Parmiggiani 2017). The influx of migrants, mainly from Africa and the Middle East, has coincided with a resurgence of xenophobic sentiments and nationalist fervour within Italian society (Vianello 2021). Scholars argue that right-wing parties have adeptly tapped into these anxieties, leveraging anti-immigrant rhetoric to garner political support and consolidate power (Merrill 2011). This discourse often constructs migrants as scapegoats for societal issues, including economic stagnation, cultural dilution, and security concerns (Merrill 2011). Studies on this subject emphasise the complex interplay between migration, racism, and political ideology in shaping contemporary Italian society (Iocco, Lo Cascio and Perrotta 2020). Moreover, the gender perspective of alienation is also discussed in the literature. While women and children encompass most of the migrant population in Italy, issues related to gender have frequently been disregarded or downplayed by factions that uphold the perception of migrants as a homogeneous entity or uphold the archetype of the solitary male migrant from Africa as the prevailing model (Pojmann 2006, 39).

After discussing the evolution of migration laws and regulations in Italy, exploring the effect of migration laws and regulations on Somali migrants is essential. Most Somali immigrants to Italy before the civil war arrived with the idea

of going back to Somalia when they saved up enough money to return and begin a better life there. However, following the Civil War, they gradually realised that it was hard to know when they would return home and, more significantly, that they now had a duty to send money remittances to family members who had been affected by the conflict (Decimo 2007, 99). Thus, Somali migrants were initially short-term migrants and a part of labour migration for Italy, but then they became long-term migrants.

Despite an initial effort in 1981 with a law granting them temporary permits to stay, Italy still needs to provide asylum or specific social policies for Somali people. Somalis residing in Italy who have fled from oppressive regimes or civil war should technically be considered refugees. However, Italy must still fully enforce the 1951 Geneva Convention regarding refugees and asylum. Consequently, Italian media and laws often label Somalis as immigrants or foreigners, neglecting the colonial role in shaping their destinies (Di Maio 2019, 540).

Moreover, most of the Somali migrant population consists of women. Limited state support for refugees and asylum seekers, combined with demand for caretaking roles in the job market, has influenced the gender composition of the Somali diaspora (Mezzetti and Guglielmo 2009, 7). Female immigrants in Italy form migration chains supported by solidarity networks established by those who have already settled. These networks emerge due to the necessity for women to become primary breadwinners for their families, facing challenges in a country with limited social protections and precarious job opportunities. Somali female immigrants have developed informal networks centred around domestic groups to mitigate social risks. They pool resources to rent flats, creating a collective economic fund to

navigate hardships like unemployment and potential homelessness (Decimo 2007, 100).

Most migrants come to Italy by knowing the Italian language and Italian culture because of the effect of colonial rule on politics, school system and culture (Ahad 2017, 155). As this is the case, Somali people in Italy contribute to the culture through aesthetic works such as literature, cinema, and art (Brioni 2017). However, the social integration process is somewhat debatable. In several articles about migrant life in Italy, Somalis express that they feel alienated, and they feel that they do not fit in. For example, in an article dated back 2014, Somali refugee Mukhtar states that "the problem is not so much racism as indifference: a lack compassion or understanding... Italy is not a country in which I can get married and have a family, even if I work," (L. Davies 2014). In a recent article, 17-year-old Samir, who wants to be a rapper, says, "If I stay in Italy, I know that I will not be able to realise my dreams" (Manzi 2023). The Somali migrants do not feel like a part of the Italian society, and they believe they need to migrate somewhere else. Thus, in the Somali case, Italian integration policies are not efficacious.

In conclusion, Italy's migration policies have evolved significantly with the 1970s, since its transformation from an emigration country to an immigration country. The change of migration laws and regulations is affected by several factors, such as the political atmosphere at the time, migration flows, and EU laws and regulations. Moreover, the recent rise of racism and anti-migration perspectives are the debates on the topic in Italy. In the Somali case, migrants seem to have difficulties integrating into the host country. Thus, I have examined the historical relations between Italy and Somalia in this chapter and discussed their colonial connections and the postcolonial landscape. Building on the historical background and political

context offered in this chapter, the next chapter will analyse the three select novels through discourse analysis in connection to the migration experience and the state's migration policies.





CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I analyse the three selected novels by Somali migrant women writers in Italy. The analysis is divided into three parts, each part focusing on one novel. The order of the analysis based on the publishing date of the novels. Thus, I analyse *Far From Mogadishu* (1994), *Little Mother* (2011) and *Adua* (2015) respectively. While the time span of publications is from 1994 to 2015, the narrated timeline is much broader. All the novels were originally written in Italian and translated to English. Each analysis focuses on the concepts of “identity”, “gender identity”, and “home” and it explores the reflection of migration policies in fictional works. The analysis mostly follows the narrative, and therefore, the discussion of the above-mentioned concepts also follows the flow of these novels.

4.1. *Far From Mogadishu*

Far From Mogadishu (1994) by Ramzanali Fareh tells the story of a Somali woman’s migration to Italy. The novel has a first-person point of view and is written in short chapters divided into eight parts. The first and foremost aspect that catches attention is the form of the novel. The novel consists of several poem-like chapters and has a fragmented structure. The form itself reflects the state of the migrant as the subject exists simultaneously in several timelines, places, and cultures in their mind. The form demonstrates the migrant's state of mind. The poetic language and the narration's similarity to tale telling may be related to the Somali oral tradition. Somali language was not a written language until the mid-20th Century (Andrzejewski 2011, 9). The oral tradition is an important part of the Somali culture. Tale telling is significant as it is a way to pass information to next generation (Andrzejewski 2011,

9). The use of a similar tone to the Somali tradition to tell her story while writing in Italian shows the double burden (Spivak 1988) of the writer as a women migrant and the effect of colonialism in writing. The author employs the language of the colonizer while telling her story.

As stated before the colonial impact has been seen in Somalia through language too. Italian is taught in schools during the colonial era and the impact of it continued even after the colonial times. Regarding this subject, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), the Kenyan author and thinker, defends that while language is a tool for communication it is also a part of culture and carrier of values. He states that "from a word, a group of words, a sentence and even a name in any African language, one can glean the social norms, attitudes and values of a people" (Thiong'o 1986, 8). As the language carries social norms and culture with the impact of colonial language the culture changes too. It becomes hybrid, and effects the identity as well. Thus, a migrant writer who uses the colonizer's language uses both cultures and values to express herself. In the case of women writers, it becomes more significant as they both try to overcome the patriarchal narrative and the colonizer's narrative.

Moreover, the poem's writing style, both in structure and in the choice of words, shows the emotional and expressionist aspects of the writer. This fragmented narrative reflects the mindset of the postcolonial subject. The novel opens up with a poem titled "Rainbow";

Rainbow
We are not entering your towns
with arrogance and armed with guns,
but with respect.
Our colourful and smiling faces
revive your gray and monotonous towns.
We bring you our friendship,
our human values,

our culture with many new dialects,
music, dance and strong, spicy food
like our character.
In exchange, we receive your hostile sneers.
But if you treat us as if we come
to dirty your already polluted towns,
if you hated us even before meeting,
or if you pitied us to relieve your conscience,
you have been completely mistaken. (497-498)

Here, the speakers, likely representing a marginalised group, assert their agency and cultural identity in the face of prejudice and hostility from the dominant group in the towns they enter. However, the poem also prompts critical reflection on representation and power dynamics within dominant discourse. The speakers of the poem fit into Said's (1978) "the Oriental" and "the other" definitions. The speakers' resistance against being perceived as inferior or polluting challenges the colonial mindset by perpetuating such othering. Yet, the poem's representation of the marginalised group's culture and identity raises questions about authenticity and the perpetuation of stereotypes. Overall, the poem encapsulates the complexities of cultural encounters and the struggle for voice and representation within dominant discourse, echoing Spivak's (1988) call to examine power dynamics and silences inherent in such encounters critically.

Moreover, there is an apparent reference to "white guilt". Colonisers pity the newcomers because they exploited them for a long time, and now, as they come to their country, they feel guilty towards them. However, the persona states that whether the colonisers hate or pity them, either way, they are wrong. This line, in particular, and the poem reflect the distinctions between the coloniser's perspective and the subaltern. The subaltern has a welcoming attitude and cultural diversity, whereas the coloniser has a grey, hostile attitude and monotonous lifestyle.

Setting the tone of the novel with this poem, Ramzanali Faleh tells the story of a young migrant woman in first person narration and creates an alternative narrative against the Western media and institutions, “the Orientalists” (Said 1978), by expressing the effects of the political turmoil and the migration experience on an individual with an art form. As stated above, the novel's narrator is a Somali woman who migrated to Italy at a young age. She tells her story in a way that almost feels like reading a diary. The novel is divided into eight parts, and the first part focuses on her childhood in Somalia. Even the first chapter's title, “The Fairy Tale Country”, is enough to understand the narrator's positive attitude towards her homeland. The title suggests something unattainable about the country, as fairy tales are not real and cannot be reached. The first part primarily focuses on pre-war Somalia and now presents unattainable happy past times. There is a longing for it.

Besides this aspect, Somali people's solid relationships and hospitality are stressed. The narrator says that everyone in the neighbourhood knew each other, women and children talked and played all day, food was shared, and everyone looked after each other. Children are taken care of collectively. Moreover, the narrator emphasises the smells a lot. She focuses on smells like cinnamon, cardamon and ginger. All the smells she remembers are warm and sweet scents. The smells, close bonds of people and the rich, fertile land portray a warm and beautiful environment. This picture of Somalia is somewhat different from Somalia in the mainstream media. These attributes of the country are not seen from the Western perspective. Only the war and migratory waves from the government are apparent in the Western narrative. The colonised do not know the cultural and environmental specialities of the colonised world. The narrator also stresses this.

Many times, I have been asked by my Italian friends, "How many seasons do you have in Somalia? Does it rain in your country? How nice, it is always

summer!" It must be challenging for them to understand. Their idea is either beautiful white sand beaches and fun all the time or a country with drought, no crops and people dying. If I thought of the seasons in Italy when I was studying the Italian curriculum in Mogadishu, my ideas were influenced by poems, nursery rhymes, geography, science, novels and the movies we used to watch. Fantasy in my head: soft white flakes falling from the sky... I was living a fairytale—no comparison to when I saw the snow. We have four seasons in Somalia. When I was growing up as a child in the city, they did not affect our lifestyle. The rainy season was fun, and when it was very hot, we used to put on the fan. (527)

This excerpt shows how the Western narrative is well spread, and the postcolonised countries are still bound with former colonisers by language and education. In contrast, the colonisers are unaware of the postcolonies altogether. Moreover, the effect of colonisers is seen in every field of life. The narrator calls her grandmother “nonna” and “abuello” in both Italian and Somali in the novel. She studied Italian in school and learned about Italy. Also, she states that she grew up eating Italian and Somali food. Restaurants and shops have Italian names. All of these show the unwrenched colonial ties and still present the heavy influence of the coloniser. This influence plays a role in identity formation, too. As stated, the cultural and linguistic values of the coloniser have stayed after the colonialism ended and affected the culture and identity of the colonised country. Here, Bhabha's (1994) “hybrid identity” applies to the situation. The postcolonial subject creates their identity in the “third space” (1994) and carries characteristics of coloniser and colonised societies' values.

Towards the end of the first part, the tone starts to change. The narrator directly refers to political events. In the last chapter of the first part, she speaks about the independence of Somalia in 1960. Here, she states the hopeful atmosphere but does not use the optimistic, positive language she used while talking about the everyday life practices of ordinary people. She focuses on the colonised past. She states that their country was divided by colonisers, and it reunited under one flag that day again.

The following parts of the book come and go between the narrator's life in Italy and Somalia. She goes to Italy because of the coup d'état in 1969. The narrator focuses on her migratory experience and compares Italy and Somalia throughout the novel. The distinction between the coloniser and the colonised is made clear with specific characteristics. Italian cities and Somalian cities, as well as the people of each country, are portrayed with contradicting features, and the tone of the writing changes in Italian and Somalian settings. While the narrator talks about her childhood in Somalia, the tone and word selection are much more positive and hopeful than the parts set in Italy.

She leaves Somalia with her husband at a young age. She feels lonely and unwelcome in Italy. Her constructed idea of Italy shatters when she arrives and sees the country for the first time:

I was focusing on my destination, a country I knew: Italy. A country I have studied all my life, since nursery school. I had many Italian friends and schoolmates. Most of them had a Somali mother and an Italian father. It was like I had lived in the shadow of Italy for ages. I have studied history, Garibaldi, Mazzini and their struggle for Italian unification. At the cinema, Totò and Sordi were my favourite actors and I appreciated the sensitivity of the film director Pietro Germi. Pasta al forno, bignè and cappuccino were not exotic foods, but something I used to eat very often. The songs of Modugno, Mina, Gianni Morandi accompanied my adolescence. Dante, Pirandello, Pavese's writings a pillar in my studies. Now I was ready to walk the soil of a country that had shrouded my world since I was born. (557)

This monologue from the text embodies a postcolonial perspective through its portrayal of the protagonist's relationship with Italy, juxtaposed against their Somali heritage. The protagonist's familiarity with Italy, gained through education, friendships, and cultural consumption, reflects a colonial legacy wherein Western cultures, mainly Italian in this context, are idealised and internalised by the colonised subject. Edward Said's concept of "Orientalism" becomes relevant here, as the protagonist's deep knowledge and admiration for Italian history, literature, and culture indicate a form of cultural colonisation, where Western narratives and norms are

imposed upon the colonised subject, leading to a sense of inferiority and a desire for assimilation. The mention of Italian friends with Somali mothers and Italian fathers highlights the intersection of colonial histories and the mixing of cultures. Yet, it also underscores the power dynamics inherent in colonial relationships, where the dominant culture influences and shapes the identities of the colonised. Moreover, the protagonist's anticipation of visiting Italy symbolises a desire to reclaim agency and assert their own identity within the framework of a colonial past, suggesting a negotiation between assimilation and cultural autonomy. Thus, this excerpt illustrates the complexities of postcolonial identity formation and the enduring impact of colonialism on individual subjectivities, as articulated through Edward Said's notion of Orientalism.

In the excerpt, we can observe elements that resonate with Frantz Fanon's ideas as expressed in his seminal work "Black Skin, White Masks." Fanon's analysis focuses on the psychological impact of colonialism on the colonised subject, particularly regarding identity formation and cultural assimilation. The protagonist's deep knowledge and immersion in Italian culture, despite their Somali heritage, can be interpreted through Fanon's lens as an example of cultural assimilation and the internalisation of Western norms and values. This process of assimilation, according to Fanon, often results from the colonised subject's desire for acceptance and recognition within the dominant colonial framework, leading to a disavowal or rejection of their cultural heritage. Furthermore, Fanon discusses the concept of "colonial mimicry," wherein the colonised subject imitates and adopts the cultural practices and values of the coloniser in an attempt to gain social acceptance and status. The protagonist's familiarity with Italian history, literature, cinema, and cuisine can

manifest this phenomenon, reflecting a desire to emulate the dominant culture and distance oneself from one's own cultural identity.

Moreover, Fanon's analysis emphasises the psychological impact of colonialism on individual subjectivities, particularly regarding issues of self-esteem, identity, and alienation. The protagonist's anticipation of visiting Italy and walking its soil can be interpreted as a quest for validation and affirmation of their own identity within the context of a colonial past, echoing Fanon's exploration of the colonised subject's search for selfhood and liberation. Overall, the excerpt from the text can be understood through Fanon's framework as illustrating the complexities of colonial subjectivity, cultural assimilation, and the psychological effects of colonialism on individual identity, all of which are central themes in "Black Skin, White Masks."

On top of being a postcolonial subject, the narrator is a migrant and a woman. She has a complex identity. The intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, and social class is apparent. Over the burden of being a migrant in a foreign country, her gender roles bring more burden and responsibilities. Throughout the novel, she tries to adapt to her new environment, build a new identity, and take care of her family. The double burden she and other women carry around is highlighted several times. The narrator feels alone when she first arrives in Italy. She tells of enduring weeks of solitude, confiding only in her husband. She masks her feelings and tries to show her family the "...strong, brave, young woman who, along with her husband and baby daughter, was able to make it far from home" (573).

Moreover, she feels guilty that she left her mother and other elderly family members behind. Unable to share her struggles with her family, she maintains a facade of normalcy. Caught between her life in Italy and her familial obligations in Somalia, she simultaneously bears the weight of both worlds. Concealing her pain, she fulfils

her societal duty as a woman, all while giving birth far from her homeland, devoid of the support and comfort she once knew. The double burden (1988) she carries is palpable. Unlike her husband, she struggles to integrate into the community, constantly striving to please everyone while also contending with societal expectations that demand she alter her appearance.

She talks about her pain as well as other women's pain. The narrator remembers an old memory of her childhood while watching news about anti-abortionists in Italy. She remembers a girl from her hometown killing herself because she got pregnant before marriage and could not stand the gossip and pressure. The narrator says she heard an elderly woman talking about the girl, saying, "She brings shame onto her family". Women have to come across societal pressures, and people tell them what they should do with their bodies in every sphere of life. Whether in the Western country, she migrated to or in her home country, there is always a burden to carry because of their gender. All individuals renew the patriarchal system. She feels like she needs to act according to her family's, home country's and the host country's expectations.

Also, the protagonist touches upon the living conditions of women migrants in Italy. Women migrants primarily work as care workers and send remittances to their family members. Women attain the pre-chosen role of caregiving in every sphere of labour. The narrator gives voice to their struggles. She meets other women through her participation in the Somali diaspora:

I try to make them aware of their rights as women working in a society that only tries to exploit them...They are young women who worked in government offices as clerks or telephone operators, or as teachers or nurses, and whose salaries were not enough because inflation had reached frightening levels. After emigrating, however, the only opportunity offered to them was to work as cleaning women. Their situation worsened with the war...parents and children, uncles, aunts and

cousins live with the uncertainty of their repatriation, counting however on the remittances that these brave women send them every month. Their work is modest. They assist and take care of old women or look after spoilt brats. They wash, clean, tidy up and cook within the solitude of domestic walls, in a house that is not theirs. Their faces are smiling masks, but their deep black eyes are filled with melancholy. (717-720)

Moreover, the narrator reveals her name only in the seventh chapter by describing her interaction with another migrant woman. While the narrator travels, she meets another black woman speaking Italian. Even though they do not know each other, they hug and exchange numbers. Here, for the first time, she reveals her name: Habiba (746). Here, the narrator feels a real connection with another migrant woman and becomes comfortable telling her name. The writer writes about women's struggle by using literature. Farzanali Faleh's writing is an alternative narrative against the mainstream narratives on the migrant experience. The novel tells the story of a women migrant struggling to fit in and live up to everyone's expectations, touching upon other women's stories. The female narrative distorts masculine discourse, as Irigaray argues (Tandon 2008, 88-89). This novel also distorts the mainstream narrative and tells the story of migrants from a new perspective.

When her mother visits, while they are wandering around, a white man confuses the mother with Lola Falana, the only black singer and showgirl on Italian television." (582). This shows the way Western people see black women; they only see their skin colour and have a set stereotype, the black showgirl, in their heads. The hidden racism in this misunderstanding shows the way the coloniser looks at the colonised subject. Similar to this situation, when the narrator gives birth at an Italian hospital, her daughter being the first non-white baby in the hospital brings excitement. They get disappointed when they see that the baby is more fair-skinned than they imagined. The coloniser, or the host country members, have a set of ideas on Third World Countries, black people, the South, and their way of life. Habiba states that everything black is seen as bad: "Black soul, black day, black book, black hole, black cat, black heart, black beast, black sheep, black future, black comedy, black widow" (706). She says that no one knew about her country when she first came. In the 90s, they knew it but only as a war-torn African country: "Usual Africa, the one the Western world identifies with famine, images of undernourished children with no name, clans killing each other,

drought and desperation” (691). However, according to the protagonist, her country means so much more. Habiba, a subaltern, brings her opinions on the narrative created by Orientalists:

Everything that is poor, ugly, dirty, backward, underdeveloped is classified as Third World. I have never liked this tag; to put it on entire continents makes me feel bad. In my travels, I discovered the Third World in Rome, Milano, Los Angeles, New York, London, Paris, where thousands of immigrants are confined in ghettos, leading a miserable life, a life often worse than the one they left behind when they moved to a new country, with the hope of improving their existences and those of the ones they love. I am ashamed for the ones who think that the Third World is only in far lands, and continue to put labels without realising that intolerance and racism are creating a Third World in their own countries. (614-615)

Here, the main character deconstructs the narrative of the colonisers. She does not accept the narrative of the West seeing Eastern countries as Third World countries. According to her, the so-called First World countries have the third world countries in themselves. She criticises the way migrants are treated in first-world countries. The period the narrator is in is between the 1970s and 1990s. During that period, there were no policies on integration, and the unstructured migration flows caused people to live in ghettos in Italy. The real-life problems of migrants are reflected in the novel.

Habiba is a migrant trying to fit in and not get alienated. The hybrid identity of the migrant is created both with their own culture and tradition and the traditions of the home country. The migrant needs to adapt and change a part of their identity to fit in their new environment. She has to adapt to the weather, the culture and the daily routine. She states, "When one leaves one's own country and tries to integrate in the new environment, so as not to be left out, it is very difficult to maintain one's traditions" (586). She mimics the Italian people to be a part of the society. When she sees a local woman, she says "I look at her and realise that she is a lucky woman. Yes, because she never had to leave her country for economic, political, religious or ethnic reasons. She cannot understand the one who leaves behind loved ones, family, home, customs, land, ceremonies, feast days, songs, music, seasons, the dead, funeral rites, and religious ceremonies. An immigrant has to fit all this into a very small suitcase. (705)

This excerpt highlights the identity confusion and the mixed identity of the migrants as well as the transnational nature of home for migrants. Migrants leave their countries with a suitcase and carry their home to a new country. Moreover, they also

bring their old homes and identities within their memories: “It was amazing to see how these memories would change her. It was as if her cells woke up from a long hibernation” (592). The memories are also a home, a place of belonging for migrants. The transnational home does more than just stay in the physical world. They feel at home with their memories and feel relaxed. This shows the multi-dimensional and transnational nature and meaning of home.

Moreover, the migrant has a hybrid identity and mimics the host country's values. Habiba, as a migrant, is no different. She has values from Italian and Somalian cultures: “I am an Italian citizen...Italy is my home; my relationships are here, my friends” (723). Even though she feels connected to Italy, people question her ties by looking at her skin colour. She faces racism every day, with people's looks and graffiti on walls around the city saying “Go home” (725).

Along with Italian culture, she has Somali culture. She carries both Italian and Somali features. The novel is like a diary describing her migration experience and hybrid identity. Thus, throughout the novel, the struggles of a woman migrant leaving her country because of political turmoil trying to fit into the host country while carrying hopes for the future and fearing alienation are told with poetic language and fragmented narrative style. The hybrid identity of migrants, transnationality of home, gender roles, alienation, and the coloniser-colonised relationship are apparent concepts of the novel.

4.2. *Little Mother*

Little Mother (2011) by Christina Ali Farah tells the story of two cousins from Somalia, Barni and Domenica Axad. They fell apart in their childhood after Domenica left Somalia and reunited years later in Italy. The novel is narrated by several people from the Somali diaspora, the two cousins being the main narrators. It is written in

Italian, but it contains Somali expressions and words. The narrative technique reflects the interconnected lives of the characters. While each has different characteristics and routes in life, each connects and overlaps at some point. In the opening paragraph, Domenica Axad explains the interconnected lives by saying, "I am one thread in that tangled mass and my beginning belongs to the multiple one" (1). Each narrator tells the story to someone; the narrative is conversational, but the reader only hears one side. Barni tells her migration story to an invisible person, a journalist as if the journalist will publish her story. As Barni tells her story to be published, she rejects the patriarchal Western narrative and creates her own.

Meanwhile, Domenica Axad narrates her story as if she is talking to Barni. The story starts in the 1970s in Barni and Domenica Axad's childhood and ends in the early 2010s. The two cousins left the country in 1991 when a civil war broke up in Somalia. The novel primarily focuses on the cousins' migratory story from Somalia to Italy. However, the characters move around the world, going to several countries and cities.

The childhood years of the cousins are set in the late 1970s and 1980s. Domenica Axad and Barni's fathers are brothers. While Barni's mother is also Somali, Domenica Axad's mother is Italian, and her name shows her dual roots. Domenica is a generic Italian Christian name, while Axad is Somali. Throughout the novel, she questions her identity and asks herself whether she feels more belonging to either side. In her childhood, she does not want to be called Domenica; she wants to belong to Somalia, where she lives. While this is the case when she lives in Somalia, she wants to use her Italian name, Domenica, from time to time. "For years, I have been called Axad. I was ashamed of the name Domenica" (113). Moreover, she cannot be sure to use either. She states, "When asked our name, we learn to respond immediately. And me? A

double answer: Domenica or Axad, the choice is yours” (114). The names represent her Somali and Italian roots.

Domenica Axad is an excellent example of a hybrid identity. She has both the coloniser and the colonised values and characteristics. She does not fully belong to either place. She says, “Alternatively, one or the other. Depending on my mood, on whether I feel I belong or like an outsider. I want to stress that difference? Then I use the name that the other person does not” (114). The name suggests the postcolonial subject's in-betweenness and shows Domenica Axad's dilemmas about her identity. She does not feel isolated in childhood but is always aware that she differed from Barni and other children. The other children see her as white.

Moreover, they think Domenica Axad is unlucky because her hair is curly, unlike her mother. They choose Western beauty standards, another example of colonial mimicry. However, as the character explains, they think she "looked much darker than they remembered” (210) when they see her after the war. This shows the ever-changing understanding and nature of migrant identity because her cousin's views changed after they moved to Western countries. They become migrants and enter “the third space” (H. K. Bhabha 1994, 37), and their identity and views on people change accordingly.

When Axad and Barni live in Mogadishu, Somalia is a sovereign state, and there are works towards clearing the school system and culture from colonialist influence. However, the colonial influence stays apparent. The novel reflects the atmosphere of the time skilfully. The cousins go to school to learn the Somali language, and they go to weekend school at an Italian church to learn Italian and their culture. There are campaigns to teach Somali to children. Axad hears one of them on the radio: “Time goes by, a chain of days, think of the seasons too, and if you are someone who has lived, tell me: ‘Who is Somali? Teaching our children to write their own language,

communicating from afar using the words of the father and the mother, that is what will allow us to stay solidly united” (3). While Somali became an imperative language in the education system, Italian is still widely used. Axad says, ‘all educated people spoke Italian” (201).

Moreover, people wear clothes in both Western and Somali styles. Her aunt wears European clothes, and her mother wears traditional Somali clothes to funerals. Like language and clothing, food is multicultural, too. The atmosphere of the time supports the idea that the colonial influence lingers even after the decolonisation process and becomes a part of the culture of former colonised subjects. The “colonial mimicry” creates a hybrid identity for the postcolonial subjects (H. Bhabha 1984, 126). Also, the colonial mimicry is subtle; it is not aggressive, and it comes in unrecognisable ways, like a Western hairstyle or pizza as a street food, so “it is ambivalent and normalises the colonial power” (H. Bhabha 1984, 126).

Domenica Axad leaves Somalia with her mother in the 1980s and has lived in Italy for a while. She has no problems adjusting, thanks to her Italian name and looks. On the other hand, when Barni settles in Italy years later, her name and looks always become a problem. Barni says, "They always make such a big mess on official documents. They do not just have problems with the transcription: the big problem is with last names. It seems so simple to me.” (13). Moreover, her Italian surprises host country members as well as the invisible reporter she talks to:

You’re impressed by my Italian? I’ve spoken this language since I was a child. I started studying it in primary school, together with my cousin Axad. But you probably already know that we Somalis can almost always speak Italian. At least my aunts and uncles did, people of that generation. I was able to practice with my Italian-Somali cousin, Domenica Axad. Anyway, I’d prefer not to talk about myself. I have so many things to tell you. One story in particular that I think would be suitable for your project. (14)

Here, the colonial effects and the alienation of the migrant can be both seen. While it is normal for Somali people to speak Italian, it shocks Italian people. They need to be made aware of their influence on past colonies. The integration process does not seem to be successful as the host country members do not know the characteristics of migrants. While this is the case, Barni adapts to Italian culture in her own way. She says she likes Rome as she created a life here and has her home but only a few pieces of furniture as if it will be easier to pack if she can return home. She misses her culture in some ways but says:

Sure, I miss having a husband, my own children, but if I think of those guys with whom you can't even drink a glass of wine, or who say: When you become my wife, don't think you can go around wearing those tight jeans. No, I'd rather hear people say: Westernised, you've become Westernised now... To me, what matters is to be able to work. Intensity helps you think less. Working as a midwife is like living in a constant state of emergency.
(17)

She asserts her agency and independence, prioritising her professional life over traditional familial expectations. This challenges patriarchal norms that dictate women's roles within society. Additionally, Barni navigates the complexities of cultural identity, expressing a fear of Westernization and the loss of her cultural heritage. Her narrative sheds light on the enduring impact of colonialism and power imbalances between Western and non-Western cultures. Furthermore, as a migrant woman, she faces questions and assumptions about her background and experiences, highlighting the ongoing challenges of integration and belonging within migrant communities. Overall, the excerpt offers a nuanced exploration of the intersectionality of gender, migration, and cultural identity, emphasising the importance of considering multiple perspectives in understanding Barni's experiences.

Barni adapts to life in Italy but does not exempt herself from the Somali community. She shops at Somali grocery stores, has Somali friends and is a part of the

Somali community in Rome. She understands the effects of war on other migrants as she experiences it. She came to Italy after the war started and saw its tragedies. The traumatic experience and the problematic migratory process from Somalia to Italy make her feel like she has no home. She meets with a Somali man while working in a hospital. He does not talk to anyone, so the staff calls Barni to talk to him because they think he is Somali. When Barni arrives, she learns that the man came with a boat. The man probably is an irregular migrant and had a dangerous trip on the boat. Barni states, "There is no one place that is close to my heart... Only when I'm by the sea does my heart tremble" (18). She does not feel at home and has transnational ties with several places. She feels empathy towards him and can resonate with his experience. The novel touches upon the irregular migration and dangerous boat trips on the Mediterranean Sea with the story of Barni and her interaction with other migrants. She experiences many deaths even after leaving her war-torn home. She goes to funerals of migrants who died in boat accidents trying to arrive in Italy. She depicts the funerals:

History repeating the story of poor people spurred on by yearning, such total yearning that it uproots you, it defies sea storms. You know, dying of dehydration, gasping for air, is no small matter. I imagined those rickety boats, and the list of the things they found in the hold. Handbag, note- book, photograph, leather shoe, baby bottle, shirt, backpack, watch, shoelace. Details that tell a story... women are not allowed to approach burial sites. We were only there to watch the coffins being loaded onto shoulders, to smell the wet earth, and the cypress trees. Now and then, there was a sudden outburst, a woman began crying. Tears and salt. You'll see, she would say, we, too, will end up like that, beneath wet earth that is not our own. But the boatloads of illegal immigrants did not stop coming, even after that solemn funeral. And what about the living? (17-18)

Here, Barni reflects on the historical recurrence of poverty-driven migration, highlighting the profound desperation that compels individuals to risk their lives for a better future. The imagery of "dying of dehydration, gasping for air" evokes the harrowing realities faced by migrants during perilous journeys, challenging dominant narratives that often overlook the human cost of migration. The items found in the hold

of rickety boats serve as poignant symbols of the lives left behind and the aspirations for a new beginning. Moreover, the speaker critiques societal norms and restrictions, particularly regarding women's limited roles, as evidenced by the prohibition on approaching burial sites. This highlights the intersectionality of gender and migration, underscoring the marginalisation experienced by migrant women. Despite the solemnity of the funeral and the expressed fears of shared fate, the influx of illegal immigrants persists, prompting the speaker to raise poignant questions about the ongoing plight of the living. Overall, the quote provides a critical examination of migration, inequality, and the human experience, emphasising the urgency of addressing systemic issues and recognising the agency and humanity of migrants.

Until Barni meets with Domenica Axad in Rome, she meets with other Somali migrants and tries to get news from Domenica. Barni says that Termini station is the first stop for every migrant and the community. She thinks the station is one of the most important places for the Somali community as it is a crossroad and the beginning point of a new life. Given a place in the previously analysed novel, Termini station is a reappearing place for the Somali community in Italy. “At the Termini station you could bump into the very guy that you had lost touch with, you could find a small job” (28). It shows the social, undocumented integration processes and diaspora formation happening.

While Barni leaves Somalia for the first time after the civil war broke, Domenica Axad returns to Somalia in December 1990 without knowing a civil war will break shortly after and cannot reunite with her family with Barni. Domenica Axad leaves Somalia with a childhood friend. While because of her Italian passport, she can cross borders more easily, she witnesses the difficulties her friends and relatives experience. She tries to help them as she can. Before the fingerprint system comes into

force in the EU, she gives her passport to a Somali girl who wants to break up with her boyfriend and live a free life somewhere else:

But—I was aware of it, too—it is not easy to cross borders with Somali papers. Domenica Axad, with my Italian passport, could help her...The idea that no one can refuse you entry to any country, that at most, it's a matter of paying for a visa? A passport, a pass-borders. Without this thing that you take for granted, a journey over a desert or over the sea, a long and dangerous journey, is much more expensive than a full-fare airline ticket. What's missing is the visa. I agreed to surrender my passport into the hands of Saciid Saleebaan's girlfriend. This was before fingerprinting...How did I manage after that? The usual way: I reported a lost passport to the Italian embassy after she had crossed the border. That was the first time. Then—with the idea of saving lives—I lent my identity to other women. My double identity, my ineffable essence, was proving to be useful. (111-112)

In this excerpt, Domenica reflects on her involvement in aiding Saciid Saleebaan's girlfriend in her attempt to escape her relationship and cross borders. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of migration, highlighting the challenges individuals face with Somali papers attempting to cross international borders. The excerpt underscores the privilege of possessing an Italian passport, which grants its holder unrestricted access to various countries, contrasting sharply with the struggles of those without such documentation. Domenica's decision to surrender her passport to aid Saciid Saleebaan's girlfriend reflects a complex interplay of power dynamics and moral dilemmas involving deception and manipulating bureaucratic systems. She grapples with questions of agency and responsibility, ultimately rationalising her actions as a means of “saving lives” yet raising ethical concerns about the consequences and potential harm caused by exploiting her privileged identity for the benefit of others.

Furthermore, the quote sheds light on the interconnectedness of individual experiences within broader social and political contexts, underscoring the solidarity and mutual aid that can emerge among marginalised groups facing similar challenges while highlighting the precariousness of identity and the vulnerability of those without

legal documentation. Overall, it offers a critical examination of migration, privilege, and ethical responsibility, prompting readers to consider the complexities of border crossings and the moral implications of aiding others in their quest for freedom and autonomy. Moreover, while she can travel from one country to another without a problem, her friends cannot use the fingerprint system even if they have their papers. The fingerprint system and its effects on individuals are reflected in the novel. Here, it is possible to see the effect of a migration policy on individuals and their experiences with the policy.

After leaving Somalia as a refugee, Domenica Axad travels from one place to another. She talks about her experience by saying she felt lost and “moved from the house of one relative to that of another, searching for protection and warmth, always with a half-unpacked bag, a life spent amassing anecdotes and ways to survive” (217). She meets with a Somali man, and they fall in love. She gets pregnant and then goes to Italy to live with Barni. She wants her child to be born in Italy and Barni to help her raise the baby, as she knows about childcare because of her job. As Domenica goes to Italy, she finishes her story by saying:

In the final analysis, it's much easier for us women. Isn't it true that we lead the same lives no matter where we are? Isn't it true that we continue to look after, to take care of someone? Men feel useless, their names generate conflict, and they no longer play the role of decision-makers. Let's leave them without power, and let's stop protecting them, living weak lives has never produced good results. (227)

Domenica Axad reflects on gender dynamics and power structures, suggesting that women lead similar lives regardless of location. The discourse highlights the traditional roles assigned to women as caregivers and nurturers, emphasising the continuity of these roles across different contexts. The speaker also comments on the perceived decline of men's authority and significance, attributing it to feelings of uselessness and conflicts generated by their actions. There is a call to challenge

traditional gender norms by disempowering men and ceasing to protect them, implying that dependence and weakness are detrimental. This discourse critically analyses gender roles and power dynamics, advocating a shift from traditional gender roles towards more equitable relationships. It challenges the notion of male dominance and asserts the value of independence and agency for women. Thus, *Little Mother* (2011) tells the story of two migrant women navigating life, trying to find a home and a community. The primary concepts of the novel are identity, dual identity, home, community, and gender.

4.3. Adua

Adua (2015) tells the story of a young Somali woman with the same name as the novel, coming to Italy hoping to become famous in the 1970s and her migratory experience. The narrative revolves around two principal characters: Adua and her father, Zoppe, each harbouring aspirations during distinct temporal junctures. Structurally, the novel adopts a dual narrative framework, delineating the migratory trajectories of both Adua and Zoppe. Zoppe's sojourn in Italy unfolds within the milieu of Italian Colonial rule, positioning him as a colonial subject. In contrast, Adua, embodying the postcolonial subject, embarks on her quest amidst shifting socio-political dynamics.

Zoppe's narrative functions in parallel with Adua's, depicting migrant experiences across disparate epochs. From a third-person perspective, Zoppe's tale offers a counterpoint to Adua's first-person narrative, underscoring the nuanced interplay between past and present, colonialism and its aftermath. Interlacing these narratives are interstitial chapters from Zoppe's vantage point, characterised by admonitions or counsel directed towards Adua. This narrative technique accentuates

the juxtaposition of voices and perspectives, elucidating the complexities of migration, identity, and familial bonds.

The novel opens with Adua's learning that the civil war in Somalia has ended, and she can sell her family home in Mogadishu for a perfect price. She says, "Now I have my papers. Now, if I want, I can go back to Somalia too" (14). This citation encapsulates Adua's multifaceted relationship with her homeland and evolving sense of agency amidst geopolitical upheaval. The mention of "papers" signifies legal documentation and a tangible manifestation of autonomy and mobility. Adua's assertion of the possibility of returning to Somalia displays the complex interplay between displacement and belonging, suggesting a negotiation of identity and allegiance in the aftermath of conflict.

Furthermore, juxtaposing the sale of the familial asset with the prospect of repatriation highlights the economic and emotional stakes inherent in migration decisions. Overall, this excerpt serves as a microcosm of the broader thematic concerns within the novel, including migration, displacement, and the quest for self-determination.

Moreover, she says that her suitcase has been ready since 1976, when she left Somalia, and she can return whenever she wants. However, she states "It's just a fantasy!" (16). She has a married and settled life in Italy and says she likes it there. She is always ready to leave with a packed suitcase, which means she does not feel at home in Italy, but at the same time, she feels like she cannot leave. The idea is just a dream; she also says she feels good in Rome. This shows the transnational state of home for migrants.

Even when Adua learns that the civil war ended, she does not know how to feel. She expresses her confused feelings by saying, "Before August, I'd thought peace

was a beautiful word. No one ever told me that it's really an ambiguous one. Civil war broke out in my country in 1991. In 2013, peace is breaking out. Hooray" (16). Her expression critically reflects peace within the context of ongoing conflict and tentative reconciliation. Adua's initial idealisation of peace as a "beautiful word" is juxtaposed with the acknowledgement of its ambiguity, emphasising the complex nature of peace processes. The temporal markers of 1991 and 2013 delineate significant historical periods, highlighting the protracted nature of conflict resolution. Adua's sarcastic tone in exclaiming "Hooray" conveys a sense of scepticism towards the superficial celebration of peace without addressing underlying issues.

She tells her story to the invisible listener by starting from when her father returned from Italy to take her and her sister to Mogadishu. The sisters live in a nomadic tribe; their mother is absent, and other tribe members look after them. Adua does not want to settle in a city and leave her old life behind. The departure from nomadic life and settling in marks the beginning of her migration story. Adua's father, Zoppe, wants her to forget about the nomadic life and her mother, who died while waiting for her husband to return. Zoppe is aggressive toward Adua throughout the novel and is angry with his deceased wife. He does not let Adua use the name her mother gave her, Habiba. He says:

How many times have I told you, your name is Adua? Habiba is the name you had as a nomad, the one that silly romantic of a mother gave you when she was pregnant with you. Habiba is a dirty, filthy name. It's a common name, for a prostitute. Surely my daughter wouldn't have such a common name, would she? Habiba means love in Arabic ... bah, I spit on love! There is no such thing as love. It's a useless name, get it into your head. (69)

Zoppe's interrogation of Adua's choice to identify herself as Habiba reflects a coercive imposition of identity and language, wherein the father's authority dictates the daughter's self-perception. By denigrating the name Habiba as synonymous with promiscuity and filth, the discourse reinforces misogynistic stereotypes and perpetuates patriarchal control over women's bodies and identities. The father's dismissal of love as a useless concept further underscores the devaluation of femininity

and emotional expression within patriarchal frameworks. The naming comes as a reinforcement of the patriarchal system.

Adua feels like she belongs to city life once she goes to the cinema with her family. The cinema is left from the Colonial rule. Adua depicts it as:

The fascists built it in the '30s—an ideal vehicle, they thought, for colonial propaganda. There were several in Somalia. Ours was a movie theater intended for the local population. It was so run down, with busted seats and a sheet metal roof, nothing compared to the Cinema Xamar in Mogadishu, with its austere Mussolinia. (100)

This excerpt unveils the pervasive influence of colonialism on cultural production and dissemination within Somalia during the fascist era. The reference to the construction of the movie theatre in the 1930s as an instrument of colonial propaganda illuminates the colonial administration's deliberate efforts to wield cultural institutions for ideological control and subjugation. The characterisation of the theatre as run-down and inferior compared to the Cinema Xamar in Mogadishu underscores the marginalisation and neglect of local cultural spaces in favour of those aligned with colonial powers. Moreover, the mention of Cinema Xamar with its “austere Mussolinia” evokes the imposition of Italian fascist aesthetics and ideology onto Somali cultural landscapes, exemplifying the colonial project's erasure of indigenous identities and imposition of foreign norms. Moreover, even after colonialism ended, the cinema stayed and marked the colonial influence left behind. The movies are shown in Italian, too.

Adua watches many movies at the cinema. She dreams about being an actress—similarly, Zoppe, in his youth, dreams of being rich. The common point in their dreams is to go to Italy to pursue them. Zoppe goes to Italy as a translator. When he first goes to Italy, he thinks it will be a glorious experience; however, his dreams collapse when he faces reality. People he works for insult and humiliate him. They

even beat him and address him with racist insults. The realisation of the difference between dream and reality is stated as:

He had imagined Rome to be an open-air palace, but instead it was a pisspot for dogs and humans alike. And sometimes the latrine stench turned his stomach. But never as much as the sorrow of seeing how unliked he was. Sometimes others' disgust provoked unexpected gobs of spit that he'd learned to dodge with great skill. (35)

The description of Rome as a “pisspot” underscores Zoppe’s disenchantment with the romanticised notion of the city as an opulent palace, highlighting the stark disparity between expectation and reality. Moreover, the mention of being unliked and subjected to others' disgust speaks to the experience of social alienation and ostracisation faced by marginalised individuals and migrants. The speaker's adeptness at evading spit further accentuates the vulnerability and resilience required to navigate hostile environments. His experience in Italy highlights the complexities of identity, belonging, and power dynamics in the context of migration and displacement.

Adua dreams about becoming a Hollywood star like Audrey Hepburn or Marilyn Monroe. She feels she does not belong to where she lives. She states, "I wanted the lights, the makeup, the awards... I wanted to escape. Italy was everywhere in my life" (104). She leaves the country by getting in touch with a human trafficker who introduces her to two Italian moviemakers. The Italians are a couple who want to take Adua to Italy and shoot a movie with her. So, Adua leaves the country without any papers illegally and lives with the movie producers. She is aware of some of the situation. She states she knows they will ask her for her body, but she is focused on being a star, so she thinks she can bear (173).

When she arrives in Italy, she stays with the movie producers. They humiliate her by calling her racist insults and only care about her skin colour. They fetishise her and make her act in an adult movie. (169) Adua faces the reality after she goes to Italy.

Similar to her father, the dreams and the visions she had in her head do not match reality. The Western people see her as an exotic fetishised object. They make her wear her traditional clothes for the movies she plays in. As a postcolonial subject and a woman, she is an Orient, the other. Adua was fetishized, used and sexually abused in her youth. She is a migrant without a friend, family and home. Adua's experiences show the multifaceted nature of gender-based violence women face. She faces racism, sexism, and gender-based violence. She becomes powerless in the patriarchal system as a migrant woman.

After years, she becomes independent, marries a Somali man younger than her, has a best friend, and connects with other Somalis in Italy. She states that she would act differently if she had known her best friend, Lul when she came to Rome. She says Lul would have helped her in every aspect of her life. If she had a best friend, she would not be alone, would get her papers and become a citizen much earlier, would not use whitening creams, or would not act like someone else. Lul symbolises her true self. A fellow migrant, someone she can resonate with, would help her to live a different life. Here, identity formation through other people is stressed. Lul is like a family, a home to Adua. Lul helps her feel she belongs and finds her identity better. She gets influenced by the Western culture and tries to fit in; after Lul comes 'into her life, she returns to her cultural values. Adua can create a new life, a new narrative for herself, with the help of Lul. Lul highlights the importance of community and friendship. She helps Adua break free from the mainstream narrative and speak and act for herself as a subaltern.

Moreover, after she changes her life, she meets her husband. Her husband is a Somali man who came to Lampedusa with a boat and lost his loved ones along the way. The novel resonates with reality and highlights the irregular migration issue. The

man marries Adua because he needs to stay, and Adua is a citizen. Adua is aware of the situation, and when her husband wants to leave for another European country, Adua helps him. Adua wants to tell him about her past and connect with him but never can. Her husband criticises her clothing, talking and actions. The man gets angry when he sees one of the movies Adua acted in. Adua says: “I wanted to tell him how I used to be. How I had imagined my future self. The things I’d wanted for myself when I was younger. But as usual, he didn't let me talk. He sealed my mouth with his own shouting” (129). Adua cannot create a bond and affectionate relationship with her husband.

Even though she accepts him, knowing his intentions and his situation, the man does not accept Adua as she is. The double burden Adua has, as an alone migrant and abused woman, is apparent. Adua lets her husband leave for another country and stays in Italy alone. Thus, the novel explores the life of Adua and gives glimpses of her father's past to highlight the similarities between the two migratory experiences. Adua's story shows the gender-based struggles women may face and the alienation migrants confront. The novel highlights the intersectionality of migrants by showing the multi-layered issues such as racism, sexism, gender-based violence, alienation, belonging, irregular migration, and legal issues.

Moreover, the novel touches upon the irregular migration and the fingerprint system of the EU. Adua helps her husband to leave Italy as he wants to live in somewhere else. They make a deal with a man to take him out of the country. The man tells Adua:

“But, lady,” he warned, “you have to forget about Sweden. At most, he can shoot for Germany. At least if they take his fingerprints there, there’s a good chance they’ll keep him and won’t return him to sender.” (279-280)

Here, power dynamics and pragmatic realities are inherent in the asylum-seeking process. Omar's advice to abandon aspirations for Sweden and consider Germany reflects a critical assessment of legal frameworks, particularly the Dublin Regulation. The urgency in his warning, coupled with the suggestion of a strategic approach to asylum application, highlights the precariousness of the situation faced by migrants. Moreover, the gendered dynamics implied in the counsel add another layer of complexity, hinting at societal norms influencing decision-making processes. Through this excerpt, broader themes of migration policies, power differentials, and the individual struggles within bureaucratic systems emerge, inviting critical analysis of the complexities and challenges faced by migrants seeking refuge.

In conclusion, this chapter builds on the previous chapters and use the theoretical insights and the historical and political context discussed previously. The analysis of the novels shows that each book explores the themes of “home”, “identity”, and “gender identity” as well as highlight the gendered challenges in migration. Yet each book emphasizes these subjects differently. In *Far From Mogadishu* (1994), the primary focus lies on the theme of home and integration, highlighting notions of “us” and “others”, with evident concepts of hybridity and mimicry. *Little Mother* (2011) highlights integration, diasporic relations, and the formation of identity, while also addressing gender-related issues. In *Adua* (2015), the primary emphasis lies on the gendered struggles of women during their migratory journeys. The novels provide information on the political instances of the periods they narrate. Thus, the analysis proves that the chosen novels reflect the migratory experiences of Somali women migrants by their own voices and give insights on the political and social atmosphere.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this thesis has explored the migrant experience, casting a spotlight on the often-overlooked narratives of Somali women writers in Italy. The interdisciplinary approach, including Literature, Gender Studies, Identity Studies, Political Science, and Migration Studies, has allowed for a comprehensive examination of the multifaceted dimensions of migration. The choice to delve into the Somali migrant community, with its deep historical ties to Italy, has illuminated an underexplored facet of migration: the connection of fiction, migration policies, and migrant experience. By analysing three novels from Somali women writers spanning several decades, this study tried to show how literature becomes a powerful medium through which migration, identity, and belonging are articulated and negotiated over time as well as a medium for reflecting the political atmosphere.

The thesis combined Postcolonial theory and Poststructuralist Feminism to critically analyse the novels by Somali women migrant authors. The use of postcolonial theory and post structural feminism contributes to the migration area as they were not widely recognised or used in Migration Studies. The Postcolonial theory is an appropriate framework for analysing migratory experiences, as many migratory experiences are connected in colonial and postcolonial ways. In the case of Somali migrants in Italy, the theory helped to understand the underlying mechanisms of colonisation affecting the relations between colonizer and the colonized even after decolonization. The historical and political ties effect the migration experience and the narratives of the migrants deeply. Moreover, poststructuralist feminism offers essential insight as the aim of this thesis is to understand the women's migratory experiences

and, specifically, the experiences of Somalian postcolonial subjects. The theory helps to uncover the patriarchal discourse and the gender-based experience of women in the selected novels.

Moreover, the intersection of Gender Studies and Postcolonial Theory has offered valuable insights into the analysis of migrant literature, enriching our comprehension of the complex experiences of women migrants. The overarching conclusion drawn from this interdisciplinary study is that fiction, as demonstrated through the voices of Somali women writers, serves as a valuable source of knowledge in Migration Studies. The title of the study, “Fictional Narratives and the Migrant Experience: Exploring Migration Experience in Italy through the Voices of Somali Women Writers”, encapsulates the essence of this research, highlighting the pivotal role of literature in unravelling the intricacies of the migrant experience and amplifying the voices of women migrants often relegated to the margins. By combining postcolonial theory and post-structural feminism, the study acknowledges the complex interplay of race, gender, class, and migration experiences. This intersectional approach allows for a nuanced understanding of the multiple layers of identity and power dynamics present in the narratives. The study’s exploration of migration, gender-based struggles, and socio-political reflections is highly relevant to current global discussions on migration, feminism, and postcolonialism. It provides insights into the lived experiences of migrant women and their negotiations of identity within new cultural contexts.

Also, the use of critical discourse analysis enriches the research. This methodology helps uncover the underlying power structures, ideologies, and discourses embedded within the texts. It allows for closely examining how language constructs and reinforces social realities, providing valuable insights into the authors' interpretations

of migration, gender struggles, and socio-political contexts. As the study navigates the intersections of disciplines, cultures, and periods, this intellectual journey contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of migration, its impact on individuals and communities, and the broader societal dynamics shaped by migration policies. The narratives of Somali women writers in Italy serve as literary expressions and vital contributions to the ongoing discourse on the power of fiction in illuminating individual narratives within the complex mosaic of Migration Studies.

The research questions guiding this study provide a framework for understanding the intricate connections between the narratives of Somali women writers and the broader context of migration policies and integration processes. All three novels examine the concepts of “home”, “identity”, and “gender identity”. They explore the migratory experiences of Somali women characters, often including real-life events and reflecting on the struggles women experience during the journey. The novels explore the journeys of Somali women who migrated to Italy. The comprehensive timeline in the selected novels has facilitated an exploration of the evolving dynamics of migration, identity, and belonging, spanning from the 1960s to the 2010s. This temporal prism allows for a nuanced understanding of how historical contexts shape individual and collective experiences within the migratory journey.

These novels encompass women's migratory experience, show the importance of identity, and highlight the gendered problems. The “double burden” (1988), “hybrid identity”, and “mimicry” (H. K. Bhabha 1994). Also, the power relations between coloniser and colonised are apparent. These novels deconstruct the mainstream narrative on Somalia and portray their home country in a much different way. They focus on cultural practices, deep and close connections between people, neighbouring cultures, and everyday life practices. None of these are seen in mainstream Western

discourse, which only portrays Somalia as a failed state. These novels enable the reader to see a different perspective and help the subaltern speak differently. The books tell the story of the war, conflict, and decolonising processes from an insider's perspective. They focus on individual life stories and show the destructiveness of war. The analysed novels highlight the personal stories of women migrants and their journeys. The analysis shows the postcolonial roots, integration problems, diasporic activities, and effects of war and migration policies on individuals. This thesis aims to highlight the importance of the migrant narratives in understanding the migration phenomenon from an individual level.

All characters go to Italy with some tie to the country, such as knowing perfect Italian, attending schools with Italian school systems, and watching Italian movies. They learn a lot about Italy when they are in their home country. However, only a few Italians knew about their country when they migrated to Italy. They only focus on the characters' race. This shows the one-sided relationship of the colonised with the coloniser culture.

Additionally, the novels were written in Italian infused with Somali words and phrases. The poetic style reflects the Somali oral tradition, while the use of Italian highlights the influence of the colonial power on the colonies. The language is a carrier of culture and values as well as being a communication tool" (Thiong'o 1986, 8). Both languages and cultures are parts of their identity. This shows the hybridity of the migrant identity (H. K. Bhabha 1994) as the writers carry the values and culture of both traditions. In addition to being a migrant, the writers are woman, and they carry a double burden (Spivak 1988). The women migrant writers attempt to create their own discourse against the patriarchal discourse with their writing while also dealing with the colonial impact (Cixous 1976).

Each character faces a different Italy than they imagined and struggles to fit in because the Italy they learned is different from the Italy they go to. They form diasporas and try to connect with other migrants. As stated in *Far From Mogadishu* (1994), train stations are places for them to reconnect, find long-lost relatives and feel connected to other people because, in everyday life, they feel alienated. Also, they go to shops owned by other migrants and socialise with them, not the Italian people. These individual experiences of fictional characters may shed light on the social problems and alienation migrants face in Italy. Also, the longing for home is apparent in the novels. The need to tell stories is evident in *Little Mother* (2011) and *Adua* (2015). The main characters of these novels tell their stories to invisible listeners.

The collective voice of these novels serves as a counterpoint to the prevailing mainstream narrative surrounding Somalia, defying the nation's reduction to a mere failed state. Instead, they delve into the intricacies of Somali culture, close community ties, and the everyday lives of its people, challenging and broadening the often-simplistic Western perspectives that dominate the discourse on the region. The evolution of language emerges as a significant theme, illustrating multiculturalism inherent in integrating Italian words into the Somali language. This linguistic transformation is a powerful metaphor for the ongoing connection between the coloniser and the colonised. The stark disparity between the characters' pre-migration ties to Italy and the one-sided relationship they encounter upon arrival accentuates the challenges of integration, emphasising the pervasive influence of racial prejudices.

Gendered struggles reverberate throughout the narratives, offering poignant insights into the challenges faced by women migrants. From instances of sexual abuse to the persistent adherence to patriarchal norms, the novels lay bare the marginalised experiences of women during the migratory process. These gendered struggles,

portrayed through the lens of fictional characters, mirror the real-world challenges encountered by women migrants, both in their home country and the host nation. All three novels have women narrators, and their migration experiences differ from men's. *Adua* (2015) faces gender-based abuse and gets shamed because of the erotic movies she takes part in. She is only seen as a sexualised object in the eyes of the colonisers. In *Little Mother* (2011), Barni struggles at work because she has to look after her family and maintain her career at the same time. In *Far From Mogadishu* (1994), the narrator stays at home while her husband goes to work and does not even have the opportunity to talk to anyone and integrate into society. Also, women are seen to struggle with looking after their children, and this is seen as a women's job, not the men's. Women continue to live with assigned gender roles in both their home country and the host country. The patriarchal system continues in both places with different apparatuses, and the effect remains the same.

Each book contains the concepts of “home”, “identity”, and “gendered struggles of migration”; however, each has a different emphasis on the subjects. *Far From Mogadishu* (1994) primarily focuses on the theme of home and integration, emphasising us and others. Hybridity and mimicry are concepts that are apparent in the novel. *Little Mother* (2011) emphasises integration, diasporic relations, and identity formation. Gendered problems are seen. *Adua* (2015) primarily focuses on women's gendered struggles during their migratory experiences.

The novels tell the stories of the marginalised and colonised women migrants. Their individual experiences in fictional works open discussions women face during the migration process and integration into a host country. The characters may be fictional; however, the issues novels touch upon are the struggles migrants face every day, and literature sheds light on these problems and makes the migrants' voices heard.

The incorporation of autobiographical elements into fictional migrant narratives enables a contemplation of how historical and political contexts, as well as incidents, shape individuals' perspectives on both the authors and the world. The novels reflect the political atmosphere of the times they narrate. Moreover, as seen in *Little Mother* (2011) and *Adua* (2015) the reference of fingerprint systems of the EU, they directly give reference to migration policies. The novels also touch upon political issues such as alienation of migrants, integration problems, irregular migration, and gender-based violence. The novels help the migrants to raise their voices with art and aesthetics. The novel's settings align with accurate historical and political events and places. The fiction, in a way, can help to understand the migrants better and gain an insight into individual struggles.

These fictional works help the Migration Studies field with individual-level studies. As individual-level studies focus on identity and integration on a personal level, the fictional works may help to open new discussions and change the mainstream narrative to a more individualistic one. The novels help the marginalised colonised subjects to raise their voices. They can help bring in new insight into the field of Migration Studies other than mass-level studies, to give more attention to individuals. Nevertheless, the novels alone do not suffice as conclusive evidence; rather, they necessitate substantiation through political and historical contexts. Their role should be supplementary, aiding in the pursuit of more effective resolutions for the integration process.

Fiction here, as exemplified by the narratives of Somali women writers, transcends its role as mere storytelling. Instead, it emerges as a potent tool for individual-level studies in the broader field of Migration Studies. Rooted in historical and political realities, these fictional works offer a unique and humanising perspective

that complements and enriches the predominantly macro-level analyses in the field. As this exploration culminates, these novels are not merely works of art but catalysts for societal introspection. By shedding light on the struggles faced by migrants through the lenses of art and aesthetics, the fictional realm emerges as a powerful medium for discussions on social issues and alienation.

These narratives, firmly grounded in accurate historical and political events, become advocates for a more individualistic and empathetic approach within Migration Studies, challenging the status quo and inviting a deeper understanding of the migrant experience. The study contributes to scholarly conversations on migration, gender, and postcolonialism while highlighting the importance of amplifying the voices of marginalised communities within literary discourse. Analysing only three books by Somali women writers who migrated to Italy may limit the generalizability of the study's findings. Also, the individual experiences of a particular group may not be adequate to generalise the women migrant experiences. However, this study paves the way for further research on fictional works and art in general made by migrants and their connection to migratory experiences as it shows the embedded relations between reality and fiction, the narrative of the migrant. The study contributes to the broader discourse by getting Political Science and Literature together and analysing the migration experience and policies in fictional narratives with the help of the two theories to show the intersections between art and reality. Future studies may benefit from this study to analyse the relation of art and politics, exploring the area and expanding the studied groups.

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