

Hip Pop Italian Style

The Postcolonial Imagination of Second-Generation Authors in Italy

Clarissa Clò

Is there a postcolonial imagination in Italy today, and if so, what does it look like? The last two decades have witnessed a growing body of literature produced in Italy by migrant writers from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe. Since the 1990s, they have enriched Italian culture and language with their contributions, even though their input has not been without contention.¹ Yet this production has continued to grow with an increasing degree of experimentation in a variety of genres and media, including critical interventions in online journals, forums, blogs, and websites.² This essay focuses on the literature of second-generation postcolonial writers collected in the anthologies *Pecore Nere* (Black Sheep, 2005) and *Italiani per vocazione* (Italians by Vocation, 2005), as well as on the creative work of the network Rete G2. While illuminating the impact and flaws of the current immigration and citizenship legislation, these authors offer an alternative, multiethnic, and multifaceted representation of Italy through astute aesthetic choices rooted in hip hop and popular culture.³ They are “experts” who transfigure their “street knowledge” into literature and art and are perhaps the best suited to critique the legal system because, unlike Italian (white) citizens, they have a first-hand knowledge of its workings and material consequences. Their analysis of Italian culture is particularly insightful because they access it from the vantage point of a diasporic sensitivity, one that is simultaneously Italian and international.

While some second-generation youths are already Italian citizens, for the majority citizenship is a distant mirage. Italy has a very restrictive citizenship legislation based on *jus sanguinis* (i.e., blood, lineage, and race) so that, even when they are born and raised in Italy, children of immigrants are considered by law immigrants themselves.⁴ The extent of the prejudice of this legislation based on descent

and ethnic belonging is evident in the restrictions that immigrants from the so-called Third World have to suffer as opposed to others born of Italian or European origins. Whereas “foreigners with Italian origins only have to wait for three years” and “EU citizens can become Italian after four years’ residence . . . non-EU citizens on the other hand must be able to demonstrate that they have been living in Italy legally and uninterruptedly for at least ten years” (Marchetti 50–51). This situation is all the more severe for second-generation children who must demonstrate that their parents lived legally in Italy since they were born and that they themselves have been legally living there and have never left the country until their eighteenth birthday, when they can finally apply for Italian citizenship, but not after the age of 19 (Marchetti 51).⁵ For these reasons, one of the main battles of the second generation is for the approval of a new citizenship legislation that would modify the obsolete law No. 91 passed in 1992 in favor of a more flexible one that would shorten and loosen the current requirements to become a citizen for all second-generation youths.⁶ In the absence of a mature political environment on which to conduct such struggles, the cultural terrain seems to provide a fertile ground upon which some of these institutional contradictions are expressed and new identities and relations are explored.⁷ Paying attention to these voices makes it possible to bridge the distance between the abstract text of these laws and the material, racialized, and gendered effects on those who are subjected to them.

Second Generations and the Postcolonial Question

If the first wave of migrant literature in Italy could be more easily defined as “immigrant,” the production of the second generations compels us to discuss it more precisely as “postcolonial.” The term “postcolonial” better connotes many of these authors, some of whom come from former Italian colonies like Somalia, Eritrea, and Ethiopia (i.e., Igiaba Scego, Uba Cristina Ali Farah, Gabriella Ghermandi). “Postcolonial” forces a shift in the understanding of Italian culture and society, making Italy accountable for its history of colonialism and capitalism (Mezzadra 7–19) and its present role in this stage of globalization, an inevitable postcolonial phase with specific “epistemological,” and not simply “chronological,” implications (Ponzanesi 26). As Stuart Hall remarked, “what the concept [postcolonial] *may* help us to do is to . . . identify what are the new relations and dispositions of power which are emerging in the new conjuncture” (246).

On account of the population movements that were produced during and after colonialism and decolonization, historical processes that must continue to be among its objects of inquiry and investigation (Hall 249), the term “postcolonial” also invokes that of “diaspora.” In this sense it may be helpful in linking the contribution of these new cultural producers in Italy to that of other “diasporic” writers of color around the world, as well as to Italians abroad, whose experience and work has often been discounted.⁸ Even when Italy did not experience “diasporas” in the same way that colonized countries did, it may, in fact, be “heuristically helpful,” as Donna Gabaccia suggests (9), to think about Italian mass migrations in these terms, for it allows us to see the links among only apparently

distinct experiences and to point out “forms of *relationality* within and between [different] diasporic formations” (Brah 183). These connections are not missed by second generations themselves. To underscore the importance of understanding their struggle as related to that of other Italians, in the first episode of its weekly program on Radio Popolare Network, “OndeG2,” Rete G2 broadcast several interviews with second-generation children of immigrants in Italy and second-generation children of Italians around the world discussing the differential impact of the present citizenship law on the two groups.⁹

If the postcolonial question in Italy is complexly layered by its ambiguous national, colonial, and emigrant past, the very term “second-generation” is also a contested one, which designates different realities in different countries and for which there is not a clear consensus.¹⁰ Nonetheless, this is the expression that in Italy many children of immigrants themselves have adopted to define their own experience, and it is thus used in this essay. These youths do not identify as immigrants, even when they are treated as such by the law and by many Italian citizens. “Second generation” is employed as a descriptor to indicate those children who had no choice but to follow their parents’ decision to migrate. As such, they may have been born in Italy or may have arrived at a very young age.¹¹

Besides the accuracy of the sociological definition, it is the potential of the term to capture a significant change in Italian society that I believe holds the most relevance in this discussion. Second generations constitute, in fact, “a strategic turning point” for immigrants and receiving societies alike, and it is by observing their integration and adaptation that the experience of immigration as a whole can be fully evaluated (Demarie and Molina xi).¹² Engaging second generations and paying attention to their work is crucial in order to understand them and their situation, but more critically, it is central to comprehend contemporary Italian society at large, its changing demographics as well as its shifting identity, perhaps never so contested as on the 150th anniversary of the Italian unification (1861). “Generation” is the key term in a country that has always been reluctant to alter its customs and is presently facing an unprecedented crisis of ideals and values, not to mention of numbers if we consider that Italy’s declining birth rate is supplemented precisely by the immigrant population. Maurizio Ambrosini’s eloquent statement that “the case of second generations dramatizes the relation between youth groups and adult society” (20) seems particularly cogent in the context of an aging Italy.¹³ With its postcolonial cultural activism and ingenuity, the second generation embodies the future that Italy cannot afford to ignore.

Cultural Representations of “New Italians”

What characterizes second generation authors in Italy and their work? In her “Relazione” to the 2004 Eks&Tra Forum, Igiaba Scego explains that many second generation writers were born in Italy, received an Italian education and are familiar with all the Italian cultural references that pertain to their peers. Scego, born in 1974 in Rome of Somali parents, jokingly explained that “we are Italians in each and every possible way. . . . We have seen Italy win the World Soccer Cup in 1982,

we have had a healthy overdose of Japanese cartoons like every respectable Italian child (from Capitan Harlock to Lady Oscar, including the inevitable Lupin and the curly-haired Candy Candy), we have seen singer Tiziana Rivale win the Sanremo music festival before she disappeared from the radar.”¹⁴ These examples of Italian low-brow trivia used to underscore her knowledge of Italian popular culture are not simply nostalgic revivals from the 1970s and 1980s. They are perhaps the most significant markers of the experience of growing up in Italy at that time when a common heritage of pop images was being established as a result of the emergent hegemonic role of television—especially the rise of Berlusconi’s private channels which consolidated in the early 1980s—and of global consumerism. Scego’s references to Italian popular culture, which she and other second-generation writers often mobilize in their literature, are, indeed, evidence of her very Italianness.¹⁵ The difference with Italian children born in Italy of Italian parents and these writers is their migrant background and hybrid identity (Scego, “Relazione”). Yet, these aspects, far from evincing a lack, a threat, or the inability to be fully citizens, should be perceived as an enrichment of what it means to be Italian in a newly complex global world.

Two recent anthologies like *Pecore Nere* and *Italiani per vocazione* illustrate the cultural work of second generation authors. *Pecore Nere*, which collects short stories by four Italian “black” women writers—Igiaba Scego, Ingy Mubiayi, of Egyptian and Zairian origin, Laila Wadia, and Gabriella Kuruvilla, both of Indian descent—reveals up front the racial background of the authors and capitalizes, perhaps too fetishistically, on this difference. Yet “black sheep” also suggests that while the authors are of a different skin color, they are, nonetheless, already members of the family, and by extension the nation, and contribute to Italy’s culture in ways that complicate common sense understandings of it. *Italiani per vocazione*, edited by Igiaba Scego herself for a smaller publishing house, is driven by a different cultural politics. The book title moves away from mere skin color and emphasizes, instead, the agency and choice of these writers. “Vocation” entails an innate quality or predisposition that in order to thrive must be pursued and cultivated. The authors in this second collection include veterans of the first generation of migrant writers, like Syrian Yousef Wakkas and Italian-Togolese Kossi Komla Ebri, as well as emerging second-generation authors like Ubox Cristina Ali Farah, born in Italy of an Italian mother and a Somali father, and Jadelin Mabiala Gangbo, born in Congo but raised in Italy from a very early age. Striking in many of the stories in both collections is the age of the protagonists, between adolescence and thirty-something, thus belonging to up-and-coming generations.

The short stories featured in both collections condense some of the most evident traits of the literature of second generation authors: the skilled manipulation of Italian language, local dialects, and youth jargon, the pungent use of irony, the savvy deployment of popular cultural references, the representation of characters with hybrid identities, the dramatization of the intergenerational conflict, and the complicated confrontation with Italian institutions.¹⁶ For example, Igiaba Scego’s story “Salsicce” (“Sausages”), winner of the 2003 Eks&Tra literary prize and reprinted in *Pecore nere*, tackles the cultural shock experienced by the young Muslim female protagonist, holder of a regular Italian passport, who agonizes over

eating pork sausages to prove that she is a “true Italian” despite her skin color and religion. The story takes place a few days after the Bossi-Fini immigration law went into effect, requiring fingerprinting for all non-EU immigrants. Uncertain of what her fate will be in a newly reconfigured legal scenario in which everybody not conforming to mainstream Italianness (i.e., Catholic, white) is considered a migrant, and where every migrant is a potential criminal, the protagonist wonders about her supposedly split identity and allegiance: “Am I more Somali or more Italian? Perhaps $\frac{3}{4}$ Somali and $\frac{1}{4}$ Italian? Or perhaps the opposite is true? I don’t know the answer, I never ‘fractioned’ myself before” (28).¹⁷ The absurdity of such questions belies, as Scego skillfully hints, profound racist implications by invoking the specter of blood purity, a politics practiced during colonialism and Fascism, and still lingering in Italian citizenship law, anachronistically based on “legal familism” (Zincone).

The resolution of the story, and of the narrator’s identity crisis, is fittingly provided by a film appearing on the TV screen: Ettore Scola’s 1968 comedy *Riusciranno i nostri eroi a ritrovare l’amico misteriosamente scomparso in Africa?* (Will Our Heroes Be Able to Find Their Friend Mysteriously Disappeared in Africa?), about an alienated middle-class Italian man who unsuccessfully tries to rescue his brother-in-law from the heart of Africa. In the face of the grotesque representation of the worst Italian traits provided in the film, the story’s protagonist decides to embrace the multiplicity of her own self in spite of outside pressures. The irony is that such a realization is provided by a popular culture parody that reveals the many flaws of Italy’s relationship to itself and the African Other.

Irony is at play in all the other stories in the collection. “Documenti, prego” (Documents, please) by Ingyi Mubiayi also features a first person narration by a young black Muslim woman fully educated in Italy who revisits the surreal odyssey through several public agencies, each with its own inconsistent and arbitrary set of rules and regulations, that led her family to become Italian citizens. The story is playfully framed by references to the German TV police drama “Detective Derrick” (97), a popular series in Italy. The cold, rational, and matter-of-fact style of the show is mockingly compared to the indifferent attitude pervasive in the often-inefficient Italian bureaucracy. Laila Wadia’s “Curry di pollo” (Chicken Curry) and “Karnevale” (Carnival) similarly mobilize popular culture to portray the uneasy relation of the stories’ young female protagonists, both from the Indian diaspora, with their traditional parents.¹⁸

While references to Italian popular culture remain prevalent, two short stories in *Italiani per vocazione*—Cristina Ali Farah’s “Rapdipunt” and Jadelin Mabilia Gangbo’s “Com’è se giù vuol dire KO?”—focus on adolescent characters who draw from the postcolonial hip hop culture of the African diaspora to create a distinctively transnational black sense of self in opposition to the oppressive and racist Italian state they perceive around them. Both authors paint their characters and the world they inhabit with a mixed dose of skepticism and seriousness. Farah’s “Rapdipunt” fittingly combines in one word hip hop’s emergent and residual characteristics whereby contemporary “rap” is associated with “Punt,” the name used by ancient Egyptians to indicate Somalia (Scego, *La nomade* 8). The story is a monologue inspired by a group of Afro-Italians known as the Flaminio Maphia

from their meeting place in Rome's Piazzale Flaminio (Morosetti 127).¹⁹ Like many other stories in these two anthologies, it is narrated in the first person by a female protagonist who joins, despite their obvious sexist attitude, an all-male crew with all the traits of an urban gang.

While the local upbringing of this youth is evident in the Roman-inflected accent, their cultural context of reference is far wider, spanning from their own ancestral land, presumably Somalia, of which they seem to know very little, to the Americas, from Canada to Cuba. Without dismissing the institutional racism these boys suffer on account of their African origin, the narrator is wary of their seemingly uncritical embrace of rap culture only because it is produced by "brothers who know how to get respect from whites" (37). Instead, she reflects on the material conditions of black women in the diaspora, who often support entire families with their underpaid domestic labor, and displays a spiritual awareness of her African roots ignored by the rest of the group.

If Farah's story exposes some of the potential dangers associated with separatist and masculinist black subcultures who define themselves exclusively by the skin color of their practitioners and function in a nationalistic manner, Jadelin Mabilia Gangbo takes a different approach by denouncing police brutality against young immigrant men. "Com'è se giù vuol dire KO?" (What if down means KO?) explores the hip hop scene in Italy through the adventures of two 19-year-old young men walking the streets of Bologna at Christmastime. As in Farah's story, the specificity of the location is carefully mapped out with explicit references to the city center's streets and to the regional dialect occasionally used by the main characters to underscore their local belonging. During the course of one Sunday afternoon the two protagonists, native Bolognese Antonio and Moroccan-born Aziz, engage in a surreal conversation about the state of society. Their reflections on the nature of work and leisure, triggered by the flood of consumers they encounter, capture well the pervasiveness of capitalist exploitation in every aspect of contemporary life. According to Antonio it is necessary to gain a different perspective to address this situation, perhaps through a "subversive act" (140), since from his point of view Sunday "is not the concession of a day of freedom, but the theft of an entire week" (141).

As in Farah's story, the characters' oppositional identity is marked by the style of their clothes, typical of rappers, and by their attitude, like the insistence on calling each other "B" for brother or B-boy (Break-dancing boy). Hip hop culture for them is not a fad; rather, it carries a political significance, like their baggy pants, which are not just fashionable but represent a militant history of resistance: "There is a difference between your pants' crotch and that of others. Your crotch has a history, B. You should be proud. Beware of posers" (144). While their fashion has been assimilated into the mainstream through a "process of commodification" (142) whereby entire families now dress like branded rappers without any sense of their clothing style's origin and meaning, Antonio and Aziz have a clear awareness of the revolutionary legacy of hip hop culture. For them, hip hop evokes musical contributions by "Public Enemy," "Run-DMC," "De la Soul," "Beastie Boys," "Zulu Nation," "Afrika Bambaataa," and "A Tribe Called Quest" (143), most of whom were, as George Lipsitz noted, "part of a generation of inner-city youths

who found themselves . . . unwanted as citizens or users of city services by municipalities imposing austerity regimes . . . and unwanted as consumers by merchants increasingly reliant on surveillance and police power to keep urban ‘have-nots’ away from affluent buyers of luxury items” (26). Against such odds, these artists “used the conduits of popular culture to bring their isolated and largely abandoned neighborhoods to an international audience” (26).

Similarly, Antonio and Aziz are not just avid consumers of hip hop culture, they are also producers of it and are well versed in its Italian transmutation. The title of the story, hummed by one of them, is a line from “Solo fumo” (Only Smoke), a song by Neffa, one of the most famous Italian rappers of the 1990s, hailing from Bologna.²⁰ Indeed, the entire narrative, as Gangbo noted in an interview, flows like a rap, with “short sentences following the tempo and rhythm of hip hop music.”²¹ When they are stopped and harassed by the police on the way to check out an occupied theater hosting immigrant families evicted from their residences it is with a freestyle session that Aziz tries to counteract the impending violence: “*This fine fine Moroccan—this boy with big Muslim balls—is a killer B-Boy with a style like a Shaolin kung fu kid. . . . Arab Movement of Jah people you see, Haile Selassie in a Salam alek version. It is an easy karate*” (178).²² Aziz’s virtuoso hip hop “*spaghettiflow*” (178) is local and transnational at once, and it encapsulates a vast spectrum of Mediterranean cultural and political references, from the use of northern and southern Italian dialects to allusions to liberation movements and icons of the African and Arab diasporas.

Rete G2: The Second-Generation Network

A similar strategy of cultural syncretism, both rooted in Italian pop culture and simultaneously informed by global black hip hop is used by Rete G2, an organization founded by children of immigrants and refugees in Rome in 2005 and dedicated to both supporting second generations and raising awareness about their legal limbo.²³ In an effort to promote their social and political work, Rete G2 has devised a series of cultural initiatives meant to bring their concerns to the attention of their peers. In 2008 G2 adapted one of the most popular and recognizable forms of Italian postwar print entertainment, the *fotoromanzo*,²⁴ a romance-driven pulp subgenre of comics in which drawings are substituted by photographs, to their cause. Created by Italian-Filipina Maya Llaguno Ciani and a team of second-generation female collaborators, the project was sponsored by the educational office of Rome’s municipality and distributed free of charge in all the high schools of the capital (Mari 11).

In the G2 version, the *fotoromanzo*, titled “Apparenze” (Appearances), became a visual educational tool that codified in graphic terms the differences and similarities of this generation with their Italian peers. The plotline involves a group of second-generation youths who meet in Villa Borghese for a drink. While some take a romantic interest in others, they all acknowledge their diverse origins. The most hilarious moment happens at the beginning, when Lucia, a black girl, is approached by Adriano, an Italian guy who addresses her in broken English only

to find out that she, noticeably irritated, speaks perfect Italian because she was born and raised in Italy (Figures 18.1a and 18.1b).

Later Adriano also acknowledges that some of his relatives emigrated to Australia thus linking the history of immigration in Italy to that of Italians in the



Figure 18.1a Mistaken identities (*Fotoromanzo* “Apparenze”)



Figure 18.1b Mistaken identities (*Fotoromanzo* “Apparenze”)

world. With an appealing and ironic style, the *fotoromanzo* introduced Rete G2 to their Italian peers and discussed in an accessible manner the situation confronted by second-generation youths. It illustrated their campaign to change the current citizenship law, providing a glossary with definitions of the most important

legal terminology, such as “citizenship,” “jus sanguinis,” “jus soli,” “naturalization,” “nationality,” “residence permit,” “family reunification,” and “second generation” (31). In sum, it entertained, informed, and educated.

If “Appearances” tapped into a distinctly Italian feminine cultural genre, in 2008 Rete G2 also produced a CD titled *Straniero a chi? Tracce e parole dei figli dell’immigrazione* (Foreigner to Whom? Tracks and Words by Children of Immigration) collecting songs by male second-generation artists who used hip hop, but also punk, reggae, and soul, to spread their message in several languages: Italian, English, Arab, Portuguese, and local dialects. Their names and aliases were Nasty Brooker, Mike Samaniego, Karkadan, Amir, Wahid Efendi, Zanko El Arabe Blanco, Intiman and the Dojobreakers, Diamante & Skuniz, Linea di Massa, Natural Disastro, Maztek, and Taxi, and originally they all came from a variety of countries around the globe.²⁵

Like the characters in Farah’s and Gangbo’s stories, these young artists specifically draw from the music of the African diaspora to denounce the discrimination they face due to their skin color and immigrant status. While their lyrics attest to the urgency of their situation in Italy, the postcolonial imagination they display in their songs through rhythm and sound evokes a community that transcends national boundaries and origins. In the album’s opening song, called “In ostaggio” (Hostage), Nasty Brooker (a.k.a. Claudio Magoni), Italian-Haitian-Cape Verdean, raps, “I am of a second generation, my name is savage, I come from a bad situation, society keeps me hostage, my ancient African origins, I can only remember them today, meanwhile people are dying there, [and] they treat me like a dog in the Western world.”²⁶ In “Prospettive” (Prospects), Mike Samaniego, born in Italy of a Filipino father and a Chinese mother sings, “I have endless dreams to change my life, but I only have prospects, [with] those papers in my hands. . . . I was born in this state . . . I know the culture, the language, and I am right when I ask for rights but no distinction.”²⁷ The legal limitations imposed on this generation is brought up also by Natural Disastro, who in “100% hip hop” raps, “I had a dream, I had a passport and I traveled around the world . . . I am an Italian foreigner, a freak of nature.”²⁸ In “Umano normale” (A Normal Human), Zanko, born in Milan of Syrian parents, appeals to people’s common humanity and to the cosmopolitanism of second generations: “I am Palestinian, I am Sicilian, I am Albanian, I am African, I am Chinese, I am Latin American, I am Neapolitan, I am the Syrian from Milan, metro-cosmo-politan, I know I am a human being.”²⁹ It is also noteworthy that one of the album’s songs, by Italian-Egyptian Wahid Efendi, is a cover of a famous Italian pop song, “Con il nastro rosa” (With the Pink Ribbon) by Lucio Battisti and contains a line that has entered Italian common phrases: “Who knows what will be of us, we will find out only by living.”³⁰ All these authors are aware of and attentive to the global postcolonial cultural scene as well as its local and vernacular manifestations in Italy. In this sense, they may be called “cosmocitizens” following Moroccan scholar Fatema Mernissi, who identifies as such “all those who across the world are fighting for the same ideas and believe in the same dream of a planet in which all citizens can interlace thousands of dialogues” (14).

Conclusion

If in the past few years articles in *The New York Times* (Fisher) and *The New Yorker* (Mueller) have unflatteringly portrayed Italy “in a funk” struggling to renew and regenerate itself, this is also the result of the ruling elite’s inability to read a situation that is not as static as it seems, but already inevitably in motion: that of a nation undergoing profound changes, which second-generation postcolonial artists might be better equipped and qualified to confront. As George Lipsitz reminds us, “the populations best prepared for cultural conflict and political contestation in a globalized world economy may well be the diasporic communities of displaced Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans created by the machinations of world capitalism over the centuries. These populations, long accustomed to code switching, syncretism, and hybridity may prove far more important for what they *possess* in cultural terms than for what they appear to *lack* in the political lexicon of the nation state” (30–31). One aspect that this emergent second-generation postcolonial production illuminates is the failure of Italian institutions, cultural as well as political, to perceive the limits of certain models of national representation, including immigration and citizenship laws. In this sense, the work of these authors is relevant precisely in its attention to underaddressed questions in Italian culture and history, from the colonial past to the postcolonial future. As Antonio says to Aziz in Gangbo’s story, urging him to rap against the police, “you are fundamental to the cultural evolution of this country. You deserve respect, not loads of shit” (177).

Ultimately, these authors are already altering Italian culture and society and helping to place Italy in a global perspective. Not only the field of Italian Studies, but the very notion of Italian identity is being affected by works that challenge and trouble the definition of what it means to be “Italian” today. In particular, the use of hip hop and popular culture by second generation postcolonial authors should be taken seriously as both a marker of integration and dissent. As Jenkins, McPherson, and Shattuc noted in *Hop on Pop*, “‘popular’ was originally a legal term” and “began with a political connotation referring to a country’s citizenship, or to a political system carried on by the whole” (27). While today popular culture is often interpreted as mass consumption and commodification, it is also a powerful “site for cultural intervention” (28) when others are precluded. In this sense, the connection between popular culture and politics has not been missed in the work of second-generation authors born or raised in Italy. What the political and legal spheres deny, the cultural one supplies.

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Notes

1. See Gnisci, Parati, and Portelli (“Mediterranean Passage”).
2. Among such virtual realities are *El Ghibli*, *Kumá*, and Eks&Tra. On the issue of thematic and formal experimentation of this new generation of writers see Portelli (“Fingertips Stained”).
3. By “hip pop” in my title I refer to the creative syncretism of hip hop and popular culture used by the authors discussed in this essay.
4. According to the latest 2011 report by Istat, the Italian National Institute of Statistics, the number of foreigners residing in Italy was 4,570,317 or 7.5 percent of the entire population. In 2010 children born of immigrants in Italy were 13.9 percent of the total of all newborn babies.
5. On Italian citizenship see also, among others, Codini, and D’Odorico, Colombo, Domaneschi and Marchetti, Pastore, Rossi, and Zincone.
6. This is especially the case for the members of Rete G2, who, on the Manifesto available on their website, define themselves as “Italians with a residence permit.” See <http://www.secondegenerazioni.it/g2-nel-2011>.
7. On the relevance of the cultural terrain for minorities’ struggles, see Lowe (22).
8. On this topic see, for instance, Gabaccia, Giunta, Guglielmo and Salerno, and Verdicchio.
9. See <http://www.secondegenerazioni.it/2008/02/15/onde-g2>.
10. The label “second generation” originated in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century when it was used by sociologists of the Chicago School who were then studying the extraordinary transformations in the demographics of their city and country as a result of the massive migration from Europe, including Italy. The term meant to indicate the period deemed necessary for immigrant groups to assimilate

to the nation, which would have occurred under certain circumstances, like upward mobility, only from the second generation on (Celli). It is also important to note that if assimilation did not take place, “second generations” were considered not only at risk, but more prone to social deviance and criminality (Ambrosini 21; Sollors 213). While in the American context “second generation” is now used in a more nuanced manner to account for the racial shift occurring in immigration patterns since the 1960s, predominantly from Asia and Latin America, and to indicate a variety of experiences which include children born in the United States or abroad with different levels of socializations and schooling (Rumbaut, qtd. in Ambrosini 5–6); in Europe, particularly in France and the United Kingdom, “second generation” tends to have a negative connotation on account of these nations’ histories of colonialism. The term has been criticized for imposing a prescribed identity on children of immigrants or racial Others often born in Europe, and therefore already citizens, but conveniently marginalized when not rejected altogether (Ben Jelloun 98; Gilroy 90; Wihtol de Wenden 110). Unlike in France or Britain, the term “second generation” in Italy encompasses experiences and ethnicities that may or may not be related to the history of Italian colonialism. In Italy, the majority of those identifying as “second generation” are children of immigrants themselves affiliated with the Rete G2. For a critique of the use of the term in the Italian context see Thomassen. Recalling the French model of assimilation, Italian Algerian writer Tahar Lamri has also expressed an opposition to its use in Italy in his intervention in *Trickster*.

11. On second-generation children of immigrants in Italy, see also Colombo, Leonini, and Rebughini.
12. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.
13. On this point see also the open “Letter to second generations” by the editorial board of *Tricksters*: <http://tricksterici.wordpress.com>.
14. See <http://www.eksetra.net/studi-interculturali/relazione-intercultural-edizione-2004/relazione-di-igiaba-scego>.
15. Italian experimental writing collective Wu Ming summed up this point in an interview with Henry Jenkins: “if you don’t know pop culture, you don’t know your culture, thereby you do not know the world around you.” http://www.henryjenkins.org/2006/10/how_slapshot_inspired_a_cultur_1.html.
16. For a discussion of some of these traits, see Pezzarossa, Ciampaglia, and Scego (“Relazione”).
17. See also the published English translation of Scego’s story by Giovanna Bellesia and Victoria Offredi Poletto.
18. The stories in *Pecore nere* have been discussed by several scholars. See Curti, Hanna, Portelli (“Fingertips Stained”), and Quaquarelli.
19. Farah’s story was printed first in Morosetti’s *Quaderni del ‘900* 4 (2004): 127–30, then it appeared in Scego’s *Italiani per vocazione* (2005) and subsequently it was translated into English in a slightly abridged version as “Punt Rap” by Giovanna Bellesia and Victoria Offredi Poletto and published in *Metamorphoses* 14.1–2 (2006): 276–80.
20. On the relevance of Bologna as a fertile site for hip hop and other urban subcultural productions, see Pacoda (17–26) and Magaouda.
21. See <http://guide.dada.net/multiculturalismo/interventi/2005/03/204439.shtml>. Gangbo himself was in a rap group and wrote their lyrics (Bousquet 300).
22. “Questo marocchino fino fino—’sto cinno con du’ palle da saracino—è un B-Boy assassino dallo stilo shaolin u’ guaglioncini’. . . . Mouvement arab all Jah people ‘ve—Hailè Selassie in versione Salam alek. Vien da sè giù di karate.” Italics in the original.

23. See <http://www.secondegenerazioni.it>. This association has rapidly become one of the major points of reference for second generations, Italian institutions, and researchers. See, for instance, Andall, Marchetti, and Zinn. From Rome the association expanded to several other Italian cities. Rete G2 has collaborated with the previous center-left government, with local administrations, and was received by the President of the Republic Giorgio Napolitano who recently has been advocating a change in the current citizenship law to accommodate the position of second generations.
24. On *fotoromanzo* see McMillan.
25. See Fabiani as well as the CD press review on the site of Rete G2 <http://www.secondegenerazioni.it/forum/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=973>.
26. "Sono di una seconda generazione, il mio nome 'selvaggio,' vengo da una brutta situazione, la società mi tiene in ostaggio, le mie origini antichissime africane, oggi giorno le posso solamente ricordare, intanto lì la gente muore, mi trattano come un cane, nel mondo occidentale."
27. "Ho dei sogni senza fine, cambiare la mia vita, ma ho solo prospettive, quel foglio tra le dita. . . Sono nato in questo Stato . . . conosco la cultura, questa lingua ed ho ragione se vi chiedo dei diritti ma nessuna distinzione."
28. "Ho fatto un sogno avevo il passaporto e giravo tutto il mondo . . . sono straniero italiano, contro natura."
29. "Son palestinese, sono siciliano, sono albanese, sono africano, sono cinese, sono latinoamericano, sono napoletano, sono il siriano di Milano, metro-cosmo-politano, so di essere un essere umano."
30. "Chissà che sarà di noi, lo scopriremo solo vivendo." Lucio Battisti was one of the most popular and influential Italian singer-songwriters of the 1970s, and his songs still maintain a special place in the Italian collective imagination.