

## SENIOR ASSOCIATE FELLOWSHIP

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*Museum practices in world literature: postcolonial objects in care at the Museo Italo Africano 'Ilaria Alpi'*

It was a great honour to be the recipient of the inaugural Senior Associate Fellowship (2021–2). I applied to the new scheme as I was keen to explore how a non-residential association with the British School at Rome could help me to complete a section of Rome-based research that was needed for my current monograph project. I also wanted to connect with the vibrant community of artists and scholars resident at the BSR in order to broaden out my own ideas and horizons: after two periods of lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, the thought of in-person conversations and events was incredibly appealing. Lingering COVID regulations, post-Brexit visa restrictions, family caring responsibilities and other academic duties (including a visiting professorship at the University of Pavia) all meant that I was unable to visit the BSR as often as I had envisaged when I drafted my application the year before. When I did manage to engage with the infrastructure and the community, however, I found both experiences to be extremely rewarding.

My research in Rome formed part of my third book project, entitled *Curating Worlds: Museum Practices in World Literature*. The project identifies the collection, curation and display of objects as a site for the radical retelling of histories of empire, war, borders and mobility, using acclaimed world literature novels by Daša Drndić (*Trieste*), Valeria Luiselli (*Lost Children Archive*), Maaza Mengiste (*The Shadow King*), Orhan Pamuk (*The Museum of Innocence*), Maria Stepanova (*In Memory of Memory*) and Olga Tokarczuk (*Flights*) to form a primary corpus of what I term 'museum-novels'. These works collage together literary, archival and journalistic sources, traces of visual and material culture, song and photography, and in so doing, they function explicitly as narrative archives on display. They start with inventories of content, and their wayward collection of objects demands deep reflection on what textual purpose their accumulation serves. As works of fiction, they also each supplement the material notion of the object collection with a sense of creative fabulation. This is an intimate, imaginative way of archiving, which signals new directions in potential retellings of historical and contemporary moments alike. Individual chapters in the book focus on key museum practices (such as collecting, curation, storage, display, conservation and deaccession) as they are articulated in literary form in the museum-novels under examination.

Whilst in Rome, I focused my attention on the chapter which reads practices of restitution through a juxtaposition of Maaza Mengiste's 2019 novel, *The Shadow King*, with an installation of colonial objects recently taken out of storage in Rome's Museo delle Civiltà. This installation, entitled *Depositi Aperti* [Open Storage], is a precursor to the official opening of the new Museo Italo Africano 'Ilaria Alpi'. My visits to *Depositi Aperti* and the rest of the Museo delle Civiltà were facilitated for me by staff at the BSR, and constituted a fundamental step towards my being able to conclude the chapter in question, and the volume as a whole. The modality of the object displays in *Depositi Aperti* allowed me to think through critical questions of care and repair, and how museums can effectively engage with live debates around restitution and

decolonization. The book manuscript is now complete and under contract with Northwestern University Press, where it is scheduled for publication in autumn 2024.

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#### ROME FELLOWSHIPS

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### *TULAR: human mobility and social–cultural shifts in frontier areas of pre-Roman Italy*

During the first millennium BC, Italy was characterized by well-defined archaeological groups. Among these, the Etruscans are recognized as the leading group of pre-Roman Italy, expanding across the peninsula and undergoing significant sociopolitical changes. Proto-Etruscan (also known as Villanovan) settlements are among the earliest cases of early state formation in Italy. During its formative phase (tenth–eighth centuries BC), this group, mainly located in Etruria (modern Latium, Umbria and Tuscany), developed extensive networks, reaching areas all over the peninsula. The Etruscan society and its rapid development across the Mediterranean have been the focus of extensive research, but much is still unknown about the formative period that brought such success to these people.

The TULAR (Etruscan for frontier/border) project explores population dynamics at proto-Etruscan sites inside and outside Etruria through osteological, multi-isotope analysis for diet (carbon and nitrogen) and mobility (strontium, oxygen, sulphur), and ancient DNA (aDNA) analysis. Within this broader framework, the Rome Fellowship has provided a unique opportunity to study comprehensively the osteological record from the necropoleis of Fermo (Marche, ninth–fifth centuries BC) and Vulci (Latium, ninth–sixth centuries BC) at the Servizio di Bioarcheologia of the Museo delle Civiltà in Rome.

Fermo is one of the most puzzling Villanovan sites outside Etruria. Located near the Adriatic coast — several kilometres from Etruria — in a territory dominated by the so-called Picene culture, the site revealed hybrid features in the funerary ritual and material culture. In the ninth–eighth centuries BC, the funerary record showed that the site was part of the proto-Etruscan network, having funerary rituals and object typologies which recall the main sites from Etruria. Fermo experienced different outcomes compared to the other main Etruscan sites in the Orientalizing (eighth–sixth centuries BC) — when borders, networks and power relations were reorganized all over Italy — developing unique hybrid-local funerary rituals which suggest an abandonment of the original proto-Etruscan networks. Additionally, no shift towards increasing social complexity and urbanization was evident. By contrast, Vulci represents one of the principal Villanovan sites of Etruria, which became Etruscan in historical times. Like other major centres in Etruria, Vulci expanded on a large plateau (126 hectares), which started to be occupied in the Final Bronze Age 3 (c. 1025–925 BC) and was surrounded by a significant area of necropoleis.