

## ‘Books written by the so-called colonials or half-bloods’: Italian publishers’ reception of novels by the Windrush writers in the 1950s and 1960s

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This article contributes to the expanding body of scholarship investigating the problematic correlations between racism, the legacy of colonialism, and configurations of national and cultural identity in post-war Italy. It does so through a yet unexplored perspective: that of the attitude of Italian publishing towards literature from former colonies. More specifically, it examines the reception of anglophone Caribbean novels written by ‘Windrush writers’ in the 1950s and 1960s. The article provides evidence of how Italian agents and publishers – belonging to the country’s intellectual elite, and many of whom publicly espoused anti-colonial positions – not only proved to be more interested in the exotic, picturesque contents of Caribbean literature than in its historical, ideological, and political significance, but sometimes actively opposed the circulation of texts containing anticolonial or pro-Black identity claims. Some of their comments demonstrate the persistence of racist and derogatory assumptions of an imagined black and colonial Other, and a negation of their identity as both political subjects and cultural producers, if they failed to conform to dominant expectations. The expectations and the evaluation criteria active in the reception of Caribbean novels allow for an assessment of the ambiguous attitude of Italian publishing agents towards colonialism, race, and alterity.

**Keywords:** post-war Italian publishing; Italian cultural history; Windrush writers; post-colonial literature; post-colonial Italy; race in post-war Italy

### Introduction

In the period following the Second World War, Italy was to shape a new identity for itself after the dark years of Fascism. This new identity was derived from a concerted effort to establish a clean break with the recent past, and to repudiate everything the regime had been and done, including the colonial experience (Zunino 2003, 283–305; La Rovere 2014, 24–25; Focardi 2005, 3–14; Labanca 2002, 427–471; Del Boca 2003). Although in the immediate post-war years Italy’s government sought to regain control of its former colonial possessions, once these claims were definitively rejected by the United Nations in 1947, the colonial past became another ‘Fascist element’ to obliterate in this process of national cultural regeneration (Lorenzini 2007). Accordingly, it became popular among many sections of the Italian political and cultural elites to present themselves as ‘cautiously’ anticolonial and pro-independence, and Italy as the main friend and ally to the ‘new’ nations that were emerging from colonial domination, or were still fighting it, at a time when a number of major European powers were still deeply implicated in colonial enterprises and wars (Bagnato 1992, 289–298; Ianari 2003). However, as a number of scholars have suggested,

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Italy's attempts to demonstrate dramatic and progressive shifts in political and cultural attitudes after the war were often deeply problematic, because they did not entail an open and honest engagement with the recent past, and a collective political effort to come to terms with difficult aspects of the country's history (Pavone 2004, 272–273; Focardi and Klinkhammer 2004, 335–344; Battini 2007, 26, 31–41; Ward 1996, 61–64; Bosworth and Dogliani 1999, 6–8; Fogu 2006, 149–150). Rather, they were based on the suppression of uncomfortable historical facts and memories, such as the rise to power of the regime, the widespread support for the dictatorship, the ingrained and institutionalised racism, and the brutality of Italy's colonial enterprise (see e.g. Zunino 2003, Labanca 2004, Forgacs 2016).

These processes of denial and obliteration left problematic hangovers from the Fascist period intact and unexamined in a post-Fascist Italy that claimed to be progressive, antifascist, and anticolonial, or at least supportive of decolonising and newly independent nations. One of these hangovers certainly concerned the relationship with race and black colonial alterity. While racism predated the establishment of the regime, it was under Fascism that it was radicalised, institutionalised, and made into an explicit and constitutive element of the Italian state and of national identity (Gillette 2002, 1–4; Giuliani 2014). After the fall of the regime, references to race were removed from public discourse together with Italy's colonial responsibilities, while they kept operating on a deeper level, and shaping attitudes and forms of national identity (Mellino 2012, 88–93; Lombardi-Diop 2012, 175–177; Giuliani and Lombardi-Diop 2013, 21–65; Portelli 2003, 33–34). Although scholars have studied racism and the centrality of ideas of race in the national symbolic construction in the liberal, Fascist, and contemporary periods, the post-war decades have been less explored. Ellena has defined this period as 'the site of a historiographical vacuum' on the relationships between racism, the legacy of colonialism, and configurations of national identity (2015, 17). Other scholars (e.g. Pezzarossa 2013, 273; Deplano 2016, 97–98; Patriarca 2015, 33) have also stated the need for further investigation of this subject, in order to achieve a better understanding of how elements of Fascist and colonial culture have survived unscathed through the post-war period and beyond.

This article contributes to this intellectual endeavour and does so through an as yet unexplored perspective; that of the attitude of Italian publishing towards authors and literature from former colonies which emerged in the 'decolonisation era', or soon afterwards. More specifically, it examines the reception of anglophone Caribbean literature in the 1950s and 1960s, produced by the so-called 'Windrush writers'. This group of writers emerged on the London scene in the 1950s, and their works, taken as set of writings, were largely an expression of the desire for cultural and political independence of the Caribbean colonies. The dynamics of the reception of these writings, which provide a particularly pertinent example of engagement with both political and racial issues, are revealing of the tensions and ambiguities that surrounded ideas of race and black colonial alterity in post-war Italian culture. Examining the expectations and the evaluation criteria active in the reception of Caribbean novels allows for an assessment of the ambiguous attitude of some prominent Italian publishing agents towards colonialism, race, and alterity, and of the foreclosure of these issues in postwar Italian culture more generally.

This article shows that Italian agents and publishers not only proved to be more interested in the exotic, picturesque contents of Caribbean literature than in its historical, ideological, and political significance, but also sometimes actively opposed the circulation of texts containing anticolonial or pro-Black identity claims. Some of their comments demonstrate the persistence of racist and derogatory assumptions of an imagined black and colonial Other, and a negation of authors' identities as both political subjects and cultural producers if they failed to conform to dominant expectations. The few works that were translated were mainly grounded in familiar,

unchallenging representations of alterity (or were presented as such), while the ‘revolutionary’ project of achieving cultural and political autonomy and fighting racial discrimination that animated the Windrush writers was considered inappropriate or uninteresting for Italian readers. Such attitudes are even more remarkable and revealing when one considers the background and biographies of some of these agents, who formed part of the country’s cultural and intellectual elites, and sometimes publicly expressed anticolonial beliefs or sympathy towards ‘third-world’ peoples and their struggles. Elio Vittorini, for instance, the major public intellectual and most famous of the figures discussed here, firmly endorsed independence movements and struggles in the colonies, undertaking initiatives such as drafting a *Manifesto of Solidarity of Italian Intellectuals* with the French intellectuals who had signed the *Manifeste des 121* in 1960, condemning the action of the French government in Algeria,<sup>1</sup> and joining a petition addressed to the Portuguese President asking for the release of the Angolan poet and political activist Agostinho Neto, in 1962 (Mistretta 2013, 80).

Vittorini’s actions were in line with wider attitudes of outspoken support and endorsement of anticolonial and third-world movements of Italian cultural and intellectual milieus in the post-war period, which emerged especially as a reaction to the Algerian liberation war and the French repression. In particular since 1958, the Italian intellectual world mobilised in support of the Algerian resistance, followed by increasingly large sections of the political classes, and by significant public support (see Gaudio 1982; Valabrega 1982; Rainero 1982; Bagnato 2012; and Scolari 2001).<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Pirelli was undoubtedly, of all Italian intellectuals, the strongest advocate of the Algerian cause. His engagement and enthusiasm led to the translation of the works of Frantz Fanon, of whom he was a personal friend, and their publication with Einaudi between 1962 and 1967 (Srivastava 2015), as well as to the creation, in Milan, of the *Centro Documentazione Frantz Fanon*, in 1962 (Love 2015). The manifestations of solidarity throughout this period were mostly grounded in a powerful connection established between the Algerian liberation struggle and the Italian resistance against the German occupation (or even the Risorgimento), which was in those years among the most influential foundation myths of a new, post-Fascist, and democratic Italian identity. Many intellectuals and activists saw this engagement as an ideal continuation of the values that had inspired the fight against the Nazis and the Fascists (see e.g. Love 2015, 350; Gaudio 1982, 283, 293; Valabrega 1982, 320–321; Rainero 1982, 408–409). This parallel, however, conveniently glossed over the uncomfortable fact that Italians, despite having engaged in a national liberation war (which was, however, also a civil war), had been fascists and colonialists themselves (and some of these intellectuals had been personally involved with Fascism: Vittorini and Pirelli, for instance). The strong sentiment of solidarity towards the Algerian cause did not entail or elicit a reflection on Italy’s own colonial past. Rather, without hesitation and seemingly without perceiving any conflicts or ambiguity, several members of the Italian intellectual, cultural, and political elites, as well as significant sections of public opinion, positioned themselves on the side of the ‘victims’ fighting for the values of resistance, national independence, freedom, and democracy. As will be seen, exploring the responses of some prominent exponents of the Italian cultural and intellectual elites to the postcolonial fiction of the Windrush writers provides a useful means of drawing out and examining some of these submerged and unacknowledged tensions and silences around race, colonialism, and identity in the post-war era.

In the article I analyse evaluations of literary value and the extra-literary factors that interact with and shape them, reading between the lines in judgments of literary merit in order to contextualise and historicise expressions of literary taste.<sup>3</sup> Publishers’ archives are an immensely valuable source for this historicising work, as they offer a window on otherwise hidden publishing processes and editorial decisions that lead to the publication of literary works. Archives provide relatively unmediated access to judgements of literary merit and commercial value produced by

agents of the publishing industry, and to exchanges about the publication of literary works.<sup>4</sup> This article is based on archival research carried out in the archives of Fondazione Mondadori; specifically the archive of Mondadori, the largest Italian publishing firm, and that of Erich Linder, the major literary agent of the time. Unfortunately, most Italian publishers' archives are not accessible to researchers.<sup>5</sup> However, I attempt to draw larger, if necessarily partial, conclusions on the dynamics of the field by considering a broader set of data. I thus analyse all anglophone Caribbean novels translated into Italian in the 1950s and 1960s, along with their paratextual frameworks, in order to offer a more comprehensive account of the dynamics of reception of this body of work.

After a brief introduction to Windrush literature, I examine the reception of the two writers who were the most represented in Italian translation, Edgar Mittelholzer and V.S. Naipaul, showing how their works were, in different ways, catering for Italian agents' and readers' expectations on Caribbean literature. Subsequently, I analyse readers' reports on works with ideological and political contents which were considered controversial and unacceptable, and show how responses to these contents interfered with evaluations of literary merit. A key factor to consider when assessing these reports is that many of Mondadori's readers and collaborators, like Vittorini, Mattioli and Tasso, used to work for different publishers at the same time. Although their evaluations were tailored to the specificities of the different publishers, their being active in several publishing houses simultaneously, combined with the analysis of other publishers' translations, allows me to take their ideas and remarks as a fundamental starting point to draw more general conclusions on the dynamics of the field. Finally, I look at the few books by Windrush writers which reached the Italian marketplace besides Naipaul's and Mittelholzer's, and discuss how they were, both for their nature and for their framing and presentation, removed from their context of production, so that any connection with the Caribbean and the Windrush movement was erased.

### **The adventurous and the funny side of life in the Caribbean: Mittelholzer and Naipaul**

In the 1950s, a number of Caribbean writers established themselves in London, emerging into prominence on the literary scene, and published by distinguished British presses. This group included George Lamming, Derek Walcott, Wilson Harris, John Hearne, Andrew Salkey, Jan Carew, Orlando Patterson, Samuel Selvon, V. S. Naipaul, Edgar Mittelholzer, and Michael Anthony (Low 2011, 93–94). They became known as the 'Windrush writers', from the name of the ship, *Empire Windrush*, which in 1948 brought one of the first large groups of Caribbean migrants to the UK. Although obviously marked by individual differences, the Windrush generation produced a body of work of particular cultural and political significance. Taken as a distinct set of writings, they could be seen as working 'towards the goal of cultural and political autonomy of the Caribbean' (Brown 2013, 16; see also Vadde 2015, 63). They were 'intensely concerned with questions of identity and ideology' (Brown 2013, 39), and expressed 'a contestatory ideological critique that ... [sought] to inspire a reconsideration of common assumptions about race, equality, and the residual effects of empire' (40). However, this body of works, which represented an important literary and publishing phenomenon in the British field, particularly between 1950 and the early 1960s (Low 2011, 93–95), did not produce significant interest in the Italian field. Archival records reveal that Italian agents were familiar with this literary movement, but saw its relevance as limited to the British field, as expressed in the following remark on Naipaul's *Miguel Street*:

...We are dealing here with the typical book of a dawning literature, and I think it is right to publish works like this in England – works written in English by a writer for whom English is the cultivated language and not the native language; but I do not think it is worth translating it into Italian.<sup>6</sup>

The translation and publication of Caribbean authors of the Windrush generation in Italy was almost entirely limited to the works of Edgar Mittelholzer in the 1950s, and V. S. Naipaul in the 1960s. Archival records provide crucial insight into the motives underlying these patterns of reception. Naipaul and Mittelholzer were the authors who were least involved in the cultural and political nationalistic project that animated the Windrush writers, and those that were the most detached, in both 'emotional' and ideological terms, from their native countries (Brown 2013, 45, 170–171). As this section shows, the preference given to their work over that of other, more engaged authors was an expression of the predilection for texts that provided undemanding entertainment and allowed an unproblematic consumption of Caribbean alterity. Conversely, novels entailing an engagement with socio-political realities of the Caribbean islands and containing anticolonial, nationalist, and pro-Black identity claims, which were crucial to many Windrush works, were considered uninteresting and boring, or even ideologically unacceptable.

Edgar Mittelholzer was well-known for his controversial conservative political views which set him apart from the other writers of the Windrush generation and to a certain extent conditioned his critical reception (Brown 2013, 45). Nonetheless, in the 1950s he was the most successful Caribbean writer on the British scene (Brown 2013, 45), especially from a commercial point of view, and for a short period of time, between 1953 and 1957, some of his novels had remarkable international circulation and were translated into several languages, which was uncommon for Caribbean literature at that stage.<sup>7</sup> His novels acquire particular significance in the analysis of the Italian reception of Caribbean fiction (and postcolonial fiction in general), in the period under question, since he was the only author who had no less than five works translated by three different publishers in a very short period of time (1953–1955), and in the context of a general lack of interest in Caribbean literature in Italian publishing.<sup>8</sup> As Buzelin has pointed out in relation to French reception of Mittelholzer, the success of his historical novels can be ascribed to their exoticist and popular appeal, which situated them 'in the realm of middlebrow fiction redolent of exoticism and adventure' (Buzelin 2005, 83), and such tropes were foregrounded in their presentation and marketing. Recounting the history of Guyana through tales and sagas of passion and violence, his most successful novels were mostly issued by commercially-minded publishers in Britain, who exploited their most 'pulp' and saleable side in their packaging, in order to appeal to a popular audience (Edmonson 2009, 10). For instance, the brief synopsis on the dust jacket of a 1959 British edition of *Children of Kaywana*, one of his most successful novels, reads: 'Supercharged with the passions of men and women living amid the heat, the terrors and the smouldering frenzy of brutalised slaves in the jungles of Guiana' (Ace Books).

Mittelholzer's novels found a similar positioning in the Italian market, where they appeared mainly in the catalogues of publishers of popular, middlebrow literature, like Baldini & Castoldi and Rizzoli, but also in that of a more prestigious publisher like Frassinelli.<sup>9</sup> In similar colourful and sensationalist terms, the 1956 Italian edition of *Children of Kaywana* (*I figli di Kaywana*, Baldini & Castoldi 1956) describes the book as the

... spectacularly imaginative saga of a family of Dutch pioneers settled in a colony which will later become British Guyana ... with a huge whirlwind of characters. In that primitive country, fighting against the elements, the savages, the French and English raids, the van Groenwegels lay the foundation of a real dynasty, appropriating lands and treasures and conquering a sense of pride, of limitless power and aggression which gives rise to the cruellest tyranny. (Mittelholzer 1956, back cover)

It is clear from these blurbs and covers that the depiction of the Caribbean ambience, the representation of alterity, and of relations between colonists and natives in these works was often exoticist and stereotypical, and these traits were emphasised because of the predominantly popular positioning of the novels.

*Children of Kaywana* and *Shadows Move among Them*, also published by Baldini & Castoldi in 1957, had previously been considered for publication by Mondadori. Augusta Mattioli,<sup>10</sup> who reviewed them, acknowledged that the novels were not exceptional in terms of artistic value and did not show any psychological depth in the depiction of characters, but could appeal to ‘that part of the public that is sensitive to the allure of hazy atmospheres, not devoid of a certain morbidity of exotic quality, as well as to the lovers of the so-called escapist fiction’, and to ‘readers who love novels of thrilling and byzantine adventures’ and ‘long-drawn-out, sensational novels’.<sup>11</sup> A note added under her book report on *Shadows Move Among Them* said that ‘it would be good to take it, but we have too many engagements’,<sup>12</sup> showing that it was the kind of book that Mondadori too was potentially interested in offering its readers. In contrast, Mittelholzer’s later novels *My Bones and My Flute*, a ghost-story horror novel, and *Of Trees and the Sea* were reviewed extremely negatively by Enrico Piceni.<sup>13</sup> The last report in Mondadori’s file was on *A Tinkling in the Twilight*, written by Bruno Tasso.<sup>14</sup> Despite praising the author and his earlier works, Tasso warned that the quality of his work had declined, and speculated that this was the result of his prolific output. Interestingly, he remarked that *A Tinkling in the Twilight* was less felicitous than the previous ones also because the author had ‘abandoned the setting that is most congenial to him, that of the islands of the Sea of the Antilles, and set the plot in London – the results are not exactly brilliant’.<sup>15</sup> This comment suggests that the interest in Mittelholzer’s novels was mainly in the brutal and exoticist depiction they provided of Guyana and its history, which could resonate well with the popular imagination of Italian readers, and provide ‘easy’ entertainment. When the genre, and then the setting of his novels changed, Italian publishers lost interest in his works. *My Bones and My Flute*, *Of Trees and Sea*, *A Tinkling in the Twilight* and all the following works by Mittelholzer were never published in Italy.<sup>16</sup>

With a trajectory opposite to that of Mittelholzer, Naipaul established himself quite late on the British scene compared to the other Windrush writers, but is the writer who has achieved the greatest prominence in the long term (Brown 2013, 170), culminating in his 2001 Nobel Prize for Literature. While during the 1950s he was overshadowed by other novelists such as Lamming, Mais, Mittelholzer, and Selvon, he began to establish himself as a prominent figure on the British scene in 1961, when *A House for Mr Biswas* was published and won the Somerset Maugham Award. This novel was highly praised by critics in Britain and also advertised as a masterpiece outside of Britain even before its release, through the international network of literary agents who had a crucial role in regulating the international exchange of literary products. In Italy, Erich Linder, the country’s predominant literary agent and a key influence on foreign imports and translations,<sup>17</sup> began promoting the novel two months before its release. In sending Mondadori Naipaul’s previous novel *The Suffrage of Elvira* for consideration, he urged them to examine it quickly, as the new book by Naipaul would appear soon, and he had ‘heard wonderful things about it’.<sup>18</sup> Unsurprisingly this introduction, together with the very positive British reviews, had a bearing on Mondadori’s decision to publish the book, which came out in 1964. Such was the interest in the novel that Mondadori agreed to also publish *The Mystic Masseur*, since Naipaul, showing commercial awareness, had made the publication of one of his earliest novels the condition for obtaining the option and the publishing rights of *A House for Mr Biswas*.<sup>19</sup> Archival records show that Mondadori had initiated a publishing plan that entailed the publication of at least three other of his works: *The Middle Passage*, *Mr Stone and the Knights’ Companion*, and *An Area of Darkness*,<sup>20</sup> which led literary director Vittorio Sereni to claim in 1962 that he was ‘globally our [Mondadori’s] author’.<sup>21</sup> However, it would seem that Mondadori had taken on more contracts than it could handle and in the end, after trying to hand over some titles to other publishers like Il Saggiatore and Adelphi without success, had to renounce the planned publication

of Naipaul's works (which did not please the author). As a consequence, the importation of his works into the Italian marketplace in the 1960s ended with these two novels, and was not resumed until the 1980s (Pennacchietti 2017, 151–152).<sup>22</sup>

As will be illustrated in this section, Mondadori's bias for Naipaul over other Caribbean authors was not only due to the literary quality of his writing; in fact, it can also be ascribed to the light, humorous style of his early novels (the only ones which actually got to be published in Italy in the 1960s), and to his deliberate avoidance of political and ideological claims in his literary works, which set him apart from most Windrush writers, and made him closer to Mittelholzer (although their writings did not otherwise have much in common). Caribbean history and politics do feature in Naipaul's work, however his novels

... are not concerned with politics per se or with political creeds as the basis of nationalism. There is no fusing of socialism with nationalism – one of the more commonly employed forms of nationalism in new countries; there is no emotional or partisan repudiation of social and political order from colonial days, no defining of the individual through confrontation with Europeans or Americans, no obsession with a Prospero-Caliban dichotomy. (Ramraj 1984, 190)

Moreover, his approach to Caribbean and 'third-world' socio-historical issues was destructive, rather than constructive, especially in the novels he wrote after *A House for Mr Biswas*; it was thus very different from that of most Windrush writers, whose works envisioned an ideal of cultural and political autonomy of the Caribbean. Naipaul's by now notoriously harsh and derisive depictions of his homeland and fellow countrymen, as well as his bleak perspective on the third world, have been seen as a sign of his disassociation from his country and 'impatience with third-world societies, nationalisms and peoples' (Harney 1996, 143; see also Brown 2013, 170–171).

In 1954 Naipaul became the editor of the influential radio programme *Caribbean Voices*, which played a pivotal role in promoting Caribbean writers, and in setting the dominant taste and trends on Caribbean literature (Low 2011, 96–99). This granted him the role of commentator on Caribbean authors and literary trends. His ideas of what Caribbean literature should and should not be, emerging from his comments, showed a remarkable convergence with what Italian agents, specifically Mondadori's readers and collaborators, liked and disliked in the Caribbean works they reviewed. Naipaul claimed, for instance, that too often Caribbean writing 'has been one of social protest' and that 'the writer is an individual who no longer needs to be buoyed up by his nationalism'. He also complained about writings engaged with racial issues, commenting that 'writers are so boring when they are only being black' (*Caribbean Voices* 26 December 1954, 18 September 1955 and 16 September 1956, all quoted in Brown 2013, 173). In speaking out against literary experimentalism, which was the stylistic hallmark of many Windrush writers, Naipaul 'argues instead for more commonsense language, straightforward stories, and a down-to-earth, lightly humorous writing style' (Brown 2013, 172), much like his own. These were very much the positive features Mondadori's agents identified and praised in his novels, constituting characteristics they expected from Caribbean literature, or which they evaluated positively. Bruno Tasso's report on *The Mystic Masseur*, recommending the publication of the novel, is emblematic in this respect:

After so many works on the Trinidads [sic: 'sulle Trinidad'] which look like anthropology treatises, which aim to give us an analytically political picture of the situation of those wonderful islands, where a very low standard of living is opposed to a luxuriant vegetation and mores that are still at a tribal stage, hooray for the face of an author who only considers the funny side of life, and who has the intelligence to give us the tropical equivalent of a picaresque story. Because Ganesh Ransumair ... is ultimately the European *picaro* from the seventeenth/eighteenth century transferred to another setting, picturesque enough to be the most suitable backdrop for his adventures .... There are hilarious pages, it is all a big firework of funny episodes, and the reader never gets bored.<sup>23</sup>

Elio Vittorini agreed that the book was ‘good and amusing’, and approved its purchase.<sup>24</sup> Tasso’s polemic allusion to the ‘many works’ on the Caribbean islands which ‘look like anthropology treatises’ dealing with political issues suggests a familiarity with the ‘engaged’ works of the Windrush writers. This familiarity was confirmed in his reports on Jan Carew’s novels, in which, as will be seen, he voiced his dislike even more explicitly. This polemic allusion clarified his belief that Caribbean writers should leave socio-political matters out of their literary works. His stereotypical ideas of the Caribbean, which emerge in this report (the ‘low standard of living’, the ‘luxuriant vegetation’, and the ‘mores still at a tribal stage’) and the terms of his praise of Naipaul’s novels then confirmed his opinion that Caribbean books should be about light-hearted and picturesque stories of life on the islands.

Bruno Tasso was even more enthusiastic about *A House for Mr Biswas*. In his report, he wrote that it was

maybe the best book that Naipaul has written so far, certainly better than *The Mystic Masseur* because it is more complete, more balanced, with ... [an] exact proportion of comic and tragic .... It is a work that for its novelty, for its freshness, for its intelligence ... should definitely be translated.<sup>25</sup>

Vittorini did not completely agree, as he found *A House for Mr Biswas* too long, verbose and over-descriptive. While acknowledging the general good quality of the novel, according to him its undue ambition to be rich and inclusive characterised Naipaul as a sort of ‘Dickens from the Antilles’, by which he meant that these features made it similar to a sprawling nineteenth-century novel, and ‘not problematically interesting from the point of view of modern literature’.<sup>26</sup> However, he concluded that ‘the reading of the new novel is still so amusing that we should take it’. Vittorini’s comment constructs *A House* as a somehow obsolete and *not modern* book, whose value however was in the amusing depiction of a picturesque setting. Tasso’s remarks and Vittorini’s comments are exemplary of a tendency, which appears to be dominant in the Italian field at this stage, to consider ‘engaged’ Caribbean novels unappealing, as these texts were expected to provide forms of ‘easy’ entertainment on an exotic background, exemplified by Mittelholzer’s and Naipaul’s early novels.

### Windrush writers and the boredom of race and politics

In this section, the reception of Mittelholzer’s and Naipaul’s novels will be compared with the evaluation of other Caribbean works which did not conform to the same entertaining, depoliticised formula. Mondadori’s readers reviewed Jan Carew’s *Black Midas* and *The Wild Coast*. Both novels can be seen to present an appeal similar to that of Mittelholzer’s novels, leveraging a popular taste for adventures in an exotic setting, which was foregrounded in some British editions. Indeed, the first reports written by Mondadori’s readers on both novels were positive and used similar evaluative categories, but also acknowledged a higher literary quality, which was disavowed in some reports on Mittelholzer’s works. According to Ruth Tassoni, in *Black Midas* Carew used

... a style of irresistible and primitive lyrical beauty, evoking the smell of the forest and of unexplored rivers, the liveliness of a wild, open world, without the limits of bourgeois conventions; he often leaves characters speaking in black people’s picturesque jargon, but a sophisticated awareness of their psychological problems gives the book a peculiar quality. ... One of those rare literary works in which possible weaknesses vanish into the richness, the vigour, and the immediacy of the narration-confession.<sup>27</sup>

Giuliana Galeazzi Pozzo evaluated *The Wild Coast* in similar terms, and wrote that



... the story is interesting for two reasons: one is the extremely lively and throbbing description of a primitive world on the margin of the big tropical forest; the other is the succession of various experiences that lead Hector out of the limbo of adolescence. It is a rapid, concise, violent narration, to be read all at once.<sup>28</sup>

However, both novels, particularly *The Wild Coast*, also engaged with issues of class and race in British Guyana, as they provided a critique of the discriminatory Guyanese social system (Birbalsingh 2002, 20), and they did so from the perspective of an anti-colonial author who was also an activist in the global black civil rights movement, alongside figures like Malcolm X and Kwame Nkrumah (Sivanandan 2002, see also Sivanandan et al. 2002). For Tasso, who wrote the second report on *The Wild Coast*, the novel's literary quality was compromised by its racial and anticolonial claims, which he violently condemned as unacceptable. The tone of his report was derogatory and almost indignant:

The books written by the so-called 'colonials' or half-bloods, books that are currently much in vogue in Britain (but only in Britain), have one fundamental drawback: apart from rare exceptions, they are deadly boring. There is always the same environment, always the same situations, and the same implied celebration of the 'savage' and consequent denigration of the Europeans. It may be a reaction to the well-known 'white man's burden', but one cannot deny that, in both cases, the result is discouraging. And this book is no exception to the rule: the story of Hector Bradshaw, a half-caste who lives in a big farmstead in Tarlogie, British Guyana, entrusted to the care of a Negro governess ... does not go beyond the usual clichés. It is a childhood that is supposed to be romantic, with natives who have only superficially absorbed Western civilisation, but underneath have remained the same barbarians they have always been, in the good and in the bad sense of the word ... with all things that we have read many and many times. It is the same old story and I don't think it is worth proposing it to the Italian public, although Carew, in some instances, shows an unquestionable writing talent.<sup>29</sup>

It is worth pointing out how Carew's 'unquestionable writing talent', emphasised in the previous positive reports but also by Tasso himself, was overshadowed by the author's unacceptable ideological positions. The primary ideological motivation of his harsh judgment, which is evident also in the racist expressions employed to refer to colonial authors ('half-bloods'), colonial people in general ('the savage'), and colonial characters ('natives who have only superficially absorbed Western civilisation, but underneath have remained the same barbarians they have always been'), was disguised under the contention that the novel was not worth publishing because its subject matter and viewpoint were unoriginal and clichéd. However, Italian readers had certainly not come across many such works before 1960. Dismissing the previous positive reports, Elio Vittorini concluded, with one of his customary concise but telling comments, that *The Wild Coast* was a

... decent but unoriginal novel, on a topic that is of little interest in Italy. It is about black people as such, or rather, as they are always, well aware of being different from the others, that is the whites.<sup>30</sup>

This brief but crucial comment states clearly that works engaging with the subject of race, especially when entailing radical claims to the legitimacy of black identity defining itself in explicit opposition to 'white' identity, were not judged to be appealing for an Italian public. The reaction to Carew's novels is indicative of how problematic ideas of race were in the Italian cultural sphere. The agents involved, including a left-wing intellectual professing anticolonial views like Vittorini, manifested discomfort with, and even hostility towards a 'militant', oppositional approach to the race question, adopted by a black author. Such was the unsuitability of the ideas expressed in the book, that even its acknowledged and commended literary quality took second place. Vittorini's allusion to the Italian public's lack of interest in these issues also indicates a general belief that the theme of race was not relevant to the Italian context, and did not hold the same concern as it did in other European countries that were

dealing with the dismantling of their colonial empires. Following Tasso's report and Vittorini's comment, Sereni suggested extrapolating parts of the book in which Carew's writing talent emerged, and publishing them in one of Mondadori's magazines, in an attempt to decontextualise lyrical excerpts, thus depoliticising Carew's writing and making it 'innocuous'.<sup>31</sup> It seems the suggestion was not taken forward.

Carew's racial and anticolonial politics thus led his writing to be judged as unpalatable and unacceptable by Italian intellectuals. It is notable also that even Naipaul's novels, when they did not abide by the formula of the light-hearted, picturesque Caribbean stories, or were perceived as being ideologically controversial, received harsh judgements which led to their rejection. While he was enthusiastic about *The Mystic Masseur*, Tasso was very critical of *The Suffrage of Elvira*, although the two novels are in many ways similar. The reason was that he saw in *The Suffrage of Elvira* a rejection and a mockery of Western democratic values generously provided to colonial countries:

One of the many authors who have blossomed in the West Indies and have gradually invaded the British marketplace, Naipaul is the author of an amusing book, *The Mystic Masseur* .... Here he reprises the same theme, but the result is less felicitous. He presents us with more or less the same characters, and he tells us the tragicomic story of the second elections that take place in the town of Elvira, in Trinidad. ... It is too easy to disavow democracy, to hold it up to ridicule, to deride it with the usual stories about vote rigging, influence peddling, scuffles, ... about the substantial meanness of white people who have brought to the natives meaningless institutions. When starting from scratch, democracy is not easy, it should represent an achievement, and it is too easy to mock it for its mistakes, because mistakes are unavoidable when one tries to adapt it to models that have nothing to do with democracy. The book does not lack some amusing scenes and humorous jokes, but is undermined by the idea that informs it. It is a work that is wrong from its roots, and as such I do not believe it is worth a translation.<sup>32</sup>

It is unnecessary to emphasise the genuine colonial 'ideology' that forms the subtext of this report, and how it interfered with literary judgement and determined the reader's opinion on the book. Again, the value of the book was in its 'amusing scenes and humorous jokes', but it was invalidated by what was perceived as an unacceptable ideological stance, criticising and ridiculing Western values and institutions. As was previously mentioned, Naipaul had posed the publication of *The Suffrage of Elvira* as a condition for granting an option to *A House for Mr Biswas*. Following Tasso's report, Vittorini decided to request, successfully, that *The Mystic Masseur* be swapped with *The Suffrage of Elvira*, and Mondadori published the unproblematic *The Mystic Masseur* instead.

Mondadori's archive contains records of two other meaningful rejections: those of *Of Age and Innocence*, by George Lamming, and *While Gods are Falling*, by Earl Lovelace. Like Carew's novels, these texts were concerned with social and political issues, specifically the troubled process of the transition to independence of the Caribbean countries, and its problematic aftermath. *Of Age and Innocence* was also written in Lamming's famously complex style (Brown 2013, 73–102), constituting a conscious act of resistance by the author to expectations of his work (79–80), which made it even less appealing, and certainly contributed to its incomprehension by Mondadori's readers Bulgheroni and Vittorini.<sup>33</sup> A lack of interest in works engaging with the social and political realities of Caribbean countries, or an active hostility towards them, does not only prevail in Mondadori's readers' assessment of Caribbean novels, but seems to dominate the Italian field at large. As noted, almost no novels by the Windrush writers reached the Italian marketplace in this period, besides those of Naipaul and Mittelholzer. The last part of the article will look at the Caribbean novels published by other presses in this period, of which there were only two. Although written by authors associated with the Windrush movement, it is important to note that both novels did not 'openly' address Caribbean socio-political issues, and in fact they were not even set in the Caribbean. These

novels are the eloquently titled *Moscow is not my Mecca*, Jan Carew's only book to ever be translated into Italian, and *The Leopard*, by Victor Stafford Reid.

*Moscow is not my Mecca* was issued in 1968 by a minor publisher, Corbaccio, with the title *Mosca non è la mia Mecca*. Jan Carew wrote it after a period spent studying in Moscow on a scholarship granted by the government of the Soviet Union, as part of a programme carried out between the mid-1950s and 1970, funding students from third-world countries to attend Soviet universities (Rupprecht 2015, 192–193). Although the perspective expressed in the book was more complex than the title might suggest (its original title, *Green Winter*, was less 'direct' than the Italian one, translated from a later edition), and ultimately it was 'just as critical about the West as it was about the Soviet Union' (Rupprecht 2015, 192), it did express a disillusionment with the Soviet regime, and could be proposed to the readers as an anti-Communist novel recounting and criticising the Soviet Union from the point of view of an external spectator. The publication of this book by a 'commercial' publisher of popular, lowbrow fiction like Corbaccio (which was known for being the publisher of Emilio Salgari's popular adventure novels, for instance) would be hard to explain in any other terms – *Mosca non è la mia Mecca* was placed in a book series called *Gli anelli* alongside a variety of lowbrow works of fiction including adventurous, historical, comic, and even erotic novels, with no discernible rationale.

*The Leopard* by Victor Stafford Reid was published by Rizzoli in 1959 with the title *Il Leopardo*. Although it engaged with the issue of race relations, the novel, which was set in Kenya, could also be seen as epitomising the captivating representation of Africa as a mysterious, wild, primitive, and brutal land, which was foregrounded in several editions of African novels published in this period (Pennacchietti 2017, 53–73). It was precisely in these terms that the work was presented to Italian readers:

This strange, magical, hallucinatory narration, not comparable to any other, is the epic and obsessive story of a tragic chain hunt, in which a Negro chases a white man through the African forest and is chased in turn by a leopard, the insidious animal which symbolises the mysterious land of Africa. The author, a Jamaican Negro, has been able to shape the language of the white conqueror into an instrument of high poetry, embellished with bold and strange images, to describe the story through the actions of a primitive spirit, the protagonist Nebu, who from contact with Western civilisation has only learnt an inextinguishable, all-out hate. The novel is a new page, highly significant and revealing of the complex relations existing between natives and whites in Kenya, which stands as a musical and poetic comment on the bloody news stories about racial struggle, at the same time evoking all the mystery, the beauty and the terror of the jungle and its inhabitants. (Reid 1959, inside flap)

The rich semantic field and imagery used to describe the text and define its value on the book jacket mobilises ideas of mystery, danger, primitiveness, and terror, once again evoking the images of Africa that dominated and thrilled Italians' collective imagination. At the same time the blurb tried to exploit a potential documentary value of the text, through a vague and almost casual reference to 'the complex relations between natives and whites in Kenya' and the 'bloody news stories about racial struggle'. The Mau Mau uprising was being reported by the media in that period, so this mention could represent an additional 'lure' to curious readers.<sup>34</sup> These loaded issues were only mentioned *en passant*, without dwelling on them or expressing a stance, and implying that the book itself did not really engage with them, but rather was an unthreatening 'musical and poetic comment' on these matters. Some sentences and wordings even betray an ambiguous positioning towards colonial issues – for instance the remark that 'from contact with Western civilisation, [Nebu] has only learnt an inextinguishable, all-out hate', which was a sign of a lack of discernment and sophistication, and made of him a 'primitive spirit'. The presentation of the text did not, therefore, convey any of its political or ideological content, despite the references

to racial struggles, and rather foregrounded a stereotypical reading. These publications show that the attitude of other publishers towards Caribbean fiction in this period did not diverge widely from that of Mondadori, as none of them proved to have a serious interest in providing Italian readers with a perspective on the ideological and socio-political dimension of Caribbean literature, or in introducing them to the political and cultural project of the Windrush writers.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has shown that the dismissal of novels which expressed an engagement with racial, ideological or political issues, and a corresponding bias for works that avoided such commitments and offered a picturesque, exotic or stereotypical representation of Caribbean realities, was a determining factor in the selection of anglophone Caribbean novels by Italian publishers in the period under consideration. A pattern of selection privileging the exotic, entertaining appeal of Caribbean novels over their ideological-political content, led literature by the Windrush generation to be almost completely rejected in the Italian field. Since only a few novels from this period have been translated at a later stage, this meant that these books, constituting a significant literary-cultural phenomenon both in their contemporary context and in the history of English-language and postcolonial literature, have been largely absent and unacknowledged in Italy. George Lamming's hugely important body of work, for example, has never been translated and remains unavailable in Italian. These patterns of reception are revealing of the ambiguities and the problematic elements of continuity with the past that marked the relationship with black colonial alterity in Italian culture, in a period in which Italy was striving to create a new identity as a progressive, anticolonial country, supportive and sympathetic to decolonisation struggles and newly independent nations. As has been suggested, this project of cultural and political regeneration rested upon denials and silences around Italy's historical experiences with racism and colonialism.

The response to the Windrush writings documented in Mondadori's archival records and analysed in the field at large is largely reactionary from a literary, cultural, and political point of view, and suggests that even members of the educated elites had problematic and backward attitudes towards black colonial alterity, attitudes that created troubling patterns of continuity with a recent past that had been so forcefully repudiated. Investigating such dynamics is important not only for what it tells us about the attitudes of post-war intellectual elites: it also sheds light on the formation of wider social attitudes and values in post-war Italy. The role of these agents in selecting and shaping the cultural products which entered and circulated in the system should not be underestimated when assessing their impact, as they were directly involved in the creation of a collective imagination which profoundly influenced cultural trends, in this case in the relationship with alterity. The attitudes of intellectuals and publishing agents thus provide a critical lens with which to view the problematic configurations of ideas of race and alterity in post-war Italy. Their attitudes and decisions should be seen as emblematic of the unacknowledged persistence of colonial mentalities and the failure to adequately address the recent past, but also as an important contributor to and determinant of wider cultural trends.

## Notes on contributor

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## Notes

1. The Manifesto is available as a pdf on the website of the research centre Franco Fortini: <http://www.ospiteingrato.unisi.it/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Fortini-p.-276-Ospite-2000.pdf> (accessed 15 June 2017). It was signed, besides Vittorini, by numerous intellectuals, writers, artists, and academics, including Giulio Carlo Argan, Carlo Bo, Italo Calvino, Giansiro Ferrata, Alberto Mondadori, Elsa Morante, Alberto Moravia, Franco Fortini, and Vittorio Sereni.
2. In Milan, the left-wing cultural centre *Casa della cultura* organised several talks and events on the Algerian question between 1958 and 1964, often inviting speakers and participants from African countries; it also contributed to the organisation and promotion of the exhibition *La nazione Algeria*, held at the Arengario in June and July 1962. Several artists and intellectuals endorsed or contributed in various ways to the exhibition, testifying to the large following that this issue attracted among Italian intellectuals; these included Giovanni Pirelli, Giovanni Arpino, Gilberto Tofano, Albe Steiner (who curated it), Carlo Bo, Corrado De Vita, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Paolo Grassi, Alberto Mondadori, Elio Vittorini, Vittorio Sereni, and Enzo Paci (Valabrega 1982; Scotti 2016, 226–227).
3. My overarching methodology draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s field theory, as the main theoretical model for the investigation of dynamics of production and circulation of cultural value. The classic reference work for the theorisation of the cultural field is Bourdieu 1993. See also Bourdieu 1984, 1995, and 2008. On the crucial debate on literary taste and the canon see Bourdieu 1995, 144–145; Frow 1995; von Hallberg 1983; Adams 1988; and Gorak 1991, in particular 1–8.
4. However, their use as sources of information for academic research is also very problematic, as they are often patchy, disorganised, and difficult to access, when they can be accessed at all. Despite all these issues, they remain the most significant source of knowledge on publishers’ activity, and therefore on the mechanisms governing the publishing industry. See Low 2002, 74–75 for a discussion of the use of archives in her research on the publishing history of postcolonial literature in the UK.
5. My attempts to access the archives of other Italian publishers relevant to my research (Adelphi, Frassinelli, Rizzoli, Feltrinelli, Jaca Book, and Edizioni Lavoro) were unsuccessful, as these either do not have an archive, or their archives are not accessible, or they do not include the post-war period. Einaudi’s archive, which I was able to access, does not hold any significant records on Windrush writers.
6. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder V.S. Naipaul, Marisa Bulgheroni on *Miguel Street*, 31 January 1962. Bulgheroni was a writer, translator, and Professor of American literature at various Italian universities. She worked as a reader and consultant for Mondadori. All translations from Italian are mine.
7. In those years, Mittelholzer’s novels were translated into French, German, Spanish, Dutch, and Danish. A list of translations is provided in the blog entry ‘Bibliography. Works by Edgar Mittelholzer’, available at <http://edgarmittelholzer.blogspot.it/2006/03/victor-l.html> (accessed 10 May 2017).
8. Mittelholzer’s novels translated into Italian were *Weather in Middenshot*, 1952 (*Strani eventi a Middenshot*, Frassinelli 1955); *Children of Kaywana*, 1952 (*I figli di Kaywana*, Baldini & Castoldi 1956); *A Morning at the Office*, 1950 (*Tempesta a Trinidad*, Corriere della Sera 1956); *The Life and Death of Sylvia*, 1956 (*Il sole nel sangue*, Rizzoli 1957); and *Shadows Move Among Them*, 1951 (*La saga delle ombre*, Baldini & Castoldi 1957).
9. On Baldini & Castoldi see Caccia 2013, 61–62. On Rizzoli see Ferretti 2004, 16–24. On Frassinelli see Billiani 2007, 259–263; Barbieri Torriani 2004, 48–49.
10. Mattioli was a reader and translator from English, German, and French. She worked for some leading publishers, such as Mondadori, Rizzoli, Garzanti, and Il Saggiatore.
11. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Edgar Mittelholzer, Augusta Mattioli on *Shadows Move Among Them*, October 1951, & Augusta Mattioli on *Children of Kaywana*, 12 March 1952.
12. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Edgar Mittelholzer, handwritten note under Augusta Mattioli’s report on *Shadows Move Among Them*, October 1951.

13. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Edgar Mittelholzer, Enrico Piceni on *My Bones and My Flute and Of Trees and the Sea*, 8 November 1956. Enrico Piceni was a translator, a consulting editor, and an art and literary critic. He was press office manager and joint editorial manager for Mondadori from 1925 to 1935.
14. Tasso was a well-known and prolific translator and a specialist of English-language literature. He collaborated with leading publishers, such as Mondadori and Garzanti. He famously committed suicide in 1962 due to work-related stress.
15. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Edgar Mittelholzer, Bruno Tasso on *A Tinkling in the Twilight*, 7 April 1960.
16. Mittelholzer's only novel translated into Italian which has a different setting was *Weather in Middenshot*, published by Frassinelli in 1955 with the title *Strani eventi a Middenshot*. This is a noir novel set in a village in England.
17. Linder received and 'sorted' the majority of foreign books, proposing them to the major Italian publishers according to their literary-publishing identity (Ferretti 2004, 45; see also Marazzi 2003 and Biagi 2007).
18. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, Linder to Mariagloria Sears, 29 August 1961.
19. It was Naipaul's intention that this novel should be *The Suffrage of Elvira*, but Mondadori asked for it to be swapped with *The Mystic Masseur*, which was judged a better novel, for reasons that will be explained later in this section (FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V. S. Naipaul, 30 October 1961).
20. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, 16 December 1965.
21. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, 19 October 1962. Vittorio Sereni was a poet, author, translator, editor, and key figure of post-war Italian publishing. His role of literary director at Mondadori, which he held from 1958 to 1975, was far-reaching and demanding: he supervised the entire editorial production. He managed the entire procedure of manuscript evaluation, assigning the texts to the readers and reading them personally when he could; he usually had the last word on whether or not they were suitable for publishing, before submitting the decision to Arnaldo Mondadori. On Sereni's publishing activity, see Ferretti 1999 and Esposito and Loreto 2013.
22. *A House for Mr Biswas* and *The Mystic Masseur* were published in 1964 and 1966 respectively, with the titles *Una casa per il signor Biswas* and *Il massaggio mistico*. The publication of Naipaul's works was then interrupted until the 1980s, when it was resumed by Rizzoli, Mondadori itself, and then Adelphi, which became Naipaul's 'official' publisher in the 1990s. All of Naipaul's works have now been translated into Italian (see Pennacchietti 2017, 90–91 and 151–152).
23. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, Bruno Tasso on *The Mystic Masseur*, 11 October 1961.
24. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, Elio Vittorini on *The Mystic Masseur*, 25 October 1961. Vittorini was a novelist, translator, literary critic, and editorial consultant for some of the most prominent Italian publishers (e.g. Bompiani, Mondadori, and Einaudi). At Mondadori, he progressively gained an intermediate position between readers and managers: he would sum up readers' reports and give a final word on books that had been evaluated by other readers, so as to help and 'guide' Sereni and Mondadori's final decision. He was a leading figure of the Italian post-war publishing and intellectual scene (on Vittorini's publishing work see Ferretti 1992).
25. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, Bruno Tasso on *A House for Mr Biswas*, 8 November 1961.
26. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V.S. Naipaul, Elio Vittorini on *A House for Mr Biswas*, 8 January 1962.
27. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Jan Carew, Ruth Tassoni on *Black Midas*, 30 April 1958. Tassoni was a German writer, literary critic, and intellectual, who worked as a reader for Mondadori. She only moved to Italy in 1950 and kept writing her works in German, apart from a poetry collection in Italian.
28. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Jan Carew, Giuliana Galeazzi Pozzo on *The Wild Coast*, 3 October 1960. Giuliana Galeazzi Pozzo worked as a reader and a translator for several Italian publishers (e.g. Mondadori, Rizzoli, Fabbri, and Longanesi). She translated into Italian notable authors such as Charlotte Brontë and Katherine Mansfield.
29. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Jan Carew, Bruno Tasso on *The Wild Coast*, 28 October 1960.
30. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Jan Carew, Elio Vittorini on *The Wild Coast*, 18 November 1960.
31. FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder Jan Carew, Vittorio Sereni on *The Wild Coast*, 22 November 1960.
32. FAAM, AME, *SEE – AB*, folder V. S. Naipaul, Bruno Tasso on *Suffrage of Elvira*, 4 September 1961.
33. In rejecting *Of Age and Innocence*, Vittorini did acknowledge some value in Lamming's writings, as he stated that he was 'the most talented author of Negro origin writing in English'; however, his opinion was that he had 'failed' that book (FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, Elio Vittorini on George Lamming's *Of Age*

and *Innocence*, 8 March 1961). Vittorini, who also worked for Einaudi, added that Einaudi had also rejected it, although they had bought another book by him. However, no work by Lamming was ever translated into Italian.

34. In a book report on *Weep not, Child* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ettore Capriolo refers to the 'famous Kikuyu uprisings' (FAAM, AME, *SEE – GDL*, folder James Ngugi, Ettore Capriolo on *Weep not, Child*, 30 November 1964).

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## Italian summary

Con il presente saggio si intende contribuire al campo di ricerche che, in tempi recenti, ha interrogato e illuminato le correlazioni e influenze reciproche tra il razzismo, i retaggi del colonialismo e la formazione di culture e identità nazionali nell'Italia del dopoguerra. Si affronta, tuttavia, la questione da un punto di vista sinora inesplorato, ovvero l'atteggiamento dell'editoria italiana nei confronti della letteratura delle ex-colonie. In particolare, nel saggio si esamina la ricezione editoriale dei romanzi caraibici di lingua inglese, scritti dagli autori della cosiddetta 'generazione Windrush' negli anni cinquanta e sessanta. Il saggio evidenzia che molti tra i lettori, gli editori, e in generale gli 'agenti' dell'editoria italiana di cui si è trovata traccia negli archivi, che facevano parte delle élite intellettuali del paese e in molti casi si proclamavano anticolonialisti, non solo si rivelavano essere più interessati al lato esotico e pittoresco della letteratura caraibica

piuttosto che al suo valore storico, ideologico e politico, ma talvolta si opponevano alla diffusione di testi nei quali riconoscevano temi anticolonialisti o affermazioni dell'identità nera. Alcuni dei testi e delle dinamiche analizzati rivelano la persistenza di stereotipi razzisti e denigratori che agivano nell'immaginario relativo a un Altro nero e coloniale, e la negazione della sua identità come soggetto politico e produttore di cultura, se non si adattava alle aspettative dominanti. L'orizzonte di attesa e i criteri di valutazione ravvisabili nei processi di ricezione di questi romanzi permettono di trarre alcune conclusioni, seppur parziali, sull'atteggiamento ambivalente di alcuni agenti dell'editoria italiana e di parte della classe intellettuale, segnata dall'esperienza del fascismo e del suo fallimento, rispetto al colonialismo, la razza e l'alterità.