

## Memory and African Identity in Italian Migrant Literature: Case Study of *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore* by Esoh Elame

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**Abstract:** In a socio-political and economic context characterised by migratory flows to Italy and the emergence of a multiethnic and multicultural society, the coexistence on the same space of people of different origins can give rise to different problems, including discrimination and stereotypes that create identity problems, and bring to light problems related to memory. The present contribution aims to study the couple memory and identity in the collection of stories of Esoh Elame through which he depicts Italy as an environment where diversity is the norm and coexistence with the other is inevitable. Starting from an analysis based on the postcolonial theory, reflections of Glissant on diversity and those of Ricoeur on memory, we will attempt to clarify the nature of the relationship between memory and identity in a context of diversity.

**Keywords:** migratory flows, memory, identity, diversity, postcolonialism.



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### Introduction

Esoh Elame is a Cameroonian who graduated in geography from the University of Grenoble in 1999. He has lived for many years in Italy but has been teaching for some years at the "Ecole des Travaux Publiques" in Yaoundé Cameroon. He has published numerous books, essays, articles both in Italian and French on different topics (sustainable development, interculturality, social pedagogy, etc.). We recall among other titles: *Prevenire la violenza giovanile. Il contributo della pedagogia sociale*<sup>1</sup>, *Incontrarsi giocando. come costruire un ecogiocattolo*<sup>2</sup>, *Le vocabulaire discriminant dans la langue française: un handicap à la communication interculturelle ?*<sup>3</sup>, *Pedagogia interculturale. Il concetto di (co) integrazione fondato sui diritti e doveri dei nativi e migranti etc*<sup>4</sup>. In his collection of stories: *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore*<sup>5</sup>, Esoh Elame tackles the theme of colonization, placing some emphasis on notions of memory and identity. The concepts of memory and identity are multidisciplinary notions, that is they are present in different

<sup>1</sup>Esoh Elame,(2012), *Prevenire la violenza giovanile. Il contributo della pedagogia sociale*, collana: la società formativa.

<sup>2</sup>Esoh Elame, (1999), *Incontrarsi giocando. come costruire un ecogiocattolo* EMI.

<sup>3</sup>Esoh Elame, *Aménagement linguistique et diversité*, PP. 41-49.

<sup>4</sup>Esoh Elame,(2012), *Pedagogia interculturale. Il concetto di (co) integrazione fondato sui diritti e doveri dei nativi e migranti*, edizioni pensa multimedia collana la società formativa.

<sup>5</sup>Esoh Elame, (2007), *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore*, EMI, Bologna.

fields of study such as sociology, psychology, literature, etc. In the field of literature and related studies, for example, these concepts are the subject of abundant reflections such as that of Jakob Svedberg in his essay where he defines memory as “*Composizione, creazione, immaginazione e ricostruzione del passato*”.<sup>6</sup> Identity, on the other hand, is defined by Maria Vittoria Calvi<sup>7</sup> as “*l’Insieme dei caratteri particolari e delle appartenenze culturali che definiscono una persona, distinguendola dalle altre, in modo stabile e pressoché definito*”. The link between memory and identity is no longer to be denied if we take into account the fact that the things we remember influence our particular characters and who we are can influence our way of composing, creating, imagining and reconstructing the past. It is precisely in this sense that Laura Constanza Pedraza Rojas quotes Giovanni Jervis when he says: “*Per riconoscersi e descriversi occorre però avere una memoria di sé*”<sup>8</sup>. Taking the previous reflections as a starting point for our study, we will analyse the relationship between memory and African identity in Italian migrant literature based on the collection of stories by Esoh Elamé. Using postcolonial theory, Ricoeur's reflection<sup>9</sup> and Edouard Glissant's diversity poetics<sup>10</sup>, we will analyse this pair at three levels. First, we will identify the traces of African memory in the book studied, then the characteristics of this memory in relation to African identity, and finally we will talk about the need for deconstruction, construction and (co)construction of African memory and identity in the current context of globalization.

## 1. The collection of stories *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore* and the traces of African memory

### 1-1. *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore*: ideological profile and central issues.

*Non chiamatemi uomo di colore* is a collection of stories published in September 2007 by the Cameroonian Esoh Elame and consisting of thirteen chapters framed by a general introduction and a conclusion. The volume was published in a social, economic and cultural context in which there is a considerable increase in the Italian population, an increase mainly due to migratory flows from different countries of the world. This situation is at the origin of linguistic and cultural diversity that will give rise to numerous problems of which the author speaks, proposing solutions possibly useful to enhance cultural coexistence in contemporary Italian society and in global society. To better understand his intercultural ideology, Esoh Elame develops very diverse themes in the chapters of his book. Among the topics addressed by Esoh in *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore*, we remember: the exploitation of immigrants, discrimination in Italy, the identity crisis of African immigrants, relations between Africa and the West, relations between Africa and Italy, multiculturalism and the possibility of peaceful coexistence in contemporary society.

#### ➤ **Exploitation of immigrants and discrimination in Italy:**

Exploitation can be read in the volume through a story about elections that the author tells in these terms:

il caso forse più clamoroso è stato quello di una signora nigeriana che ha partecipato a vari comizi, sempre vestita con l’abito tradizionale del suo paese. Dopo due giorni dal voto, non sapeva nemmeno che il candidato per il quale era stata coinvolta nella campagna aveva vinto. Non è stata più contattata da nessuno. Nella società dell’usa e

<sup>6</sup> Svedberg(2016:1).

<sup>7</sup> Calvi, Maria Vittoria, *Lingua, memoria e identità nei racconti ispanoamericani* PP.1-17.

<sup>8</sup> Pedraza (2012-2013 :10)

<sup>9</sup> Ricoeur, Paul, *La mémoire, l'histoire et l'oubli*, (2000) Paris: Seuil.

<sup>10</sup> Glissant, Edouard, (1996), *Introduction à une poétique du divers*, Paris: Gallimard.

getta, il consumismo dilaga a 360 gradi, a tutti i livelli, implicando anche l'uso a fini utilitaristici delle persone<sup>11</sup>.

In newspapers and in various places, you can both read and hear:

“squadra di cioccolatini, “ negro del c ...<sup>12</sup>”, “sporco negro”, “ brutto negro di m...”, “nutellone tornate a casa”, “ squadra di negri”, “ brutto negro, mi dovresti lucidare le scarpe ”.

“Questi negri vengono qui e vogliono fare come a casa loro”, “ preferisco che mia figlia rimanga zitella piuttosto che vederla sposata con un negro”, “i negri portano con sé delle malattie” Brutto negro di m..., vai a vendere i tuoi stracci da un'altra parte ”! ecc<sup>13</sup>.

Speaking of football Esoh Elame says:

come dimenticare la frase di Giambattista Pastorello, allora presidente del Verona, che disse di Patrick Mboma, allora nel Parma : “È nero, non posso comprarlo”, giustificandosi affermando che purtroppo la nostra tifoseria è fatta così ? Come dimenticare la frase : “Fagli vedere a quel negro di m... che sei molto più forte tu”, attribuita a Luis Aragones allenatore della nazionale spagnola ? Come non ricordare l'insulto che l'allora laziale Mihajlovic rivolse a Viera, allora dell'Arsenal : “Negro di m...” ? “O la frase dell'allenatore del Bari, Fascetti che definisce Diawara del Torino “Quel negro che sputa ?<sup>14</sup>

### ➤ The identity crisis of African immigrants:

To illustrate his reflection on the identity crisis Elame states:

La diffusione di questa visione miserabile dei neri tra gli alunni italiani è da associare alla maniera in cui l'Africa nera viene presentata nelle trasmissioni televisive, nei libri di testo e anche a volte in ambito ecclesiale. La questione è talmente grave che i bambini neri nelle scuole italiane rifiutano di accettarsi come sono e di appartenere a un continente sempre rappresentato con il volto della miseria. La reazione di questi bambini neri va compresa, perché essi non possono prendersi sulle spalle il peso della povertà del loro continente d'origine ; non hanno strumenti concettuali per capire davvero il loro mondo culturale e le dinamiche economiche e geopolitiche che vi sono associate. Ne consegue, prevedibilmente, una crisi d'identità che potrebbe tradursi in assimilazione culturale o in forme di razzismo alla rovescia e di etnocentrismo invertito<sup>15</sup>.

African children find it difficult to assume their origins because of the image of poverty and suffering attributed to the African continent and the discrimination they experience every day. This has terrible consequences on their psychology, because they find themselves in a position of people who do not belong to any of the universes and cultures around them. In fact, they are not accepted in Western culture and want to escape from African culture.

The themes mentioned and illustrated above are part of a larger ideology that can be read in the volume also thanks to the abundance of terms that trace the memory of Africa.

### 1-2. The traces of African memory

The word traces generally indicates a sign of the passage or presence of someone or something in a specific place, for example, the footprints of steps in the sand indicate the passage of someone,

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<sup>11</sup> Esoh Elame (2007:85).

<sup>12</sup>The author uses graphic censorship for some discriminatory terms that can hurt the reader's sensitivity. This graphic caesura materializes through ellipsis.

<sup>13</sup>Esoh Elame (2007:29).

<sup>14</sup>Esoh Elame (2007:30).

<sup>15</sup>Esoh Elame (2007:46 e 47).

of a being a little earlier. Inspired by the definition of memory mentioned above, we will try to highlight the words that refer to a composition, invention and reconstruction of Africa's past in Elame's collection of stories. In fact, these elements can be grouped into two categories, namely onomastics and socio-cultural and historical elements.

### ➤ African onomastics

According to the Garzanti dictionary of the Italian language,<sup>16</sup> onomastics is: The branch of linguistics that studies the proper names of persons (anthroponyms) or places (toponyms). In the case of the present study, African onomastics is made up first of all of the so-called places of memory consisting of the names of countries located in different areas of Central and Eastern Africa: "*Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Uganda* etc".<sup>17</sup> Secondly, African onomastics include names of people: "*Sekou Toure, Thomas Sankara, Kwame N'krumah, Nelson Mandela, Leopold Sédar Senghor, Patrice Lumumba, Patrick Mboma, Cafu, Seedorf, Thuram*, etc."<sup>18</sup> These place names immediately make you think of some countries in Africa, and the anthroponyms of a precise era in their social, political and cultural history. For example, the name of Nelson Mandela (1918-2013), brings to mind the struggle against Apartheid (racial segregation and political domination of black minorities) in South Africa and the political period between 1994 and 1999. Also, Patrice Emery Lumumba (1925-1961), Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1960 and 1964 is considered a national hero of the country. In the same way, Patrick Mboma, Cafu, Seedorf and Thuram make us think of the world of African football, and are cited by the writer to highlight the discrimination and stereotypes experienced by blacks in today's Italy, which arouses in them the memory of the wounded memory of black Africans in relation to their history.

### ➤ Saturation of space with African socio-cultural and historical elements

As already mentioned above, in addition to the elements of African onomastics, the traces of African memory are also highlighted through a considerable saturation of the space with social and cultural elements of the continent, which gives an idea of the beliefs, customs and traditions that were part of the pre-colonial traditions. These socio-cultural elements are names of sacred trees and forests: "*Iroko Milicia excelsa, baobab Andansonnia digitata, Moabi, Colatier, Sakpata Xevioso, Dan, Legba*,... "; of some original peoples of Africa "*pygmies, bantu*"; of events, and historical events: " Slave trade or triangular trade, Black Code, etc."<sup>19</sup>

The elements mentioned are very important to understand some rites and customs of the African continent. For example, Iroko, according to Benin Africans, is considered the first of the sacred trees, followed by baobab. Similarly, the Colatier (having Cola as a fruit) is a tree whose fruits are used to seal traditional marriages between engaged couples in the African tradition, and the exchange of cola between engaged couples is an action that symbolizes the mutual consent of the couple. The term Pygmies in turn designates a people present in Africa (Cameroon, Gabon, Burundi, Uganda...) who live in a natural environment (very often in the forest) thanks to hunting, fishing and gathering. The Black Code, on the other hand, designates a document that was written to establish the rules that black slaves had to abide by during the period of the triangular trade. Disobedience to the rules of this document could lead to a death sentence for the slave.

Most of the elements listed above refer to traditions established before colonialism that have been abandoned or whose frequency has decreased. This seems to be a subtle expression of the nostalgia the author feels when he remembers pre-colonial Africa. If it is true that the indices of

<sup>16</sup>Op.cit.

<sup>17</sup> Per Esch Elame (2007:70).

<sup>18</sup> Per Esch Elame (2007:67, 42 e 30).

<sup>19</sup> Per Esch Elame (2007: 71,72 e 13,14).

African memory are numerous in the book studied, it becomes important to also talk about the characteristics of this memory and its effects on African identity.

## 2. Characteristics of African memory and identity

The relationship established between the memory of a people or an individual and its identity is no longer to be demonstrated. In fact, the things we remember and how we remember them can affect who we are, that is, our identity. In addition, each of us has our own way of remembering things that happened and have happened, that is, identity can also influence memory. In this sense, the memory/identity component is truly ambiguous and each part of this pair influences the other as can be understood by reading Svedberg<sup>20</sup> when he states: «*La problématique de l'identité et de la mémoire compose par conséquent une ambiguïté circulaire où la mémoire et l'identité s'influencent réciproquement*»<sup>21</sup>; or Pedraza quoting Fabietti and Matera who affirms " *In altre parole identità e memoria sono intrinsecamente legate e si succedono in una catena infinita, ed è di conseguenza che l'identità può essere pensata come una costruzione simbolica che deve fondarsi principalmente sulla memoria*".<sup>22</sup> Memory and Identity therefore constitute an inseparable complex in which the first component can determine the second and the second the first. In his book on memory, Paul Ricoeur identifies different types of memories, and we will study some of them, namely: individual, collective, sick, manipulated and forgotten memory.

### ➤ Individual memory and collective memory

Individual memory designates the way in which an individual composes, creates, imagines and recompiles the past and collective memory that composed of words, images, gestures, rituals, festivals and social relationships.<sup>23</sup> The two types of memory have an inclusive relationship since the collective memory (of a people, a society or a continent) is the result of the association of the individual memories of the members of this community. Collective memory can also be composed of the stories, places, monuments, culture and people that have been preserved and passed on centuries after centuries from one generation to the next. To illustrate this are the historical and social episodes experienced by the inhabitants of the old continent and narrated by the writer. Among others, we remember triangular trade, apartheid, colonization, racism (realities experienced on a personal but also collective level). The following segments are an illustration of this: "Nell'ottobre del 1962 James Meredith entra nell'Università del Mississippi protetto dalle guardie federali perché i bianchi non sopportano di vedere un negro frequentare il luogo principale del sapere, l'università".<sup>24</sup>

Article 38 of the Black Code explicitly says: "Lo schiavo che ha tentato di fuggire per un mese avrà gli orecchi tagliati. Se ricomincia avrà il garetto tagliato e sarà segnato nell'altra spalla. Se tenta di fuggire per la terza volta, sarà bastonato a morte. [...]"  
 Articolo 58: Gli schiavi liberi dovranno portare rispetto al loro ex proprietario, alla sua vedova e ai suoi figli, in modo che l'ingiuria che sarà fatta a loro, sarà punita molto di più che se fosse fatta ad un altro bianco".<sup>25</sup>

With the historical and social events mentioned above, not only the myth of the superiority of the white man but also of the inferiority of the black man was put in place and, the black man himself began to believe and accept the idea of curse and condemnation, of being an eternal subordinate. The memory and individual and collective identity of the black African then enter a very serious crisis.

<sup>20</sup> Svedberg (2016:2).

<sup>22</sup> Pedraza (2013-2014:10).

<sup>23</sup> Pedraza (2013-2014:10).

<sup>24</sup> Esah Elame (2007:16).

<sup>25</sup> Per Esah Elame (2007:14).



### ➤ Sick and manipulated memory

In his book, the philosopher Paul Ricoeur speaks of sick or repressed memory as a memory that has known wounds, traumas and scars. Once hurt, wounded and sick, memory becomes the appropriate place for manipulations of all kinds. In fact, the historical, cultural and social events of the colonial period led black people to adopt a false image of themselves, self-contempt for their culture and their way of thinking and living. It is precisely this contempt and manipulation that Elame speaks of, quoting Frantz Fanon and Charles Taylor when she states:

“La principale arma dei colonizzatori è stata l’imposizione della loro immagine dei colonizzati sui popoli sottomessi. Cioè ci troviamo così di fronte a profonde alienazioni dei popoli neri che si definiscono sempre in riferimento all’Europa e ai suoi schemi spirituali, temporali, economici, sociali e politici. D’altro canto, il disprezzo che molti neri hanno di sé stessi e della loro condizione umana coincide con il misconoscimento di cui parla Taylor nella sua importante osservazione che abbiamo già citato nel capitolo I: Non è soltanto una mancanza di qualcosa di dovuto, il rispetto; può anche essere una ferita dolorosa, che adossa alle sue vittime il peso di un odio di sé paralizzante”.<sup>26</sup>

This quote highlights an amnesia of African memory from the pre-colonial period, as if there was no life, culture or social norms before the arrival of the colonizers. With this painful past of alienation and manipulation, the black African turns in on himself and at the same time gets rid of his memory and his identity. This is advantageous for the colonizer who can now orient African memory, in his own way, and decide to neglect some episodes of history common to Africa and the West.

### ➤ Forgotten memory

The forgotten memory in the corpus studied refers to the historical memory of the African people that has been neglected to such an extent that to this day, many Africans are ignorant of some episodes of their history. Although manuals and history books have been written about colonization, triangular trade, and all the atrocities of the colonial period in Africa, there is no doubt that most of these works have willfully overlooked, "forgotten" facts. We remember, among others, the sterilization of the "bastards of the Rhineland", these children born of the relationships between German women and black soldiers from Africa and the Antilles, which caused the so-called "black shame". It is for this reason that Elame congratulates Serge Bilé, a French-Ivorian journalist who broke the "wall of shame and silence" with his work *Neri nei campi nazisti*, through which she denounces the realities of a period during which Mixed-race children were a real threat to the "purity" of "white blood". With respect to the forgotten episodes of history and about the victims of the Holocaust, Elame herself says:

La riflessione finora sviluppata sulla shoah ha trascurato il ruolo e le conseguenze del nazismo e fascismo sulla popolazione nera di origine africana. Come è noto, a finire nei campi di sterminio nazisti di Auschwitz, Mauthausen, Buchenwald, Dachau ecc. Non furono soltanto gli ebrei. Vennero deportati anche zingari, handicappati, omosessuali, comunisti e decine di migliaia di neri... La questione dei neri nei campi nazisti è stata finora un muro di silenzio su una tragedia dimenticata, quasi una fatalità, un’umiliazione voluta dal destino<sup>27</sup>

When we take into account the different characteristics of African memory at the individual or collective level, the need, necessity and urgency of first of all a deconstruction, then of a reconstruction, and finally, of a co-construction of the memory and identity of black Africans

<sup>26</sup>Per Esoh Elame (2007:18).

<sup>27</sup> Per Esoh Elame (2007:18).

immediately imposes, especially in this context of globalization that makes the partisans of neo-Marxism fear a "uniformization of cultures".<sup>28</sup>

### **3. Modes of deconstruction, construction and co-construction of African memory and identity.**

Deconstruction or deconstructionism as an idea was born in France during the period of structuralism<sup>29</sup> and is considered by critics such as Antonio Nanni as the stage that precedes construction<sup>30</sup>. The concept of deconstruction was first used in philosophy with thinkers such as Husserl, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Popper, Foucault, Levi-Strauss, Derrida, De Certeau, Irigaray, Dussel, Lévinas, and progressively extended to other disciplines such as pedagogy and literature, taking on the sense of: historicization and relativization of knowledge that continually renews the act of understanding and helps to encounter the face of the other.<sup>31</sup> The encounter with the other therefore leads to (co)construction in intercultural contexts such as those of contemporary Italy in particular and global society in general.

#### **➤ Deconstruction Mode**

In the case of the present reflection, we mean by deconstruction the need imposed on black Africans to destroy, dethrone and reject ideas, myths, taboos and stereotypes... which have been inculcated in them by the socio-political and historical events experienced in the past. Speaking of the need for deconstruction in intercultural contexts and Eurocentrism, Nanni states: "C'è un muro dentro di noi: un insieme di pregiudizi che abbiamo assimilato involontariamente, per il semplice fatto di avere una cultura".<sup>32</sup> The time has come for Africa to change its way of thinking and considering itself. Africans must make a critical analysis of the so-called "inferiority" of the black race and the "superiority" of the white race and Western values in order to put an end to the Eurocentrism Nanni expresses this very well when he states: "Noi non siamo la cultura, siamo una cultura tra molte altre" "For blacks, it is not a question of being eternal victims because of their painful past, nor of having attitudes that will bear witness to an Afrocentrism or a reverse racism, but of laying lasting foundations, a long work that has as its first objective a profound revolution of the black-African system of thought. It is precisely this deconstruction that Nicolas Bourget and Al talk about in their article where we read:

«La véritable décolonisation reste à faire. Elle sera longue et une transformation radicale des pays du Tiers-Monde. [...] Les conflits à venir seront des conflits de valeur et il y a une très grande urgence à développer une communication culturelle entre le Nord et le Sud. Une communication que le Nord a toujours refusé d'entamer estimant que ses valeurs étaient les plus aptes à résoudre les problèmes contemporains, les plus modernes, les plus susceptibles d'apporter des solutions aux défis du futur et les plus adéquates pour les pays du Sud car elles sont « universelles » ».<sup>33</sup>

Africans are therefore the main actors in the process of deconstruction and enhancement of their culture, as Elame points out when she writes:

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<sup>28</sup>Gachruru, shally, Cultural coexistence in a context of globalization, Cahier du rifal, PP.63-66.

<sup>29</sup>D'allessandro, Paolo, Potestio, Andrea, (2008), Philosophical writing and practice of deconstruction, university editions of humanities economics law.

<sup>30</sup>Nanni, Antonio, The Pedagogy of Deconstruction, PP.1-5.

<sup>31</sup> Per Nanni (2001:128).

<sup>32</sup> Per Nanni (2001:128).

<sup>33</sup>**Translation:** La vera decolonizzazione resta da fare. Sarà lunga e una trasformazione radicale dei paesi del Terzo Mondo. [...] I conflitti futuri saranno conflitti di valore e vi è una grande urgenza di sviluppare una comunicazione culturale tra il Nord e il Sud. Una comunicazione che il Nord ha sempre rifiutato di avviare ritenendo che i suoi valori fossero i più idonei a risolvere i problemi contemporanei, i più moderni, i più suscettibili di apportare soluzioni alle sfide del futuro e i più adeguati per i paesi del Sud in quanto sono "universali". Sociologie des Nouvelles Dynamiques Sociales : Le Post-Colonialisme (PP.1-12).

Il nero dell'Africa, se vuole sopravvivere, deve fare una profonda analisi critica della propria diversità culturale [...]È ormai indispensabile per i neri superare con coraggio e orgoglio l'immagine riduttiva e autodisprezzo inculcata dal colonialismo, che li ha trasformati in strumenti della loro stessa oppressione.<sup>34</sup>

As already mentioned, deconstruction is the first stage of a progressive process and this deconstruction must be followed by the construction stage.

### ➤ Construction methods

As the second stage of the process that will allow African memory and identity to fit into today's multicultural and hybrid society, the construction can be understood in a simple way as giving new life to this African soul that has been repressed in the past. In fact, it is a matter of reviving the forgotten memory of Africa and deciding to recall memories of the pre-colonial and colonial era to allow blacks to become aware of who they are and to better understand their customs and traditions. Carmine Di Martine expresses his vision of the world as far as the construction of memory is concerned:

Se non fossimo in grado di ricordare ciò che ci è accaduto e che ci riguarda, di rievocare parti significative del nostro passato, la nostra identità personale ne risulterebbe compromessa e con essa la nostra vita quotidiana: non sapremmo più chi siamo e che cosa vogliamo diventare, come vogliamo vivere. Per disporre di una identità personale occorre ricordare il proprio passato, avere una memoria autobiografica, non solo cioè incarnare un passato, portarne impresse le tracce, ma "averlo" presso di sé e potervi attivamente e continuamente tornare<sup>35</sup>.

It seems obvious, if we refer to Edouard Glissant's thought according to which we must remain ourselves without closing ourselves off from others, that we should first of all know who we are, if we do not want to give up ourselves in the process of opening up to others. It is therefore essential for Africans to return to their roots, not to live barricaded in their own world, but to establish suitable conditions for their openness to the world. Let's read Elame's worldview of construction in these terms: "Non dico che bisognerebbe ritornare puramente e semplicemente alle pratiche precedenti la colonizzazione. Ma se ne può conservare qualche"<sup>36</sup>.

After freeing himself from the limitations coming from the stereotypes of colonization and returning to his roots, the black African must insert himself into the world dynamic giving birth to "a modernity with an African soul".<sup>37</sup>

### ➤ Co-construction methods

The word co-construction is composed of two parts, namely a prefix "co" and the word "construction". In Italian, the prefix "co" means together or with, and the Garzanti dictionary of the Italian language defines the word construction as: "L'operazione del costruire; edificazione, fabbricazione.[...]" <sup>38</sup>. Co-construction can be defined as the process through which the black African puts together or reconciles the parts that constitute him by associating them with other memories. Antonnio Nanni highlights the need for co-construction of memory when he states:

[... ] Costruire, cioè, una nuova memoria planetaria decostruendo la memoria dominante che è etnocentrica, ma che si spaccia per planetaria. Ecco la necessità di decostruzione su cui si è appoggiata la pretesa di essere noi, uomini occidentali, il centro definitivo della «coscienza in sé»

<sup>34</sup> Per Esoh Elame (2007:62).

<sup>35</sup> Di Martino, Carimine, The Construction of Memory, PP.1-37.

<sup>36</sup>Esoh Elame Per Esoh Elame (2007:66).

<sup>37</sup> Per Esoh Elame (2007:69).

<sup>38</sup> I Grandi Dizionari Garzanti della lingua Italiana, (1999), Industrie per le Arti Grafiche Garzanti Verga.



del genere umano. L'Occidente non è il traguardo prestabilito di tutte le culture umane. Noi non siamo la cultura, siamo una cultura tra molte altre.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, with its past (colonial and pre-colonial), it is now inevitable that the black African lives with this history that he can no longer deny but, without being disconnected from his present (globalization, diversity, muticulturalism, transculturality) etc. For him, it is a matter of using the past to draw lessons from it and learn from the abundance of cultures that surround him in the planetary village, which will allow him to enrich, consolidate and enhance his culture. The black African must therefore make the decision to put together his memories and identities in order to obtain a single stronger memory and a single identity capable of facing the new world dynamic. The reflection developed by Elame in her collection of stories is inscribed in the same logic, which is why, summarizing his thought on co-construction, he states:

"L'ibridità in sé non è male[... ] la cultura che ci è stata imposta con la colonizzazione[... ] è ormai una cultura che dovrà convivere con noi. Tocca a noi saper prendere ciò che ha di positivo per farla convivere in modo sostenibile con le nostre culture".<sup>40</sup>

## CONCLUSION

At the end of our work, which aimed to study African memory and identity in Elame's collection of stories entitled *Non chiamatemi uomo di colore*, we recall that our reflection took place in three stages. Firstly, we presented the corpus and identified the elements of African memory in the text under study. Secondly, we highlighted the characteristics of this memory in relation to African identity. Finally, we discussed ways of facilitating the inclusion and enhancement of African memory and identity in the current context of globalization. After this journey, we can conclude that African memory and identity must be nurtured, revived, deconstructed, constructed, and co-constructed in order to fit into the current context of globalization and "world totality," which challenges everyone to provide a satisfactory answer to Glissant's question: "Come essere sé senza rinunciare agli altri e come aprirsi agli altri a tutti gli altri senza rinunciare a sé".<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Op.cit. P.2.

<sup>40</sup> Per Esoh Elame (2007:66 e 67).

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