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"BABE, Bodies Across Borders. Oral and Visual Memory in Europe and Beyond"[1]

PART I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS: CROSSROADS BETWEEN FIELDS OF KNOWLEDGE.

The BABE project is situated in the context of the relationships between various fields of knowledge, not only of cross-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary research, but rather of bridges between whole groups of disciplines. We intend to locate our research in those hybrid fields of research that are being created by the overlapping of traditional disciplines with thematic areas. In our case: of oral history and cultural history and geography on the one hand, with memory studies and visual studies on the other, including a special attention for the visual arts.

Within the area of cross-disciplinarity, there are some types of connections which have been more frequently explored, such as 1) those between the arts and the so called hard sciences on the one hand, and 2) those between the socio-historical disciplines and the sciences on the other.

Indeed, in recent years we have seen many examples of connections between different fields of knowledge emerge in the arena of public culture. For what concerns the first type listed above, I refer for instance to the bridges between the arts and the sciences that every year are presented at the Science Festival in Genoa, which has been in existence now for ten years. Significantly, its theme this year was "Beauty", a title which poses explicitly the question of relationships between art and science. Some of the events explored the crossroad between mathematics, botanic and

aesthetics; others the history of the infinitesimal calculus and the concept of "limit", reviving dramatically the dispute between Leibniz and Newton, and conjugating audio-visual media, avant-guard theatre, history of philosophy and mathematical analysis.

For the second type of connection, between the socio-historical disciplines and the hard sciences, I'll take my example from a similar public initiative, the Biennale Democrazia in Turin, in existence since 2009, whose last edition (2013) was on the theme of "Utopia". It included an event presenting the parallel exploration of the concept of equal distribution in physics and in political philosophy. A physicist and a political scientist had a dialogue on how keywords such as "equality" and "difference" evidence similarities and discrepancies between the two disciplines, comparing among other instances the equality of Euclid's common notions in mathematics and the equality of citizens – otherwise different – as voters.

I have taken these two examples from the kind of public events that have become very widespread and popular all over the world, such as biennials, festivals, feasts on various cultural topics. They are significant for our work - although they are not a direct object of research for the project - because they have something to do with public history, public memory and education understood in their largest sense, and they are generally related to the world of communication and media. All this is very important for a project like ours, which has a relevant educational side.

But we will work in a third area of cross-disciplinarity: the exploration of the connection between the socio-historical sciences and the arts. At least a decade ago I realised that on the problematic issue of the ongoing changes in European sense of belonging, the visual arts (in the form of video, cinema, photography, and so on) were more vocal and explicit than political and cultural history – not to mention active politics. It seemed to me that visual art was taking the place of these other branches of intellectual and political engagement, not only in denouncing the narrow and hierarchic nature of traditional forms of European identity – which has

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become a rather obvious remark – but also in exposing crucial features of present day Europe and some ways in which new senses of belonging could develop on the basis of migrations to and across Europe as well as within various communities in Europe.

I found inspiration for developing a research in this third field of connection in the way crossroads were being created in the two first fields I mentioned before. But BABE intends to historicize the cross-disciplinary approach, in the sense of situating in historical perspective the public dimension of art in various places and epochs. This will mean also taking into account the necessity of a multiplicity of media for this type of exploration and the relationship between different media.

We start from the intent to enlarge the field of cultural and oral memory to visual memory. I conceive cultural memory as embodied in various cultural products and 'material' cultures – also, but not only, in the sense of Jan and Aleida Assmann as legacy and heritage of the past, in the double sense of collective and connective memory. Our effort will be to try to go beyond the counterposition between a "lived" memory and an "accumulated" memory, working with both oral and visual interviews – individual and collective – and with various forms of arts and media.

Each part of this introductory talk will be associated with a significant image, which reverberates on our research. This association intends to suggest that the BABE project has at its centre visual memory, although my introduction is focused on conceptual links. The first
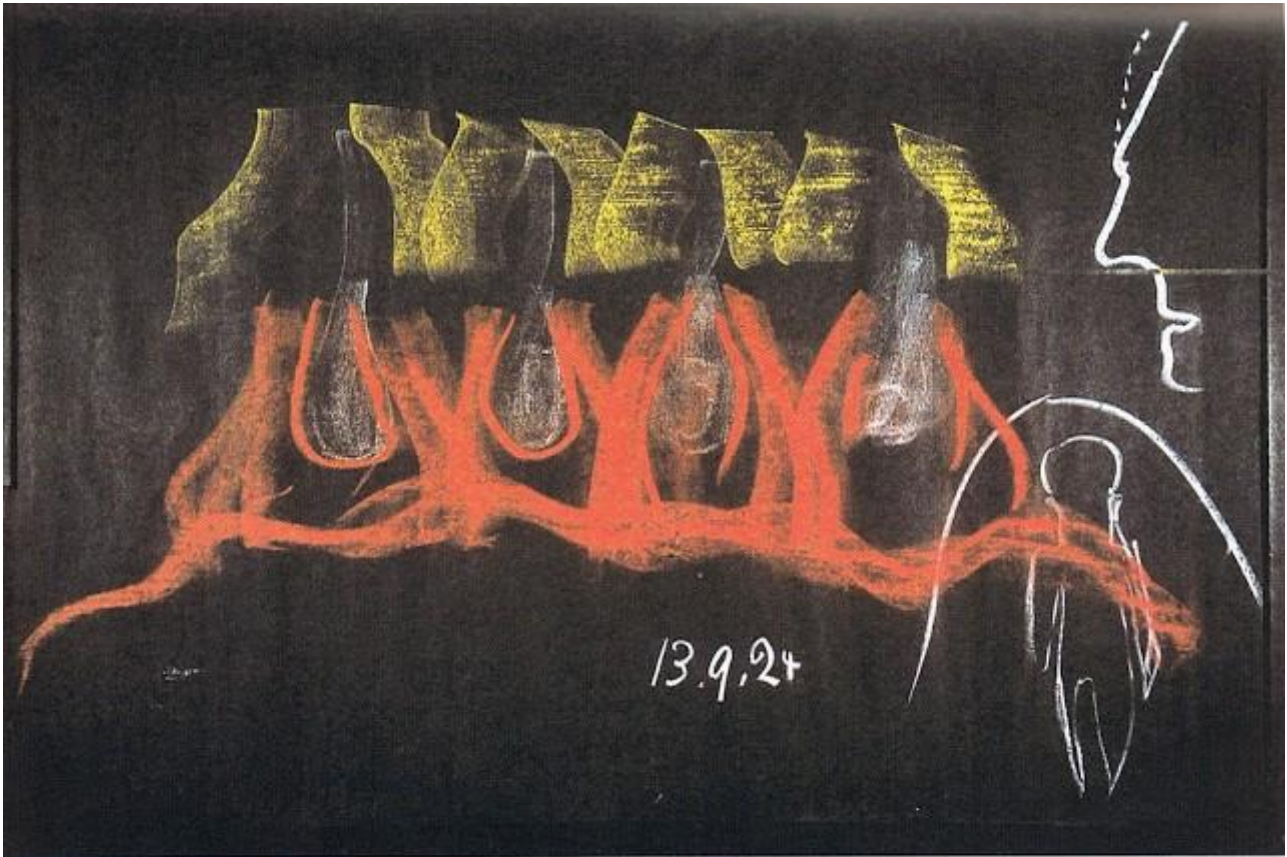
(1924) represents one of the blackboards (drawn with colored chalk) that Rudolf Steiner used in the 1920s to illustrate his numerous lectures throughout Europe in the fields of aesthetics, agriculture, education, medicine and architecture. His effort was to reconcile art and science, combining image and text in a visual transformation of the spoken word. This particular image shows a profile that we can interpret as that of talking subject. This is why I deem this image by Steiner an appropriate allusion to these preliminary considerations of my talk and generally to our research.

I shall now present two of the key concepts around which the project revolves (Parts II and III) and some of the first results of our fieldwork (Part IV).

PART II. MEMORY AS MOUVEMENT/MOBILITY/MOTION.

This area concerns the link between memory and movement, which is not a new one, but which has been deeply innovated in recent times, especially by neuroscience. We know from oral history studies that memory moves, in the sense that it changes through the life of the individual and on the basis of transmission between individuals and generations, both in a diachronic and in a synchronic sense. This movement has been most often understood by oral historians as a mobility of discourse. Now we can add to the understanding of memory as a discursive movement that of a more literal motion: not only the memory of moving bodies, but also of movements within the body.

I refer to neuroscientific literature for the general audience, not to highly specialized writings. I think for instance of the work by the Nobel prize Eric Kandel, and particularly his book *In Search of Memory. The Emergence of a New Science of Mind*. Kandel has written about memory not only as a way of recalling something, but also his own emotional experience. His effort to find links between personal memory and the biology of memory storage resonates with oral historians' own preoccupations, although on a different ground.

Kandel experimented on *Aplysia Californica*,

the giant marine snail which can be both male and female, with different partners at different time, as he became a cellular neurobiologist of behavior and learning. The nerve cells of *Aplysia* were so large and identifiable
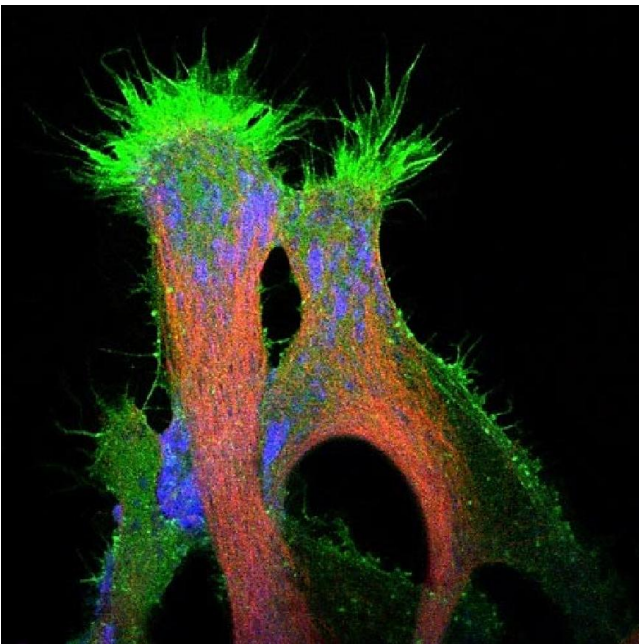
that they allowed him to study something he called 'biochemical identity', explaining that this type of identity - new for those who like myself who had studied all sorts of other identities, connected with gender, generation, nations and continents - has to do with how one cell differs from another at the molecular level and what actually happens at the level of the synapse in the brain when behavior is modified by learning.

By 1985, after more than fifteen years of research, Kandel and his collaborators had shown that a simple behavior in *Aplysia* could be modified by various forms of learning, and more specifically that training can convert a short-term memory into a persistent, self-maintained long-term memory, so that, after a certain amount of time, this process results into memory consolidation, a state that is stable for some time and can be less easily disrupted.

Of course I am not proposing in the least to get involved in this sort of research, rather to keep this dimension as a metaphorical horizon for our own study. I found all this extremely suggestive as an indirect indication for what can happen in oral memory and tradition when certain parts of the narrations become formalized or crystallized. The resulting suggestion is to keep in mind, for the interpretation of memory, the multiplicity of meanings in a historical context, for what concerns not only the role of memory, but also the sense of the value and role of mobility in various places and epochs, thus evidencing the specificity of present day mobility.

This is why I used for the title of this second part of my talk multiple terms like movement, mobility, motion, motility (this last term indicating relatively autonomous movements of organs within the body or of whole organisms). We can evoke even the French term *mouvance* in its generalized literary meaning: changing and changeable, fluctuating, swinging, shifting, oscillating, all adjectives referring to movements in the body, within the body and between bodies. In our project, we will insist on the multiplicity of meanings of mobility, in order to stress the complicacies of the connections between movement and memory, much to the contrary

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than pulling all or many types of mobility together, as some scholarship is doing for tourism, commerce, and various forms of migration.

The project is first of all concerned with the movements of bodies through and in migration, connecting mobility with subjectivity. But we are also interested in a less obvious – at least for oral history – connection between memory and movement, which concerns individual and collective bodies; this is why we include among our objects of research the relationship between certain forms of dance and forms of identity.

The mobility of memory and the memory of mobility involve visuality but at the same time cannot be reduced to the visible. By this I mean that we will avoid an idea of visuality understood in a strict and fixed sense, as a reception of images by a static gaze which then reacts almost automatically or mechanically. We will try to study memory in transcultural perspective, understanding by this the process of production and memorialization of images, mental and material, as guidance and result of life itineraries and strategies generating alternative geographies.

We would like to take into account also inherited visuality, often not physically visible, as an example of going "beyond the visible". This can be understood in various senses, for instance as the study of the imaginaries (and I underline the plural in the use of this term) in their relationship with oral and visual memory. In short, we will try to avoid the concept of a static visuality, and interpret it as an activity, as a combination of social and cultural practices, a form of subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

PART III. MEMORY AS ART, ART AS ARCHIVE.

This third part of my talk concerns the nexus that exists between art and memory and the archive, as well as the question of the boundaries between various forms of knowledge and research.

Scholars of memory have known from a long time, at least since Frances Yates wrote *The Art of Memory* (1966), that memory – especially oral, but not only – is closely associated with visuality, in fact on the basis of associations. It was the connection between an image (mental or material) with a part of a speech that gave rise to mnemotechnics, the art of connecting names and places, mental images and sites, an art indispensable to whomever should memorize a poem or a speech of any kind. Yates' approach was also an indication of the connection between the collective and the individual dimensions of memory.

No wonder that in this direction of research there exists a wealth of documentation, since it is a process that has been going on for a long time, but I will again follow the principle of my choice of examples from events of public culture, and this time I will take the last Venice Biennale (2013) as a significant case of multinational and transnational art, since it is recognized as the most ancient and global of the biennials, although challenged now by so many similar events on a world scale. The last version of the Venice Biennial, cleverly curated by Massimiliano Gioni, Director of the New York New Museum, is meaningful for us not so much because of presenting great novelties but rather of organizing coherently and systematically the products of trends that have gone on for some time.

It is not a novelty that written archives keep shopping lists and bus tickets, documenting something once defined as "irrelevant" aspects of life. But, for us of the BABE project, this Biennale - one of the most beautiful in recent years - is relevant because it blurs the boundaries between the artist and the collector, between both and the archivist, between artistic and historical documentation. Art as memory archive and as encyclopedia of various forms of knowledge. And also as a field including products by many creators who are in a marginal and isolated position in respect to society: religious movements like the Shakers, psychiatric patients, autistic artists - thus reminding experiments such as the "Museum of Everything", a traveling exhibition of *undiscovered* artists from various parts of the

world, and of course the Encyclopedic Palace (1950s) by Marino Auriti that gives its title to this Biennale – expressing the utopia of the total collection and archive of human knowledge. Here the link with one of our key concepts, daily life, is evident.

In this perspective, the casual, the *trouvaille*, the accidental finding, receive new light and value, both for art and for history. I already mentioned that this is not a total novelty. Of course we knew that the well-known photographer Cindy Sherman had been collecting for years albums of family photographs bought in NYC second hand shops.

But it is something more to group a very wide variety of different ways of collecting and archiving, and put the triangle art/memory/archive at the centre of the stage. It is still the principle of associations that is crucial for memory, the principle established by Freud in his essay on screen

memory, but deeply revisited. The archive becomes an archive of feelings, in the terms by Ann Cvetkovic, or an archive of the imagination, or even of Innocence – like the museum created by Orhan Pamuk in Istanbul with the objects that he had invented in his novel *The Museum of Innocence*.

It is neither my competence nor my interest to discuss whether these forms of creation deserve the full definition of art. I accept the definition given by Arthur Danto in the 1960s: art is defined as such if it is recognized by a community of artists, critics, art historians, curators, collectors, but I would like to add that the social recognition can come even from a small and informal community (which is very different from saying like Joeph Beuys that everybody is an artist). What we are interested in is the enlargement of the specific boundaries of art and its coming close to archival and historical procedures; it is this closeness that is significant for the cultural history of memory, as well as for public history in general and for the very way of conceiving documentation and archive.

To clarify this, I want to refer to my own work within the project, or at least to sections of it. During the last ten years I started studying the cultural and historical meaning of work of artists dealing mainly with migration to Europe. In this process, the concept and practice of video-essay by Ursula Biemann have been particularly relevant for both my own research and the project.

I am interested on how her video-essays trace out a research field at the juncture of different forms of knowledge production, thus creating a discursive expansion that concerns not only an expanded aesthetics, but also generates theoretical reflection on the globality of mobile bodies and the concept of border on a geopolitical level. She has developed a discourse which is explicitly subjective and inter-subjective, reflecting her relationship with the interviewees in the video-essays, and involving both text and image, a genre that combines both with the sonic dimension of voices, music, environmental sounds. The medium evidences the narrative quality of image sequences, moving from one type of enunciation to

another, while often the narration is not congruent with the image (something we find in our own research field).

I have been studying the videos *Sahara Chronicles*, composed of images and interviews by Ursula Biemann, in which the history of the Sahara as a postcolonial space is directly called into question. Of these days, products or installations like these can be seen in any of the many biennials around the world. Far from making an inventory and evaluation of such work, we understand part of our job as historians to accept the challenge to understand the context of such works. And more specifically, to explore links between texts and contexts around them not only on the basis of intellectual and cultural history but also with a fieldwork based on individual interviews and collective encounters that start from and lead to the production of visual material. All the material thus collected will be deposited at the Historical archive of the European Union at Villa Salviati.

Part IV. WORK IN PROGRESS: ITINERARIES OF MOBILE SUBJECTIVITIES IN AN ITALIAN CTP.[2]

The Babe project includes fieldwork with migrants, in both individual and collective interviews. The collective ones pertaining to the Italian part of the project are done in secondary schools and Centri Territoriali Permanenti (Permanent Territorial Centres). This field research is aimed to obtain oral and visual testimonies from the classes and from the individuals, as well as drawings and writings about their traveling experience.

CTPs were created in 1997 by the Italian Ministry of Education, with the aim of promoting adult education. These state schools, completely free,

exist all over Italy, and we have in mind some comparison between regions. The CTPs host both migrants and native Italians, who are either illiterate or scarcely literate, or who want to get a degree in order to find better jobs.

The school I will focus on[3] is the CTP "Aristide Gabelli", philosopher and pedagogist of the 19th century; it has 1,350 students, including 350 refugees who are hosted by the assistance programs of the Municipality of Turin. It is located in the periphery of the city. The age of the students, women and men, varies between 16 and 50-55 or even older. Their cultural, social and geographic origins are extremely diverse. Many classes are in the evening to allow those who have jobs to participate.

The way we proceed in this field research can be summarized as follows. The first time we meet a class, we present the project and ourselves, including the film operator who films the meetings. Then we begin with the critical examination of the work of some key artists concerned with migration; a number of these works are chosen to be shown to students, both to recent migrants and to native-born ones, with the aim of creating an 'induced reception': after a collective discussion, the students are asked to create oral, written and visual responses to the art works. In this way, we hope to use the artistic representations as a form of 'immanent critique' of dominant imaginaries, allowing for the emergence of new geographies of memory and belonging. In the preparation, we are in close contact with the teachers of the classes we interview.

I will present just one example of the artists' works we use as inspirational for the students. It is by Bouchra Khalili, French Moroccan artist, born in Casablanca in 1975. In 2011 she created the series *The Mapping Journey,* composed of eight videos and silk-screen printings that she called

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[3] Thanks are due to the teacher of the various classes we interviewed, Dr Elena Gobbi, for her generous and competent collaboration.

Constellations – a cartography of "clandestine" itineraries of migration in the Mediterranean not through Gibraltar, but from Algeria o Lybia to Sicily and especially the island of Lampedusa.

Mapping Journey no. 2, DVD still
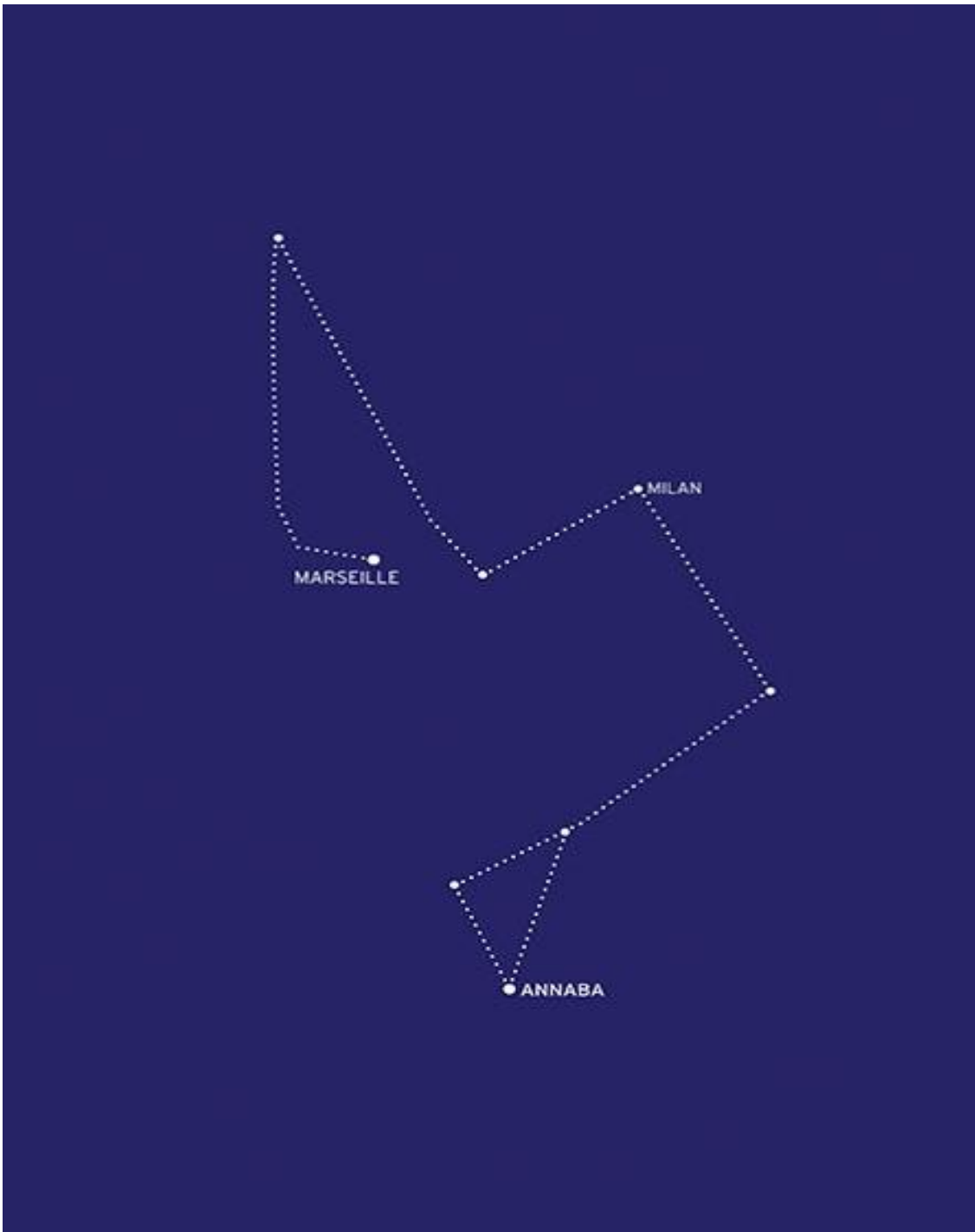
The Constellations, silkscreen print, created by the artist on the basis of the migration itinerary she asked a migrant to draw on a map.

Bouchra Kalili's work contributes to produce a counter-geography that challenges the normativity of maps, an alternative visual memory to that of conventional geography.

After showing and discussing these and similar works, we ask the students whether they are willing to produce something visual themselves. In this case we offered drawing papers and colored pencils and crayons. The production was done individually but sometimes also in small discussion groups. The students were then asked, after completing their works, to present them in front of the class; most of them accepted, some did not; the other students fully participated in the presentations and often clapped hands or intervened critically.

The request of drawing sometimes met some resistances, exactly like the classical request in oral history to tell the story of one's life. Most of the times this is a rhetorical device, I can say after more than forty years of collecting life-stories in the field. "I have nothing to say", or "I have too much to say" are frequent examples of this rhetoric. In some cases it may be a partial refusal of the medium – tape-recorder or drawing – and we might receive different responses when we will provide a video-camera and/or a camera. In the case that I am presenting, quite a number of students decided to combine writing and drawing or even just to write rather than draw, but in a very figurative way, arranging the writing on paper in an aesthetic way.

I want to show now some of the images,[4] starting from those concerning Jean-Willy Mundele Makusu from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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[4] Since the beginning of the project, 1st June 2013, to November 2013, the fieldwork in the CTP Gabelli has involved four classes and has produced about 60 large drawings (33x48 cm) and 80 smaller ones, plus written, oral and video documentation.
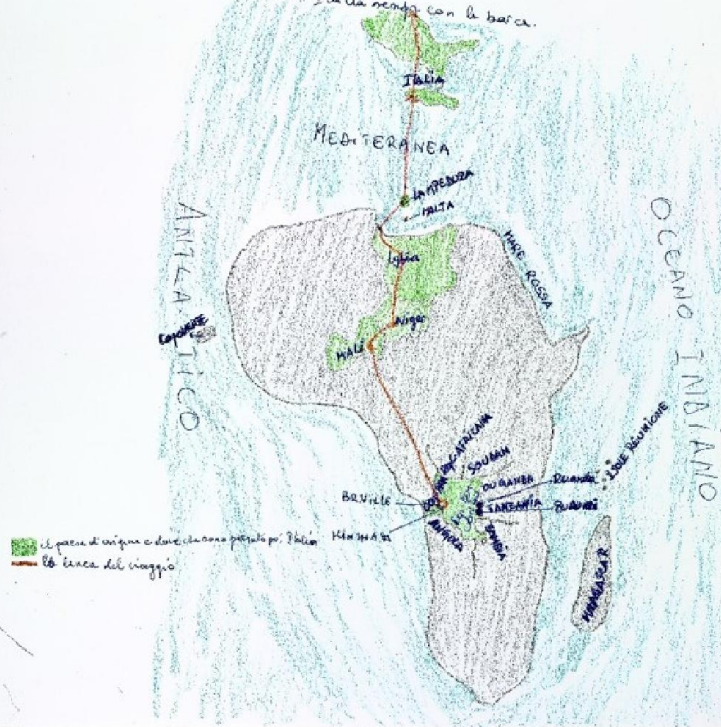
DRAWING OF ITINERARY from 1997 to 2013

The written part in the drawing starts with this sentence: "My name is Mundele-Makusu (Jean-Willy). I am in Italy because I fled from my country, Democratic Congo. I fled for political reasons, in the sense that I

was part of a political party called BDK (Bundu-Dia-Kongo)."[5] In Mundele's narrative,[6] the writing has an important role as part and his declaration of identity. We have this story also in oral form and in two versions: the presentation in front of the class, from where the clip is taken, and an individual interview which he explicitly asked for.

Mundele characterized BDK as an ethnic-political-religious party, in which he was in charge of security and sometimes took part in military action. He claimed that his membership was a form of total adhesion to the party, "almost like a belonging to a church". This drawing of Mundele's itinerary shows an imaginary strongly structured around a political idea of Africa, some of its nation-states and his trip to Italy. Africa is represented as dominant in a precise and detailed way (while Asia is ignored), and the two arrows of the direction of the trip in Italy indicate the initial stop and the trip to the north of Italy, where he was sent after his request for political asylum. The formalization of his narrative may have been influenced at least partially by the fact that he had to tell it to the commission for getting asylum, and he still considers himself as a political

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[5] Bundu dia Kongo was a politico-cultural movement founded in June 1969 and mainly based in the Bas-Congo province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The movement advocated for the establishment of a federal government system capable of eradicating social and economic injustices, had a strong belief in their ancestors and considered Jesus Christ as a prophet. In March 2008, the Congolese government banned Bundu dia Kongo.

[6] Mundele left the Congo in 1997 because of the civil war in which his party was fighting against Mobutu. In that war Mundele's wife was killed and his house burned. He does not know where his four children are now, because at the time he was advised to throw away his party membership card and immediately flee. He got a Malian passport through friends, crossed the river Congo at night to Brazzaville, went to Mali and then to Niger, to Libya and Lampedusa, where he applied for political asylum.

refugee, although he has been given only "subsidiary protection" (lasting three years rather than five) and not full political asylum.
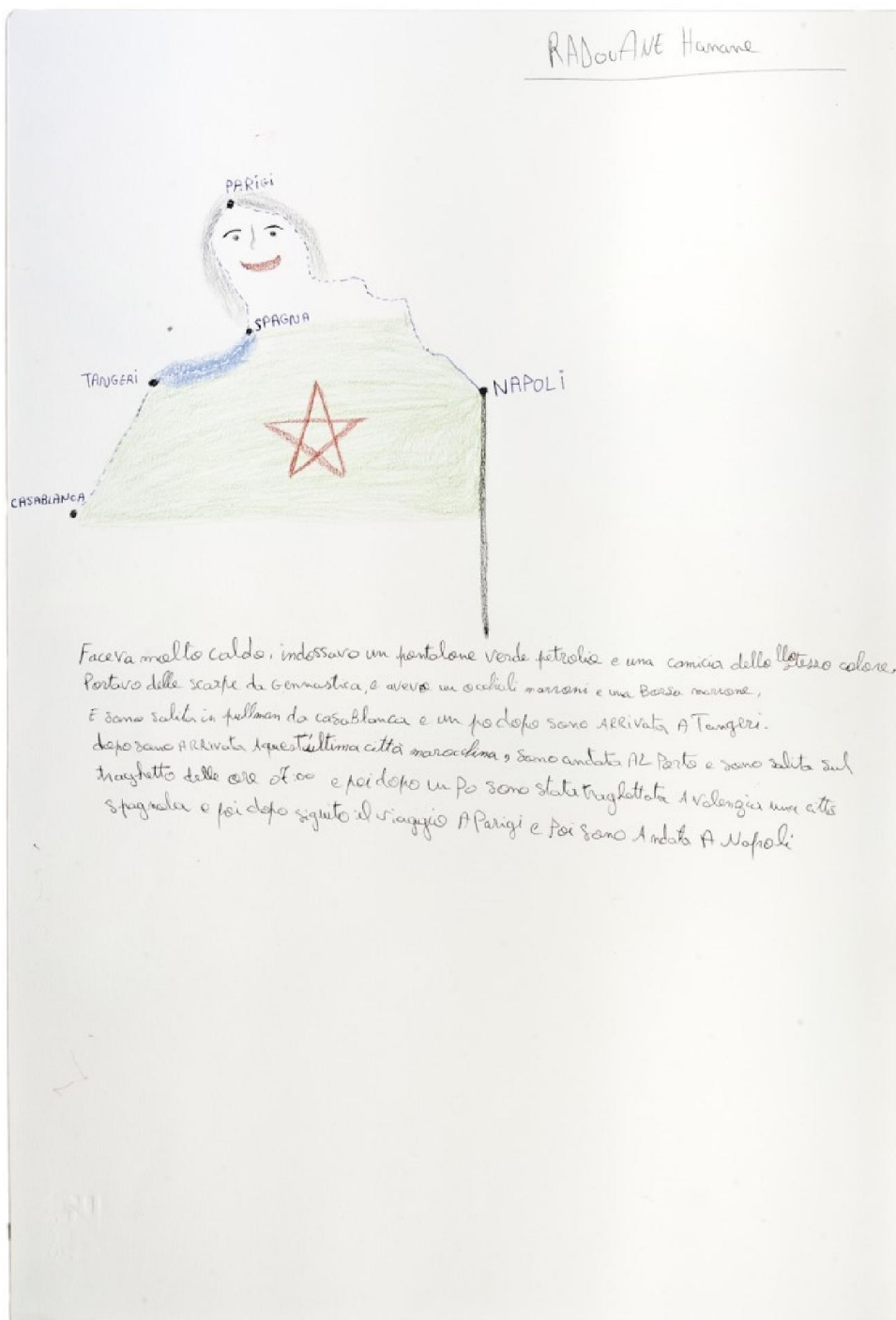
Another drawing that Mundele decided spontaneously to create, of Patrice Lumumba, is extremely significant: Lumumba's gesture can be understood as showing the way forward or as a sign of welcome and acceptance beyond any division of Africa. His posture is that of a great hero of African or global stature, and there is a sense of identification between Mundele and him. Indeed Lumumba stands for a way that Africa could have taken, a dream that was alive during the struggles against colonialism, with the hope of an African socialism and a "new man". The drawing represents this political and emotional memory, which is vaster than the Congo. Mundele thus erects a symbolic monument to Lumumba as a memento of the dream of independence of the whole of black Africa (after the Congo became independent in 1960). An actual monument to Lumumba exists in Kinshasa, in bronze, in which Lumumba raises his right arm rather than the left in a gesture of greeting, but the contrast is striking with Mundele's drawing. In the actual monument, Lumumba is shown as giving a stereotyped salute, while in the drawing he is represented as an alive human figure moving and gesturing to the way forward.

I find most interesting the tension between the declaration by Mundele that one of the motivations of his choosing to belong to an opposition party was based on ethnic belonging (Mobutu being from the North and Mundele from the Centre-West of the country) and the implication of his drawing of the monument, that I see as a universalizing interpretation of the figure of Lumumba. Thus Mundele's story and his drawings go beyond the interpretation of civil wars in Africa as ethnic conflicts (as partially suggested by Mundele himself) and set them in a tension towards an emancipation – represented by Lumumba, with a universal dimension.

While Mundele's testimonies show a link between cultural and political identity on the one hand and his itinerary to Europe on the other, within a pervasive political structure, the same type of identitary constellation can be found in other testimonies without a political slant, which allows them to show a more direct connection between the body, the self, and the itinerary of migration.

A first example is the drawing by **a** Moroccan woman, Hanane Radouane,

who in her country used to work in the office of a lawyer. Relating her sudden decision in a way that often punctuates the narratives of migrants, "at one point" she said to herself: "I want to go and see this Europe" and paid 5000 euros for a Shengen visa for two months.

[CLIP](#)

RADOUANE Hanane

PARIGI

SPAGNA

TANGERI

NAPOLI

CASABLANCA

Faceva molto caldo, indossavo un pantalone verde petrolio e una camicia dello stesso colore, Portavo delle scarpe da Ginnastica, e avevo un occhiali marroni e una Borsa marrone, E sono salita in pullman da casaBlanca e un po dopo sono arrivata a Tangeri. dopo sono arrivata aquestiultima città marocchina, sono andata al Porto e sono salita sul traghetto delle ore 06.00 e poi dopo un Po sono stata traghettata a valencia una città spagnola e poi dopo siguito il viaggio a Parigi e Poi sono andata a Napoli

This smiling woman seems to represent both Hanane and Morocco itself. Her trip is narrated along the lines of a double identity, collective and individual: "my traveling was like playing", and she adds: "this figure smiles because I am cheerful". She first went to Naples, where she learned Italian (she spoke Arab and French) and she worked as baby-sitter for eight years, but she was not satisfied, so she moved to Turin with her two

children. However, she wanted to move further, and in fact left Italy in order to go to Lièges in Belgium, almost immediately after the interview. During her presentation to the class, she insisted on her self-representation as positive and cheerful, but did not want to give personal information on her life and age.

Hanane Redouane did not find the time and will for an individual interview before her departure to Belgium. Her case is a reminder of the nomadic life of many of the people we interview for the project and of the interrupted and fragmented nature of the life-stories we collect.

But the same connection between the body, the self, and the itinerary of migration is more extensively testified by Youssef Boukouss, born on 1st January 1978 in Morocco, where he attended university for two years, and then started his migration itinerary three years ago.
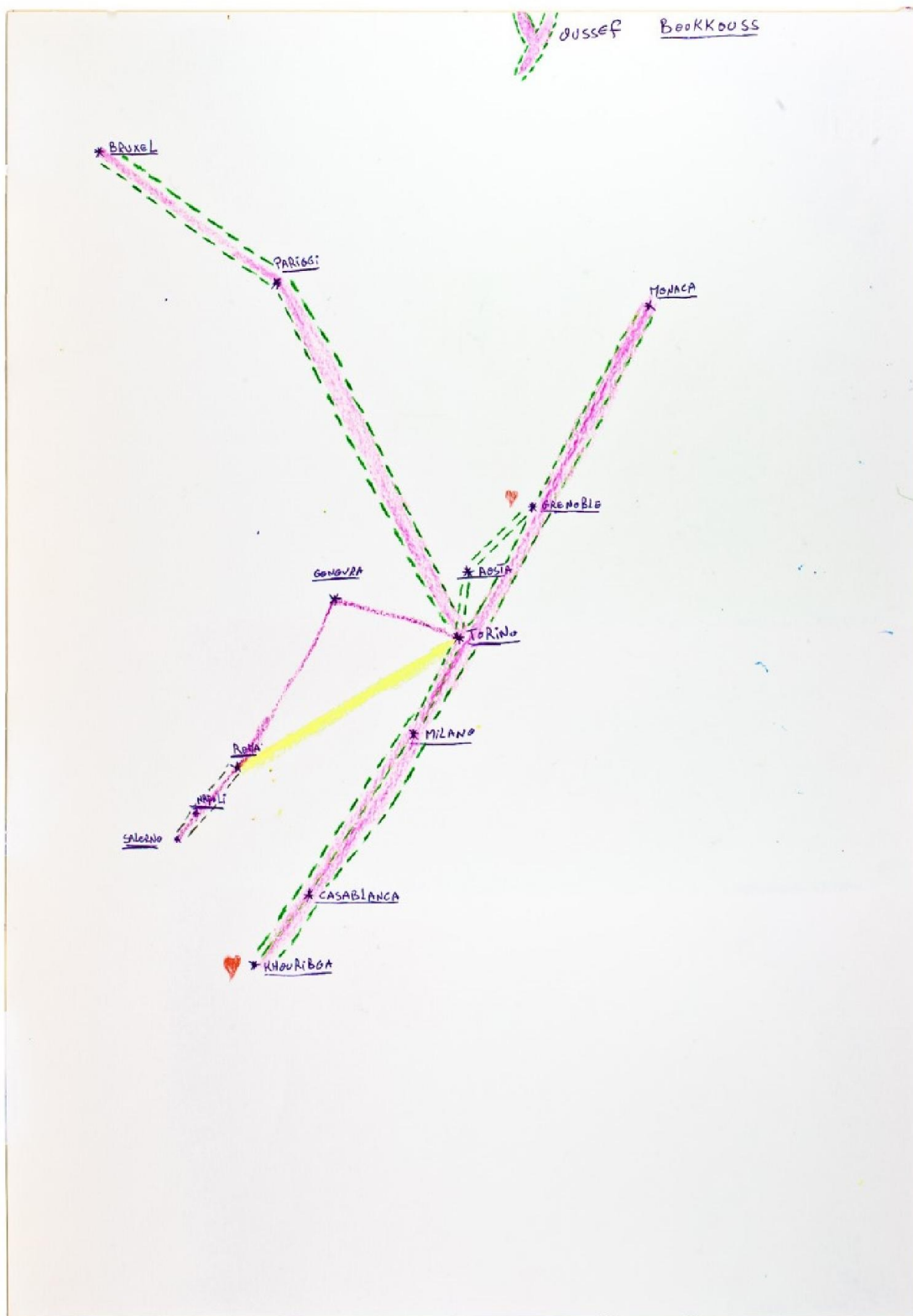
This drawing adds the author's first name to the constellation of identitary connections. Youssef pointed out explicitly that he has used on purpose the same shape and color for the initial of his first name and the representation

of his itinerary. The initial at the top on the right clearly indicates this sameness. The color, a sort of fuchsia pink, is evidenced by a green dotted contour in order to be made more visible. When asked about this coincidence, he simply laughed and said something like: "Eh, destiny!".

In this organisation of space and of experience, some lines clearly appear like digressions: the trip Turin-Geneva-Rome-Naples and Salerno is not a significant movement, therefore does not compose the Y, because it is considered by Youssef as marginal. It was a trip he did for his job as technician of theatre, concerts, and cinema: he and his team went by train and came back by car on the highway. The line Torino-Aosta indicates the first trip he did within Italy, by car, qualitatively different from the migration itinerary.

On the contrary, the line Torino-Aosta-Grenoble is inserted in the main trajectory, which connects two places of the heart, the town where he was born in Morocco, Khourigba, and the one where his wife lives with her parents, Grenoble, some 150 km from Turin. She is a cashier in a big supermarket there, and is of Moroccan origin, but born in Grenoble. They have known each other since childhood, their marriage having been set up by Youssef's mother, a good friend of his wife's mother. The narrative testifies against the opposition or even the too sharp distinction between combined marriage and love marriage, which does not hold at all here, as in many other cases: the two spouses love each other very much and travel every weekend between Grenoble and Torino. Their marriage has been done only in a legal form, with all documents signed, while the big ceremony – the feast, says Youssef – will be done later on, perhaps next year, in Khourigba, where the whole family still is.

The place where Youssef is now, Turin, is represented in his drawing not as a point of arrival, but as the centre of the drawing. It is from Turin, he says, that he can choose different ways to go to various places and come back. This drawing expresses strongly the link between the experience of migration and the very itinerary on the one hand and the sense of self - we

could say identity or belonging - on the other. It also documents the tension between the coherence of the self and its name – Y like Youssef – and the multiplicity of relations which constitute the subject as well as the different directions that a life strategy can take.

These three cases of response to our request to illustrate the itineraries of migration show that a recurrent way of organizing the spatial trip is that of following a temporality dimension, along a time-space connection. In most of the drawings, the trajectory does not follow the representations of traditional or conventional geography, in which for instance east is at the right of the onlooker. In many case the lines represents states of emotion or activities or a combination of the two. The oral or written narration is an indispensable frame to look at the drawings, and contains many strong verbal expressions: "an emotion I cannot express", "I could die in Italy", "to be abandoned", "to be loyal to the new country", "to resist, never let go". These and other phrases underline the dramatic nature of the experience of migration, the hardness of the ordeals to be faced. But frequently there is a relatively happy ending or the sense of an ongoing journey.

One hypothesis leading our project is that, while redefining themselves on the basis of their itineraries in space, time and culture, migrants redefine European identity and prefigure new potential forms of it. Our research is done in the hope of understanding new and different ways of belonging to Europe, perhaps partially or critically, thus modifying the traditional concepts and affects of Europeanness.

I am still convinced, although it is becoming a very difficult task of these days, that it is an intellectual duty to erode, from within, old visions of European and Europeanness. Saying: "from within" I intend to stress my lack of the illusion of becoming the other, taking the place of the other, identifying with the other in a literal sense, pretending not to be a European. I mean being critical "from within" but in constant dialogue

with those who are interested in discussing - even very critically - the question of the European legacy.

In this introductory talk I have tried to show some of the directions in which our work is going, providing examples of the intermediate area that we can contribute to create, with the aim of changing the image of the relationships between Europe and other parts of the world. These testimonies shows, in the terms by Jan Assmann, how urgently a utopian form of remembering is needed in order to contribute to a universalized bonding memory.