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The Fathers' Illusion of Redemption, Their Children's Perception of Pain: Migratory, Family, and Intergenerational Trajectories of Italian-Bangladeshis Relocating to London

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Abstract

This article is the result of a broader research project on the onward migration of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy who, once they have acquired Italian citizenship – and so a European passport – set off on a new migration to London, just before the "Brexit" referendum. The empirical evidence for the article comes from 40 in-depth interviews 1) with Italian-Bangladeshi men who have either already onward-migrated or are planning on doing so, and 2) with some of their children. The main motivation for this onward migration is the investment of first-migrant fathers in their children. Born and socialized in Italy, this so-called "second generation" have formal Italian citizenship, but are still subjected to processes of racialization and experience discrimination in public spaces and in political and media debates, and are also at risk of following their fathers into unskilled factory work, despite having acquired educational qualifications. The strategy for dealing with this "effect of destiny" is a "leap forward" into a context perceived – and idealized – as more meritocratic and governed by multiculturalism in which their presence would not need to be justified. However, the new migration is experienced by their children as a form of uprooting, similar to what their fathers experienced.

Keywords: onward migration, Bangladeshi Diaspora, second generations, Italian-Bangladeshi, London, Sayad.

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1. Introduction

The As Sayad wrote, the immigrant is a "worker for life". An Algerian worker who had immigrated to France and worked for Renault in Billancourt described this condition to him in the following fatalistic terms: "All I know is that I am an OS [an "ouvrier specialisé", a semi-skilled worker, a manual labourer] and I will die an OS. It doesn't matter what work I do. If they tell me to do something, I'll do it [...]" (1999; Italian edition, 2002, p. 236). This is the condition of immigrant workers in France as described by Sayad, but also in Italy today (Fondazione Leone Moressa, 2023; Perocco, 2012), where the terms "immigrant" and "worker" are almost interchangeable (Basso, 2006) and where immigrants are employed in the lowest strata of the labour market. They find themselves in so-called 3D jobs (dirty, dangerous, and demeaning); are systematically under-employed with respect to their educational qualifications and previous experience (professional under-employment) and their employment contracts (occupational under-employment); earn wages that are on average lower than those of Italian-born workers; have very few opportunities for vertical mobility, but have high horizontal mobility; and are more precarious than their Italian-born colleagues (Basso, 2006).
While emigrants-immigrants might accept the condition of being "workers for life" – in spite of their previous experience and qualifications, and even when they have Italian citizenship – and thus accept their downgrading from the middle class to the working class in their migration from the Global South to the Global North, does this mean that they will also accept that their children – those born in Italy and those who have arrived through family reunification, who have been raised and socialised in Italy – will have the same work and social trajectories? Would they accept the same life for their children, even though their children have never emigrated or immigrated (Pedreño Cánovas et al., 2024)?
Sayad (1979; 1994) analysed the imposition of a model of "integration" as proof of the success of the so-called "second generation" and also reflected on the ambivalence of the second generation and its points of continuity and rupture with the "first generation". Above all, he recounts the way in which the descendants of emigrants-immigrants are still characterised as "non-nationals" and explores their consequent work and social segregation (Delmonte Allasia, 2024) and how it affects the very meaning of the biographies, migratory journeys, and sacrifices of the first generation, *which seeks its own social redemption through the next generation.* This acts as the guiding thread of this contribution, which will focus on the expectations of emigrant-immigrant fathers with respect to their investment in their children and their childrens' personal fulfillment and social trajectories in the country of immigration. Specifically, it will focus on the

narratives of Bangladeshi immigrants in Italy and, even more specifically, of immigrants who have lived in Italy long enough to acquire Italian citizenship – and so a European passport – thus becoming Italians of Bangladeshi origin (Gerbeaur and Sajir, 2024; Moron Saes Braga and Mendes da Costa Braga, 2024), who have subsequently emigrated from Italy to the UK and London, just before the "Brexit" referendum.
After putting the phenomenon of onward migration into a theoretical-bibliographical context, this article engages in a socio-historical reconstruction of Bangladeshi immigration to Italy and the subsequent emigration of Italian-Bangladeshis to the United Kingdom. The empirical sections will be preceded by a brief outline of the research and methodological choices adopted. The empirical sections will explore the motivations and drives fuelling families' onward migration; the ambivalences, contradictions, and disappointments created by this new migration; and the gap between the expectations and social, material, and symbolic investment of the fathers, and their children's experiences of uprooting.

2. Multiple migration and onward migration of naturalized EU citizens: Conceptual lens

There have been different conceptualisations of the multiple mobilities taking place within the same migration trajectory. For instance, "transit migration" refers to the movement of asylum seekers and undocumented migrants to a destination context other than the one in which they find themselves (Collyer and de Haas, 2010). "Secondary migration" has been used to describe the trajectories of citizens from countries in the Global South who have stayed regularly for temporary but prolonged intervals in national contexts with advanced economies before reaching their final destination context (Takenaka, 2007). This is similar to the concept of "stepwise international migration", which refers to a deliberate strategy adopted by migrants to accumulate the economic, social, and relational resources necessary to reach their ultimate destination (usually Europe or North America) (Paul, 2011). The notion of "multiple migrations" describes the experiences of migrants who, after residing in a first destination country, where they intersect with other spatialities and temporalities of migration (Morad and Sacchetto, 2021), move on to a second country in order to fulfil their migration goals, meaning they might migrate to several different places over the course of their lifetimes. Ossman (2004) uses the term "serial migration" to refer to the migration trajectories of individuals who live for a significant period of time and achieve a good level of social inclusion in at least three national contexts and engage in further international

mobility to pursue better educational and professional opportunities for themselves or their family members. The term "twice-migration" was introduced by Bhachu in his research on the migration of Sikh populations (1985), and has also recently been taken up in other studies (Della Puppa and King, 2019). Bhachu describes how many Sikh people moved to the United Kingdom in the early twentieth century (after leaving Punjab for Kenya and Uganda), following the independence of the former British colonies. Twice-migration specifically describes mobility that is directly linked to the consequences of British colonialism and is limited to those nations that belonged to the Commonwealth.

Specific to intra-EU mobilities, the term "onward migration" (Della Puppa et al., 2021; Montagna et al., 2021; Stewart, 2012) refers to the process of third-country migrants with a "naturalized" status or a long-term residence permit moving to another country without the second move having been planned at the beginning of their migration experience. The decision to move a second time is typically the result of a change in their socio-economic context and their subjective experiences (Berretima, 2024).

In-depth studies on the phenomenon of onward migration (Della Puppa et al., 2021; Montagna et al., 2021) mainly focus on the experiences of refugees (Ahrens et al., 2016; Bang Nielsen 2004; van Liempt 2011) or "economic" migrants of African origin originating from countries such as Nigeria (Ahrens, 2013) or Senegal (Toma and Castagnone, 2015). Two recent contributions focused on the onward migration of Latin Americans from Spain to the UK should also be mentioned (Giralt-Mas 2017; Ramos, 2017). These works highlight the plurality of drives to forward migration: 1) the perception of limited possibilities for a professional career or, in any case, for job improvement; 2) the desire to escape from a social context perceived as racist, discriminatory or Islamophobic; and, consequently, 3) the aspiration to live in a social context seen and *perceived* as more cosmopolitan and "multicultural" (Modood, 2012) or, better, a society that has not yet adopted policies – either interculturalist or multiculturalist – able to manage diversity in an equitable and sustainable way (Mascitelli and De Lazzari, 2016); and 4) the aim of being reunited with relatives and friends or of joining a larger community of compatriots. The specific case of Italian-Bangladeshi onward migration to the UK has been studied from various different angles: in terms of its reasons and dynamics (Della Puppa and King, 2019; Morad and Sacchetto, 2021); in relation to the aspirational gap between men and women in the immigrant family (Della Puppa, 2018); in terms of the unexpected dimensions and darker sides of this experience, with its various disappointments and frustrations (Della Puppa and King, 2019; Morad et al., 2021); and through the analysis of the times of daily and working life (King and Della Puppa, 2021).

Here, then, to better understand the dynamics of this social process and the experience of the onward migration of the Italian-Bangladeshi population in London, it will be useful to study the history of the Bangladeshi diaspora and what can be defined as a "community on the move", as presented in the next paragraph.

3. A community on the move

The history of Bangladeshi migration to the United Kingdom has been explored in detail by Gardner (1995; 2002) and Zeitlyn (2016), with a particular focus on the community in East London. The origins of this migration can be traced back to the nineteenth century, with the East India Company's recruitment of young men from the Bangladeshi district of Sylhet to work on ships. Over time, some of these workers left these "floating factories" to settle in English port cities, especially in the docklands area of East London (Adams, 1987). Their presence in the British capital was consolidated in the post-war period, when more of their compatriots arrived in London, fuelled first by the demand for unskilled labour in factories, catering, and services, and later by family reunifications (Alexander, 2013). According to the British census, in 2011 there were 447,200 people of Bangladeshi origin in the UK, with a fifth of the national total residing in the borough of Tower Hamlets (Zeitlyn, 2016).
However, Bangladeshi migration to Italy has a much more recent history (Priori, 2012). It was only really in the 1990s that Italy became a significant destination, with around a hundred Bangladeshi people in Italy in 1986, growing to 70,000 by the early 2000s, and almost 130,000 ten years later (Demaio, 2013). Until the late 1990s, more than 90 per cent of them were concentrated in Rome (Knights and King, 1998), making it the second largest Bangladeshi community in Europe after London. In the following years they began to disperse across the country, mainly towards the North-Eastern regions, where it was easy to get industrial work (Della Puppa and Gelati, 2015). This provided the basis for migrants' wives and children to come to Italy from Bangladesh through the family reunification process (Della Puppa, 2018). This transformation of Bangladeshi migration from being "for work" to being for "family migration" (Sayad, 1999; 2006) took place in both Italy and the UK at different historical and migratory moments.
The first generation of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy – who today are leaving for London as Italian citizens – was made up of members of Bangladesh's middle and upper-middle classes. The educated children of landowners, industrialists and government officials, their experience of international migration and their "migration project" (Berretima, 2024) were not configured

as a desperate escape from hunger and misery, but as a strategy to engage in upward social mobility both for themselves and for their families. In this context, the representation of a "successful migrant" is a social product emerging from the intersectionally constructed perspective of middle-class families in Bangladeshi society striving to acquire upward social mobility, that is male and family honour (Bourdieu, 1998), through various strategies, including international migration.

To fully understand what is defined as successful masculinity and socially realized adult migrant men in the Bangladeshi middle-classes, it is necessary to understand some of the social dynamics related to the socio-economic stratification and material conditions of Bangladeshi society. Although in recent years Bangladesh has had strong economic growth – the GDP has grown by about 6% per year in the last 10 years, to reach 8% in 2019 – this has not translated into a generalized improvement in people's living conditions in the country. In fact, it is crossed with deep inequalities and growing social polarization: apart from a small elite connected to the global economy, the mass of people survive in incredibly precarious conditions. The first generation of Bangladeshi migrants to Italy came from a class that lay between these two poles: an anxious middle class struggling against the erosion of its socio-economic position (Della Puppa and Ambrosini, 2021). Defending this social position or, better still, being upwardly mobile, was an obsession and duty for middle class men and families (Bourdieu, 1998). This is also the main way through which Bangladeshi migrants can realise themselves as successful migrants, and thus as successful men and fathers. However, this upward social mobility and consequent individual and collective realisation can only take place across generations: the social realisation of their childrens' generation – or at least what the fathers consider to be their realisation – will always result in and be understood as the realisation of the fathers themselves, as will be shown below.

Finally, we should point out that, according to the Bangladeshi embassy in Italy, in 2015 approximately 6,000 Italian households of Bangladeshi origin (approximately 25,000 people) left Italy to move to London. The Italian National Institute of Statistics reports that, in 2016 alone, among the 29,000 Italians with a non-European country background who left Italy, over 2,500 were of Bangladeshi origin. Of Italians of Asian origin who left Italy, 92% moved to the UK. This meant 5,000 people of Asian origin moved to the UK in 2016, an increase in 19% from 2015.This movement began in earnest after the 2008 economic crisis, which hit Mediterranean countries particularly hard, and intensified shortly after the Brexit referendum.

After this reconstruction, in the next paragraphs, it will be specifically analyzed the motivations and drives fuelling families' onward migration; the

ambivalences, contradictions, and disappointments created by this new migration; and the gap between the expectations and social, material, and symbolic investment of the fathers, and their children's experiences of uprooting. Of course, before this, it will be illustrated the methodological choices and fieldwork strategies adopted.

4. Methods

This article is the result of broader research on the onward migration of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy who set off on a new migration to London once they have acquired Italian citizenship and a European passport (Gerbeaur and Sajir, 2024; Moron Saes Braga and Mendes da Costa Braga, 2024) and just before the Brexit referendum.

The empirical evidence for this article comes from 40 in-depth interviews with Italian-Bangladeshis who have either already onward-migrated or are planning on doing so. The interviewees were all married men with children, aged between 30 and 50, who arrived in Italy between 1990 and 2005. All of them had families who had reunited with them and had lived in Italy for long enough to acquire Italian citizenship and so a European passport.

20 of the interviewees were interviewed in London between 2015 and 2017, having already made their migration there between 2010 and 2017; another 20 were interviewed between 2011 and 2012, in Northeast Italy. The latter group consisted of Italian citizens of Bangladeshi origin who were actively planning to move to the UK.

In addition to these interviews, five interviews were carried out with Italian-Bangladeshi children and young people (students) who were either born in Italy or arrived their through family reunification, but now lived in London with their families of origin due to the decisions of their parents to emigrate.

The first onward migrants interviewed in London had already been interviewed in Italy, several years earlier, during a previous research work on the family dynamics of migration and were, thus, contacted again, years later and after they had acquired Italian citizenship and accomplished a new migration to the UK. From these first interviews I proceeded using the snowball technique, but also by frequenting places of meeting and socializing of Italian-Bangladeshis in London (cafés, association offices, etc.).

The dialogical interviews were sometimes collected in the same cafés frequented by Italian-Bangladeshis, sometimes in other agreed upon and easily accessible public establishments (such as cafés in shopping centres), sometimes in the interviewees' homes, sometimes in public parks, depending on preferences, requests and inclinations of the interviewees themselves.

During their time in Northeast Italy, our interviewees had mainly been employed in industrial work as unskilled or sometimes semi-skilled workers in the metal, tanning, chemical and textile industries. Some of them had worked in the tourism and catering sector as hotel porters or cooks. In London, they were employed in the service sector in highly flexible unskilled jobs, such as supermarket security guards, delivery workers for fast-food chains or small fast-food shops and, most commonly, mini-cab drivers, almost always for and through companies that use online platforms and mobile applications, of which Uber is the most emblematic case.
The interviews took place in either Italian or English, depending on the interviewees' preferences, and the Italian interviews were translated into English for this article.
The names of the interviewees have been changed, however, the category of "father" (as well as that of "children", "son" or "daughter") reflects the family relationships of the interviewees, their self-definitions and their self-attributed identity and family positions.

5. From the aspirations of Italian-Bangladeshis…

The onward migration to London of Italian-Bangladeshis is the result of a combination of individual factors, collective histories, and more or less idealized representations of the British context (Berretima, 2024). The migration to London shapes migrants' male and female identities, giving them symbolic capital and the *allure* of social success (Bourdieu, 1998). The primary motivation for this onward migration project is Italian-Bangladeshi fathers' aspiration for upward social mobility for their children and the investment of first-migrant fathers in the so-called "second generation". Although their children, born and socialized in Italy, have formal Italian citizenship (Gerbeaur and Sajir, 2024; Moron Saes Braga and Mendes da Costa Braga, 2024), they are still subjected to processes of racialization and experiences of discrimination in public spaces and political and media debates. They are thus at risk of reproducing their fathers' existential trajectory and working conditions: ending up as unskilled factory workers locked into subordinate sectors of the labour market despite their educational qualifications (Delmonte Allasia, 2024; Pedreño Cánovas et al., 2024). The first-migrant[a] fathers who arrived in Italy between the 1990s and 2000s belonged to the middle- and educated classes of Bangladeshi society and so have a habitus and aspirations consistent with this social class. They accepted

[a] I use the term "first-migrant" to identify the family member who first migrated, opening the family "migration chain".

a downward shift in their class status with their migration from the Global South to the Global North in order to activate intergenerational social mobility, thus focusing on their children's future. But if their children are subject to the same "destiny effect" as they themselves were, then the fathers' sacrifice, both in terms of their illusions as emigrants and their suffering as immigrants (Sayad, 1999; 2006) will have been in vain.
Between the 1990s and 2000s, Italy still offered some chance of socio-economic fulfilment: it still had a relatively inclusive labour market and its economy its economy, though declining, still seemed sound. However, the global economic crisis that hit Southern Europe particularly hard from 2009 onwards limited the possibilities for the Italian working classes and especially their immigrant component, reducing the already minimal chances of breaking the "glass ceiling". Rintu clearly expresses this sentiment:

> I chose to come to England because I was thinking mainly about the future. Not my future, not ours – mine and my wife's – but my children's future. Looking around me in Italy, knowing that there's a crisis, I couldn't see any future for them. I was afraid for my children's future. So I came to England for them, because there are more possibilities here. (Rintu, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)

The greater appeal of London with respect to Italy in terms of their investment in their children's future arises from several factors: the supposed meritocracy of London; the governance of British multiculturalism (in the perceptions of the interviewees) (Modood, 2012); and the possibility of socialising and schooling their children in English. Indeed, Italy's lack of meritocracy emerged in Bangladeshi migrants' representations as a limit of Italian society, especially in relation to the labour market. This narrative is reinforced by a shared representation of London as a context in which social fulfilment can be based on one's own abilities and qualifications, regardless of ascribed social membership.

> In Italy, you'll always be an "extracomunitario" [non-EU national]. You've got an Italian passport, OK, Italian people are nice and kind, but it's very difficult to have an institutional role, to have a high-status job. [...] In Italy, no one from our country has a good job, they are only workers; whereas here, if you study to be a doctor, you'll be a doctor. [...] Here there is multiculturalism, you have all the cultures of the world. It's normal. Here we are "invisible", while in Italy it's like we're in a zoo. (Rumon, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)
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> Another reason, which is very important for me and for the Bengali

> community, is English: for my daughter's future. If she studies in English and is brought up in English, she will be able to work here, in Bangladesh, or anywhere else in the world. But if she stays in Italy, she'll only learn Italian and, at most, only a little bit of English... (Asek, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)

Added to this is the conviction that being Italian "on paper" is not sufficient to protect you from racist discrimination. In other words, according to some fathers, the citizenship that is formally granted after ten years of continuous residence in Italy is understood as "third-class", while the citizenship experienced on a daily basis in all spheres of social action – first and foremost at work – is inscribed in your body, skin colour, surname, and all the other elements that "betray" your Bangladeshi origins:

> If you live in Italy, but you come from the third world, like me, you will always be a third-class citizen with third-class citizenship [...] I'm Italian only on paper and my daughters will always be the daughters of a Bengali worker. (Sarif, Italian-Bangladeshi father, Italy)

Zaeed perceives Italian society as still unprepared to include citizens of different "ethnic-cultural" backgrounds or national origins, and implicitly expresses his aspiration to live in a context perceived as more cosmopolitan. Again his main concern is for his son, whom he wants to spare the suffering and humiliation of growing up in a context in which it would be difficult to free himself from the condition of "foreigner" and "immigrant":

> My son was born here, he has Italian citizenship, he feels Italian. A few weeks ago, I took him to a guitar course at a music school. The school secretary, talking on the phone to someone else, said: "There's a little Indian boy who has come for guitar lessons". My eight-year-old son immediately asked me: "Why did she say I was Indian? I'm not Indian, I'm Italian!" He is Italian, he feels Italian, but [in Italy] the colour of his skin communicates that he is Indian. It's painful. What should I do as a father? (Zaeed, Italian-Bangladeshi father, Italy)

The subjective and objective drives underlying this reactivation of migratory mobility offer us an overview of migrants' representations and perceptions of Italian society. What emerges is an image of a deeply impoverished country in an economic and productive crisis; but also a society that is full of discrimination and exclusion at all levels. Incapable of designing effective policies for social inclusion and diversity management (Mascitelli and De Lazzari, 2016), it instead produces an informal but real stratification along

"ethno-national" lines. This society is characterised by a political and media system that inferiorises immigrants and their families and prevents them from having any upward mobility; a labour market that segregates workers of non-Italian origin into the lowest status, lowest-paid, most exhausting and dangerous sectors of the labour market; a school and university system that systematically excludes and marginalises pupils belonging to the so-called second- and third-generations; and a welfare state that, as well as being subject to a process of radical dismantling (forty years earlier it guaranteed a minimum threshold of social security to working families), is particularly exclusionary in relation to citizens of immigrant origin.
Thus the "mirror effect" of immigration identified by Sayad (1999) emerges with particular clarity. He described it as a key opportunity to make manifest what is latent in the constitution and functioning of a social order, to uncover that which is hidden, to reveal that which there is an interest in ignoring and leaving in a state of social "innocence" or ignorance, to bring to light or magnify that which is habitually hidden in the social unconscious and is therefore meant to remain in the shadows, as a secret or something that is socially unthought. This mirror reveals the deepest contradictions of the society it reflects, its political organisation, and its relations with other societies.

6. ...to the disappointments of the onward migrant

However, this new migration is full of ambivalences and contradictions. In particular, not all of the aspirations that migrants had before onward migrants were matched by their experiences when they arrived in London and other cities in the UK (Della Puppa and King, 2019).
For first-generation onward migrants, the idea that a move to London would improve their labour-market position and boost their income often proved to be a myth. Although their jobs in Italy as factory workers were physically arduous, socially unrewarding, and badly paid, these jobs generally had a "regular" contract with fixed hours and a steady income, giving them a recognised social identity as a family breadwinner. Moreover, their lives in Italy involved daily interactions with their colleagues in the workplace and other people in their neighbourhood, based around a stable routine of work shifts and days off, which gave them opportunities for family time and other forms of sociability:

> Here, I worked washing dishes in restaurants. The work was very hard and my boss didn't treat me very well. I also worked in a fast-food restaurant, washing chicken. I didn't like that either. Each time I spent ten, eleven hours

> washing the chicken or cleaning the floor. My job in Italy was much better: I worked in a factory, full-time, with a permanent contract, a good salary, two fixed shifts. I was satisfied. I liked it much better than the jobs I was able to get here. Now, I work as a security guard in a supermarket. It's a bit better than washing dishes or fast food. (Hassan, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)

The working lives of Italian-Bangladeshis in London were marked by precariousness and insecurity in terms of both time schedules and locations. Furthermore, the type of work available to them was generally considered not worthy of their age and social identity, with typical jobs being mini-cab drivers, security guards, and washing dishes in restaurants. The interviewees in London generally said they suffered a process of professional devaluation and de-skilling. Onward migrants often provide a bottom-up testimony of the ruthless liberalisation of certain segments of London's labour market, especially of unskilled and badly paid jobs in catering and other labour-intensive services that heavily rely on migrant workers (May et al., 2007).
Furthermore, their aspirations about joining the world's largest and most famous "diasporic community" of Bangladeshis were also disappointed. In fact, there is a lot of mistrust – sometimes out-and-out hostility – between the "newcomers" from Italy and the "historical" British-Bengali community who have been in London for generations (Della Puppa, 2021):

> They [British-Bengalis] don't welcome us [...] they don't like us. They asked me: "Why did you come here? You are Italian, well, good ... why did you come here? Go back to Italy". That is their mentality. (Bitu, Italian-Bangladeshi Father, London)

In the short time they have been in London, the Bangladeshi onward migrants we spoke to had not built any significant relationships with the local population, especially with "white British" people who are not members of "ethnic communities". The impermeability of this social border is also a product of the specific areas they have settled in, such as neighbourhoods in inner-East London. These places are characterised by high rates of "old" and "new" immigration from all over the world, and only have a minority of "white British" people (Peach, 2006).

> It is very difficult to have English friends here, for different reasons. But in Italy, I had a lot of Italian friends, because these friendships arose in places where we both hung out, we were in the same workplaces. Here, many people, like me, are mini-cab drivers, and the English don't do that job. There are no English people amongst my colleagues. Here in England, we don't

> work in industry or factories like in Italy. We work in restaurant kitchens and you don't meet any English people there either... The English are in different places to us: there are no opportunities [to meet them]. English people who do "quality" jobs in the City slip into the underground at night and go home, to their neighbourhoods, which are different from ours, and we never meet them. Then there are the lower class English workers, labourers, for example, who spend their free time between their homes and the pub, but we don't go to the pub and so we don't meet them either [...]. For the new generation of "Italian Bengalis", our children, who will study and grow up here, it'll be different: maybe they'll meet professionals, office workers, in universities, in workplaces, they will be their colleagues. But we, the first generation of Italian Bengalis in London, we, who have a "low status", we don't have a chance to meet people. We only go out with and hang out with each other. (Pavel, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)

> I had a lot of Italian friends, but I don't know any English people here. Also because, look around here: there are no English people. I mean white English people. All people who come from other parts of the world or, at most, are English but from other countries. So I don't get the chance to meet white English people, maybe only in public offices. (Musharat, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)

These disappointments can be understood in terms of what Sayad called a "triple absence" and a "double betrayal" (Sayad, 1999; 2006). The fathers are absent from Bangladesh, the country in which they were born and socialized, and which they sometimes feel they've betrayed through emigration. They are absent from Italy, the country in which many spent the majority of their lives, where their children were born, and where they acquired citizenship, but which they have now left and forced their children to leave, in what feels like a second betrayal. And they are absent from the UK because they are not fully present there as a result of various forms of exclusion.

7. ...and the frustrations of their children

While the first generation emigrated from Bangladesh, leaving the country in which they were born and socialised, their family and friends, and the middle class social identity they felt they had in Bangladesh, their children, who were either born in Italy or arrived there when they were very small, and who are now adolescents or young adults, have not really experienced the sometimes painful effects of emigration. They have cultivated friendships and established daily routines, activities and interests in Italy. And so, despite the discrimination

found there, they see Italy as their own country. Thus their fathers' new migration project is not in keeping with their expectations and wishes and they experience the new migration as a form of uprooting, much like that their fathers experienced when moving to Italy:

> My eldest had finished secondary school [15 years old], he wasn't that old and we knew that the older he was, the more difficult it would be. In fact, he did suffer a bit from the trauma, the eldest. Up until a year ago, every argument we had at home was about why we came here. This also had an impact on school, in fact he didn't take anything seriously, he wasn't interested in anything, and last year he failed his exams. I was very sad about that. (Tanim, Italian-Bangladeshi father, London)

> My brother and I were brought here in the summer, on holiday. We came to visit my uncle and then my mum said to us: "No, now that we're here, we'll stay here". First we were here on holiday and then, gradually, my uncle also started to explain to us that it was better here and this and that… But we didn't like it, we didn't want to come, we had a wonderful life in Italy, friends... A different life from here [...] We had a beautiful house in Italy with a garden and we were very happy. Then, there's the weather: it rains all the time! And not having friends: in Italy we had so many friends, we grew up, from nursery to secondary school, with the same friends. So here it was hard, especially at the beginning. (Jakkir, Italian-Bangladeshi son, London)

A further aspect that links the migratory experience of Bangladeshi first-migrant fathers in Italy to the uprooting that Italian-Bangladeshi children feel they have been subject to against their will is that of racism and discrimination. When they arrived in Italy their fathers endured the suffering of being racialised immigrants in the factories where they were employed as unskilled workers (Sayad, 1999), but they suffered in silence and alone so as not to undermine their authority in their immediate family and in their family of origin, and so as not to reveal to them the gap between the idealised image that Bangladeshis have of Italy and the reality. They thus hid behind the "lie of migration" (Ibid.). Today, new generations of Italians of Bangladeshi origin suffer from the exclusion they experience at school at the hands of their peers who have been "British" for generations:

> I remember the first month when we started school and we couldn't speak English very well. We were bullied a lot. It was very, very hard. I also had problems with depression, I really remember that [...] It was a boys-only school, it was chaos, the lessons, the break times, always chaos, we were always being bullied, when a school is huge and there are 2,000 students, which is very different from Italy where we were used to a much more

> organised, structured school, with fewer pupils... well, here, with all those pupils, it's much easier to be bullied, because we didn't know how to speak English very well, because we had just arrived from Italy... At that school most people were black and white, very few Asians; in the second school I went to, there were a lot of white people, working class, racists, so there were bullies there too and that was really racism. Especially the first year was very difficult, but I didn't talk about it to my parents. (Rashid, Bangladeshi-Italian son, London)

This experience was also recounted by Hilary Clarke (2015), a journalist for *The Independent* who first reported on the experience of Italian Bengalis, whom she called "London's newest ethnic minority":

> Thirteen-year-old Maliha Mazumbder came to Tower Hamlets with her parents and brother from Rome two years ago. She says she has been consistently bullied at her school in Bow, where the vast majority of the students are of British-Bangladeshi heritage. She said: "They call me 'Freshy' and other things I can't repeat. I have never faced this bullying before in Italy. I was shocked."

Again, similar to the first migration from Bangladesh to Southern Europe by their fathers, the children experience the migration from Italy to the UK as transnational (Della Puppa and Sredanovic, 2022), and use social networks and low-cost air fares to keep friendship ties alive and move across two social fields (Zeitlyn, 2016). In Jakkir's words:

> Yes, I always keep in touch with my friends in Italy, I tell them about London and they update me on what they are doing there. They are friends I've known since I was born. So I often go to Italy, every year in the summer, for a couple of weeks, or even at other times, to eat some Italian gelato, to see friends, because now it's cheap, with EasyJet, Ryanair it's very cheap... (Jakkir, Italian-Bangladeshi son, London)

Finally, the theme of identity emerges, as well as that of the splitting of absence and presence due to the intra-European migration that they had to accept against their will and which was justified to them as being "for their own good" (Sayad 1979; 1994). Shafiq recounts how his Italian passport remains the last bastion he can cling to in order to defend his identity, the fetish needed to explain to himself and others where his roots are (Della Puppa, 2014), who he is and who he wants to be:

> I still haven't changed my passport, it's still Italian, and I don't think I want to change it because it's part of my identity. Although here it is very strange

> explaining that I am of Bengali origin, but I was born in Italy, but I live in London...

If, as we said earlier, the experience of fathers is describable in terms of a "triple absence", the experience of their children is of being "doubly absent" subjects – due to their physical absence from Italy and the forms of exclusion they suffer in the British context – but, at the same time, they are "doubly present", because they participate in the activities of both poles of migration and engage in frequent transnational journeys (Basch et al., 1993; Boccagni, 2009; Glick-Schiller et al., 1992; Riccio, 2007). If fathers feel they are the perpetrators of a "double betrayal", their children belong to a "betrayed generation" that did not choose to emigrate from their home country, but had to suffer against their will, due to their fathers' desires for self-realisation through their children's fulfilment.

8. Conclusion

This article draws attention to a still underexplored aspect of the process of intra-European onward migration of EU citizens who originate from third countries – specifically, Italian citizens of Bangladeshi origin – giving voice to the experiences of the children of onward migrants – in this case, "second-generation" young people who were born, raised, and socialised in Italy, but who have been forced, against their will, to emigrate from Italy to London in the UK.

One of their fathers' motivations for re-emigrating across the Channel was the investment in their children and the reactivation of upward social mobility for the so-called "second generation", often born in Italy, who this "first generation" of emigrants-immigrants worry will be almost completely overlooked in Southern Europe, especially following the 2008-2009 economic crisis, as a result of a society that is still far from being "multicultural" or, better, far from adopting policies able to manage diversity in an equitable and sustainable way (Della Puppa and King, 2019; Mascitelli and De Lazzari, 2016). Paradoxically, however, the Italian-Bangladeshi children of onward migrants did not experience this intra-European migratory shift as an opportunity, but as an uprooting from their friends and from an affective, national and life context that they felt as their own, from a country that they perceived as "home" (Della Puppa and Segalla, 2019), in which they were born or arrived at pre-school age and in which they were socialised. They are forced to realise the aspirations of their first-migrant fathers – who are often anyway disappointed in the onward migration – and in the process are subject to suffering and frustration,

discrimination and loneliness. They thus in part follow the experiential journeys of their fathers during their first migration from Bangladesh to Italy. Like them, these young people are also protagonists of transnational dynamics – although between the United Kingdom and Italy and not so much between Italy and Bangladesh – and like them they are also "doubly absent". Unlike their fathers, however, they are not "guilty" of betraying their country of origin (Bangladesh) and/or their "country of transit" (Italy), but, on the contrary, perceive that they themselves have been betrayed through what they see as a forced migration.
Finally, although the new migratory journeys for these families led by the fathers is presented and justified as a strategy for the social and personal fulfilment of the next generations, on closer inspection, it is an attempt by the fathers to fulfil themselves *through* the fulfilment of their children, that is, as a way of claiming themselves to be "successful migrants". It also increases their male honour within the family (Bourdieu, 1998) from the perspective of the Bangladeshi middle class to which they, unlike their children, feel they belong, whose *habitus* they have incorporated and whose value system they adhere to.

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