

## **Candidate A evidence**

*In 'Io non Ho Paura' Ammaniti conveys the image of two Italies divided in every way. To what extent did the economic divide between the North and South create social conflict amongst the people during the 1970s?*

'Io non Ho Paura' is the critically acclaimed novel by Niccolò Ammaniti which explores the prevalent divide between the North and South of Italy in the 1970s. The protagonist is a young Michele, who discovers that the adults of his small village (Acqua Traverse, set in the South) have kidnapped another boy from the North and are holding him for ransom. The novel is a tense portrayal of a young boy's devastation that his parents are involved with the crime, and also his understanding of the contrasting lifestyles between his poor family in the South and his perceived conception of the North. During the 1970s, the South was much poorer with the vital industry and jobs located in the North which caused a sense of separation across the country. This economic divide was a significant cause in creating social conflict between the people from the two different areas which resulted in jealousy, crime and further tension. Although there are other factors which contributed to the divide – such as cultural differences – the economic division was a major aspect in this historic issue, which still remains today.<sup>1</sup>

In the novel, it is interesting how Ammaniti explores the economic disparity between the North and the South through use of setting, narrative and central characters. Ammaniti has Michele tell the story as if he is looking back on the event when he was nine years old. From this young age, Michele had an awareness of the wealth gap – although he had never even been to the North – *'Sapevo che il Nord era ricco e che il Sud era povero.'*<sup>2</sup> It is clear to the reader from the very start that Michele's family is poor and his surroundings are at the opposite ends of the spectrum from life in the North. This is shown in how his father works as a lorry driver, which means he travels to the North because that is where the work existed. Ammaniti conveys Acqua Traverse as being an extremely small place which lacks the opportunities of the Northern parts. Another character who travels to the North is Felice, the bully of the village, who is said to leave the village for a time in order to find work. In the fictional setting of Acqua Traverse, Ammaniti conveys the agricultural beauty of the South where the children are able to play, but combines this with the sinister nature of the adults' actions. Michele finds the kidnapped Filippo, trapped in a hole in a rural and abandoned building and gets to know him. The contrast between these characters is clear, especially as the narrative progresses, and reinforces the wealth gap between the children from the two areas. When Michele finds a note written by Filippo talking about his own father, Ammaniti again emphasises the idea of the differences in wealth and opportunities for families in the North versus the South – *'In America lui ci sta per lavoro e quando torna mi porta sempre i regali.'*<sup>3</sup> The industrial boom during the 70s in the North led to greater employment opportunities so this caused a desire amongst people to emigrate from the South. Therefore, the North possessed a rich image which was perceived by people across the country. Indeed, Ammaniti uses Michele's impression of the North to demonstrate why significant jealousy

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<sup>1</sup> Research Article:

<http://www.unibo.it/it/ricerca/divario-tra-nord-e-sud-italia-nuove-risposte-a-una-vecchia-questione>

<sup>2</sup> 'Io non Ho Paura' – Ammaniti, Niccolò. (Einaudi, 2007) p38

<sup>3</sup> 'Io non Ho Paura' – Ammaniti, Niccolò. (Einaudi, 2007) p131

and tension towards the North was present amongst the people. Michele talks to his father about going to the seaside and the North – *'Che é il pedalo? ...Io voglio andare via da Acqua Traversa.'*<sup>4</sup> Michele clearly had not been on holiday before and his lack of awareness over something like a pedalo emphasises how his childhood has been shaped by his poor background in the South. Ammaniti establishes the economic conditions of these characters and then reinforces the desperation of the adults who kidnap a child and blackmail his Northern parents for ransom. Overall, the motivations involved in the kidnapping of Filippo, is made more prevalent by the reader's understanding of the conflict amongst Italian people – caused by economic turmoil in the South.

The economic divide during the 1970s caused major social conflict amongst the Italian people and this is reflected in many ways. In general, there was a great sense of jealousy between people from the North and South. This kind of jealousy has had a greater impact on people's attitudes and the general relationship between the two areas. Perhaps this was compounded by the vast number of people from the South leaving in order to find more prosperity in the North. The jealousy or discord between the two seems to have been shaped by the different social and economic restraints. One of the ways which formed this social conflict was the child kidnappings. Gangs and criminals from the South tended to kidnap children of wealthy Northern people – especially powerful and rich industrialists – and then hold them for ransom. Ammaniti based his book on the kidnapping of a boy from Milan and he manages to convey the sense of desperation as the adults of the village turn to sinister alternatives in order to get money. The kidnappings were a key way in creating opposition and reinforcing the lack of unity between the North and South. So it was an unsettling time in Italy during the 1970s, not just economically, but also politically. There was lots of unrest with the *'anni di piombo'*, (the *'years of lead'*) which continued until the start of the 1980s with conflict and terrorism being the main focus. This kind of unrest was only worsened by the economic divide between the North and South.

Researchers have always been curious about the divide between the North and South of Italy and the reasons behind it. The University of Bologna carried out research as part of a recent study<sup>5</sup> and found that there is a contrast in attitudes and way of thinking between Italians from the North and South. The researchers of this particular study emphasise that the lack of unity between the North and South is a result of historic incidents which have taken place in the past – even before the 70s. (*'All'origine del divario vi potrebbe essere un circolo vizioso tra arretratezza e senso di impotenza generato dalle tante esperienze storiche negative.'*)<sup>6</sup> So, the social conflicts amongst the Italians from the different parts were cemented by historic constraints. This includes the violent conflicts from enemies out-with Italy which resulted in the North having more cooperation than the South and the South being less so.<sup>7</sup> Another one of these includes the historic economic divide between the areas, which was a key issue in strengthening this sense of separation. The contrast between the turmoil of the South and the

<sup>4</sup> *'Io non Ho Paura'* – Ammaniti, Niccolo. (Einaudi, 2007) p117

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.unibo.it/it/ricerca/divario-tra-nord-e-sud-italia-nuove-risposte-a-una-vecchia-questione>  
'raccolge la sfida di spiegare perché, a 150 anni dall'Unificazione, il divario socio-economico tra Nord e Sud Italia persista...'

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.unibo.it/it/ricerca/divario-tra-nord-e-sud-italia-nuove-risposte-a-una-vecchia-questione>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.unibo.it/it/ricerca/divario-tra-nord-e-sud-italia-nuove-risposte-a-una-vecchia-questione>

industrial success of the North made a large impact on the country. People seem to be more divided as a cause of the difference in opportunities and experiences in these two parts.

However, the economic divide is not the only cause of the social conflict over the years, there are also cultural aspects which have contributed to the issue. In the novel, Ammaniti conveys the cultural differences between Michele and Filippo which originate from the background and lifestyle these characters have. These cultural aspects have been shaped by the lifestyles and wealth of their families and so it is an example of how the economic divide influenced how the people in the North and South lived. So, it could be said that the economic differences between the areas played a key part in shaping the cultures within the North and South. Therefore, the social conflict which came from behavioural differences is based on the contrast in wealth between the areas.

In conclusion, the economic divide between the North and South of Italy during the 1970s played a major role in creating social conflict amongst the people. This is evident in the series of child kidnappings by Southern criminals which demanded wealthy Northern people to pay ransoms and a lack of unity as a cause of this kind of crime, migration and jobs. In my opinion, I believe that the economic and wealth divide reinforced the sense of separation between the Italian people even further. Although there are cultural and behavioural differences between the people from the different areas, I believe these have perhaps been shaped by the economic conditions. So, the economic divide created social conflict amongst the people to a very significant extent.

Word Count: 1354 (excluding quotes)

### **Bibliography**

#### Italian Literature.

Novel:

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#### Secondary Source Article by University of Bologna

Available online:

<http://www.unibo.it/it/ricerca/divario-tra-nord-e-sud-italia-nuove-risposte-a-una-vecchia-questione>

## **Candidate B evidence**

**How were women treated in Sicily 1980?**

One may think women in Sicily in 1980 were treated with respect, love and care but it wasn't quite so.

This will be my interpretation of the book "Volevo I pantaloni" by Lara Cardella. This book was written in 1989 by Cardella when she was only 19 at the time. She wanted to illustrate how life was back then in Sicily. The book became in short time a bestseller and was translated into different languages from its original; Italian, it also got a movie adaptation. I will be looking at the main character and how her life informs us about the life in the past.

The book is about a girl, Anna, that everybody calls Annetta. She is a bit different from the other girls as she doesn't dream of a "Principe Azzurro" (prince charming) but instead, her dream is simply to wear trousers which symbolize for her freedom and independence. The book brings us on a journey where Annetta tries to achieve her big dream, as she tries she is called a "puttana" (bitch) because only bitches were wearing trousers and of course men. There, a "puttana" was not that one we all know about of, the one that sells her body. There a "puttana" is a girl that wants to be free from the man's hands, she wants to be independent. Annetta because she decides to take this step she suffers massive consequences, because of the stupid society's mentality.

At the start of the story Annetta tells us that girls are strictly controlled on what they wear e.g. the length of their skirts, the transparency of their shirts, if all the buttons are buttoned etc. They weren't also allowed to wear any sort of make-up. If the head teacher had noticed even a small bit of the make-up he would angrily shout and the girl would be in serious trouble as the parents are called. The girl coming with the father, instead of protecting her he would say "Ha fatto bene! La doveva ammazzare a questa puttana!" (He did the right thing! You should have killed this bitch), mothers would "tenere gli occhi bassi per la vergogna, per il disonore" (keep their eyes low for the embarrassment and the dishonour) as all people in the village whispers to each other on how shameful the family was. With this we can see that the mentality in the small village of Sicily is very awful. The fact that the parents call their daughter a "bitch" is a good example of how badly the women were treated at that time. Women were not respected as men could easily talk trash about them and if the women wanted to defend themselves they got criticized. Even the family didn't protect their own. Annetta was different, she didn't care to attract boys, she just wanted to be finally free, to do what she wanted and to be respected, which because of being a woman she doesn't deserve. Annetta decides to run away. She decides to go to the convent, to become a nun and wear finally trousers. Unfortunately she gets a nasty surprise. Nuns don't wear trousers, Annetta with disappointment has to come back home. As she gets back she needs to face the consequences: The belt of her father. Her mother interrupted, at this point we could say her mother was nice, protective but no... later in the story we can see the true face of these people. Annetta had a brother but "non lo consideravo mio fratello" (she didn't consider him as a brother) they didn't have a good relationship, they were indifferent to each other. Her brother had an easy life, he was untouchable and her father didn't use his hands on the brother. Girls back then were treated in an inferior way to boys. If a girl did something wrong she was strictly punished for that, especially from their family members. The mentality of the people was so undeveloped that girl family members were suffering but it seemed to be 'ok' and boys were the ones treated nicely and loved no matter what they did. Annetta started to be friends with Angelina "un idolo" (an idol) for the girls, she was called a "puttana" but she didn't care. She was organising a party where Annetta was invited. She met Nicola, a boy that was interested in her and soon they started to hang out and one day they kissed on a bench, her uncle saw that. Her father of course furiously beat her up and from that on she was considered to be a "puttana" from the family members and everyone else. She was closed inside, she couldn't go to school anymore, her parents made everyone believe

Annetta was dead as they wanted to save their honour and reputation. Her mother was crying every day and saying "mia figlia é morta" (my daughter is dead) because the mother fell into the state where she couldn't do anything Annetta "non potevo piu vivere con loro" (I couldn't live with them anymore) her father found a solution to bring his wife back alive; his daughter had to move. He came up with the solution of sending Annetta to her Aunt and Uncle.

Annetta loved her aunt but she was scared of the husband of the lovely aunt, her uncle touched her when she was little. Her uncle, back then when she was little touched her in places where kids shouldn't be touched. The words he said after something interrupted the act were "Dopo continuiamo" (We shall continue later) Annetta was scared, she told once this to her caring grandma who become really angry at the uncle but died a few days later, her mum was always blaming her for this death. Even though the parents of Annetta knew what the uncle has done, they never believed it or, they didn't want to believe. Even though they didn't care what Annetta said they still forced her to move. Parents in the 80's wanted to keep up the face more than they wanted their daughters to be happy. Often girls were molested and the parents didn't do anything about it as it would give a bad reputation to the family so instead, they would go and say to their daughters to forget the story.

Not only Annetta had a hard time in the 80's, her aunt was always badly treated. She was looked down the whole life from different people. The grandma of Annetta, her husband etc. She had to beg on the streets as her husband didn't work. At that time men were allowed to do everything and still not be looked down on. If women were doing something wrong? They lost all respect.

From what Annetta tells us in her story we can see how women and girls were treated a few years ago. They were definitely seen as being inferior, they belonged to their fathers and husbands. They didn't have the rights to do what they wanted to.

Things have changed, the mentality of Sicilian men appears to be more modern and girls can go out and enjoy themselves. They have all the rights men have and they can do what they want. Their opinion is now considered as well. They don't have to submit themselves to their husbands or any men anymore.

## **Candidate C evidence**



## Io Non Ho Paura

*“Tu sei un angelo”.*

*What features of Michele Amitrano’s personality enable us to agree?*

Michele Amitrano’s “secret discovery”<sup>1</sup> of the kidnapped Filippo Carducci, cruelly imprisoned in a hole in the yard of an old and dilapidated house ‘lost’ in the countryside,<sup>2</sup> marks what is at once both the unexpected and painfully abrupt end to childhood innocence, and a disturbing and sinister prelude to an altogether violent awakening to the darker side of the world of adults.<sup>3</sup> As the relationship between these two nine-year-old boys develops, it soon becomes the ‘barycentre’ of the dynamic of Michele’s life in the small and sparsely populated hamlet of Aqua Traverse.<sup>4</sup> In a sense it constitutes the beginning of the end of a young boy’s fanciful universe, created, for the most part, by the interplay of imagination and naivety. Yet it is too a touching examination of a profoundly tender concern of one adventurous and courageous child for one of his own age, whose very survival is in jeopardy and hangs interminably in the balance.

Niccolo Ammaniti’s novel, ‘Io Non Ho Paura’, is set in southern Italy (il Mezzogiorno).<sup>5</sup> The drama depicted takes place during the unremittingly ferocious and unbearable heat of the summer of 1978.<sup>6</sup>

Michele, the narrator, describes the heat of that “...maledetta estate del 1978...” in all its intensity: “Il calore entrava nelle pietre, sbriciolava la terra, bruciava le piante e uccideva le bestie, infuocava le case.” (p.6). As a consequence the adults remain indoors, “...gli

<sup>1</sup> Cfr., p.34, “Era mio. Era la mia scoperta segreta.”

<sup>2</sup> Cfr., p.20, “La cosa strana era che dentro quella conca nascosta erano cresciuti degli alberi...E una casa abbandonata...”

<sup>3</sup> Cfr., the irony in the description of Acqua Traverse, p.197, “Il cielo si era coperto di nuovo e Acqua Traverse se era avvolta da un coltre nera e spessa di tenebre.”

<sup>4</sup> Aqua Traverse is variously described. See pp.6, 35, 36 - where it is described as “...quel posto dimenticato da Dio e dagli uomini...” - 74, and 87, where Sergio, ‘il vecchio’, describes it as “...questo posto di merda.”

<sup>5</sup> Cfr., D.Sassoon, ‘Contemporary Italy. Economy, Society and Politics since 1945’ p.17 where the author describes the ‘regional dualism’ evidenced in the Italian context in the gap in prosperity between the industrial North and the agricultural South. Poverty can perhaps be regarded as the dark undertow of the drama depicted in the novel.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr., P.Ginsborg, ‘A History of Contemporary Italy. Society and Politics 1943-1988’, pp.379-388, where the author deals with the ‘Anni di Piombo’ (The Years of the Bullet), which provides an insight into the historical backdrop of the novel and particularly to the kidnapping by terrorist groups (e.g. Brigate Rosse) of industrialists, journalists, magistrates, and politicians (e.g. Aldo Moro in 1978). Filippo’s father, Giovanni Carducci, is described as an “industriale lombardo” (p.89).

adulti non uscivano di casa prima delle sei di sera...”, whilst the children, despite the heat, are ready to embrace the outdoors: “Solo noi ci avventuravamo nella campagna rovente e abbandonata.”(p.6). This countryside, in all its hues, shadings and tints, is the constant backdrop to the action described in the novel; and its textures are vividly painted by the author from the outset: “Ogni cosa era coperta di grano. Le colline, basse, si susseguivano come onde di un oceano dorato. Fino in fondo all’orizzonte grano, cielo, grilli, sole e caldo.” (p.5-6).

Michele, besides being the narrator, is also the principal character among the *dramatis personae*.<sup>7</sup> He is a supremely interesting focus for an analysis of the text – it is through his eyes that we see the narrative develop and unfold; through his young mind that we are introduced into the turmoil and the vagaries of the adult world into which he is ever more deeply, indeed inexorably, drawn. We might then pose the question, ‘Chi sei tu, Michele’? Is he, as Filippo affirms, an ‘angel’? What are the qualities of his character that might allow us to define him as ‘angelic’? In answer, a number of character traits may be cited that might provide us with an insight into the heart and soul of one who asserts, “Io Non Ho Paura”.

Michele evidences in his behaviour a sensitivity of conscience that no other character in the novel, either grown-up or peer, possesses to any similar degree. This can be detected in Michele’s relationship with his little sister Maria, for whom there is a certain particularity of care and concern, and although it is possible to pick-up on this solicitude throughout the novel,<sup>8</sup> it is placed to the fore even in opening lines which may well be regarded as emblematic.

Racing with the others in their small group of friends to the top of the hill, through that ‘oceano dorato’ of wheat, Maria falls and, besides breaking her spectacles (p.8), apparently hurts her ankle (p.9). Michele has already introduced his sister to us in endearing terms: “Mia sorella Maria aveva cinque anni e mi seguiva con l’ostinazione di un bastardino tirato fuori da un canile.” (p.6). However, despite the effect his stopping to help her will have on his ranking in the race; and although he does in all honesty (another character trait, e.g. see p.80) indicate that leaving her at home wasn’t an option - “Non dovevo portamela dietro, mamma me l’avrebbe fatta pagare cara” (p.5); and although he does express his frustration with her in no uncertain terms, “Maria, mi hai fatto perdere la gara! Te l’avevo detto di non venire, mannaggia a te...” (p.8), and later, upon absorbing the consequences that the broken spectacles may well have, “Le avrei mollato uno schiaffone.” (p.8); he does manifest a recognition of the expectations intrinsic to his mother’s will, “Sei o non sei il fratello maggiore? E non c’erano santi, mi toccava portarmela dietro.” (p.6).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, as displeased and disappointed as he is, and although anxious too at the prospect of Teschio exacting some terrible forfeit should he be last, “Speravo sola che il Teschio non mi facesse scontare una penitenza troppo dura.” (p.9), he did stop, turned about and went to her assistance, demonstrating, despite all the

<sup>7</sup> Cfr., p.7 for the group of friends.

<sup>8</sup> Especially in regard to his parents, and indubitably with the kidnapped Filippo Carducci.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr., p.8 “Devi stare attento a tua sorella, sei il fratello maggiore.”

boyish bravado, a tender care for her wellbeing: “Le ho slacciato la scarpa da ginnastica e l’ho sfilata con molta attenzione. Come avrebbe fatto un dottore.”(p.9).

This sensitivity, together with what might best be described as compassion, may also be noted in his readiness to spare Barbara the ignominy of Teschio’s preferred ‘penitenza’, and assume in her stead the role of the sacrificial lamb<sup>10</sup>: “C’era qualcosa di sporco, di...Non lo so. Di brutto, ecco. E mi dava fastidio che ci fosse mia sorella lí.”(p.24); “La voglio fare io.” (p.25).

It is a feature of his personality that extends to the depth of his affection for his parents, and is a reality in a number of episodes that point-up the profound bonds that exist between them: his description of his mother (p.58-59); the tenderness of her love for her children and they for her (pp.123-125); her somewhat ironic yet caring admonition, following upon her struggle with Felice<sup>11</sup> (an indication perhaps that she is not as wholehearted as her husband in the kidnapping enterprise; and she does later show signs of succumbing to the pressures it is causing, e.g. p.190): “Quando diventi grande te ne devi andare da qui e non ci devi tornare mai piú.” (p.155); Michele’s observation of his father during their conversation regarding Michele’s recent ‘absences’ (pp.107-110), “L’ho guardato. Sembrava piú vecchio, tra i capelli neri spuntava qualcuno bianco, le guance gli si erano scavate e sembrava che non dormiva da una settimana.” (p.108); and his feelings for his father that manifest themselves in tears, “L’ho abbracciato piú forte che potevo e mi veniva da piangere. Le lacrime mi scendevano e mi si stringeva la gola.”(p.109). There is in a subsequent conversation between father and son (pp.156-159) a certain irony: “Michele, ora ti parlo come a un uomo.”(p.158).

Michele’s induction into the hard realities of the adult universe, with all its monsters,<sup>12</sup> is in a sense being sealed with an oath: “Di’, giuro sulla tua testa che non ci torno piú.” (p.157). Michele’s integrity and honesty, rooted in his love and respect for his parents, is demonstrated in the readiness with which he attempts to resolve the perplexities arising from his ‘scoperta segreta’ – “In fondo a quel buco c’era un bambino” (p.32). This reality raises a fundamental question: “Ma che ci faceva là dentro?” (p.34), and “Ma se lo avevano nascosto lí ci doveva essere una ragione.” (p.53).<sup>13</sup> It is a burden<sup>14</sup>, engaging his fears and imagination,<sup>15</sup> which he wishes to share with his father, “Papa mi avrebbe spiegato tutto.” (p.53). However it proves to be a desire confounded at every turn: “Papà! Papà...Ho spinto la porta e mi sono precipitato dentro. Papà! Ti devo dire...Il resto mi si è spento tra le labbra.” (p.53); “Aspetta, ti devo dire una cosa...Ho implorato...Papà, è una cosa importante...” (p.54); and the ironic statement of intent, “E appena papà tornava gli raccontavo tutto. Come mi aveva insegnato. E lui avrebbe fatto qualcosa.” (p.80).

<sup>10</sup> Cfr., p.23.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr., pp.151-154, e.g. p.152, “Mamma non ha avuto nessuna pietà. Ha preso la padella dal lavello e ha colpito Felice in faccia.”

<sup>12</sup> Cfr., p.53 “Devi avere paura degli uomini, non dei mostri...”

<sup>13</sup> The fulness of an answer to this question is arrived at only gradually, and not without surprise: “Ce l’aveva messo lui il bambino nel buco...Felice.” (p.75); “Erano stati papà e gli altri a prendere il bambino a quella signora della televisione.” (p.90).

<sup>14</sup> Cfr., p.135, when Michele shares his secret with Salvatore: “Provavo una sensazione bellissima.”

<sup>15</sup> Cfr., p.52, “Forse era un mostro. Un lupo mannaro.”

It is, however, in his relationship with Filippo that we may appreciate the measure of Michele's character: embracing not only sensitivity and compassion, kindness and generosity, but also loyalty, courage, integrity, determination and resolve.

We see Michele disturbed by the boy's physical and mental state as the author explores the dehumanising nature of his imprisonment. Very much to the fore in this disturbing context is Michele's sensitivity of feeling, and his profound compassion for this pathetic and desperate figure in the hole: "Non aveva più niente di umano." (p.49); "...ha cominciato a bere...come un cane." (p.66); "Sembrava un piccolo fantasma straccione." (p. 76); "Era come una radio rotta che improvvisamente riprendeva a trasmettere. (p. 77); and the affecting cry by which the author presents the depths of the imprisoned Filippo's suffering, "Ha urlato, rauco, senza voce, stridulo come un' unghia sulla lavagna. Sono morto? Sono morto? Sono morto." (p. 79).

This compassion is evidenced too in the tender care and the acts of kindness which Michele extends to the young Filippo Carducci: "Ti ho portato da mangiare. La cacciota." (p.75); "C'era il pan di Spagna...Senza farmi vedere ne ho tagliato un' altra (fetta), l'ho avvolta nel tovagliolo e me la sono cacciata in tasca. Filippo sarebbe stato felice." (p.125). All this undertaken not without fears, anxiety, and repercussions.<sup>16</sup> Such solicitude is characteristic of Michele's commitment to Filippo who gradually assumes a particular place in his life: "Vado da Filippo...È un amico mio." (pp.196-197); "Mi dispiaceva di lasciarlo." (p.145); "Filippo. Papà aveva liberato Filippo. E lo aveva portato da me." (p.163); and Michele's visceral reaction upon finding the hole empty, "Dove sei? – ho urlato alla pioggia. Sono caduto in ginocchio. Ho immerso le dita nel fango e l'ho strizzato nelle mani." (p.183).

Particularly relevant in underscoring the nature and development of their relationship and providing us also with greater insight into the 'angelic' qualities of Michele's personality, are three sections in the book. The first, pp.110-116, in which Michele, attempting to tell Filippo that his mother had appeared on the news, appealing for his safe return, perceives the boy's emotional and psychological suffering as he makes the painful admission, "Mio papà ti ci ha messo qua." (p.112), and then caringly applies himself to the task of cleaning the boy's eyes, allowing him to see again, and upon parting makes a promise to return. Promises are intensely important to Michele.

The second, pp.137-145, in which Michele cannot comprehend Salvatore's apparent indifference to the content of his secret, "Come poteva non fregargli di un bambino incatenato in un buco?" (p.137); his pain and regret at having told Salvatore his secret, "Ero peggio di Giuda..." (p.137); his pride at having been true to his promise, "Sono venuto, hai visto? Hai visto che sono venuto? (p.138); Filippo's felt understanding and appreciation of Michele's identity, "Tu sei un angelo." (p.141), which grounds our

<sup>16</sup> Cfr., "E se arrivavo su e c'erano le streghe o un orco?" (p.47); "Ma scendere li dentro mi faceva paura." (p.49); there are too the threat of the friars (p57, p62), his father's anger (pp.53-54), and that cost which he could remember into adulthood: "Per tutta la vita, quando ho ascoltato la Traviata, mi sono rivisto con il sedere all'aria, sulle gambe di mia madre che, seduta composta sul divano, mi gonfiava di botte." (pp 81-82, here p.82).

question, “Chi sei tu Michele?”. Michele, with no mean effort, also helps Filippo out of his dark prison and into the daylight for a short time, and delights in his reaction, “Era contento, si vedeva da come sorrideva. Un venticello gli accarezzava la pelle e lui se lo godeva tutto.” (p.143). Light and darkness are very much part of the texture of Amitrani’s canvass throughout the novel, and it could be said that Michele is very much a bearer of light. Even without a torch he succeeds in overcoming the darkness and achieving that which is good.

The third, pp.197-215, constitutes the climax and denouement of the narrative. Reacting to his father’s declaration of intention, “Chi perde lo amazza. È tanto facile.” (p.196), Michele sets out into the night to find Filippo in the ‘gravina’. It is an undertaking not without substantial risk, for having just negotiated the threat of Melichetti’s pigs, Michele falls into the gravina, “Avevo superato il bordo della gravina precipitavo nel vuoto.” (p.204). He eventually realises his mission might be futile, “Filippo poteva essere dovunque.” (p.205), and his desperation increases, “Ho cominciato a correre avanti e indietro tra le rocce e gli olivi, a caso, mentre mi pigliava la disparazione.” (p.207). Always the good detective,<sup>17</sup> he observes the behaviour of an owl, and concludes that it is seeking entry to its nest – the clue to Filippo’s whereabouts, “Nascosta alla buona c’era un’ apertura nella roccia...Era lí!” (pp.208-209). The relief felt by Michele manifests itself in tears of joy: “Lo avevo trovato. Mi veniva da piangere. Mi sono asciugato gli occhi con le mani.” (p.209). The strength of his feelings for the unfortunate ‘prisoner’ to whose liberation he commits himself, are revealed, in all their intensity, in this section.

Michele’s courage and determination are seen to be tested further when, having managed to enter the small dark cave, he attempts to convince Filippo that they have to escape: “Dobbiamo andare, stanno arrivando.” (p.211). However, he realises, in a very touching way, that his friend has very little energy left to make his escape: “Non c’era piú un briciolo di energia in quel corpicino esausto.” (p.211), and his frustration and desperation again increase, “Non lo capisci che ti sparano se resti qua...Sono scoppiato a piangere. Ero scosso dai singhiozzi.” (p.211), yet he movingly continues to encourage Filippo to increase his efforts to break free of the hole: “Ci ho riprovato ancora e ancora...Alzati! Alzati! – ho urlato, e l’ho preso a pugni.” (p.211), and attempting to convince him to move, “Non sei ancora morto, lo capisci? Sono rimasto cosí, a piangere. Questo non è paradiso.” (p.211). Having succumbed to fatigue himself, Michele awakes with the realisation that danger is close by and again, and this time with greater success, urges Filippo to flee, “L’ho strattonato. Filippo! Filippo, stanno qua! Ti vogliono ammazzare. Alzati.” (p.212). Despite Filippo’s touching declaration “Senza te non vado” (p.213), Michele remains determined that he must escape and exerts himself in pushing Filippo up and out of the cave: “Michele! Michele, ce l’ho fatta! Vieni.” (p.213). Michele, now incapable of making his own escape from the cave due to the injury to his ankle, in complete selflessness implores and encourages a fearful Filippo, who does not wish to leave without him, to get away from the cave and hide: “No, tu non hai paura. Non hai paura. Non c’è niente da avere paura. Nasconditi.” (p.214). Having been convinced by his companion and friend, Filippo makes his escape, “Ha fatto sí con la testa ed è scomparso.” (p.214).

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. Michele’s interest in the saucepan: pp.65, 66, 68.

The culmination of the narrative is at once both disturbing and moving. Michele's father, who has lost "il tocco del soldato" has arrived to kill Filippo. Michele attempts to alert his father to his presence, but is shot. The scene is one of light and dark, the heavy sombre sounds of police helicopters, and Michele's flitting in and out of consciousness, and caring still, in these moments, for his father; whom he knows only too well has been very much a main player in the kidnapping of Filippo: "Papà, stanno arrivando. Scappa. Scappa." (p.215). Michele's father remorsefully declares, as the police close in, that he did not recognise his son as he fired the gun, an irony indeed at the novels end, just as the darkness again closes in on Michele; a darkness which appears to leave the father<sup>18</sup> and son separated as if torn asunder: "E c'era papà. E c'ero io." (p.216).

The portrayal of the young Michele Amitrano in this exciting narrative, filled with adventure and suspense, enables us to evaluate and appreciate the many qualities that constitute his character, and to conclude that, having looked him in the face,<sup>19</sup> - and thus acquired a penetrating insight into his heart - Filippo's appreciation of him is one with which we can readily, and wholly, and unhesitatingly, agree: "Tu sei un angelo."

Word count: 1797 (excluding title, bibliography, and footnotes).

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<sup>18</sup> Cfr., p.90 where Michele asserts, "Papà era l'uomo nero."

<sup>19</sup> Cfr., p.49, "Dovevo vedergli la faccia. La faccia è la cosa più importante. Dalla faccia si capisce tutto."

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## **Candidate D Evidence**



### **To what extent is Ammaniti's portrayal of women in 'Io Non Ho Paura' a true reflection of women's role in 1970's Italy?**

'Io Non Ho Paura' is a novel that follows the story of a boy who one day finds another boy named Filippo in a hole in the ground; he has been kidnapped by the Acqua Traversa community in the South of Italy. The novel explores the differences between the North and South of Italy at that time; the economic divide, the social conflict and the role of women in society. I have chosen to look further into the role of women in Italy in the 1970's.

Ammaniti explores the role of women principally through the character of Teresa, Michele's mum, as she is one of the few female figures in the novel. Whenever Ammaniti focuses the narrative on Teresa, who the readers see through Michele's eyes, she is primarily described as a housewife - always cooking, cleaning and looking after the house: *'Lei stava sempre in piedi. A cucinare. A lavorare. A stirare.'*<sup>1</sup>

Ammaniti does however suggest that this role of housewife was not simply confined to those women who like Teresa, came from economically deprived backgrounds, but also to women like Salvatore's mum, who enjoyed a much more privileged life: *'Passava la vita in cucina...tra vapori e odori di ragu...tutto doveva essere in ordine per quando rientrava l'avvocato Scardaccione dalla città.'*<sup>2</sup> As seen in *Io Non Ho Paura* women simply did not have jobs outside the confines of their house.

Personally, I found this to be a surprising portrayal of women due to the fact that a brutal economic crisis hit Italy during the 70's. It shows how strong people's views were in 1970's Italy as even in a desperate situation when families needed as much money as they could get, women still didn't work.

In order to better understand the role of women as portrayed by Ammaniti, it is also important to look at women's education around this time, as education and work prospects are closely connected. This is an aspect that Ammaniti does not discuss in his narrative but through further research it can

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<sup>1</sup> *Io Non Ho Paura*, Niccolò Ammaniti, page 58

<sup>2</sup> *Io Non Ho Paura*, Niccolò Ammaniti, page 138,139

be seen that in 1950, 7% of girls aged between 14 and 17 went to school, while 12% of boys did. In 1998-99, 84% of girls and 81% of boys went to school<sup>3</sup>. Although this is a huge increase for both boys and girls, it is possible to see that the number of girls who attended school increased to a higher percentage than boys in the years surrounding the 70's. More and more women began to get jobs outside of the home as a result of this however in 1999 there was still only 35.3% of women working outside of the home<sup>4</sup> and this figure would have been even less in the 1970's. Mothers were not attractive to employers, they preferred to take on men or childless women who were unlikely to take time off work, for example for maternity leave.<sup>5</sup> This shows that although education did improve drastically for women in Italy, most women still only obtained jobs within the home due to not receiving equal opportunities because of the way that they were viewed at that time. This was as a result of sexist views of people in Italy which demonstrates that not only was there little development in terms of employment and work opportunities for women but there was also no social development.

Ammaniti does not limit his portrayal of women to that of housewives. He uses the characters of Teresa and Barbara to convey an image of women as sex symbols and sexual objects, degraded by men just because of their sexuality. Even Michele, a nine year old boy, who is still innocent and unaware of the constraints imposed on women by society, picks up on the way men look at his mother. *'Quando andavamo al mercato di Lucignano vedevo come gli uomini le appiccicavano gli occhi addosso.....quelle occhiate voraci le scivolavano addosso. Quelle sbirciate nella V del vestito....'*<sup>6</sup> As far as Barbara, a young girl in Michele's 'gang', is concerned, she is ostracised from the group of children for being a girl, and when she is allowed to take part in their games she is humiliated and forced to expose herself: *'Hai perso. Ora ti abbassi I pantaloni. così impari a fare la stronza.'*<sup>7</sup> Ammaniti clearly uses these two characters to make the reader aware of the little respect women received from their male counterparts and to highlight the disparity between the sexes at that time. Upon further investigation it can be seen that this particular portrayal of women in 'Io Non Ho Paura' is a very true reflection of the way women were viewed in the 1970's. *'(Le donne) vivono ancora situazioni familiari tradizionali che riproducono quelle vissute con il padre e la madre, non riescono a vivere pienamente la propria sessualità, forse neppure a comprenderla.'*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup><http://family.jrank.org/pages/979/Italy-Education-Gender-Roles.html>

<sup>4</sup><http://family.jrank.org/pages/979/Italy-Education-Gender-Roles.html>

<sup>5</sup><http://family.jrank.org/pages/979/Italy-Education-Gender-Roles.html>

<sup>6</sup> Io Non Ho Paura, Niccolò Ammaniti, page 58

<sup>7</sup> Io Non Ho Paura, Niccolò Ammaniti, page 24

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lastoriasiamonoi.rai.it/puntate/storia-del-movimento-femminista-in-italia/738/default.aspx>

Women were seen as sex objects to men. They did not feel valued but instead as though they were just something that could be used. They didn't have a say over the way in which men treated them and this led to women being mistreated and taken advantage of. According to the journalist Liliana Madeo *'l'italia 'era ancora un paese molto sessuofobo, molto discriminatorio fra uomo e donna?'. Insomma, sembra proprio che in questa società le donne rimangano il Secondo sesso.*<sup>9</sup> Women were accepting of this as they had always been viewed in this way of being the 'second sex', as though they had much less value and worth than men which therefore again suggests why most women just stayed at home while the men went out to provide for the family economically. Around the 70's women were identified with their mothers and were not entitled to have their own sexuality and their own pleasure.<sup>10</sup> They were never given the chance to express and to discover their own sexuality hence why they were forced to feel worthless and as though they were objects to be used by men. *'Perché essere una donna fra donne non ha valore nella società in cui viviamo; una donna ha valore solo quando si relaziona a un uomo, come sorella di, come madre di, come compagna di, come moglie di.'*<sup>11</sup>

Another role of women in Italy at this time was to educate their children. They took on the parental role of disciplining their children and of protecting them whilst the husband was the money maker. This gender gap becomes very obvious through the novel and is represented by Teresa and Pino. Pino goes to work in the North whilst Teresa stays at home taking care of the children every day. It is clear that the father makes all the decisions in the house without consulting anyone else, for example, deciding to kidnap Filippo. Throughout the novel you can see that Teresa does not agree with Pino in this decision yet she feels as though she can't say anything and is unable to stand up for herself. She is very quiet and doesn't say much in the house unless it is to discipline the children.

During the 1970's Italy was a much divided country between the North and South economically, socially and culturally. However one thing that can be seen clearly is the difference in how quickly the two halves become more modernised and begin to develop. The North moves at a much quicker rate along with the rest of Europe while the South appears unchanged in many ways such as still

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lastoriasiamonoi.rai.it/puntate/storia-del-movimento-femminista-in-italia/738/default.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.lastoriasiamonoi.rai.it/puntate/storia-del-movimento-femminista-in-italia/738/default.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.lastoriasiamonoi.rai.it/puntate/storia-del-movimento-femminista-in-italia/738/default.aspx>

being very sexist and old fashioned in its views. In the North of Italy 63.1% of mothers of young children are working while in the South the figure is only 31%, with 53.1% of mothers as housewives.<sup>12</sup> These are today's figures yet they reflect the development of 1970's Italy and how both parts of Italy moved at a different pace during this period.

To conclude, I think that Ammaniti's portrayal of women in 'Io Non Ho Paura' is a true reflection of women in 1970's Italy. Women were seen as inferior in the workplace and in decision making and were expected to take care of the family and home. Ammaniti represents this through the characters of Barbara, Salvatore's mum and Teresa as each of them has a different role to play throughout the novel. From further research however, I believe that towards the end of the 70's, Italy, and more specifically the North of Italy, began to develop into a more equal society where women were given more opportunities and were respected much more.

**1,440 words (excluding quotes)**

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<sup>12</sup> <http://family.jrank.org/pages/979/Italy-Education-Gender-Roles.html>

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Source Type	Source
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