

Editorial

This issue of *From the European South* places language, literature, and the humanities at the centre of contemporary affairs and intervenes in the debate about how to produce new forms of understanding, conviviality and citizenship in a world ravaged by poverty, discrimination, racism, the (re)emergence of populism, and environmental dead ends.

It opens with three contributions devoted to the question of migration and refugees, all discussing ways in which European political and cultural institutions react to the predicament of migrants, and ways in which the lenses of the humanities may contribute to reading reality differently, in search of spaces of understanding and survival.

Homi K. Bhabha's offers a reflection on the right to move and the need to open horizons of hope in the context of the Mediterranean refugee crisis. He evokes conceptual and theoretical problems linked to the anguish and despair of migration, found in places such as the rubbish dumps of Zarsis in Tunisia. Bhabha focuses on examples of tropic language used to represent the loss of human rights and status of the Zarsis refugees: figures of speech that turn statelessness from a legal, political condition into an existential and ethical imperative. He argues that the language of tropes plays a heuristic role in diagnosing "black holes" or "blind spots" in political and legal discourses concerning the rights of migrants and, through his analysis, he highlights how a humanistic philology and phenomenology of the migration crisis may help us tackle loss, fear, risk, and vulnerability. Some of these inputs are debated also in Bhabha's conversation with MA and PhD students of the University of Padua, reported in the interview section.

From within the same scenario, Roger Bromley shifts the attention onto immigration and refugees as the main target in the contemporary Euro-American Far Right political narrative about the ethnic 'invasion' threatening Europe, which is gaining currency in populist politics. In attempting to locate the sources of this discourse in the concept of racialisation, Bromley develops an inspired decolonial analysis, supported by an exploration of two texts (literary and cinematic), which have contributed to a Global South counter-narrative from the perspective of people on the move, blocked at the southern borders of Europe.

Connected to this, from a transnational and translational perspective, the third article deals with the potential of translation practice and theory, and reports the interesting experience of a literary seminar held at the University of Turin. Pietro Deandrea and his students examined and translated six poems centred on the question of refugees. This work offered them a chance

to reflect on issues such as the reversing of one's perspectives and the adoption of the Other's vision; the spatial constraints of diasporas and migration policies; the questioning of stereotypical dichotomies between different cultures. At the same time, a series of theoretical reflections around translation emphasised the privileged role of literature for an ethical approach to alterity.

FES 3 then goes on to include a number of critical essays about literary texts dealing with local and global contexts. Four contributions centre around the Italian language, literature, and art from a postcolonial and 'southern' viewpoint. In her reading of Sardinian writer Grazia Deledda's novels, Maria Valeria Dominioni reviews the history of the Italian South, in both its meanings of the South of Italy and Italy as European South. She discusses how Deledda, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1926, tried to emancipate her writing first from the Italian colonial narrative and then from the patriarchal one. The novel *Canne al vento* (1913), presenting the recomposition of a Sardinian matriarchal community after the invasion of a stranger, seems to speak of a redemption from 'double colonization', while warning against the violent and sacrificial nature of any emancipation. This reading responds proactively to the *postcolonialitalia* project from which *FES* stems, and dialogues well with Roberto Derobertis' insightful review of *Riscrivere la nazione. La letteratura italiana postcoloniale* (2018). In the book, Caterina Romeo sees postcolonial Italian literature as a reviving event in the country's contemporary culture, both as a site where non-white and foreign-origin or second-generation Italians can make their voices heard, and as a tool of desirable transformation at the heart of Italian identity and citizenship, which still excludes people who were born to foreign parents on Italian soil. Postcolonial Italian literature of the last thirty years must be considered, Romeo maintains, as a resistant counternarrative to mainstream 'Italianness'. It should be noticed, however, that reading Italian literature backwards, as in the case of Deledda, will also contribute to a revision of the national archives of the 20th century.

Fiction and the Italian language are the focus of Marco Medugno's analysis of Somali writer Nuruddin Farah's *Past Imperfect* trilogy (2005-2011). In particular, Medugno proposes a new assessment of the role and use of Italian in the novel *Links*, questioning the dichotomy between colonial and local language, and challenging the concepts of transnational and diasporic. Farah's use of Italian is clearly related to the development of the themes of his fiction, as they have shifted and broadened in scope from the early portrayal of the decolonising period to the latest representation of a more global and neocolonial environment.

The Horn of Africa, in this case Ethiopia, and its (post)colonial legacy return in a conversation between Gianpaolo Chiriaco and Gabriella Ghermandi, the Ethiopian-born storyteller, novelist and vocalist based in Bologna, during a visit to the 2015 'postcolonial' Venice Biennale, curated by Okwui Enwezor. Their day-long exchange formed a creative space/time during which they juggled several issues: Ethiopian history and its connection with Italy; the functions and values of traditional art and music; the business of world music;

Ethiopian diaspora and Italian cultural identities; stereotypical representations of Africa; the role and the image of women in contemporary Africa. What emerges is an engaging reflection on the reasons, limits and motivations of singing and music-making, where the works of art symbolically represent the backdrop of an investigation into the practices and the life of a diasporic performer. On a similar but more academic note, Maria Festa's interview with Caryl Phillips – one of the most thought-provoking creative voices of contemporary Anglophone literature – was originally conceived as a conversation on the novel *The Nature of Blood* (1997), but unexpectedly broadened to take on wider issues such as the author's stance on intertextuality, character formation, and his perception of critical work.

In-depth readings of Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) and of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* (2013) widen further the 'global' perspective of this issue, to include an Indian and a Nigerian/diasporic position. In Roy's novel, argues Angelo Monaco, tropes of vulnerability affect individuals and environments alike, promoting not only a poetics of loss but also a radical critique of such social questions as anti-globalisation, environmentalism, anti-nuclear campaigns and land rights in Kashmir. Monaco explores the juxtaposition of Bharati fantasy and historical realism in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, and investigates how a hybrid narrative format manages to convey a complex plot of contemporary India, where gender questions, caste discriminations, wounded landscapes and religious conflicts animate a tale of decay and hope.

As a postcolonial coming-of-age story, Adichie's *Americanah* rewrites the stereotypical plots of western romance and Bildungsroman from the perspective of two Nigerian characters, simultaneously deconstructing the Eurocentric patriarchal literary canon. Through the tension of adaptation and resistance to white norms and white privilege, racism, sexism, and classism in British and American societies, Adichie explores her young protagonists' strategies to overcome suffering. Isabella Villanova adopts approaches to gender, decolonization, globalization, and Afropolitanism to analyse their stories, with a special focus on the importance of Nigeria for the writer and her characters, within the global South/global North entanglement.

"About race and visibility", the review essay by Lisa Marchi that closes this issue, connects to many of the reflections of the preceding contributions through an analysis of *A fior di pelle. Bianchezza, nerezza, visibilità* (2017), edited by Elisa Bordin and Stefano Bosco. The collection explores the intersection between critical race studies and visual studies, by following an interdisciplinary and g/local approach. It investigates the symbolic import of Black icons such as Barack Obama, Django Freeman, and Saartjie Baartman; it considers the historical construction of Blackness and its appropriation through performance by, among others, contemporary rappers; and it interrogates the construction of whiteness in Italy during the post-war period with a specific focus on TV advertisements and movies.

All of the articles, interviews, and reviews collected here testify to the active commitment

of the humanities in the face of widening social, political, economic instability and also (though less frequently, as Amitav Ghosh argues in *The Great Derangement*) environmental catastrophes, and promote a culture of debate and dissension against emerging paradigms centred on intolerance, injustice, and violence. Back in the 1960s, in his essays on “language, literature and the inhuman”, George Steiner called for the urgent birth of a “humane literacy” (*Language and Silence*, 1967): *FES 3* is proof that what we may call “humane humanities” are alive and well. A.O.