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Introduction to Volume 9, Issue 1: Italia senza frontiere/Borderless Italy

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Borders, of every form, exist in relation to us. If we were not present to perceive them—and in doing so, produce them—then borders would not exist at all. Yet in the twenty-first century, borders seem to have acquired an assertive existence, their limits policed more forcefully than ever. One need only skim the news headlines to recognize that borders are elements to be patrolled and protected, and that politicians and powerbrokers will fight relentlessly over their control. In other words, as Nicholas De Genova writes, "Borders themselves have only acquired their contemporary significance and materiality as the effect of histories of reactive tactics on the part of state powers."[1] Thus, borders today fortify state power and represent critical loci where national security regimes arise.

At the same time, the hardening of borders that has accompanied these security regimes pits them against the liquidity and flows said to characterize our globalized age. For an élite class, the ideals of mobility, flexibility, and borderlessness have become a matter of identity; they are embraced and celebrated for their emancipatory potentials from the mundaneness of everyday life.[2] Self-reflexively, the title of this volume—*Italia senza frontiere /* Borderless Italy—echoes the positionality of its co-editors who are among the most mobile class (academics) of our times. Mobiles like us enjoy the freedom of movement—of people, goods, and ideas—and experience life on the move as largely positive; for instance, with the ability to work remotely or to have unfettered access to consumer culture online. For a vastly larger underclass of people, however, life on the move has been debilitating, if not devastating, especially for those who have been classified as "illegal" by those selfsame security regimes. They have little recourse to the freedoms purportedly accorded by mobility, no matter how much sympathy they may receive from those who seek to highlight their subaltern status and extend the Foucauldian critique of modernity to regimes of mobility (as do many of the authors in this volume).[3]

Borderlessness, too, has taken on a moral value. To be "without borders" has become linked to humanitarian intervention and the business of saving lives. The organization *Médecins Sans Frontières* (Doctors Without Borders) is perhaps the most famous example of what we might call an ethics of borderlessness. Yet there are many others—from Architects without Borders to Reporters without Borders—that link borderlessness with humanitarianism and espouse intervention as a moral obligation.[4] According to Didier Fassin, humanitarian organizations

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[1] Nicholas De Genova, "Introduction," in *The "Borders" of Europe: Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*, edited by Nicholas De Genova (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 24.

[2] Anthony Elliott and John Urry, *Mobile Lives* (London: Routledge, 2010), 4-9. On liquidity and globalization, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000) and *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2006).

[3] As of April 2020, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) calculated more than 70 million displaced people were on the move in the world, a number that continues to grow each month. https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/figures-at-a-glance.html (accessed April 14, 2020).

[4] A cursory web search revealed the following humanitarian organizations "without borders": acupuncturists, architects, artists, bankers, chemists, coders, dentists, doctors, ecologists, engineers, healers, homeopaths, lawyers, libraries, managers, naturopaths, nursing students, reporters, pharmacists, professors, salmon, scientists, teachers, translators, veterinarians, and world chefs.

operate from a premise of moral authority, yet they run the danger of maintaining a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight.[5] To be without borders, then, represents a transcendence of state power, on the one hand, and on the other, a system of morality entangled in and defined by elites that implicitly accept the limitations on the mobility of millions of others imposed by post(neo)colonial networks of state power.

How, then, do we study these contradistinctive understandings of borders and borderlessness? What critical differences exist between borderlessness and being "without borders"? How have the political and moral values of borders changed over time? How do we reconcile our own positions as mobile elites with our scholarly work?

Borders and borderlessness give rise to variegated *border imaginaries*, which we define as culturally and politically constructed expressions of inclusion and exclusion. Border imaginaries delineate who belongs to a community and who gets left out, as well as every subjective position in between. Border imaginaries are also expressed in myriad ways. Literature, for example, is one medium that simultaneously manifests these imaginaries and interrogates their effects on the human condition, as in the works of authors like Igiaba Scego (see the first chapter of her novel, *La mia casa è dove sono* (Home is Where I Am), translated by Jon Snyder and Megan Williamson in this volume) and Carla Macoggi (see Smythe in this volume). In another example, oral history documents the memories of belonging that localize specific border imaginaries, such as that of the Anglo-Italian community in Kingston Upon Hull (see Haworth and Rorato in this volume). Or, as a third example, rhetoric reveals how the multivalence of words, like *passeur* (smuggler) or *sovranismo* (sovereigntism) (see Di Blasio and Agnew, respectively, in this volume), complicate notions of inclusion and exclusion.

Thus, border imaginaries range, inter alia, from the geographic to the political, the linguistic to the literary, the generic to the symbolic, yet rarely do they exist in isolation. To explore the many ways that they interact with one another brings us close to the political and cultural formations that shape our contemporary moment. Scholarship positioned through connections with borders, edges, and intermittences also recognizes culture as dynamic and unstable and thus helps to illuminate that which is often less visible or otherwise undervalued (see Muscio or Fognani, both in this volume). Put another way, by studying those "fractures and fissures we find new roadmaps for understanding how cultural identity is formed, embattled, negotiated, and emerges within and against political regimes of value."[6] Such an approach permits us to push against the grain of conventional readings of histories, identity, and narrative (see Meo in this volume).

One would be hard pressed to find a more compelling site to study the ever-shifting constellations of border imaginaries than Italy, a space that both in abstraction and in a very real sense, has long been understood as being shaped by dynamic affiliations—political, geographic, and otherwise. The founding refrain of Italian national history, "*l'Italia è fatta; non ci resta che*

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[5] One example of this solidarity is the uneasy relationship between the military forces that often guard aid workers on the frontlines, comprising what Didier Fassin names the "military-humanitarian nexus." Didier Fassin, "Heart of Humaneness: The Moral Economy of Humanitarian Intervention," in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Intervention*, edited by Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 273-74 and 284-86.

[6] Laura E. Ruberto, "Cultural Studies and the Intermittence of Ethnicity in Italian Diaspora Studies," *RSA Journal (Rivista di Studi Americani)*, 30 (2019): 116-20, here 119. For more on the notion of "edges" see, by the same author, "*Along the Edges of Ethnicity: An Overview of Italian Americans in Media,*" in *La culture italo-américaine à l'écran – Cinéma et series,* edited by Julie Assouly and Kevin Dwyer (Arras Cedex, France: Artois Presses Université, forthcoming 2020).

fare gli italiani" turned, and continues to turn, the very theory of nation-building on its head: the constitutive subject of the nation (a linguistic and cultural community) is first posited as being absent and then proposed as an objective that must be attained through a retroactive, and yet obligatory (*bisogna*), act of legitimation. One might, therefore, interpret the conceit as simultaneously challenging and reinforcing the *doxa* that each nation-state is the expression of an "imagined community" in search of a state to solidify its borders.[7] The last European nation to be created in the second half of the nineteenth century reversed the national order of things by being born as a state before it ever existed as an imagined community. To further underscore the point, Italy even began the process of colonial expansion overseas before its nation-making process was complete. No wonder the question of its borders has been fraught with anxieties from the beginning, hence its forced separation from the Mediterranean space of its secular history and, conversely, the emotional appeal of *irredentismo* (irredentism). "Italian" history has proven this point time and again: whether in territorial exchanges after the fallout of wars, in the loss of millions of citizens to emigration, in the development of a multiracial colonial empire, in the fashioning of a destination for mass tourism, or in presenting the principal port of entry into Europe for thousands of migrants crossing into Italian geo-political spaces by air, sea, or land. The everyday lives of individuals and the expressive culture and creative productions that have come from them has pushed notions of Italian imaginaries even further, narrativizing and illustrating a multiplicity and breadth of experiences.

In this issue of *California Italian Studies* dedicated to *Italia senza frontiere*/Borderless Italy, we interrogate the border imaginaries that challenge our understandings of Italy, Italianness, and Italians. The very word *frontiera* in Italian implies the double edge of the *lines*, both borderline-edge (*la frontiera*) and edgy imaginary space (*una nuova frontiera si apre*). The essays in this issue juxtapose subjective edges against geographical, "national," and disciplinary frontiers, and together, call into question commonplace notions about Italy's territorial, linguistic, cultural, political, religious, racial, and social unity. What is at stake in this issue is a re-orientation of Italian Studies as a discipline to account for the dynamics intrinsic to Italy's border imaginaries. As co-editors of this volume we position ourselves as an intermediary voice counterbalancing our individual scholarly positions that address to different degrees, and in sometimes competing ways, themes of nationalism, modernism, colonialism, and migration. With such an approach we hope to support and showcase the many fields that have contributed to an integrated model for understanding and practicing transnational Italian Studies.

The disciplinary integration that this issue underscores is part of a larger movement to come to terms with Italy's place in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.[8] This direction in Italian Studies has developed from its connections to a number of other fields—

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[7] Stephanie Malia Hom, "On the Origins of Making Italy: Massimo D'Azeglio and '*Fatta l'Italia bisogna fare gli Italiani*,'" *Italian Culture* 31, no. 1 (2013): 1-16.

[8] Examples of such scholarship, which are by no means exhaustive, include: Emma Bond, "Toward a Trans-National Turn in Italian Studies?," *Italian Studies* 69, no. 3 (2014): 415-24; Teresa Fiore, *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Re-Mapping Italy's Emigration, Immigration, and (Post-)Colonialism* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017); Anthony Tamburri, *Un biculturalismo negato la letteratura "italiana" negli Stati Uniti* (Florence, Italy: Franco Cesati Editore, 2018); Stephanie Malia Hom, *Empire's Mobius Strip: Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019); articles by Derek Duncan, Giulia Grechi, and Viviana Gravano that are found in "Beyond Borders: Transnational Italy," *Italian Studies* 74, no. 4 (October 24, 2019) https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00751634.2019.1669342 (accessed April 15, 2020); and the edited volume, *Transnational Italian Studies*, edited by Charles Burdett, Loredana Polezzi, and Marco Santello (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

notably for our purposes here Italian American Studies, Italian Diaspora Studies, and Italian Postcolonial Studies—that have engaged with the concept of Italian transnationalism over the last thirty years, even as those fields have been skeptical at times of the usefulness of the concept. Yet given their default focus on movement and migration, with its de-territorialized, de-centralized realities, transnationalism has offered a way to highlight Italian mobility while perhaps (over-)emphasizing the importance of the nation-state in shaping that mobility.[9] We can likewise trace the development of the contemporary transnational Italian Studies approach to earlier scholarship that highlighted the relationship between Italian emigration and immigration to Italy and/or Italian colonialism.[10] To put a finer point on it, Donna Gabaccia reminds us: "the temporal framing of … scholarship shapes what kind of knowledge and what kind of understanding scholarship can produce about the past."[11]

These interdisciplinary premises have informed both our selection of articles and how we organized them in this issue. We were careful to include a diverse range of scholars in the sense of their disciplinary positioning as well as the stages of their academic careers, recognizing that such multiplicity of voices is central to our perspective on understanding borderless Italy. We organized this issue along three strands—*geography*, *genre*, *politics*—that highlight what we have identified as the salient border imaginaries represented by the articles, with the understanding that these groupings are, by intent, artificial. We expect the disciplinary and subjective borders between the articles to be porous so that they can be read with an eye to crosspollinating one another.

Border Imaginaries: Geography

In terms of border imaginaries that center on *geography*, Italy is the locus of many intersecting physical and symbolic geographies. One of the most important is that of the Mediterranean Sea,

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[9] For ground-breaking approaches to the study of Italian migration vis-à-vis transnationalism, see, for instance, much of historian Donna R. Gabaccia's work, including *Italy's Many Diasporas* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), and her co-edited collections, Donna R. Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, eds*., Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser M. Ottanelli, eds., *Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2005). For a cultural studies slant, see Pasquale Verdicchio, *Bound by Distance: Rethinking Nationalism through the Italian Diaspora.* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson Press, 1997). For recent work reflecting on Italian transnationalism as an approach within Italian American and Italian Diaspora studies, see, for instance Laura E. Ruberto, *Gramsci, Migration, and the Representation of Women's Work in Italy and the U.S.* (Lanham, MA: Lexington Books/Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2007); Anthony Julian Tamburri and Fred L. Gardaphe's *Transcending Borders, Bridging Gaps: Italian Americana, Diasporic Studies, and the University Curriculum,* Studies in Italian Americana, #10 (New York City: John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, 2015); or, Matteo Pretelli, ed., *Forum: New Perspectives on Italian American Diaspora Studies*, Special Issue of *Rivista di Studi Americani* (Fall 2019).

[10] Colonialism has been at the center of Italian-language scholarship for decades with pioneering works by Angelo Del Boca, Giorgio Rochat, and Nicola Labanca, which laid the groundwork for scholarship in English, including but not limited to: Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Mia Fuller, eds., *Italian Colonialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Graziella Parati, *Migration Italy: The Art of Talking Back in a Destination Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Jacqueline Andall and Derek Duncan, eds., *National Belongings: Hybridity in Italian Colonial and Postcolonial Cultures* (Oxford, UK: Peter Lang, 2010); Caterina Romeo and Cristina Lombardi-Diop, *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Ruth Ben-Ghiat and Stephanie Malia Hom, eds., *Italian Mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2016).

[11] Donna R. Gabaccia, "Afterward," in *New Italian Migrations to the United States: Volume 1: Politics and History since 1945*, edited by Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 187.

which borders the Italian peninsula on three sides. The sea destabilizes seemingly fixed territorial boundaries so much so that it was once known as a *mare di paura* (sea of fear) owing to the fears of banditry and kidnapping of those living along its vulnerable coastlines.[12] The Mediterranean, too, is a geographic expanse to be both claimed and transited by Italians. For example, the designation of the Mediterranean as *mare nostrum* (our sea) expresses this intent of possession as does the nickname of Libya as *la quarta sponda* (fourth shore) during the era of Italian colonization (1911-1943). Today the Mediterranean represents a sea of fear for a new underclass of people—migrants—hundreds of thousands of whom risk the deadly crossing from North Africa to Lampedusa to seek refuge in Italy and Europe. It is the domain where the tactics of bordering, the exercise of state power, and the military-humanitarian nexus all play out in real time.[13]

The three opening articles of our issue address configurations of Italianness in three unusual sites in the colonial Mediterranean, namely, the non-Italian colonies of Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt. With his "The Making of Italians in Tunisia: A Biopolitical Colonial Project (1881-1911)," Gabriele Montalbano explores Italian immigration in Tunisia, reconnecting his study with an article published by Mark Choate in the very first issue of this journal (2010), and Lucia Re's pathbreaking discussion of race in the construction of Italian identity in that same issue.[14] Montalbano shows that the discourse on the "Mediterranean race" initiated by Giuseppe Sergi in the 1890s was used by Italian notables to characterize the Sicilian workforce that emigrated to Tunisia as a "colonizing race." Sicilian emigrants to Tunisia, in other words, overcame their atavistic tendencies "by" working in a colonial context. Border crossing, in this case, had been the activating ingredient for the coalescence of a nationalist conception of Italian identity based on the intertwining of the categories of race, nation, and class.

Similarly, in the autobiographical writings of Anna Messina, analyzed by Arianna Fognani in her article, "(R)esistenze in conflitto nella narrativa di Anna Messina e Fausta Cialente ambientata ad Alessandria d'Egitto," we encounter the biopolitical paradigm of fascist-Italian identity as developed in *resistenza* (resistance) to the quintessential *città di frontiera* (border town) of Alexandria, Egypt. Rooting her analysis in Franco Cassano's definition of *frontiera* (border, frontier) as "un diaframma che 'separa e unisce' continenti, persone e civiltà" ("a diaphragm that 'separates and unites' continents, people, and civilizations"), Fognani shows how Messina's characters exemplify a vision of motherland rooted in the fear of contagion.[15] By contrast, Fognani singles out Fausta Cialente's *Ballata levantina* (1961) as depicting the fragmentation of the Italian community in interwar Alexandria, which, through a plurality of

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[12] Giuseppe Bonaffini, *Un mare di paura: Il Mediterraneo in età moderna* (Caltanissetta, Italy: S. Sciascia Editore, 1997). See also Claudio Fogu and Lucia Re, "Italy in the Mediterranean Today: A New Critical Topography," *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2010). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6dk918sn (accessed April 14, 2020).

[13] On the deadly Mediterranean crossing, see Maurizio Albahari, *Crimes of Peace: Mediterranean Migrations at the World's Deadliest Border* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Ruben Andersson, "Rescued and Caught: The Humanitarian-Security Nexus at Europe's Frontiers," in *The "Borders" of Europe: Autonomy of Migration, Tactics of Bordering*, edited by Nicholas De Genova (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 2017), 64-94; Mayanthi Fernando and Cristiana Giordano, "Refugees and the Crisis of Europe," Hot Spots, *Cultural Anthropology* (June 28, 2016). https://culanth.org/fieldsights/introduction-refugees-and-the-crisis-of-europe (accessed April 14, 2020).

[14] Mark I. Choate, "Tunisia, Contested: Italian Nationalism, French Imperial Rule, and Migration in the Mediterranean Basin," *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2010); Lucia Re, "Italians and the Invention of Race: The Poetics and Politics of Difference in the Struggle over Libya, 1890–1913," *California Italian Studies* 1, no. 1 (January 2010).

[15] Franco Cassano, *Il pensiero meridiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1996), 53.

voices, both deconstructs "la visione biopolitica fascista della nazione sana fondata sul legame tra terra, sangue, e razza" ("the biopolitical fascist vision of the healthy nation founded on the bond between land, blood, and race") and contrasts Messina's late-Orientalist gaze with a "musical" model of polyphonic narrative and identity.

The importance of this musical referent to the affirmation of transnational forms of belonging in the Mediterranean imaginary of Italians is confirmed in Lucia Re and Kelly Roso's exploration of the writings of Elisa Chimenti, a virtually unknown Italian writer, journalist, and educator, who lived in another North African frontier city: Tangier. In their article, "A Mediterranean Woman Writer from Naples to Tangier: Female Storytelling as Resistance in Elisa Chimenti," Re and Roso argue that most of Chimenti's texts (*Chantes de femmes arabes*, 1942) share a recurrent theme: "a focus on women's voices and songs that resonate across the boundaries of varied origins, ethnicities, and faiths." Her major novel *Au Coeur du Harem* (1958), written in French "hybridized" with Arab dialects, reflects a desire to "facilitate a transnational dialogue, specifically though not exclusively among women" that had its origin "in Chimenti's unique upbringing and education at the intersection of several diverse Mediterranean cultures and value systems," but also enacted a "the discursive hybridity of many Mediterranean and North African women's texts." In this unique "Mediterranean-Italian" writer, Re and Roso identify a paradigm of resistance not only to Orientalism in any form, but also to any discourse of identity *per se*—Italian, fascist, or otherwise.

Symbolic geographies have also produced lines of inclusion and exclusion. One example is the alleged division between North and South, an ideological project that was given the name *la questione meridionale* (the Southern question) in the mid-nineteenth century.[16] According to John Dickie, the South came into existence at the moment of Italian unification to serve as an internal Other against which the nation-state could define itself.[17] By the 1950s, this division became mobilized as the South emerged as a source of migration to the North during the *boom economico* in parallel with movements from rural areas to urban centers. Indeed, urbanization and modernization advanced hand-in-hand after World War II, further cementing the borders between rural and urban in Italy.

The relationship between the territorial boundaries of *italianità* and the discursive construction of the South form the crux of Luigi Cazzato's article, "Italia come Africa e Africa come Italia: movimenti migratori, confini reali, espansioni immaginarie da S.T. Coleridge a Erri De Luca," in which the author introduces his theory of "meridionism," claiming that the territorialization of Italianness started with the diffusion of the discursive metaphor of "(Southern) Italy equals Africa" in the early nineteenth century, which, in turn, fostered the racial profiling of Southern Italians as Africans from within. Connecting the writing of Samuel Taylor Coleridge with that of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Erri de Luca, Cazzato shows how the transfiguration of "Italia=Africa" was first produced by means of the postcolonial equation "Sud d'Italia=Sud del mondo" ("South of Italy=global South"), and then, by the paradigm of decolonization in which "c'è una sola Africa grande come il mondo intero" ("there is only one Africa as big as the whole world") and "c'è una sola matrice da smantellare, quella della

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[16] On the emergence of *la questione meridionale*, see Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, translated by Pasquale Verdicchio (New York: Bordighera Press, 2015); Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy's "Southern" Question: Orientalism in One Country* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

[17] John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 1.

colonialità del potere che ha governato e governa tutt'ora la modernità, dalla colonizzazione delle Americhe ai giorni nostri" ("there is only one matrix to dismantle, that of the coloniality of power that has governed and still governs modernity, from the colonization of the Americas to the present day").

For Cazzato, the passage from "africanità immaginata" ("imagined Africanness") to "africanità reale" ("'real' Africanness") is mediated by the physicality of the Mediterranean Sea that has begun to impinge upon the borders of the nation. But the vulnerability created by the physical geography of the Mediterranean Sea is not unique. Rather, it is amplified by the isolating effects of Italy's mountains. More than one-third of the peninsula is mountainous, and historically, ranges like the Alps and the Apennines formed natural barriers to the movements of people, goods, and objects. For instance, it was only with the opening of the Stelvio Pass from Switzerland to Italy in the early nineteenth century that travelers, and later, tourists, could access the peninsula en masse. Quite appropriately, Federica Di Blasio in her article, "*Passeurs*: Narratives of Border Crossing in the Western Alps," focuses on literary and filmic figurations of alpine border crossing over the past three decades, and more specifically, on the figure of the *passeur* (smuggler). Contrasting the image of the human trafficker that dominates the representation of Mediterranean migration, Di Blasio shows the representation of the *passeur* is multifaceted and helps to complicate and even question the criminalization of people who are deemed smugglers. What emerges from the illegal passing over the alpine frontiers is the image of the *passeur* as a humanitarian hero who saves lives and redresses global inequalities.

Finally, borders—imagined or real—disappear altogether in the historical phenomenon of Italian emigration characterized by the (legal or illegal) crossing of oceans. Since the late nineteenth century, a borderless, transnational Italy that Luigi Einaudi used to call "la più grande Italia" ("greater Italy") has grown numerically to such an extent as to surpass the population of the *bel paese* (beautiful country).[18] As Mark Choate has shown, however, the Italian diaspora is a multidirectional phenomenon characterized by interlinked projects of expatriate communities in the Americas, demographic colonies of Italian Africa, and internal colonies centered on land reclamation in places like Sardinia and the Pontine Marshes. "The Italian state set out to build natural emigrant affinities for their homeland with a complex and multipronged approach," writes Choate. "Beyond territory, beyond borders, the nation could provide intangible support for emigrants abroad: a sense of belonging in a harsh transnational world."[19] Naturally, the role of the nation-state in forming and reflecting identities abroad has shifted as Italian migration continued throughout the twentieth century to our contemporary moment. Today's *fuga dei cervelli* (brain drain) comprise an "elite" class of migrants who are "often transnational in their daily lives," and with the aid of the Internet and other global technologies, have created new meanings of Italy, Italians, and Italianness.[20]

The multilayered history of Italian emigration in the Americas takes center stage in other articles in our issue (see Muscio and Endebo, respectively); however, the last two articles in this section remind us of the geographical spread and the longue-durée history of Italy's many diasporas, to quote Donna Gabaccia's well-known phrase. In his article "Viaggio e viaggiatori

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[18] Luigi Einaudi, *Un principe mercante: studio sulla espansione coloniale italiana* (Turin: Fratelli Brocca, 1900). For additional details on Einaudi's vision of "Greater Italy," see Mark I. Choate, *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 49-53.

[19] Ibid., 219 and 233.

[20] Laura E. Ruberto and Joseph Sciorra, eds., *New Italian Migrations to the United States: Volume 1: Politics and History since 1945*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 16-17.

italiani nel Seicento: relazioni odeporiche per una nuova geografia del vecchio continente," Alessandro Boccolini reverses one of the most resilient images of Italy-as-destination by offering a reading of two rare accounts of Italian travelers to Northern and Eastern Europe in the seventeenth century. In the diary of Luigi Pio and the accounts of an anonymous Bolognese traveler we are exposed to a little-known account of what can be described as a "proto-Italian tourist gaze" onto the lives of others. In a similar vein, Rachel Haworth and Laura Rorato focus on an unusual destination, Kingston Upon Hull in East Yorkshire in their article "Memory, Identity and Migrant Generations: Articulating Italianità in Twentieth- and Twenty-First-Century Northern England through the Case of Kingston Upon Hull." Utilizing both Marianne Hirsh's notion of "post-memory" and Agnieszka Bedingfield's idea of "trans-memory," they show how the locales of Italian emigration become *themselves* part of the hybrid identities cultivated by diasporic Italians. For the Anglo-Italians of Hull, the classic refrain "tutto il mondo è paese" ("all the world is a village") seems to translate into "ogni paese è Italia" ("every village is Italy").

Border Imaginaries: Genre

The models for constructing, challenging, or reshaping divisions of Italy, Italians, and Italianness are reflected in the ways in which Italian writers and artists have related to the notion of genre, a term that while setting borders around groups of representations, is itself malleable, and in a sense, borderless. Any argument attempting to establish a stable idea of genre certainly implodes when mobilities come into play. The migration of individuals and the movement of culture are particularly forceful in challenging adaptations and recalibrations of accepted genres.

All creative texts and experiences—from popular consumer products to localized expressive culture—borrow willy-nilly from one another resulting in new narratives and structures. Such "*contaminazione*" has become the dernier cri of contemporary musical genres like rap but in reality cuts across many genres and rests squarely within our borderless approach to Italian culture.[21] For example, scholars have tracked the *canzone napoletana* as a "transnational subject" mapping the shifting nature of the soundscape from Naples to New York, from New York to Buenos Aires, and returning to Naples, a city that has itself been sonorously influenced by heterogeneous Mediterranean routes.[22] Thus musical genres and sound have the ability to "touch at a distance" as John Gennari argues, and in so doing, shape and build communities across both real and imagined lines.[23]

Given the way many entertainers work across multiple genres, the transnational Neapolitan musical example includes other performative cultures illustrated here by Giuliana Muscio's article, "East Coast/West Coast: The Long Tradition of Italian Immigrant Performers," on the

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[21] Examples of studies of transnational Italian vernacular culture through genre hybridity include Paola Sensi-Isolani, "Italian Image Makers in France, England, and the United States," in *Selected Essays from the 22nd Annual Conference of the American Italian Historical Association*, edited by Paola A. Sensi-Isolani and Anthony Julian Tamburri (Staten Island, NY: American Italian Historical Association, 1990); John E. Zucchi, *The Little Slaves of the Harp: Italian Child Street Musicians in Nineteenth-Century Paris, London, and New York* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).

[22] On transnational Neapolitan sonority see Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Simona Frasca, *Italian Birds of Passage: The Diaspora of Neapolitan Musicians in New York* (London: Palgrave, 2014); Goffredo Plastino and Joseph Sciorra, eds., *Neapolitan Postcards: The Canzone Napoletana as Transnational Subject* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2016).

[23] John Gennari, "Touching at a Distance: A Meditation on Italian American Soundfulness," *Italian American Review*, 9, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 10-25.

impact of emigrant Neapolitan performers, such as Enrico Caruso, as crucial for constructing "southern" Italianness in North American film. Muscio rightly places her analysis of Caruso, an entertainer she notes who was "typical of the Italian immigrant performers of his era, returning frequently to his home country and always maintaining a repertoire of Neapolitan songs," alongside that of other immigrants from Campania who worked in the industry (i.e., Salvatore Ferragamo) as well as other southern Italian performers (e.g., Antonio Maiori, Mimi Aguglia) and under-recognized figures (e.g., Tina Modotti) who left an "Italian imprint" in Hollywood. In this way, Muscio's piece works to direct a different paradigm for accepted notions of ethnic and migrant influences within the genre's development early in the film industry.

The cultural media and geographic expanse taken up by Muscio parallels other work by authors in this volume. Many of the essays here consider how a particular genre—in film, visual art and multiple forms of written narrative—when studied against the history of the migration of ideas and people re-orients that genre, pushing conventional readings of nation-specific cultural expressions and recognizing the openness (borderlessness) of culture. Unpacking such hybrid creative expressions helps recognize that which has been conventionally understood as "traditional" Italian culture within a larger cultural landscape, a perspective central to Amanda Batarseh's close reading of *Orlando Furioso* vis-à-vis its associations "toward and away from Muslim-Arab cultural affiliation." In her article, "Re/writing the Orient: Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the *Hundred and One Nights*," Batarseh critiques a simplified, unidirectional narrative of influence and, through engagement with postcolonial theory, demonstrates a kind of cultural affiliation between European and Arabic texts as well as negotiation of cultural forms and geo-historical spaces across various medieval sites and texts.

A critical genre repositioning across borders can also act to underscore a less restrictive sense of what it means to be part of an Italian cultural identity as Marianna Aguirre proposes in "Concealing African Art: Ardengo Soffici and Carlo Carrà's Ambivalent Primitivism," or as Eleonora Meo outlines in "Il visuale italiano nella crisi della cittadinanza. L'Italianness nei dispositivi di cattura neoliberali del 'Migrant Cinema.'" These essays both ask us to rethink accepted notions of artistic forms and art practices by recognizing and better understanding the influence and incorporation of sources not always readily visible given Italo-centric, nationalist perspectives—during earlier colonial and fascist eras or even still today. Aguirre reconsiders how artists Ardengo Soffici and Carlo Carrà shaped Italian primitivism, informed by (but also sharply moving away from) other contemporary art forms and importantly, lessening the influence from African art as an anti-modernist, exoticized aesthetic.

Meo, instead, adopts an already polemical category, "Migrollywood," within which to broaden the confines of an Italian national cinematic tradition in our contemporary moment. Through the lenses of visual culture, cultural studies, and critical migration studies, she places together films about migration to Italy which make central the "corpi-migranti esposti alle violenze dei confini" ("migrant bodies exposed to border violence") in an effort to understand how an Italian identity ("Italianness") is mapped cinematically.

Meanwhile Francesco D'Antonio in "*La trilogia del naufragio* di Lina Prosa (2003-2013): un teatro tra due frontiere" also takes on contemporary migration to Italy but does so through an extended analysis of Lina Prosa's theatrical trilogy—more like performative monologues—about African migration, specifically their arrival to Lampedusan shores. D'Antonio focuses his readings on concretized notions of transcultural border-crossings and on the way that theater can offer a rich "esplorazione della diversità e della marginalità" ("exploration of diversity and

marginality") precisely given the immediacy and direct relationship between performers and spectators.

While D'Antonio's approach focuses on drama, other research here looks to broaden literary forms and definitions. The use of sound and language as a tool for political critique is taken up by Nelson Shuchmacher Endebo in "'A invençó do Brasile': Juó Bananére and Non-Italian Italian Literature." He analyzes the writings of the satirical Brazilian author Juó Bananére (pseudonym for Alexandre Marcondes Machado), who wrote in the voice of an Italian immigrant in a fabricated Italian Brazilian language. Endebo considers how the culture of Italian migration to Latin America informed the style and tone of Bananére, creating a localized voice inflected with the existence of the Italian diaspora in Brazil. In so doing, Endebo questions the borders of belonging within an Italian literary canon by deconstructing some of its most essentialist aspects. Endebo connects his reading with other scholarship on Italian diasporic writing and suggestively dreams up *The Cambridge History of Other Italian Literature*, which would productively include works such as that of Bananére.

Border Imaginaries: Politics

All border imaginaries can be considered political. The core of politics—the *polis*—is both the premise for, and the site at which, untold operations of inclusion and exclusion take place; the *polis* (ancient Greek πόλης (*pólis*) has long been recognized as the basis of modern democracy, and implicitly, the modern nation-state. Yet even at its origins, exclusion and inclusion defined the democratic enterprise. For example, the well-known practice of ὀστρακισμός (*ostrakismos*), or ostracism, was characteristic of democracy in Classical Athens, as a means by which the citizenry regularly voted to expel a person from the *polis*, often under the auspices of neutralizing a threat to the city-state.[24] Expellees had no recourse for protest, banished as they were by a majority vote.

A similar analogy can be drawn with the acts of inclusion and exclusion that take place in Italy's migrant detention centers today. Of the many centers in operation, five of them bear the title of *Centro di identificazione ed espulsione* (Center of Identification and Expulsion, CIEs). These are sites where people who have been deemed "threats" to the Italian nation-state are expulsed from the country. Like their Athenian counterparts centuries ago, these expellees have zero recourse for protest.

Indeed, the CIEs in Italy localize the edges of the contemporary *polis* in their most severe incarnations. Many kinds of exclusionary measures intersect here, and when operating together, they both fortify and amplify one another.[25] The architecture of sequestration is one measure that controls people through physical space with barbed wire, electronic locks, and bulletproof glass. Another exclusionary mechanism is that of the law, and specifically, the competing legal frameworks that beleaguer any person caught within them (i.e., Italian law, EU law, international law, etc.). A third means stems from the criminal justice system, and the increasingly blurred

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[24] Sara Forsdyke, *Exile, Ostracism, and Democracy: The Politics of Expulsion in Ancient Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[25] Hom, *Empire's Mobius Strip: Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019), 63-82.

lines between criminality and migration. All exclusionary measures in play at the CIE depend upon the idea of belonging to an imagined community.[26]

The articles in this section consider the border imaginaries that focus on the creation of imagined communities, that is, how the *polis* takes shape in relation to borderless Italy. Broadly speaking, they consider practices of belonging to the *polis*, and how those differ along lines of language, rhetoric, ethnicity, and race. Critical for these articles, too, is the instrumentalization of citizenship and literature, respectively, in service to the nation-state. For instance, Heather Sottong's article, "Dante's Afterlife in Argentina," explores how a translation of *La Divina Commedia* in the late nineteenth century advanced both the political unity and the idea of Argentina as a nation-state. President Bartolomé Mitre (1862-1868) spent a decade translating Dante's work with the aim of bringing Italian "high culture" to his country where Italian immigrants already comprised much of the social fabric and upon whose labor its modernization depended. According to Sottong, Mitré's translation of the *Commedia* resonates with readings of Risorgimento leaders, like Giuseppe Mazzini, who linked Dante to political unanimity, morality, and civilizing power.

If Dante proved the literary model for conceptualizing the *polis* from a position of exile, then Eveljn Ferraro shows how a Jewish Italian female writer, Ebe Cagli Seidenberg, complicates the relationship between exile, identity, and literature in her article, "Jewish Refugee Women, Transnational Coalition Politics, and Affect in Ebe Cagli Seidenberg's *Come ospiti: Eva ed altri.*" Cagli Seidenberg fled Italy with the advent of Fascist Racial Laws in 1938 and took up refuge in Berkeley, California. Among her numerous writings, she authored five novels that have been gathered together in a multivolume work titled *Ciclo dell'esilio obbligato* (1975-1991), which testifies to the unwanted separation and the implications that borders have on processes of self and communal identity, hybridization, and exclusion. In her article, Ferraro focuses attention on Cagli Seidenberg's last novel in the series, *Come ospiti: Eva ed altri* (1991), exploring its articulations of coalition politics and borders, especially around women and motherhood. The result, according to Ferraro, is a liminal literary space molded on national tradition but set to achieve transnational status.

The exclusionary measures experienced by Cagli Seidenberg under fascism are resurfacing today, most notably with the political rhetoric of *sovranismo* (sovereigntism), according to John Agnew. His article, "Soli al Mondo: The Recourse to 'Sovereigntism' in Contemporary Italian Populism," explores the rise of *sovranismo* and its corollary terms (i.e., *sovranista*) in contemporary Italy. *Sovranismo*, he argues, is shorthand for a set of political positions that stand counter to globalization and its flows of people, ideas, and objects across borders, and instead, lobby for the defense or reconquest of national sovereignty. Agnew traces the origins of *sovranismo*, how contemporary populist movements have appropriated its usage, and how their applications of *sovranismo* are based on the misreading of the actual history of sovereignty in Italy that minimize the complexity of the term.

In their article "Black Italianità: Citizenship and Belonging in the Black Mediterranean," SA Smythe addresses the complexities of belonging to a *polis* through the exercise of citizenship, and at the same time, membership in a larger community that exceeds the boundaries of the Italian nation-state, that is, a community centered on Black Italianness, or *afroitalianità*. Through a close reading of works by two Black Italian women writers—Igiaba Scego's short story

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[26] Benedict Anderson famously defined the nation-state as an imagined community; specifically, "an imagined political community that is imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

"Salsicce" and Carla Macoggi's novella *Kkeywa: Storia di una bambina meticcia*—Smythe teases out the fraught relationship between legal citizenship and Black belonging. Both works, Smythe argues, affirm the necessity of reclaiming the power of self-definition, self-representation, and political agency when reckoning with the exclusionary power intrinsic to the project of citizenship, which is defined by the capacity to determine who belongs to the nation-state and who is refused from that belonging. To study the dynamic corpus of Black literature in Italian offers critical insights into the racialized, gendered, and religious negotiations of Italian sociopolitics for Black people navigating life throughout Italy and the Mediterranean.

Integral to the unfolding of Black Italianness is Italy's largely unacknowledged history as a colonizing power; a history that has been excised, for the most part, from studies of modern imperialism. Yet this is changing as scholars, artists, and writers reckon with the multigenerational fallout of Italy's colonial imperialism in Eritrea, Tianjin (China), Libya, Rhodes and the Dodecanese, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Albania from 1890-1943. Scholarship in anthropology, history, literature, and postcolonial studies has documented and interrogated the structures and the traces of Italian colonialism in physical spaces, historical artifacts, literary and cinematic works, and public and private memory.

To that end, the first chapter of Igiaba Scego's novel, *La mia casa è dove sono* (Home is Where I Am, 2010), newly translated into English by Jon Snyder and Megan Williamson, serves as a coda to our volume on borderless Italy. The chapter is many things, but above all, it is a meditation on transnational belonging. Scego explores both the means and the meaning of belonging, whether these are ties of kinship that connect her to Italy, Somalia, and the United Kingdom; or, the memories of wars past and present, colonial and civil; or, one's bond to a country that has forgotten its colonial past; or, how these complex attachments together can be expressed by overlapping cartographic imaginaries of Rome and Mogadishu. This chapter is an apt climax to our volume for it lays bare the interactions between dynamic border imaginaries and shows how literature can serve as a force for reconciling histories of exclusion, and more importantly, for reorienting borderless Italy toward inclusion so as to elevate the richness of diversity and to advocate for equity and equality among all people.