

Special Issue: Futures in Post-displacement Italy

Editors: Emma Bond and Stavroula Pipyrou

**Introduction**

Italy holds multiple histories of displacement in both its past and present times. These might be said to begin with the ‘many diasporas’ of Italians sketched by Donna Gabaccia in her 2000 book of the same name, which charts the emigration of around 27 million people away from Italy from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Such outward displacements were not always permanent and gave rise to multiple webs of transnational identifications within narratives of Italianness.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority occurred directly after the national process of Unification (1861-70), and just before the start of Italy’s first forays into establishing overseas colonies in the Horn of Africa (1882-90), thus displacing the concept of the nation at the very point of its foundation. There was a further, acute convergence of mobility that took place in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where Italian emigration shrank just as inward migration to the peninsula from the Global South and Eastern Europe increased. This occurred alongside a gradual acknowledgment of Italy’s (post-)colonial past and the ways in which its after-effects still persist within a multitude of structures and practices in contemporary society. As Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo state: ‘the temporal and spatial axes that link colonization, emigration, and immigration set Italy apart from other European contexts’.<sup>3</sup>

Our sense as editors is that something might have gotten stuck in the neat convergence of these accounts of temporal and spatial displacements, of pasts of outward emigration and presents of post-colonial migration. They connect ‘all at one point’ in the eloquent sketch of what Teresa Fiore calls Italy’s ‘pre-occupied spaces’,<sup>4</sup> spaces that encapsulate past and present stories within new transnational and postcolonial networks. But the temporal arc involved is limited to looking around, and then back – so where within it can we locate discourses that attend to the future? What would happen to our understandings of Italy’s displacements if we were to shift our temporal gaze forward? Could we start to put together a

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1 Donna Gabaccia, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*, London: Routledge, 2000.

2 As Mark Choate demonstrates, around half of Italian emigrants returned to Italy, ‘bringing capital and experience with them’. *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2008), p. 8. The complex imaginaries involved in such transatlantic identifications are traceable in recent literary accounts such as Laura Pariani’s *Quando Dio ballava il tango* (2002) and Claudia Durastanti’s *La straniera* (2019), to name but two examples.

3 Cristina Lombardi-Diop and Caterina Romeo, ‘Paradigms of Postcoloniality in Contemporary Italy’, in *Postcolonial Italy: Challenging National Homogeneity*, eds. Lombardi-Diop and Romeo, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 5.

4 Teresa Fiore, *Pre-Occupied Spaces: Remapping Italy’s Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies*, New York: Fordham University Press, 2017.

toolkit that would allow us to map, chart, plan for and make space for Italy's post-displacement futures? How might past and present displacements potentially haunt and unsettle such futures?

At the same time, multiple Italian displacements have passed unacknowledged, and have often been hidden in layers of shame. Internal movement from south to north has sedimented inequalities rooted in the original 'questione meridionale' through generations of economic and social necessity. Stavroula Pipyrou locates internal child displacement in the 1950s in a context of acute violence that conditions political subjectivities to this day,<sup>5</sup> whilst Pamela Ballinger's recent study of the experiences of repatriated Italians in the wake of decolonization emphasizes the 'invisibility' of another sizeable group of migrants. Such histories of 'domestic' population flows have been treated, at best, as 'footnotes to the main events of the war and the early postwar period'.<sup>6</sup> Yet since the 1990s, there has been a growing revisionist trend in Italy and other European countries that focuses on histories that unsettle the national canon and generate multiple questions of belonging. Indeed, one of the most striking elements of Italy's situation within the European context is the lingering 'displacement' of belonging, rights and citizenship to 'Italians' living outside the national space, and away from 'non-Italians' present within it, thanks to the enshrined legal principle of *jus sanguinis*.<sup>7</sup> How are such histories being displaced and re-placed? Inspired by Peter Gatrell's notion of how migration has 'unsettled Europe', we set out to ask how histories of displacement might subsequently work to unsettle Italian futures.<sup>8</sup>

Foregrounding the temporal paradigm of 'post-displacement' in the title of this special issue allows us to muddle time--based and spatial binaries in what Ahmed Gamal has called the 'double movement' of the term between the global and the post-colonial. "Far from being static or essentialist," Gamal remarks, 'this movement is a dynamic one and grounded in constant renegotiations and reconstructions'.<sup>9</sup> It is a term that allows space to open up for a productive theoretical dialogue between two major critical strands of contemporary analysis of Italian culture: the transnational and the postcolonial.<sup>10</sup> The 'post' of post-displacement sheds new light on the 'post' of post-colonial by foregrounding the contemporary effects of multi-scalar and intersectional racial, ethnic and gender-related injustices endured by minoritized communities, which occur in the 'realms of social and political discourse, media

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5 Stavroula Pipyrou, 'Displaced Children, Silence, and the Violence of Humanitarianism' *Anthropological Quarterly*, volume 93 (3), 2020, pp. 161-192.

6 Pamela Ballinger, *The World Refugees Made: Decolonization and the Foundation of Postwar Italy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020, p. 3.

7 For an in-depth account of the question of citizenship, see SA Smythe, 'The Black Mediterranean and the Politics of the Imagination', *Middle East Report: Suffering and the Limits of Relief*, volume 286, Spring 2018, pp. 3-9.

8 Peter Gatrell, *The Unsettling of Europe: How Migration Reshaped a Continent*, London: Allen Lane, 2019.

9 Ahmed Gamal, 'The Global and the Postcolonial in Post-Migratory Literature', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 49 (5), 2013, pp. 596-608 (598).

10 For two succinct position pieces on these two theoretical strands in Italian Studies, see: Cristina Lombardi Dipo and Caterina Romeo, 'The Italian Postcolonial: A Manifesto', *Italian Studies* 69 (3), 2014, 425-433 and Emma Bond, 'Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies?', *Italian Studies* 69 (3), 2014, 415-424.

representation, and institutional representation'.<sup>11</sup> In the context of displaced Syrians living in Denmark and Germany, Nina Grønlykke Møllerup (2022) has called the reorientation toward post-displacement futures a process of '(re)grounding'; turning attention to 'other than violence' to think about future potentiality that grounds the violated subject in a future present. Crucially, in coining the term 'post-migratory', Elleke Boehmer envisions a space for creative responses to injustice and prejudice through the 'regeneration' of communities and individuals, something that we also identify in the post-displacement space created by this special issue. This creative landscape gathers together a multitude of 'connected and overlapping yet distinct centres and regions',<sup>12</sup> and we would add, also assembles and conjoins different times from the past and present in order to imagine and anticipate diverse futures.

Rebecca Bryant and Daniel M. Knight have explored the different affective ways that the future resides in the present, how the future effects practice in the present, through orientations – mapped out in their 2019 book through modes of anticipation, expectation, speculation, potentiality, hope and destiny.<sup>13</sup> How people envisage the future, how they draw 'feedback from the future', has implications on their actions today toward actualising their hopes, expectations, and speculative imaginings. Further, Bryant and Knight argue, orientations can be lived collectively since bundles of relations embedded in politics, kinship, and media cultures influence potential pathways toward what is deemed viable future-creation. Morten Nielsen, writing in the context of Mozambique, sheds more light on 'the future as a guiding trope in the present' with a focus on house building before planning permission is granted (or, more likely, denied) that places what he calls 'a wedge in time' whereby people live-out futures that they know are doomed to collapse.<sup>14</sup> In different contexts globally, this future-making activity is work, then, that we are all engaged in, all the time. The aim of this special issue is to attend to what happens after displacement, the meaning-making that works to imagine new and different futures within the national space of Italy. How does the reconfigured future, as a product of entangled waves of displacement in all their complexities, influence collective orientations to the future in the present? How is the future enacted in the present toward a set of partially defined, yet ultimately indeterminate teleologies?

The hope and expectation involved in such future-making orientations can lead to disappointment and disillusion, since the futures that might be desirable are not always available. We hold close the acknowledgement that the optimism of this future-oriented

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11 Kathryn A. Kleppinger and Laura Reeck, 'The Post-Migratory Postcolonial', in *Post-Migratory Cultures in Postcolonial France*, eds. Kathryn A. Kleppinger and Laura Reeck, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018, pp. 1-20 (9).

12 Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 250.

13 Rebecca Bryant and Daniel M. Knight, *The Anthropology of the Future*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

14 Morten Nielsen, "'A Wedge of Time': Futures in the present and presents without futures in Maputo, Mozambique', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20 (S1) 2014. pp. 166-182.

project clashes with the reality of many contemporary post-displacement lives in Italy. The popular and political rise of Salvini and the League has transformed Italy into a particularly hostile environment for both new and more established groups of migrants, something currently exacerbated by the politics of the new government led by Giorgia Meloni of the neofascist Brothers of Italy party. Humanitarian protection has been abolished for people not eligible for refugee status, alongside the wide-scale closing of reception hubs and camps for migrants. New government proposals have put an end to NGO rescues at sea, and all the while the number of racially-motivated attacks in the country is on the rise (tripling between 2017 and 2018, according to reports by Lunaria). Proposals to revise citizenship laws have amounted to nothing, leaving generations of young Italians effectively stateless. The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic also exacerbated dire employment prospects within Italy, and rendered journeys of displacement toward the peninsula even more risky. This entangled mesh of violated human rights, legal inertia, and aggressive populist rhetoric is, we can only hope, one potential post-displacement future out of many.

### **Futures Out of Sight, Out of Mind**

To accomplish one of their central programmatic components – safeguarding the sovereignty and the borders of the Italian state – the Meloni government recently introduced a series of interventions that re-configured migration towards Italy. Two of these interventions relate to mandatory relocations and developmental deals with what in popular imagination constitute the ‘origin nations’ of migrants. The Italian prime minister openly suggested that ‘migration redistribution’ is not her priority because it does not work.<sup>15</sup> Instead, for Meloni, forging migration deals with African countries that aim to control their external borders and stop departures from the continent of Africa seems a much more sustainable strategy. Not dissimilar from the UK government’s scheme to pay Rwanda to receive asylum seekers deported after landing on British shores (with the rhetoric of providing displaced people with a chance to start their lives again in a vibrant new environment), Meloni will offer financial incentives and development planning for countries of migration origin under the rubric of ‘solidarity’ and ‘humanitarianism’ to target migration control. Such policies have knock-on effects for the temporal and spatial proximity of migrants vis-à-vis the collective imagination of Italian nation-state futures, as well as geographical relocation of migrants ‘back to Africa’ to restart their ‘original’ lives which provides spatial detachment between Italy and the Problem Other. In this way, Italian post-displacement futures are disrupted as something that can be dealt with not only geographically elsewhere, but also somewhere further down the temporal line; there is spatial and temporal displacement of the migrant ‘problem’. There is also a sense of future-revisionism in removing the unwanted aspects of Italian futures from spatial and temporal proximity in a way that suggests Italy does not have to, or want to, deal with migrants as integrated constituents of its immediate collective future.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/redistribution-of-migrants-never-my-priority-says-italys-meloni/>

The transnational management of migration, reminiscent of well-tested US interventionist strategies of ‘scientific colonialism’ during the Cold War,<sup>16</sup> is concomitant with new models of colonialism whereby the control of migration toward Italy is integral with interventionist strategies of development in the countries of migration origin. New models of colonialism articulate the capacity to successfully govern global processes and flows of displacement as opposed to purely governing displaced populations (governmentality). The Meloni government thus intervenes and shapes future policies of migration elsewhere in order to protect national interests at home.<sup>17</sup> Such interventions locate the planning of Italy’s future into the hands of another country. That is, Italy’s post-displacement future is now entwined more than ever with the policies, incentives, and whims of other governments; we may call this a displacement of sovereignty, perhaps. Decisions on migration futures under the pretext of human rights protection shapes new forms of governmentality located outside Italy in mechanisms of transnational co-operation, and ultimately feeds back into how Italian citizens collectively imagine their futures in the nation-state. With the intention to prevent future migrations to Italy, such politics and policies that aim to address post-displacement in Italy point to a dangerous re-imagining of migration globally where *migration itself is displaced*.

Collective imaginations of displacement are, by way of political policies and sabre-rattling, or through claims to epistemological superiority,<sup>18</sup> partially ‘manufactured’ by government institutions. Policy statements and mass media information-circulation constitute what Laura Bear calls ‘technologies of the imagination’, or, loosely defined, another take on Bryant and Knight’s ‘orientations’ thesis, purporting that we are offered potential pathways to future-creation through bundles of viable relations – and, for Meloni, migrants are not part of this imagined network.<sup>19</sup> Knowledge is exchanged, channelled, imported and exported, sold to an audience to influence collective action, whether the actors realise it or not. In the current political climate in Italy, migrants are not presented by the governing political sphere as being part of future imaginaries. In the context of the importation of foreign psychotherapy methods to Greece in the twentieth century to displace traditional medicine, Charles Stewart has called this process of scientific knowledge teleportation the ‘colonizing the mind’.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, in a wide-sweeping and well-known comparative perspective, Michael Herzfeld takes the psychosocial aspect of colonisation further by posing that whole nation-state ideologies are shaped by external forces, or political agendas of other nation-states. The displacing of responsibility – of sovereignty – for the shaping of national imaginations is a form of crypto-colonialism; citizens of a nation think of themselves as independent but are

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16Johan Galtung, *Theories of Peace. A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking*, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, September 1967.

17 Scientific colonialism is the process whereby the centre of gravity for the acquisition of knowledge about the nation is located outside the nation itself. (Johan Galtung, *Theories of Peace. A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking*, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, September 1967).

18 Carol A. Kidron, ‘Rebirthing’ the Violent Past: Friction Between Post-Conflict Axioms of Remembrance and Cambodian Buddhist Forgetting’, *Anthropological Forum*, 31 (3), 2021, 291-311.

19 Laura Bear, ‘Capitalist Divination: Popularist Speculators and Technologies of Imagination on the Hooghly River’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 35 (3), 2015, pp. 408-423.

20 Charles Stewart (ed), *Colonizing the Greek Mind: The reception of Western psychotherapeutics in Greece*. Athens: DUREE, 2014.

really being shaped by external forces beyond their own spatial and temporal limits.<sup>21</sup> Once again, displacement is displaced within a political agenda of revisionism and white-washing.

Displacement is thus a violent act of subjectivity, and a politicization of body and mind in future-orientation. What happens when histories are founded in acts of displacement? How do these histories become presents to be addressed in orientations toward collective futures? In a Freudian sense, displacement is always a temporary defence mechanism whereby anxiety and trauma can be alleviated by the postponement or redirection of the problem. In this Freudian rubric, that which displaces vaguely alludes to the displaced. Anticipating a ‘future at stake,’<sup>22</sup> the Meloni government is promoting investments in African countries thus temporarily redirecting migration as a problem to be solved through development outside Italy. As a neo-imperialist actor, Italy displaces its own history of displacement forged through internal and external migrations and colonial expeditions sponsored by the fascist regime. In the current special issue, our focus on Italy does not only stem from our own specialisation and long-term engagement in the country. It is important that through a set of articles we look at displacement in a nation of the Global North and the ways in which its ramifications underpin possible futures both within the country and beyond its borders.

### **Crafting Scripts for Possible Worlds**

Whilst acknowledging these macro facts, this special issue aims to situate its focus within the gaps, intervals, pauses and delays between hope and disillusionment that characterize displacement, because it is in these gaps that speculation resides. ‘Speculation takes us down alternative temporal routes’, towards ‘other possible futures’.<sup>23</sup> This critical interval allows us to explore the space of the ‘what if’, and in so doing, to explore a fuller range of the potential futures of post-displacement in Italy. Within that space we look to explore how people are creating new forms of community, how they might build resilience through activism, creative practices and other initiatives or choose to remain in silence. As Arjun Appadurai reminds us, migrant suffering is not the whole story, and the bare fact of the migration journey does not do justice to the range of project-making, efforts, resources and relation changes that displacement triggers. In a sense, displacement offers the chance for people to ‘craft the scripts of possible worlds and imagined selves’ – what Appadurai calls the ‘capacity to aspire’.<sup>24</sup>

If the story of displacement is one of rupture, of departure and of loss, it is also then a space for aspiration and speculation. We see this imaginative work as aligning with the ‘frontier

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21 Michael Herzfeld, ‘The Absence Presence: Discourses of Crypto-Colonialism’, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 101 (4), 2002, pp. 899-926.

22 Georgina Ramsay, ‘Time and the other in crisis: How anthropology makes its displaced object’, *Anthropological Theory*, 20(4), 2020, pp. 385–413 (406).

23 Bryant and Knight *The Anthropology of the Future*, op. cit., p. 103.

24 Arjun Appadurai, ‘Archive and Aspiration’, in *Information is Alive*, eds. Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder, Rotterdam: V2 Publishing, 2003, pp. 14-25 (20; 18).

practices’ described by Donna Haraway and later Anna Tsing as practices of creation, radical invention, and replacement that have ‘little truck with thick pasts and presents’.<sup>25</sup> This work also builds on Saidiya Hartman’s notion of critical fabulation in its arrangement and re-arrangement of storied elements, in the re-presentation of “the sequence of events in divergent stories and from contested points of view”, which allow us “to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or what might have been said or done”.<sup>26</sup> Italy is perhaps the natural arena for such fabulative, future-facing work to occur within. Roberto Esposito has claimed for Italy the title of ‘the great incomplete’, describing the national territory as a ‘spectral landscape of unfinished never ends,’ littered with the remains of unfinished construction projects.<sup>27</sup> But in this incompleteness, Italy’s ‘failure to develop imagined projects’, Esposito sees not weakness but strength. Italy’s time-lag, its belated modernity, its delay, can thus be transformed into a space for anticipation, turning ‘an abandoned ruin into a future challenge’.<sup>28</sup>

The ability to construct counter-factual, speculative or fabulative accounts also impels us to displace the centrality of the colonial or neo-colonial logic from our work. Taking inspiration from Ariella Aïsha Azoulay’s notion of potential history, we will look to re-wind the gaze back to before the moment in which imperialism displaced millions of objects and people from their rightful places, to reverse ‘what should not have been possible’, returning to before the event, rehearsing new scripts of alternative futurity.<sup>29</sup> In a similar fashion, Gabriela Manley has recently asked what might the future have been if unification of England and Scotland had not displaced the Scottish Enlightenment – what futures would have been created if unification had not happened, and the Scottish Enlightenment not interrupted? Furthermore, is there the possibility to tap into this alternate timeline now, to create new futures based on a reimagining of a past event, not through historical revisionism (going back) but by drawing-in possible futures in a form of future-revisionism (looking forward)?<sup>30</sup> Such an approach takes eventedness to be a manipulation of time, suggests Chloe Ahmann, that adds politicization to otherwise quiet episodes of history.<sup>31</sup> As such, much of the structural, axiomatic, violence of history is overlooked by the focus on event, and predominantly colonial versions of pasts and futures inevitably rise to the fore.<sup>32</sup> Returning to the contexts of the ‘pre-’ allow us to better facilitate a projection of the ‘post-’ in imagining speculative futures.

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25 Donna Haraway, ‘Speculative Fabulations for Technoculture’s Generations: Taking Care of Unexpected Country’, *Australian Humanities Review* 50, 2011, pp. 1-18 (5).

26 Saidiya Hartman, ‘Venus in Two Acts’, *small axe* 6, 2008, pp. 1-14 (11).

27 Roberto Esposito, ‘Unfinished Italy’, *Italian Studies* 76 (2), 2021, pp. 128-134 (128).

28 Esposito, ‘Unfinished Italy’, p. 128.

29 Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, London: Verso, 2019, p. 10.

30 Gabriela Manley, ‘Reimagining the enlightenment: Alternate timelines and utopian futures in the Scottish independence movement’, *History and Anthropology*, 2022.

31 Chloe Ahmann, “‘It’s exhausting to create an event out of nothing’”: Slow Violence and the Manipulation of Time’, *Cultural Anthropology* 33 (1), 2018, pp. 142–171.

32 Stavroula Pipyrou and Antonio Sorge (2021) ‘Emergent Axioms of Violence: Toward an Anthropology of Post-Liberal Modernity’, *Anthropological Forum* 31 (3), 2021, pp. 225-240.

In our current time, the precarity of displacement is emblematic of the wider precarity of economic, political, environmental and health crises that continue to lacerate the contemporary age. Yet as Anna Tsing has it, precarity is also ‘the condition of being vulnerable to others’, and that vulnerability allows the potential for change, for transformation: ‘Unable to rely on a stable structure of community, we are thrown into shifting assemblages, which remake us as well as our others’.<sup>33</sup> Post-displacement involves these kinds of world-making projects, both human and non-human, that ‘emerge from the practical activities of making lives; in the process these projects alter our planet’.<sup>34</sup>

### **Post-Displacement Futures**

The concern of this collection is not to foreground policies and programmes that locate displacement as an external issue, or as something separate to everyday future-creation within the Italian nation-state. In the articles that follow, we return instead to focus on symbiotic post-displacement futures *in* and *of* Italy. Such world-making projects are here sketched out in accounts of associations and activities aimed at promoting a sense of (future) community through anti-racist action and social justice, or the creation of informal social networks of solidarity and integration programmes. In his analysis of the social media reception of the ‘Riace Model’ of migrant integration enacted by former mayor of Riace, Domenico Lucano, Marco Benoît Carbone demonstrates that concerns around issues of nationality, citizenship and identity inform hostility towards new arrivals in Italy. Post-migratory subjects in Italy thus occupy a space of perception in which they become the targets of projected anxieties about the future. Carbone performs a complex act of discourse analysis which shows that popular vocabularies around migration contribute to shape and crystallise attitudes that may be enshrined in legislative frameworks and perpetuate exclusionary effects. In their article ‘After Institutional Reception: Time, Im-mobility and Social Networks in Southern Italy’, Giuliana Sanò and Francesco Zanutelli analyse two very different sites in Calabria (Gioia Tauro and Villa San Giovanni) in order to contrast the immobility produced by hostile migration policies in Italy with the ‘capacity to aspire’ which is retained by many of the individuals they interviewed for their study. Official structures are shown to impact on and regulate the temporal and spatial regimes available to migrants, especially in the post-reception phase. Characterised as a time of waiting and stasis, during which migrants are ‘processed’ through institutional systems in order to be able to seek documentation that allows them to settle and to find work, the interval this moment produces can also be seen as part of a process of future-making. This can occur even when time stands still, as Djon, a young man from Mali tells the authors: “I’m waiting to leave this place to start living.”

But articles in this issue go beyond individual case studies of location and their models of post-displacement community building, in some cases focusing on the landscape of Italy

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<sup>33</sup> Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015, p. 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

itself. In ‘Displacing Displacement: Narratives for a Controversial History’, Elena Miltiadis seeks to explore how the historical timestamping of a place such as Latina through its irrevocable association with a fascist past can lead not only to a sense of hopeless immobility, but also to the creation of alternative future narratives within its community. These displacements are temporal, teasing out new directions of time travel that materially intervene in the past to identify new futures. By displacing the condition of displacement in this way, Miltiadis offers a new angle on the question of post-displacement futures by focusing on individual strategies enacted by residents of Latina to reaffirm their imagined and desired connection to their local place.

Displacements also occur in alternative spaces which allow for different modes of creativity. Salvatore Giusto and Morganne Blais-McPherson reveal how social media can provide a digital space where the right to performativity and irony can be re-assigned to those usually disenfranchised by the mainstream media and cultural outlets. Their comparative analysis of social media content produced by Matteo Salvini, on the one hand, and Black Italian Youtubers such as the artist Bello FiGo, on the other, engage ventriloquizing tactics in order to temporarily occupy each other’s rhetorical space. Discourse becomes displaced from recognised modes of identity and identification in a game of populist irony. Linked to this, Justin Randolph Thompson shows how artistic collaborations can give rise to the development of a new language capable of decoding and expressing the specificities of Black Italianness and able to take ownership of new modes of narrative building. ‘Contradictory Forces, Facts and Tendencies’ draws on W.E.B. Du Bois’ framing of race within a framework of exclusion that characterises Black experiences in contemporary Italy. Thompson’s analysis, based on his experience as the founder of Black History Month Florence (BHMF) and the related Young Gifted and Black Italians (YGBI) Research Residency, is driven by a call for us to ‘move beyond an understanding of displacement into a realm that could be considered post-displacement in an imaging of what is next.’ Finally, Pamela Ballinger in her rich and generative afterword, invites us to consider the ‘potentialities or futures of the post-displacement concept itself’ in a way that extends far beyond Italy itself.

We have been inspired in our selection of articles by new work in the field of what Anab Jain and Alex Taylor have called ‘feral futuring’. This kind of futuring is exploratory and open to all kinds of wonderings and wanderings about futures that might be ‘personal, familial, communal, national and planetary’ all at once.<sup>35</sup> It also reminds us that it is a privilege to be able to imagine the future, especially within the context of displacement. Navigating the lingering crises of the COVID-19 pandemic at the same time as the global effects of a worsening climate emergency and entrenched systems of social injustice have left us all facing different futures and have allowed us to call into question the kind of futures we would

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35 Anab Jain and Alex Taylor, ‘Experiments in Feral Futuring’, *Public Books*, 30 October 2020. Accessed 12 November 2020. <https://www.publicbooks.org/experiments-in-feral-futuring/>

like to inhabit and have stakes in ourselves. This special issue is a first, robust step towards a collective imagining of post-displacement futures in Italy.

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