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10 years of writing and critical commitment in the postcolonial humanities

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ABSTRACT

Issue 18 (Spring 2026) of *From the European South* celebrates the tenth anniversary of the journal, which began in 2016 as a spinoff of the *postcolonialitalia* research project at the University of Padova. Over the years, *FES* has developed into a solid platform for post- and decolonial critical thinking and writing from the Global South, taking the planet and the future as its necessary horizons. This issue evidences the journal's roots in postcolonial studies, literatures and cultures, its dialogues with decolonial and critical race studies, and ongoing interest in the arts and activism. It also encourages the quest for a new critical language involving affect and sensibilities that might help us to work through the opacity of a war-ridden world that is difficult to articulate.
To celebrate this important milestone and to acknowledge the great work carried out over time by the more than 200 contributors listed at the end of this introduction, the editorial board has recently invested its efforts in transforming the open-access, peer-reviewed journal into a fully indexed publication in some of the most prestigious international databases, in order to enhance visibility and reach out to further global connections. This process is still ongoing, and the upgrade of *FES* will be fully operational in the second half of 2026.

Keywords
10th anniversary, affect, anti-racism, arts-based research, Black Lives Matter, colonialism, decoloniality, dehumanization, European South, everyday resistance, language, mobile methodology, Palestine, postcolonial Italy, postcolonialism, re-signification, sensibility, sexual dissidence, translation

Anniversaries are moments of celebration and recollection of what has been achieved, but also opportunities to raise questions, looking both backward and forward: the ten years spent working to promote postcolonial studies in the humanities and to build an international network for transcultural dialogue compel us to reflect on what levers we may use to maintain a fresh gaze despite the polycrises we are living through, and how we might or should re-read what we have written—believing, with Canadian author Margaret Atwood, that "a word, after a word, after a word is power."[1]

The eighteenth issue of *From the European South* (*FES*) is dedicated to all those who, in various ways, have contributed to the growth of the journal—authors, editors, reviewers, readers, followers, friends and allies—and have cultivated a perspective from the European South, the Mediterranean, and the Global South, practicing critical and engaged thinking in

search of transdisciplinary lenses through which to read our troubled times. Over the years, *FES* has kept asking questions and investigating new areas of knowledge and of literary, artistic, and cultural production, and Issue 18 is no different. But what strikes me positively is that the 10th anniversary has elicited contributions with a distinct 'southern' mediterranean voice that reconnects *FES* to its beginnings, while at the same time updating its aims and contents.

A 'postcolonial turn' in the Italian humanities became visible in the second decade of the 21st century. The time seemed indeed effervescent, despite its belatedness when compared to the temporal frame of development of postcolonial critical theory and studies in other parts of Europe and the world, and marked a moment of promise in which the postcolonial started to speak to a wider public. In her article on "Arts, anti-racism, and academia" written for the journal's tenth anniversary, Alessandra Ferlito reads 2015 as a pivotal year, when scientific and cultural events happening at the same time (groundbreaking initiatives such as the international conference *Archives of the Future. The Postcolonial, Italy and the Time to Come* at the University of Padova, and major cultural events like the Venice Biennale curated by Okwui Enwezor) signalled a sort of 'coming out' of the postcolonial that began to interest not only academia, but various expressions of the art world and social movements. In the following years, however, the postcolonial was largely adopted in the Italian context as a thematic rather than a critical framework, and only rarely embraced as an ethical orientation capable of reshaping artistic, curatorial or institutional practices. What Ferlito sees as productive areas of research and critical investment today, at the intersection of academic and artistic exploration, are practices that have approached the postcolonial as a process of dismantling Italian 'whiteness', exploring the potential of art as an anti-racist discourse and practice as proposed by the interdisciplinary project *Research as Vocality. Tracing the African Presence in Naples* (2022–2025).

A decisive shift from critique to praxis may be detected in *FES* 18. Postcolonial and decolonial thought are less referred to as analytical frameworks, and more as sets of practices that unfold across artistic, pedagogical, and activist domains. However, coloniality continues to shape contemporary political realities, epistemologies, and subjectivities, and decoloniality remains a central although disputed reference point. Therefore, the issue at hand extends beyond critiquing inherited archives or narratives to take on the urgent task of asking again how knowledge is produced, mediated, and mobilized. Mikal Woldu, Yodit Estifanos Afewerki and Ariam Tekle's "From Discourse to Praxis: Decoloniality, Knowledge Production, and Everyday Resistance in the European South" provides a multivocal answer to this question. The article, co-authored by three Black-Italian women working across academia, activism, community organising and cultural curation, asks: How do we move beyond elite discourse to praxis that grounds decoloniality and anti-racist commitment in everyday resistance and

solidarity? What role can academia play in building equitable collaborations which acknowledge and redress existing power inequalities in knowledge production? The text examines how research tools and institutional practices shape access to knowledge, influence whose voices are amplified, and determine inclusion or marginalisation. It also explores ethical collaboration, focusing on the distribution of leadership, authority, and agency, while promoting the extension of decolonial practices beyond academia into everyday life. By bringing their own distinctive practices into close dialogue, the authors contribute to decolonial scholarship by demonstrating how practice-led, collaborative, and reflexive approaches can challenge epistemic hierarchies and reorient decoloniality towards meaningful, accessible, and transformative praxis.

The emphasis on multivocality, closely tied to a broader reconfiguration of epistemic authority, may be found also in "Echoes from ዶግዓሊ/Dogali" by Giulia Grechi and Gioia Toscani De Col, who focus on public memory and heritage sites in Italy, and illustrate a collaborative and decolonial project carried out in Rome in 2025, in connection with the restoration of the colonial monument dedicated to the Battle of Dogali (1887). Their work, rooted in critical heritage, memory studies, and theories of haunting, conceptualizes Italian colonial monuments as material and symbolic survivals of colonial power that continue to shape public space, historical knowledge, and collective perception. Against such fraught legacy, the project advances 're-signification' as a methodological and political practice. Through a process of co-design, the monument is approached as a site of dialogue and debate, so that the Dogali case is eventually re-signified as an example of how participatory, multivocal approaches can transform colonial monuments into spaces of critical engagement, fostering historical accountability, ethical remembrance, and forms of symbolic repair within European public memory.

So, the questions we are dealing with in *FES* 18 are no longer the ones we started to ask ten years ago. In his incisive "Seawork" intervention, Iain Chambers poses the question of "How to write and research in the light of migration, genocide and decolonial imperatives," grounding it squarely in the violence of the present. Writing and doing research in times that defy understanding is a challenge that invites a quest for fresh methodologies and words. Inspired by his long-standing reflection on the fluidity of the maritime world, and the drifting nature of language itself, Chambers proposes the critical opening of a mobile methodology, which means "registering how language is inflected and loses its illusions of transparency and neutrality when confronting the brutal fashioning of the modern world, ultimately prompting us to change our language and infuse it with another register of affects and sensibilities."

Language as a constitutive force is a central concern running through the articles: it emerges as a terrain marked by historical violence, in which processes of dehumanization, exclusion, and domination are both enacted and contested. This is clearly visible not only in

Chambers' invitation to articulate alternative narrative and affective registers that may help us see and feel and think differently, but also in the analysis of colonial literary genealogies and their afterlives in present-day political discourse, as in Luigi Cazzato's "Prospero and Caliban in Palestine." In the work of Palestinian writers and activists, Cazzato argues that the character of Caliban is figurately reappropriated to reclaim agency, language, and historical presence, in ways which reveal that struggles over linguistic representation are inseparable from struggles over land, self-government, and humanity. Ultimately, his essay contends that recognizing the linguistic, discursive and political genealogy of 'dehumanization' in Western colonial history is key to understanding the ongoing structures of violent settler colonial power in Israel/Palestine. A further focus on language surfaces in Angelo Monaco's analysis of how, in her autobiography, prominent Indian transgender activist and writer A. Revathi reinterprets the experience of social exclusion and 'shame' (connected to her being a *hijra*) as a form of resistance and emancipation, as well as an aesthetics of liberation that asserts the political and resistant nature of precarious lives.

The concluding contribution on "Translating Black Lives Matter" is a collaborative critical and linguistic exploration of translation as a politically charged practice, promoted in spring 2025 by Pietro Deandrea during a seminar with a group of students at the University of Turin. The four poems offered here in their Italian translations are a selection from a volume titled *Black Lives Matter. Poems for a New World* (ed. Ambrose Musiyiwa, Civic Leicester, 2020), containing 107 poems by various authors who respond to the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing forms of protest against the oppression of racialized communities worldwide. This translation work is precious for its pedagogical import, the political reflections it involves, and the compelling linguistic practice it develops, and is well received for its having been conceived as a celebratory 'gift' to our journal in its tenth anniversary. We are very grateful to the editor Ambrose Musiyiwa and the poets Panya Banjoko, Julian Colton, Joel Scarfe and Paul Francis—who generously permitted the re-publication and translation of their works—and also wish to warmly acknowledge, with Pietro Deandrea, the commitment of the forty-one students in the seminar on literary translation by naming them all: Francesca Alborghetti, Aurora Amoroso, Alex Ancarani, Antonio Assisa, Erika Bondesan, Alessia Brafa Misicaro, Elena Canu, Arianna Cavallaro, Alessia Anna Colla, Martina Colomba, Alessandro De Bonis, Elena Dominici, Emily Falcioni, Clarissa Maria Farruggio, Elena Fiorelli, Laura Gaiano Cappelli, Alice Garello, Alice Goria, Sara Grassini, Eligio Langella, Carlo Lopresti, Chiara Lorenzato, Monica Macaluso, Sara Merlino, Martina Molsitti, Silvia Monterosso, Davide Morazzoni, Chiara Novo, Luca Orlando, Milena Peretto, Egle Pertile, Matilde Saccani, Agnese Sampaolo, Maria Sapone, Sara Sheikhi, Elena Silvestri, Simone Spano, Matilda Spanu, Federica Tarantini, Carlotta Tiddia, Chiara Wasowski, Raffaella Zunino.

A celebratory ‘vibe’ can be detected in the REVIEWS section of the journal as well: this anniversary issue is exceptionally rich, and full of enlightening critical interventions which dialogue closely with the reviewed texts, with each other, and also with the ARTICLES section. The voices of the reviewers belong both to established academics and to early-career researchers, whose brilliance is undeniable. Thank you all for joining in.

Finally, to celebrate this important milestone and to acknowledge the great work carried out over the last decade by the more than 200 contributors listed at the end of this introduction, the journal’s editorial board has recently invested its efforts in transforming the open-access, peer-reviewed journal into a fully indexed publication in some of the most prominent international databases, such as Scopus and DOAJ, in order to enhance visibility and reach out to further global connections. This process is still ongoing, and the upgrade of *FES* will be fully operational in the second half of 2026.

Notes

[1] Atwood’s poem “Spelling” is part of the 1981 first edition of *True Stories,* Oxford University Press, p.18.

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