

# Migrant Choir

INNO DELLE NAZIONI

# MIGRANT CHOIR INNO DELLE NAZIONI

is an action in which recent migrants to Italy, and their supporters, sing the anthems of Italy, France, and The United Kingdom in front of these respective national pavilions at the 2015 Venice Biennale. This performance is a speech act, in which non-citizens claim their rights of citizenship while rendering the exclusionary nature of these anthems visible.

*If there were no borders, most of the people in this choir wouldn't be here, and tens of thousands like them wouldn't be risking their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean, scrambling over barbed wire fences in Ceuta trying to get into Spain, buddled on the rocks in Ventimiglia trying to get into France, crowded together in makeshift camps in Calais trying to get into Britain. In Europe, we think about borders and national anthems less and less, now that we can travel freely, now that our children can study in any university they want. But to millions and millions of people, national anthems still mean borders, and borders are a question of life and death, and that's why we are here singing.*

Robert Elliot - Migrant Choir Project Coordinator

**“Se lo Stato-nazione ha un’anima, essa è partorita da una metafisica dell’esclusione.”**

*[If the nation-state has a soul, it is born of a metaphysical exclusion.]*

Antonio Negri, July 2015

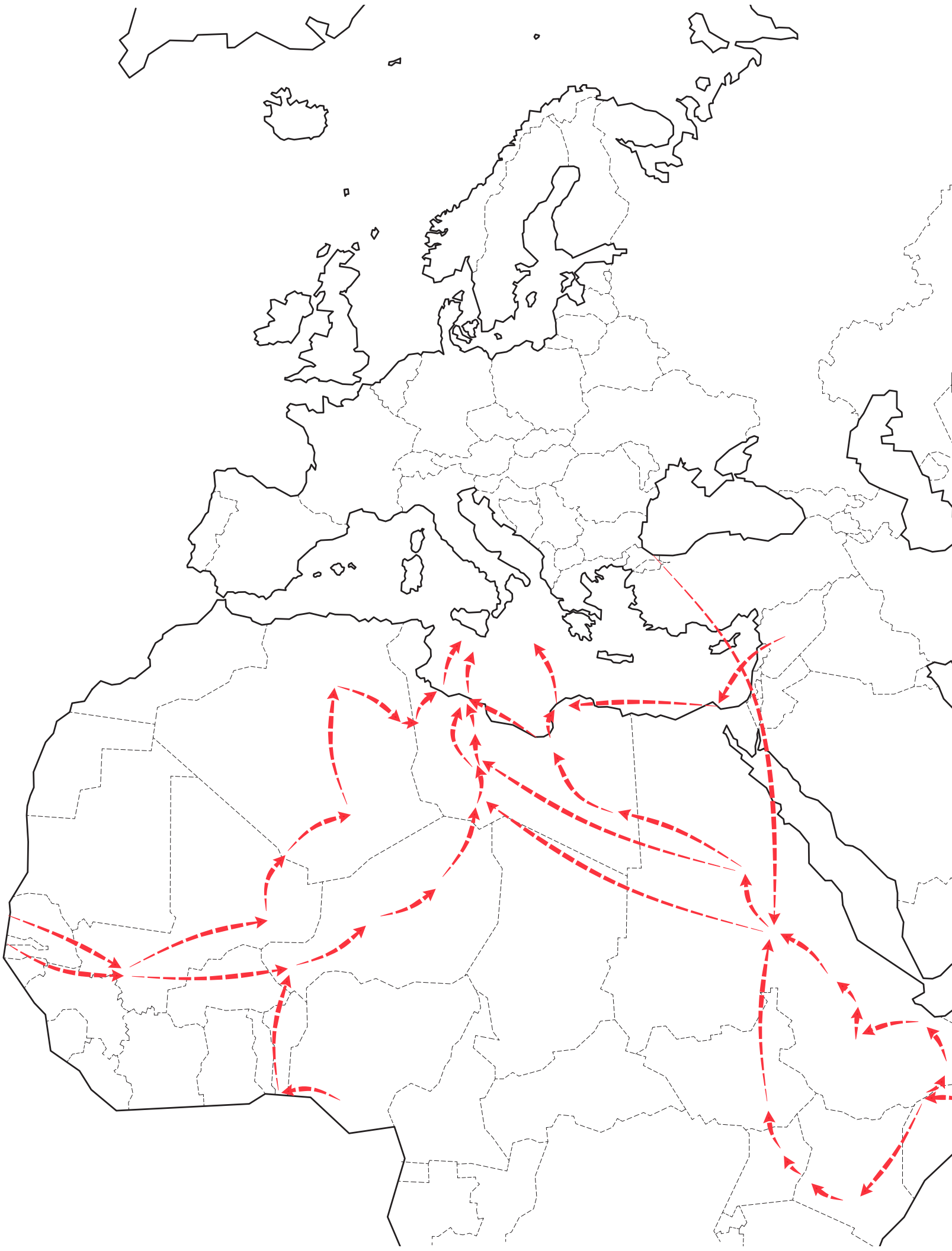
## Migrant Choir is a project by:

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Blackwood Gallery  
University of Toronto Mississauga

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INNO DI MAMELI

Goffredo Mameli

MICHELE NOVARO

Sheet music for the first system of the song "Inno di Mameli". The music is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major, with a tempo marking of 88. The lyrics are: Fra- tel- li d'I- ta- lia, l'I- ta- lia s'e' des- ta, del- l'el- mo di Sci- pio s'e cin- ta la tes- ta. Do- v'e la vit- to- ria? Le por- ga la chio- ma, che schia- va di Ro- ma Id- di- o la cre- o'. Fra- tel- li d'I- ta- lia, l'I- ta- lia s'e' des- ta, del- l'el- mo di Sci- pio s'e cin- ta la tes- ta. Do- v'e la vit-

Sheet music for the second system of the song "Inno di Mameli". The music continues with the lyrics: to- ria? Le por- ga la chio- ma, che schia- va di Ro- ma Id- dio la cre- o'. String- iam- ci a co- or- te, siam pron- ti al- la mor- te! Siam pron- ti al- la mor- te l'I- ta- lia chia- mò! String- iam- ci a co- or- te, siam pron- ti al- la mor- te! Siam pron- ti al- la mor- te, l'I- ta- lia chia- mò! Sì!

# LA MARSEILLAISE

Claude-Joseph Rouget de l'Isle

**Alla marcia** *f*

Voice

Piano

*f*

Allons enfants de la Pa - tri - e, Le jour de

gloire est ar - ri - vé. Con - tre nous, de la ty - ran - ni - e, L'é - ten -

*ff* *p*

dard sanglant est le - vé, l'é - ten - dard sanglant est le - vé Entendez -

*ff* *p*

*cresc.*

vous, dans les cam - pag - nes Mu - gir ces farou - ches soldats. Ils

*cresc.*

2

16

vien - nent jus - que dans nos bras é - gor - ger vos fils, - vos com -

19 *ff*

pag - nes. Aux ar - mes ci - toyens! For -

*ff*

22

mez - vos ba - tail - lons, Marchons, mar - chons!

26

Qu'un sang im - pur A - breu - ve nos sillons. D.C.

GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

N.C. poco rit.

*mf*

**a tempo**  
♩ = 63

A<sup>b</sup> Fm D<sup>b</sup>6 E<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>/G A<sup>b</sup> Fm D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>/E<sup>b</sup> C<sup>7</sup>/E Fm

God save our gra - cious Queen, long live our no - ble Queen,

D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>/E<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>sus<sup>2</sup><sub>4</sub> A<sup>b</sup>

God save the Queen! Send Her vic - to - ri - ous,

E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>/E<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7/B<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7/G Fm

hap - py and glo - ri - ous, long to reign

A<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7/B<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>7 D<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>/E<sup>b</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7 A<sup>b</sup>

ov - er us; God save the Queen!



**Il Canto degli Italiani**  
(Standard Lyrics in Bold)

<i>Italian lyrics</i>	<i>English Translation</i>
<b>Fratelli d’Italia, l’Italia s’è desta, dell’elmo di Scipio s’è cinta la testa. Dov’è la Vittoria? Le porga la chioma, ché schiava di Roma Iddio la creò.</b>	Brothers of Italy, Italy has woken, Bound Scipio’s helmet Upon her head. Where is Victory? Let her bow down, For God created her Slave of Rome.
<b>Stringiamci a coorte, siam pronti alla morte. Siam pronti alla morte, l’Italia chiamò. Stringiamci a coorte, siam pronti alla morte. Siam pronti alla morte, l’Italia chiamò, sì!</b>	Let us join in a cohort, We are ready to die. We are ready to die, Italy has called. Let us join in a cohort, We are ready to die. We are ready to die, Italy has called, yes!
<b>Noi fummo da secoli calpesti, derisi, perché non siam popolo, perché siam divisi. Raccolgaci un’unica bandiera, una speme: di fonderci insieme già l’ora suonò.</b>	We were for centuries downtrodden, derided, because we are not one people, because we are divided. Let one flag, one hope gather us all. The hour has struck for us to unite.
<b>Stringiamci a coorte...</b>	Let us join in a cohort...
Uniamoci, amiamoci, l’unione e l’amore rivelano ai popoli le vie del Signore. Giuriamo far libero il suolo natio: uniti, per Dio, chi vincer ci può?	Let us unite, let us love one another, For union and love Reveal to the people The ways of the Lord. Let us swear to set free The land of our birth: United, for God, Who can overcome us?
Stringiamci a coorte...	Let us join in a cohort...
Dall’Alpi a Sicilia dovunque è Legnano, ogn’uom di Ferruccio ha il core, ha la mano, i bimbi d’Italia si chiaman Balilla, il suon d’ogni squilla i Vespri suonò.	From the Alps to Sicily, Legnano is everywhere; Every man has the heart and hand of Ferruccio The children of Italy Are all called Balilla; Every trumpet blast sounds the Vespers.
Stringiamci a coorte...	Let us join in a cohort...
Son giunchi che piegano le spade vendute: già l’Aquila d’Austria le penne ha perdute. Il sangue d’Italia, il sangue Polacco, bevè, col cosacco, ma il cor le bruciò.	Mercenary swords, they’re feeble reeds. The Austrian eagle Has already lost its plumes. The blood of Italy and the Polish blood It drank, along with the Cossack, But it burned its heart.
Stringiamci a coorte...	Let us join in a cohort...

**God Save the Queen**  
(Standard Lyrics in Bold)

<i>English Lyrics</i>
<b>God save our gracious Queen! Long live our noble Queen! God save The Queen! Send her victorious, Happy and glorious, Long to reign over us: God save The Queen!</b>
<b>O Lord our God arise, Scatter her enemies, And make them fall: Confound their politics, Frustrate their knavish tricks, On Thee our hopes we fix: God save us all.</b>
<b>Thy choicest gifts in store, On her be pleased to pour; Long may she reign: May she defend our laws, And ever give us cause, To sing with heart and voice, God save The Queen!</b>
<i>Italian Translation</i>
Dio salvi la nostra benevola Regina! Viva a lungo la nostra nobile Regina, Dio salvi la Regina! Mandala vittoriosa, felice e gloriosa, a regnare a lungo su di noi, Dio salvi la Regina!
O Signore, nostro Dio, rivelati, disperdi i suoi nemici, e falli crollare. Confondi i loro intrighi, ostacola le loro manovre disoneste, in te riponiamo le nostre speranze, Dio salvi tutti noi.
I regali più preziosi che conservi, sii disposto a riversarli su di lei, possa regnare a lungo! Possa difendere le nostre leggi, e darci sempre l’occasione di cantare col cuore e con la voce, Dio salvi la Regina!

**La Marseillaise**  
(Standard Lyrics in Bold)

<i>French Lyrics</i>		
<b>Allons enfants de la Patrie, Le jour de gloire est arrivé ! Contre nous de la tyrannie, L’étendard sanglant est levé, (bis) Entendez-vous dans les campagnes Mugir ces féroces soldats ? Ils viennent jusque dans nos bras Égorger nos fils, nos compagnes !</b>	Aux armes, citoyens...	To arms, citizens...
<b>Aux armes, citoyens, Formez vos bataillons, Marchons, marchons ! Qu’un sang impur Abreuve nos sillons ! (bis)</b>	Amour sacré de la Patrie, Conduis, soutiens nos bras vengeurs Liberté, Liberté chérie, Combats avec tes défenseurs ! (bis) Sous nos drapeaux que la victoire Accoure à tes mâles accents, Que tes ennemis expirants Voient ton triomphe et notre gloire !	Tremble, tyrants and you traitors The shame of all parties, Tremble! Your parricidal schemes Will finally receive their reward! (re- peat) Everyone is a soldier to combat you If they fall, our young heroes, The earth will produce new ones, Ready to fight against you!
	Aux armes, citoyens...	To arms, citizens...
Que veut cette horde d’esclaves, De traîtres, de rois conjurés ? Pour qui ces ignobles entraves, Ces fers dès longtemps préparés ? (bis) Français, pour nous, ah ! quel outrage Quels transports il doit exciter ! C’est nous qu’on ose méditer De rendre à l’antique esclavage !	(Couplet des enfants) Nous entrerons dans la carrière Quand nos aînés n’y seront plus, Nous y trouverons leur poussière Et la trace de leurs vertus (bis) Bien moins jaloux de leur survivre Que de partager leur cercueil, Nous aurons le sublime orgueil De les venger ou de les suivre	Frenchmen, as magnanimous warriors, Bear or hold back your blows! Spare those sorry victims, Who arm against us with regret. (repeat) But not these bloodthirsty despots, These accomplices of Bouillé, All these tigers who, mercilessly, Rip their mother’s breast!
	Aux armes, citoyens...	To arms, citizens...
Quoi ! des cohortes étrangères Feraient la loi dans nos foyers ! Quoi ! Ces phalanges mercenaires Terrasseraient nos fiers guerriers ! (bis) Grand Dieu ! Par des mains enchaînées Nos fronts sous le joug se ploieraient De vils despotes deviendraient Les maîtres de nos destinées !	<i>English Translation</i> Arise, children of the Fatherland, The day of glory has arrived! Against us tyranny’s Bloody banner is raised,(repeat) Do you hear, in the countryside, The roar of those ferocious soldiers? They’re coming right into our arms To cut the throats of our sons, our women!	Sacred love of the Fatherland, Lead, support our avenging arms Liberty, cherished Liberty, Fight with thy defenders! (repeat) Under our flags, shall victory Hurry to thy manly accents, That thy expiring enemies, See thy triumph and our glory!
	Aux armes, citoyens...	To arms, citizens...
Tremblez, tyrans et vous perfides L’opprobre de tous les partis, Tremblez ! vos projets parricides Vont enfin recevoir leurs prix ! (bis) Tout est soldat pour vous combattre, S’ils tombent, nos jeunes héros, La terre en produit de nouveaux, Contre vous tout prêts à se battre !	To arms, citizens, Form your battalions, Let’s march, let’s march! Let an impure blood Water our furrows! (Repeat)	(Children’s Verse) We shall enter the (military) career When our elders are no longer there, There we shall find their dust And the trace of their virtues (repeat) Much less keen to survive them Than to share their coffins, We shall have the sublime pride Of avenging or following them
	Aux armes, citoyens...	To arms, citizens...
Français, en guerriers magnanimes, Portez ou retenez vos coups ! Épargnez ces tristes victimes, À regret s’armant contre nous. (bis) Mais ces despotes sanguinaires, Mais ces complices de Bouillé, Tous ces tigres qui, sans pitié, Déchirent le sein de leur mère !	What does this horde of slaves, Of traitors and conspiratorial kings want? For whom are these vile chains, These long-prepared irons? (repeat) Frenchmen, for us, ah! What outrage What fury it must arouse! It is us they dare plan To return to the old slavery!	
	To arms, citizens...	
	What! Foreign cohorts Would make the law in our homes! What! These mercenary phalanxes Would strike down our proud warriors! (repeat) Great God ! By chained hands Our brows would yield under the yoke Vile despots would have themselves The masters of our destinies!	

Italian Translation

Avanti, figli della Patria  
Il giorno della gloria è arrivato!  
Contro di noi della tirannia  
La bandiera insanguinata è innalzata (bis)  
Sentite nelle campagne  
Ruggire questi feroci soldati?  
Vengono fin nelle nostre braccia  
A sgozzare i nostri figli, le nostre com-  
pagne!

Alle armi, cittadini  
Formate i vostri battaglioni  
Marciamo, marciamo!  
Che un sangue impuro  
Imbeva i nostri solchi!

Che vuole quest'orda di schiavi,  
Di traditori, di re congiurati?  
Per chi questi ignobili ostacoli,  
Questi ferri da tanto tempo preparati? (bis)  
Francesi, per noi, ah! Che oltraggio  
Che fervori deve suscitare!  
È noi che si osa pensare  
Di restituire all'antica schiavitù!

Alle armi, cittadini,...

Che! Delle coorti straniere  
Vorrebbero dettar legge nei nostri focolari!  
Che! Queste falangi mercenarie  
Vorrebbero atterrire i nostri fieri guerrieri!  
(bis)  
Gran Dio! Per mani incatenate  
Le nostre fronti sotto il giogo si piegherebbero  
Dei vili despoti diventerebbero  
I detentori delle nostre sorti!

Alle armi, cittadini...

Tremate, tiranni e voi perfidi  
L'obbrobrio di tutti i partiti,  
Tremate! I vostri progetti parricidi  
Riceveranno finalmente i loro premi! (bis)  
Tutto è soldato per combattervi,  
Se cadono, i nostri giovani eroi,  
La terra ne produce di nuovi,  
Contro di voi ben pronti a battersi!

Alle armi, cittadini...,

francesi, da guerrieri magnanimi,  
Vibrate o trattenete i vostri colpi!  
Risparmiate quelle tristi vittime,

Che contro voglia si armano contro di noi  
(bis)  
Ma quei despoti sanguinari,  
Ma quei complici di Bouillé  
Tutte quelle tigri che, senza pietà,  
Lacerano il seno della loro madre!

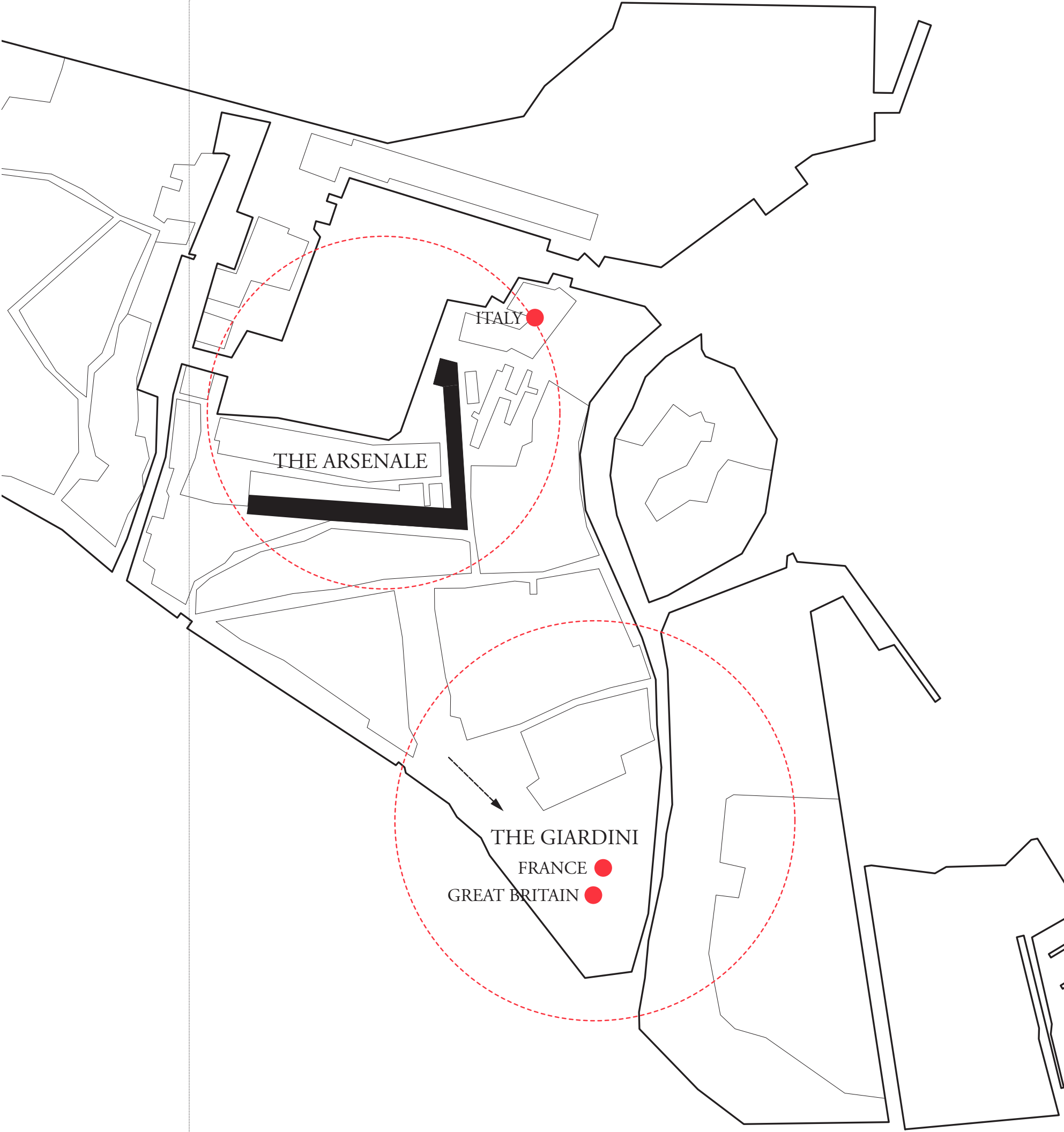
Alle armi, cittadini,...

Amore sacro della Patria,  
Conduci, sostieni le nostre braccia ven-  
dicatrici  
Libertà, amata Libertà,  
Combatti con i tuoi difensori! (bis)  
Sotto le nostre bandiere che la vittoria  
Accorra ai tuoi maschili richiami,  
Che i tuoi nemici spiranti  
Vedano il tuo trionfo e la nostra gloria!

Alle armi, cittadini,...

(Strofa dei bambini)  
Noi entreremo nella carriera  
Quando i nostri padri non ci saranno più,  
Noi ci troveremo le loro ceneri  
E il segno delle loro virtù (bis)  
Molto meno gelosi di loro sopravvivere  
Che di condividere la loro bara,  
Avremo il sublime orgoglio  
Di vendicarli o di seguirli.

Alle armi, cittadini...



Wars, state repression, and poverty have forced an increasing number of migrants from Africa and the Middle East to risk their lives, travelling from Lybia to Italy by sea. They await hearings in welcome centers in Sicily, are stranded at Ventimiglia on the French border, and are encamped in Calais, awaiting entrance to Britain. The European response to this humanitarian crisis has been cynical at best. Internal dissent has defeated even the modest proposal of accepting 60,000 refugees across Europe and inspired a hardening of European borders and enforcement procedures. In the province of Veneto, violent demonstrations recently erupted against a plan to house recent migrants in Treviso. In response, the President of Veneto and Northern League member, Luca Zaia, declared “No more refugees will be arriving” as a direct rebuke to the request by the national government’s proposal to settle migrants across the country and not only in the southern provinces.

The paths these migrants follow across Africa, the Middle East and Europe, trace backward the vectors of colonization that began in the late 19th century during the “scramble for Africa.” Eritrea, whose repressive military state has provoked the movement of the most refugees entering Italy this year, was an Italian colony from 1889-1941. Libya, the staging ground for voyages to Europe, was Italy’s colony from 1912-1947. Somalia, the country with the second largest number of refugees heading to Italy, was divided between Italy and Britain for the first half of the 20th century. The other nations from which the most migrants are escaping, were colonized by either the British – Nigeria, Gambia, Sudan – or the French – Syria, Senegal, and Mali.<sup>1</sup> Syria, whose devastating civil war is source of the most global migrants today, was assigned to France as part of the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which gave the French control over Syria until 1946.

Colonization played an essential part in the constitution of the modern capitalist economy. Throughout the long process of what Karl Marx called “so-called primitive accumulation”, during which capitalism was formed, three novel lines transformed the globe: the borders of European nation-states, the enclosure of peasant lands as private property, and the subdivision of the world beyond Europe into colonies.<sup>2</sup> These lines may seem like artifacts of history, but they act as foundations for the intertwined divisions that organize our world today.

The Venice Biennale was founded in 1895 as a celebration of Italian national arts, but it evolved quickly into an international biennale. By 1914, at the zenith of European Imperialism, there were seven national pavilions in the Giardini: Italy (1895), Belgium (1907), Hungary (1909), Germany (1909), Great Britain (1909), France (1912), and Russia (1914). The plan of the Biennale grounds with its two axes – the original Italian pavilion at the end of one, Britain flanked by France and Germany at the end of the other – has been built as an evolving representation of the balance of hegemony between national and colonial powers. The biennale itself functioned for much of its history as a project to assert the collective cultural supremacy of Europe over the rest of the world.

Europe’s national anthems were written between the 18th and 19th centuries. They are nationalist hymns, deeply ideological compositions designed to inspire common people to risk their lives to defend newly invented states. Often these simple songs point to the pure race of the nation, or allude to the conquest of neighbouring territories, or far off lands. The French Anthem,

“La Marseillaise” (1792), calls repeatedly in the chorus for the spilling of impure blood. The Italian Anthem, “Il Canto degli Italiani” (1847) glorifies Scipio Africanus, the Roman general who conquered Carthage in 202 BC, recalling the Latin conquest of North Africa. “God save the Queen” (1744), the anthem of the United Kingdom, threatens to “scatter her enemies... confound their politics, and frustrate their knavish tricks.” These songs are refrains. Singing them draws a boundary in song, a line separating citizens from non-citizens. In 1862, Guiseppe Verdi was commissioned to write an orchestral work for the London World’s Fair; in response he wrote the cantata “Inno Delle Nazioni” (“Hymn of Nations”). His composition was written to describe world solidarity, yet combined only three national songs, those of Britain, Italy and France. This curation, designed to inflate the importance of Italy within Europe, appears in hindsight as a strangely prescient combination in relation to today’s struggles over migration.

In the context of contemporary events, it seems appropriate to sing these songs together again, in opposition to their original meanings. The lines that demarcate the edges of the nation-states, were drawn alongside the lines that subdivided the nation into private properties, and the lines that carved the world into colonies. It is precisely these exclusionary lines that are reinforced by the lines of words and music that form these anthems. But the act of singing them is politically expressive in ways that exceed the meaning of their lyrics, and the intended emotional effect of their scores. Singing is a line, which has great power to create social connections and affective responses. When many people sing together these lines intermingle, resonate and amplify, to create a kind of superlinearity.<sup>3</sup> This effect can be mobilized to defend the nation, but it also can forge solidarities across national lines, or in resistance to the idea of the nation as a closed territory. Inno Delle Nazioni, Migrant Choir, is an affirmation of citizenship as an act of self-definition. Citizenship is defined here not by the exclusive membership in a given national group, but as the act of demanding “the right to have rights.”<sup>4</sup> But as migrants sing these songs their meanings self-implode and their exclusionary logics come undone.

The action is performed in solidarity with migrant rights organizations around the world.

*Endnotes*

<sup>1</sup> For the “Origin of migrants arriving in Italy by sea, Jan. to April 2015” see: “What’s Behind the Surge in Refugees Crossing the Mediterranean Sea”, New York Times, May 21, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/04/20/world/europe/surge-in-refugees-crossing-the-mediterranean-sea-maps.html>

<sup>2</sup> See Karl Marx, Capital Volume I, Trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin books, 1990), 871-940. and Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, “Fabrica Mundi: Producing the World by Drawing Borders” in Scapegoat: Architecture, Landscape, Political Economy, Issue 04: Currency, 4-19.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari use the word superlinearity to describe precisely this effect of voices. See A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 62.

<sup>4</sup> See Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1962 [1951]), 298; and Engin Isin, “Citizenship after orientalism” [opendemocracy.net /engin-isin/citizenship-after-orientalism-introduction](http://opendemocracy.net/engin-isin/citizenship-after-orientalism-introduction)