

Stéphane Mourlane, Céline Regnard, Manuela Martini, Catherine Brice, eds. *Italianness and Migration from the Risorgimento to the 1960s*. Palgrave, 2022. 270 pp. \$149.00, cloth, ISBN 978-3-030-88963-0.

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Italianness, the quality of being Italian and the feeling of belonging to Italy, has been an elusive concept since the original word *Italianità* was coined in the eighteenth century. On the one hand, due to the belated achievement of Italy's political unity, the people living in this geographical entity long retained a regional, provincial, and even local sense of attachment, except for a handful of advocates of territorial sovereignty possibly dating back to Dante Alighieri's well-known invective against "abject Italy ... inn of sorrows" in his fourteenth-century *Purgatorio* 6. On the other hand, the notion of Italianness has acquired a number of different linguistic, cultural, and political meanings and has undergone a process of continuous re-elaborations and manipulations of its contents over the centuries.

The volume under review here joins a growing scholarly interest in Italian identity from the Risorgimento to the present time and endeavors to address those complex issues, focusing on a specific—albeit quite wide—case study: the forging of Italianness within the context of the so-called Italian diaspora.[1] Resulting from a selection of the papers presented at a 2017 conference held in Paris ("Ciao Italia: A Century of Italian Migration and Culture in France, 1860-1960"), the book is as uneven as any collection of essays. A few chapters

are fully-fledged studies. This is the case of Bénédicte Deschamps's portrayal of nineteenth-century Risorgimento émigré Filippo Manetta, a promoter of republicanism in Italy from his US exile in the 1850s and a supporter of the Confederate States of America after repatriating in 1861. But it is not that of João Fábio Bertonha's piece about the 1928 incorporation of Fascist stalwarts into Italy's diplomatic ranks, which appears to be little more than a call for research in this field along with some preliminary findings.

Made up of as many as seventeen short essays and an introduction, the text as a whole might seem to lack cohesion and to bewilder readers. In particular, Delphine Diaz reconstructs the trajectories leading three Risorgimento refugees (Angelo Frignani, Lorenzo Benoni, and Cristina di Belgiojoso) to France, but she fails to investigate whether and, if so, how their plight affected their Italianness. Yet the other contributors cover an impressive array of identity-related topics across time and space. To cite a few examples, Laura Fournier-Finocchiaro explores the promotion of the Italian language by a few exiles in France in the first half of the nineteenth century. Marco Fincardi analyzes the hybrid Italian tongue that Antenore Quartaroli, an Emilian migrant from Boretto, used in an account of a 1909 mine accident in Cherry,

Illinois. Virginia de Almeida Bessa examines the function of popular theater in creating a national self-perception among Italians in São Paulo. Silvia Cassamagnaghi delves into the adoption of Italian children in the United States after the end of World War II. Maria Bossaert even broadens the notion of Italianness, pointing to subjects of the Ottoman Empire, mainly Armenians and Albanians, who developed a sense of affinity with Italy and considered it as a second homeland although they were not of Italian descent.

The grouping of the chapters into four thematic parts (“Italians through Their Travels,” “Italian Institutions,” “Italian Word,” and “Manifestations of Italianness”) instead of chronological order or along geographical lines is hardly reader-friendly, even more so because the authors are often unable to engage in dialogue with each other. The editors could have conceived more compelling sections, given that, for instance, four chapters deal with Fascist efforts to build Italianness among expatriates and to persuade migrants that loyalty to the regime was tantamount to attachment to the mother country.

Perhaps the setup of the book intends to stress some main factors shaping Italianness outside the national borders such as the displacement itself, comprising exile, and the organizations somehow dedicated to migrants—that is, the Dante Alighieri Society, Italian-language schools, and Fascist clubs abroad. As a result, for instance, besides Diaz’s essay, the first section of the volume includes Giacomo Girardi’s survey of the flight to Corfu and Albania on the part of a few Venetian patriots after the 1849 surrender of the Republic of San Marco to Austria, Manoela Patti’s discussion of the transnational identities of the Italian-American soldiers who fought in Italy during World War II, and Melissa Blanchard’s ethnographic fieldwork on migrants’ Argentina-born descendants who have moved back to Trentino since the early 1980s. While travel underlies migration almost by definition, one could frown on the decision to

place political exile, dispatch of troops to a foreign country, and settlement in the ancestors’ homeland under the same label.

Blanchard’s chapter also goes beyond the time frame of the collection. Although her essay may play the exception that confirms the rule, the periodization of the whole volume is problematic. Specifically, the 1960s are unlikely to be such a relevant turning point in the history of migration from Italy to mark a proper *terminus ad quem* as opposed to 1973, when, in the aftermath of the economic crisis that hit Western Europe, the migratory balance became positive for the first time since the outbreak of World War II.[2] Even more troubling is the fact that a book aiming to extend its coverage to the 1960s devotes three essays to a handful of Risorgimento émigrés and neglects Italian mass outflows to Western European destinations after World War II.[3] Against this backdrop, though carefully researched, Deschamps’s thirteen pages about such an eccentric personality as Manetta, who was also an inveterate racist notwithstanding his Mazzinian ideals, barely avoids falling within the category of mere academic erudition.[4]

The volume is poorly edited, too. This shortcoming affects especially a hastily written introduction that places São Paulo in Argentina (p. 21) and turns “adoption” into “abortion,” consequently stating that “Catholic institutions ... provided services in the emotive domain of abortion for Italian-American communities” (p. 18). It also mistakenly contends that unnaturalized Italian Americans were “imprisoned in 1942 in the United States as ‘enemy aliens’ (just as Germans and the Japanese)” (p. 14), while only the latter were subjected to mass detention after Washington’s entry into World War II.[5] In addition, many individuals—including famous persons such as Spanish dictator Francisco Franco, ambassador and minister of foreign affairs Raffaele Guariglia, and historian and statesperson Francesco Guic-

ciardini (p. 243)—are listed in the index without the first name.

All these flaws do not detract from the value of a few single essays. But several good chapters do not necessarily make a significant volume.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Edoardo Marcello Barsotti, *At the Roots of Italian Identity: “Race” and “Nation” in the Italian Risorgimento, 1796-1870* (New York: Routledge, 2021); and Lisa Dolasinski, “‘In Between’ Ethnic Heritage and Italian Identity: The Global Hip-Hop of Mahmood and Ghali,” *The Italianist* 42, no. 1 (2022): 119-38.

[2]. For the relevance of the year 1973, see Federico Romero, “L’emigrazione operaia in Europa (1948-1973),” in *Storia dell’emigrazione italiana: Partenze Piero Bevilacqua*, ed. Andreina De Clementi, and Emilio Franzina (Rome: Donzelli, 2001), 401; Michele Colucci and Stefano Gallo, eds., *L’emigrazione italiana: Storia e documenti* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2005), 236; and Corrado Bonifazi, *L’Italia delle migrazioni* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2013), 189.

[3]. See Michele Colucci, *Lavoro in movimento: L’emigrazione italiana in Europa, 1945-1957* (Rome: Donzelli, 2008).

[4]. It is hardly by chance that Manetta has heretofore aroused the interest primarily of non-academic, self-proclaimed Italian “patriotic” groups that cherish the legacy of an anti-Semitic thinker such as Julius Evola. See, for example, Alfonso De Filippi, “Filippo Manetta un italiano sostenitore dei confederati e della supremazia bianca,” *EreticaMente*, March 22, 2013, <https://www.ereticamente.net/2013/03/filippo-manetta-un-italiano-sostenitore-dei-confederati-e-della-supremazia-bianca.html>. For the few previous scholarly exceptions, see Howard R. Marraro, *Relazioni fra l’Italia e gli Stati Uniti* (Rome: Edizioni dell’Ateneo, 1954), 143-44; and Francesco Durante, *Italoamericana: Storia e letteratura degli italiani*

negli Stati Uniti, 1776-1880 (Milan: Mondadori, 2001), 477-79.

[5]. Fewer than 2,000 Italians out of roughly 690,000 unnaturalized immigrants were arrested, as opposed to about 112,000 Japanese. For these figures, see Guido Tintori, “Italiani *enemy aliens*: I civili residenti negli Stati Uniti d’America durante la Seconda guerra mondiale,” *Altreitalie* no. 28 (2004): 83-103, here 86, 95, 97.

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