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Mark I. Choate

Brigham Young University - Utah, mark_choate@byu.edu

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Italy at Home and Abroad After 150 Years: The Legacy of Emigration and the Future of *Italianità*

MARK I. CHOATE

Brigham Young University, USA

Shortly after unification in the Risorgimento, mass emigration stretched Italy in unforeseen ways, changing its culture, economics, and politics, and even its state, territory, language, and population. This enforced globalization polarized Italy and radically changed Italy as a nation-state and as a national culture. Controversies over emigration sharply divided Italian Liberals from the Nationalists and Fascists. The ideals of the nation-state, articulated by Mazzini, have been transformed by emigration in ways that have anticipated the twenty-first century global world. Today Italy faces similar challenges with rising immigration, together with the potential for constructive solutions.

KEYWORDS emigration, immigration, nationalism, Fascism, Liberalism, nation-state, Risorgimento, irredentism

L'Italia sarà dunque Una. Condizioni geografiche, tradizione, favola, letteratura, necessità di forza e di difesa politica, voto di popolazioni, istinti democratici innati negli italiani, presentimento d'un Progresso al quale occorrono tutte le facoltà del paese, coscienza d'iniziativa in Europa e di grandi cose da compiersi dall'Italia a prò del mondo si concentrano a questo fine.

(Mazzini, 1862, 3: 256)

Some of the core principles of Italy's Risorgimento, enunciated by Giuseppe Mazzini, seem hopelessly remote at its sesquicentennial. A hundred and fifty years have eroded the certainty of a nation based upon Mazzini's oft-repeated list of geography, language, literature, military defense, and politics. As 26 million Italians moved outside of Italy, and millions more immigrants have entered Italy in recent decades, the core assumptions of a traditional nation-state no longer apply. Mazzini's concerns for popular democracy, economic progress, and European collegiality speak to the twenty-first century in ways that an Italian national mission does not.

After unification expanded the traditional definitions of Italian geography, language, and politics, Italy's long experience with mass migration posed a fundamental challenge to Giuseppe Mazzini's prescribed ideals. Mazzini himself had condemned emigration as manifestly abhorrent, and had characterized Italy's emigration in the mid-nineteenth century as a problem resulting from Italy's political fractures into separate states. Emigration manifested the ills of national disunity. Using the language of diaspora, Mazzini characterized the divided Italians as "soldati senza bandiera, israeliti delle Nazioni" (Mazzini, 1966: 9) and postulated that unification would remove the need for emigration (1966: 56). Mazzini the prophet was incorrect in this case. Under the push and pull of industrialization, Italian laborers faced two contrasting pressures from the consequences of a transportation revolution. Inexpensive American grain imports, brought to European markets by railroad and steamship, began to crush comparatively inefficient Italian agriculture. At the same time, underemployed Italian workers could now travel to the Americas much more cheaply and reliably by transatlantic steamer. Combined with other social and political factors, Italian emigration skyrocketed after 1871, peaking in 1913 with more than 870,000 departures, and reviving again after World War II with still more millions voluntarily leaving Italy.

This article traces the impact of emigration on Italy since the Risorgimento, through a twenty-first-century international lens, leading up to debates over immigration today. While emigration appeared at first to unravel Italy, in reality it changed Italy profoundly, stretching and expanding Italian culture on a global scale. No one was prepared for the mass emigration of the late nineteenth century and early and mid-twentieth century, as Italy produced the largest recorded international migration in world history (Vecoli, 1995: 114). Similarly, Italy is unprepared for rising immigration in the twenty-first century.

Mazzini's vision of Italian development has been challenged by international migration and also by rising international institutions. The era of the nation-state, from the French Revolution through the national movements of 1848–71 to the First and Second World Wars, now seems to have receded. Although Mazzini envisioned a continental European unity founded upon independent nations rather than traditional empires, today's politics downplay national sovereignty in ways no nineteenth-century Liberal could anticipate. The European Union is ever more ambitious to expand into new areas of traditional national sovereignty, with more bureaucratic institutions and additional political and constitutional mandates. Together with other international organizations such as the United Nations, NATO, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, multinational and international organizations leave much less of an independent role for individual nation-states. These bodies also create more room for regional movements in Europe. In the early 1990s, before Romano Prodi had balanced the Italian budget, the Lega Nord argued that northern Italy, as a separate regional sovereign country, could better qualify to join the Eurozone than Italy could as a whole. The party's leader, Umberto Bossi, argued that national unity should be sacrificed to achieve continental unity (cf. Bull, 1994). Internationalism thus challenges nationalism from above and below, from the European institutional capitals and from the regions that make up Italy.

Beyond money and politics, the movement of emigrants across borders would seem to be the ultimate abnegation of national ties. Yet emigration and immigration can reinforce national feelings. For more than two decades, international migration has been studied as one of nationalism's central components. Anderson cites the "imagined communities" of American Creoles in the eighteenth century as a first wave of nationalist ideological formation, born of imperial emigration and settlement (1991: 49–68). Gellner writes of "diaspora nationalisms," identities created among scattered ethnicities such as the Jews, Armenians, and Greeks (1983: 98–105). Both Anderson and Gellner argue that migration can lead to new forms of nationalism. A later group of anthropologists, on the other hand, advance a contrary theory of global "transnationalism." According to their argument, the contemporary era of unprecedented migration, international communications, and ease of travel has led and will lead to hybrid identities, multiple loyalties, and the undermining of outmoded nation-states (see Glick Schiller et al., 1992; 1995). We must ask ourselves, then, if the rising tide of globalism always erases national borders and identities and what may happen if a nation-state intervenes directly to influence migration currents, for political, economic, and cultural ends.

Italy presents a historical example of a sending state's active involvement in building nationalism among its emigrants, and the nationalistic repercussions of migration at home. Mass migration from Italy a century ago resembles in many ways the major migration trends of the global twenty-first century (Choate, 2008). Unlike the massive Polish, Jewish, and Irish emigrations from multiethnic empires, Italians departed from a newly formed nation-state eager to compete in the global arena of trade and diplomacy. Politically unified after centuries of deep regional divisions, the Kingdom of Italy viewed migration as a problem, but also as an opportunity to spread Italian national influence worldwide. The state promoted *italianità*, a subsidized and somewhat artificial Italianism, as a portable, enduring ethnic identity for transnational emigrants. By fostering a transnational nationalism, Liberal Italy embraced the pioneering role of a global nation, centered in the metropole of Italy but above international borders, with emigrants worldwide contributing to a super-nation-state. Italians abroad, outside their native provincial and regional contexts, naturally went through a nationalizing experience as Italians when crossing international borders and confronting other nationalities. The farther away from their local church bell tower, valley, and dialect, the more Italian the emigrants appeared and behaved (see Choate, 2007).

Liberal politicians hoped to facilitate these emigrants' plans for return migration and remittances by cultivating a worldwide Italian community. To encourage emigrant nationalism, the state worked at the limits of politics, relying upon culture and religion to brand emigrants as Italian. Consolidating Italian influence abroad required a common language and a coherent ethnic identity for emigrants, supported by state-subsidized schools, cultural groups, and Catholic missionaries. While American and European governments encouraged assimilation, Italy encouraged ethnic separatism in Italian *colonie*, communities which could build a network for a combined Greater Italy. But these programs provoked deep division within Italy itself. Opponents of the Liberal policies questioned the loyalties of emigrants, particularly those who adopted another country's citizenship. Because of Italy's high rates of

return migration (more than fifty per cent), mass migration not only shaped Italian communities abroad, but also shaped the Italian metropole in profound ways (cf. Caroli, 1973; Cinel 1991).

Transnational migration in Italian culture

Emigration played a foundational role in Italian culture, especially as departure from Italy became fused with ideas of exile and diaspora. The political exile of Giuseppe Mazzini, Carlo Cattaneo, Giuseppe Garibaldi, and others launched the Italian Risorgimento upon a borderless world stage, involving Switzerland, England, Brazil, Argentina, and other countries. Emigration was almost taken for granted, as an unspoken assumption and a constant context. For example, Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Nabucco* featured the choral piece "Va' pensiero," which became an unofficial Italian national anthem combining themes of national longing, enforced exile, and diaspora. The idea of Italy was intrinsically fused with the awareness of Italy beyond its own borders, theoretically during the Risorgimento and then literally within decades, as emigration soared. By 1911 one-sixth of Italy's population were Italians outside of Italy, a reality which did not escape Italy's artists and writers. For present purposes, I will highlight now just two examples: the poems of Giovanni Pascoli and Giacomo Puccini's opera *La fanciulla del West* (1910).

Pascoli began his career as a schoolteacher in the town of Matera, Basilicata, and in Massa and Livorno in Tuscany, before achieving success with his published poetry and in 1906 succeeding Giosuè Carducci in the chair of literature at the University of Bologna. Pascoli never forgot the poverty of his impoverished high school students, in provinces with some of the highest emigration rates in the entire country. In 1909 he first memorialized the shame of Italian emigration in his collection *Nuovi poemetti*, dedicated to his students. Pascoli inscribed the subtitle of one poem "Sacred to wandering Italy" and another "Sacred to Italy in exile." The first of these, titled "Italy" (in English, not "Italia"), incorporates realistic elements of the bastardized Italian-English of migrants in Cincinnati, Ohio: "Trova un *farm*. *You want buy?*" In this poem and in several speeches, Pascoli used the anti-immigrant slur "dego" (sic) explaining to his European audiences its associations with crime and mafia (1939: 275–96). The second poem, "Pietole," incorporates phrases from the glossary of one of the many manuals for Italian emigrants in foreign lands: "I am Italian I am hungry. Soy Italiano Tengo hambre. Ich bin Italiener Ich bin hungrig" (1939: 420–31). These pathetic lyrics are among the most moving literature commemorating Italy's mass migrations, and contrast strongly with Pascoli's melancholy cycle, "Gli emigranti della luna." This childlike fairytale, describing the features of the moon as if in a dream, free for settlement and development, connotes the lack of opportunities many emigrants found in grinding poverty (1939: 388–406). In 1912 Pascoli wrote a hymn, "Inno degli emigrati italiani a Dante," to be set to music, for the monument to Dante built by Italian emigrants in New York City. With its first line, "Exile to whom everyone was cruel," Pascoli developed the theme of exile found in Dante and Virgil, contrasting Italy's past greatness to Italian emigrants' present misery (Pascoli, 1939: 920; 1914, 219; see also Amram, 1913). Pascoli's lyrics bridge the divide between high culture and low culture, bringing in brutal truths from the gritty economic reality of

emigration, rather than a philosophical or academic conception. His verses depict the sad plight of Italy's emigrants, a plight which he viewed as a failure of the Italian state and a betrayal of the ideals of the Risorgimento. As Carducci's heir and successor as Italy's national poet, Pascoli commemorated in verse the fiftieth anniversary of Italian unification in 1911. The disjunction between Italy's great ideals, and the sad contemporary results, led to some of Pascoli's most passionate poetry and prose.

Emigration became a significant theme in Italian opera as well. In his last full-length realist opera, true to the contemporary standards of *verismo*, Giacomo Puccini and his librettists explored the pathos of emigration both directly and indirectly. *La fanciulla del West* (1910) included important changes from the original source material, David Belasco's play *The Girl of the Golden West* (1905). Unlike the play, the libretto by Carlo Zangarini and Gelfo Civinini opens with a poignant focus on an emigrant's plight. In the first scene, set in a raucous frontier saloon in the Sierra Nevada mountains, a minstrel's nostalgic song on the banjo turns all the miners away from their poker game to thoughts of home, as they sing along with the refrains. The character Jim Larkens breaks down:

Non reggo più,
non reggo più, ragazzi! Son malato,
non so di che . . . Mandatemi,
ah, mandatemi via ! Son rovinato !
Son stanco di piccone e di miniera!
Voglio l'aratro, vo' la mamma mia! . . . (Puccini et al., 1910: 12–13)

The miners quickly gather donations as a group to pay for Jim's passage home; Jim thanks them and leaves. In the play, Jim returns home to Pennsylvania; in the opera, however, he returns home to Cornwall, his home across the ocean on the Celtic Sea. This opera of Puccini, Zangarini, and Civinini should be understood as a tale of transatlantic migration, set not in Italy but nevertheless informed by the Italian migrant experience.

At the end of the opera, the title character Minnie and her captured bandit lover are set free, and allowed to move far away to start a new life together. The trauma of emigration, for the individual and the group, is captured in the final lines of the opera, where the California homeland might as well be Italy:

MINNIE e DICK JOHNSON: Addio, mia dolce terra, addio, mia California! Bei monti della Sierra, o nevi, addio! . . . (escono di scena). (La turba è accasciata. . . si abbandonano al dolore — altri ancora, tristamente, fanno cenni di addio a Minnie che va allontanandosi)

Le Voci di MINNIE e di JOHNSON: (interne, allontanandosi) Addio, mia California, addio!

La TURBA: (sotto voce, singhiozzando) Mai più ritornerai . . . mai più . . . mai più!
(Puccini et al., 1910: 60–61)

Puccini's *Fanciulla* is not considered his best work, and is less known than many of his other operas. Like the Italian emigrants, *La Fanciulla del West* had a transient existence. It premiered in 1910 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, which had commissioned the work, rather than at La Scala in Milan. The famed tenor Enrico Caruso starred as the bandit Johnson, in the Met's first world premiere, and

the opera went on to premiere in other cities, several with strong ties to Italian migration: London (1911), Rome (1911), Buenos Aires (1911), Melbourne (1912), and Berlin (1913), before the First World War. The opera was revived at the Met for its centennial in 2010, yet *La Fanciulla* is performed much less frequently than Puccini's other operas. Likewise, Pascoli wrote his hymn to Dante for the Italian-American community of New York City; his hymns and speeches for the fiftieth anniversary of the Italian Risorgimento in 1911 had wider resonance with their primarily Italian audience. Writing about emigrants for an emigrant audience limited the legacy of works by Pascoli and Puccini, because the works became strangers in strange lands, remembered well neither in the USA nor in Italy, where national canons have acted as silos.¹

Even though the direct treatment of emigration is a marginal theme within the literary canon, central figures of Italian culture fall under the category of Italians abroad. During the high point of Italian emigration, the labels of expatriate, exile, and emigrant collapsed together in political and institutional rhetoric in Italy, much as Pascoli had associated the exile of Dante and Virgil with Italians abroad. Technically, emigration was only by third-class passage; those traveling by first class and second class did not have to stop at Ellis Island, for example. However, to promote Italian community solidarity the Italian government grouped together all Italians abroad, whether rich or poor. For example, the painters Amedeo Modigliani and Giorgio de Chirico, the poets Giuseppe Ungaretti, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and F. T. Marinetti, and the Italian Futurists in Paris were all together with emigrants in the same big tent of Italians Abroad. Except for Modigliani, who was in very poor health, all these returned to Italy to fight for their mother country in the First World War, along with hundreds of thousands of other Italian expatriates. These leading artists and their individual experiences should be considered within the context of Italy abroad.

Emigration sometimes has been overlooked in the big picture of Italian cultural history because, in addition to the inherent marginality of international migration, political contexts have played a role. The Fascist Party attempted to expropriate Italian emigration by creating committees or cells of Fascists Abroad, with disastrous consequences for Italy's international public relations (see Luconi, 2000; Cannistraro, 1995). Politicians on the Left often saw emigration as a sign of defeat and loss for the ongoing class struggle, and emigrants often passed out of sight and out of mind. Emigration remained something to be eradicated as soon as possible rather than something crucial in its own right. What both sides of politics could not deny, however, was the size of Italian emigration and its looming impacts at home and abroad.

Italian interpretations of mass migration

The massive outflow of emigration sparked starkly different perspectives. One proposal, favored by Francesco Crispi in the 1890s and later by Mussolini, focused on limiting the hemorrhage of people by diverting emigrants to Italian colonies in Africa. Another viewpoint, based upon laissez-faire labor theory, valued emigration as a free and constructive choice, and supported economic and political networks

between the Little Italies of Buenos Aires, New York, San Francisco, and so forth. These core Nationalist and Liberal interpretations of Italian foreign policy produced a stark dichotomy: according to these two warring parties, emigration was either controlled or free, destructive or beneficial, a scattering or an expansion (Choate, 2008). Fundamental conceptions of migration, as essentially bad or essentially good, shaped Italian politics, culture, and trade.

Emigration lay at the heart of the ideology of Italian Nationalism and national socialism. Enrico Corradini, founder of the Italian Nationalist Association, explained in 1911 why Italy needed to unite all of its people, to fight in an ongoing international struggle:

Questa condizione dell'emigrazione, del bisogno che tanti milioni d'Italiani hanno di cercare pane e lavoro oltre l'oceano; e l'altra condizione delle altre nazioni stretto da presso, mi hanno fatto, per analogia, chiamare l'Italia una nazione proletaria . . . Il nazionalismo afferma anzitutto la necessità che l'Italia si formi una coscienza nazionale, che è, anch'essa, uno spirito di corpo; è spirito di solidarietà fra cittadini, come la coscienza di classe è quello spirito di solidarietà tra lavoratori. (Corradini, 1980: 185–86)²

Corradini argued that Italians must join together as a single body. Class division and individualism meant alienation from the true class struggle, not the struggle described by Marx, but the international struggle for existence as a people. In his novels, plays, and speeches, Corradini argued that emigration was a feudal mode of production and that Italy needed to rise to a higher stage of economic development: the settlement colonialism of imperial conquest (Corradini, 1911: 221–22; compare Coletti, 1911). His formulation of national socialism, drawn from the experience of emigration, would ultimately lead Italy to disaster. Enrico Corradini led the fusion of his Nationalist party with Mussolini's Fascist party in 1923, bringing with him a cadre of intellectual leaders to the regime. In the Second World War, after Corradini had died, Mussolini pursued wars in Africa and Europe to the bitter end.

Corradini lionized Francesco Crispi and rehabilitated his reputation, which lay in tatters after Italy's first major African defeat in 1896. The economics professor Luigi Einaudi had offered an alternative to Crispi's African colonialism with his book *Un principe mercante*, published in 1900. Against the model of ancient imperial Rome, which sent conquering legions to occupy new territories, Einaudi proposed the legacy of Italy's medieval maritime republics, which had established outposts for trade and economic control of the Mediterranean (1900: 18). Italian entrepreneurs working in South America were

l'incarnazione viva delle qualità intellettuali e organizzatrici destinate a trasformare la piccola Italia attuale in una futura "più grande Italia," pacificamente espandente il suo nome e la sua schiatta gloriosa in un continente più ampio dell'antico impero Romano. (1900: 18)

Einaudi's formulation of a *più grande Italia* was modeled upon J. R. Seeley's formulation of Greater Britain, the ideal of a Liberal empire expanding naturally across the globe (Seeley, 1883). Einaudi maintained that Italians abroad would create new markets for products made in Italy, even if the emigrants produced goods in competition (1900: 146). Italy would in effect have an expanded economy, drawing upon

the productivity of Italians worldwide. Lingering doubts about Einaudi's predictions left an opening for Corradini and his successors, who promised glory and honor rather than the grinding struggles of emigration.

Corradini's and Einaudi's conclusions were profound for both Italian foreign and domestic aims. When Mussolini's wars brought down his Fascist-Nationalist regime, Italian Liberalism achieved its lasting postwar triumph. Einaudi himself was elected the first President of the Italian Republic, founded upon anti-fascism in its principles and policies. Einaudi's son's publishing house, Giulio Einaudi editore, likewise continued to promote anti-fascist political culture. The postwar peace and prosperity saw renewed Italian emigration amid unprecedented international economic integration, until the declining Italian birth rate and falling population led to a dramatic reversal, with significant immigration into Italy now necessary to balance the country's population in the twenty-first century. The internecine struggle with Fascism and Nationalism, and their final defeat, had brought Italy back full circle to Mazzini's founding republican principles.

Emigration and Mazzinian ideals

Hindsight is a judgment that historians should not abuse, but the sesquicentennial anniversary offers the chance to look back on the Risorgimento through the optic of international migration. Mass emigration, which Mazzini did not predict and which he fundamentally opposed, rewrote the rules of Italian state formation. Emigration challenged Mazzini's assumptions for the basis of Italian unity: an Italian state, territory, language, economy, and population. The following subsections will address some of the salient challenges, or questions, raised by Mazzini's principles.

Questions of the state

Mazzini's vision of an Italian Republic was crushed by the success of the monarchy in the Risorgimento, with key allies such as Crispi and even Garibaldi leaving Mazzini to support the Savoyard king. But emigrants used the freedoms of the Liberal constitution of 1848 to move entirely beyond the Italian state's control. Although the king of Italy still claimed emigrants as his subjects, and included them in the Italian census, only entreaties and persuasion could convince emigrants to send back much-needed currency, and to return home with their savings and international experience. The Emigration Law of 1901 and the Remittances Law of 1902 enshrined unprecedented rights and freedoms for Italians, protected in a Lockean compact by the Italian state (Choate, 2008).

Voting rights for Italian expatriates have a complex history involving both Right and Left, and demonstrate the often contradictory responses to emigrants' transgressive status. Emigrant voting was proposed early in the twentieth century by a Socialist Parliamentary deputy (cf. Cabrini, 1908). Although the voting rights legislation of 1913 broadly expanded the rights of Italian males inside Italy, Cabrini's proposals were dismissed as impractical. Two world wars later, suffrage for Italians abroad was proposed again by the neofascist Mirko Tremaglia, first elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1972 as a member of the erstwhile Movimento sociale italiano. Tremaglia

claims credit for authoring the parliamentary measure which in December 2001 extended the constitutional right to vote to Italian citizens outside Italy (cf. Zapperi, 2009). Italians abroad now choose twelve of the 630 members of the Chamber of Deputies and six of the 315 elected members of the Senate. One deputy and one senator come from the continents divided as follows: “Europe, including Russia and Turkey; South America; North and Central America; Africa, Asia, Oceania, and [even] Antarctica”; the rest of the expatriate seats are divided according to the density of Italian settlements worldwide (*Avviso ai Cittadini Italiani Residenti negli Stati Uniti sul Voto all’Estero*). The candidates in each geographic division must be residents of that continent. After registering with their consulate, voters may mail in their ballots from countries in compliance with international agreements guaranteeing security of the post. If no such agreements are in force for the country of residence, Italians abroad may return to Italy to vote, with a 75 percent reimbursement for their travel.

Although the expansion of suffrage is a progressive measure, Tremaglia and the MSI seized leadership in expatriate voting. For example, Tremaglia and his allies supported Italians in the Istrian territories lost to Yugoslavia (now Croatia and Slovenia) after the Fascist defeat, and hoped an expatriate voting bloc would repay them with loyalty in the new millennium. Italians abroad voted for the first time in the national referendum of June 2003 and in the parliamentary election of April 2006. But, despite Tremaglia’s campaigning for Berlusconi’s bloc in the electoral list “For Italy in the World/Per l’Italia nel Mondo,” the expatriate vote was decisive in the center-left coalition victory, and ended Berlusconi’s second government (“Il voto degli italiani all’estero è legge”).³ In essence, the fortunes of the state had been decided outside of the boundaries of the state itself.

Questions of territory

Mazzini argued that the territorial unity of the Italian peninsula, circled by seas and by the Alps, provided an obvious justification for unification, as natural and as clear as looking at a Mediterranean map. The process of unification, however, was much more complex. As the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia expanded into the Kingdom of Italy in 1859, 1860, 1861, 1866, and 1870, several Italian territories were left outside the new kingdom and remained under Austrian and Hungarian rule. These were the so-called unredeemed territories, under the pressure of German assimilation. Their cause was taken up in 1889 by the Dante Alighieri Society for Italian Language and Culture outside the Kingdom, as a cultural and supposedly apolitical effort, since Austria was Italy’s partner in the Triple Alliance. Taking rising Italian emigration into account, the Society’s second president, Senator Pasquale Villari expanded the group’s mission in 1897 beyond its traditional focus on Italian Trent and Trieste (Villari, 1898). For the good of the Italian race, Italian emigrants around the world needed to learn standard Italian, “la lingua di Dante,” whether in Tunisia, the Americas, or Switzerland, to communicate with one another and with the mother country (Villari, 1900). “Non sono anche queste, terre irredente?,” Villari queried. “Non sono anche questi nostri fratelli? (1901: 8).

Irredentism tapped into powerful Risorgimento myths of morality, mission, and territory, which would be consummated only with Italy's victory in the First World War. Labeling all Italians everywhere as heirs to Italian redemption vastly expanded the aims of Italian unification, yet maintained the significance of Italian identity for individuals beyond borders and beyond the material embrace of any Italian government.

Questions of language

Even after unification, the Italian peninsula was riven from centuries of independent political, cultural, and linguistic developments. As the novelist, painter, and politician Massimo D'Azeglio famously observed in 1867, "[...] pur troppo s'è fatta l'Italia, ma non si fanno gl'Italiani" (d'Azeglio, 1867, 1: 7).⁴ If emigrants abroad were to become, or remain, Italian, language had to be the linchpin between Italian territory, culture, and politics. In the nineteenth century, academics settled upon the Siense Tuscan dialect, used by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, as the standard Italian language; but no one outside of Tuscany spoke this language colloquially, in their homes or with their friends. High illiteracy in Italy led directly to a majority of Italian emigrants being unable to read and write. Italian politicians recognized immediately that language would be central to an enduring Italian identity abroad, so emigrants could communicate not only with compatriots from other regions of Italy, but also with Italian officials and consuls. With irredentist overtones, the radical Giuseppe Prato argued, "la lingua è rimasta ormai, se non la sola, almeno la più salda difesa delle nazioni minacciate, la salvezza unica e la speranza dei popoli oppressi, il mezzo più efficace di espansione per le razze più forti e le stirpi superiori" (1900: 109). Ferdinando Martini, who served as Minister of Public Education and Minister of Colonies, stated in 1910 that "nella lingua è l'anima della patria" (1912: 811). If first-generation migrants speaking dialects learned standard Italian, the Italian community could unite instead of falling into regional divisions. If second-generation Italians also spoke "la lingua di Dante" they would be moored to Italian culture and society no matter where they lived. Retention of national language and culture, especially by emigrants' children and grandchildren, became the goal of Italian state interventions into Italian communities abroad.

Cultural expansion had always been a cornerstone for Italy's foreign policy. True to its Romantic ideology, the Italian government established its program for Italian schools abroad shortly after Unification. Schools pursued national policy objectives in the Mediterranean basin, and after the Adwa defeat the program was expanded to Italy's so-called "free colonies" of emigrants in the Americas (cf. Floriani, 1974; Salvetti, 2002). The Italian schools flew Italian flags and celebrated Italian holidays to promote a transnational civic religion among the youth. In the United States, Italy was not allowed to establish state schools, so the state relied entirely upon proxy groups, including Catholic Church schools, subsidized after 1901 through the Emigration Fund.⁵ The Dante Alighieri Society for Italian Language and Culture outside the Kingdom, sponsored by the Italian government, organized Italian language courses for emigrants and their children abroad. Dante committees in Italy distributed patriotic pamphlets at ports of departure and creating lending libraries for passenger ships,

so emigrants would have patriotic reading for their two-week passage across the Atlantic. Dante committees abroad supported Italian schools with prizes, scholarships for poor students, and heavy subsidies. Italy's Foreign Ministry helped by supplying patriotic books, such as *Moral Tales in Italian* and *Biographies and Tales of Our Fatherland's History*.⁶

The Italian state still remains involved in Italian foreign language education. In the United States, for example, Italy heavily subsidizes the College Board's administration of the SAT Italian Subject Test, to ensure that Italian remains one of nine languages tested for high school students preparing for college. The saga of this examination, launched in 2005, cancelled in 2009, and reinstated for 2012, speaks to the trials and aspirations of the Italian American community. To fund the continuation of the exam, the Italian Language Foundation coordinates contributions from leading Italian organizations including the Order Sons of Italy in America, Columbus Citizens Foundation, UNICO National, and National Italian American Foundation. Italian language instruction has in the end relied upon funding both from Italy and from historic Italian expatriate and Italian heritage groups.⁷

Questions of economics

Liberalism meant an economic system as well as a political system, offering the promise of attainable prosperity or well-being. True followers of the economist Adam Smith posited that emigrants' free choices, protected by the Italian state, expanded the world economy without subtracting from Italy's economic potential, as in the words of Luigi Einaudi:

È ragionamento di mente piccina il credere che ogni fabbrica impiantata da nostri connazionali, ogni terreno sottoposto a coltivazione, ogni colle piantato a viti nell'America rappresenti una sottrazione alla attività nostra, una perdita netta per la esportazione italiana. Nella realtà quei prodotti locali servono ad accreditare la marca italiana, giovano a far sorgere desideri che prima erano latenti, ed il consumo, risvegliato dai prodotti locali, a poco a poco raffinandosi, si rivolge dalle imitazioni fatte da italiani ai prodotti genuini d'Italia. (1900: 146)

Einaudi had enough confidence in the strength of Italian culture that he called for free trade rather than protectionism, for Italian goods to compete unhindered in the world market rather than merely for the home market. He believed Italy could succeed as an export-driven economy. Einaudi's counterintuitive conclusions were mocked by Italian Nationalists, and the Fascists held to autarky rather than free trade principles. After the Second World War, Einaudi argued that his national policies of tight money would build the basis for a stable currency and an economy based upon exports to foreign markets rather than consumption in Italy's internal market, as the United States advised. The resulting short-term unemployment, memorably documented in the film *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), led to condemnation by Socialists and Communists, with attendant fears of revolution.

Yet Einaudi's long-term policies proved successful. His model called for economic growth based upon the success of the Italian brand worldwide, rather than fixed-sum increases in labor productivity (cf. Zamagni, 1993; Cafagna, 1989). Italy could compete in world export markets building upon style, cachet, taste, and reputation — in

short, an export-driven economy based upon culture. Einaudi called for exports directed toward emigrant markets, as bridgeheads into bigger continental markets in North and South America, and elsewhere. Piero Gribaudi argued similarly in his 1913 high school textbook on *La più grande Italia*, urging the merchants and industrialists of Italy to

creare, con l'aiuto della più grande Italia politica ed etnografica di cui abbiamo parlato, anche una più grande Italia commerciale [...] Le merci italiane devono seguire gli emigranti [...] Al ben noto *made in Germany* contrapponiamo il *made in Italy* e faremo opera non solo di patriottismo, ma anche di grande utilità per la nostra espansione commerciale. (Gribaudi, 1913: 199–200; emphasis in the original)

Italian mass emigration coincided with the development of new technologies in dry pasta production (*pasta 'sciutta*), suitable for export (cf. Cinotto, 2001; Diner, 2001; Gabaccia, 1998; La Cecla, 1998). Over time, Italian wines, cheeses, tomatoes, olives, and other products emerged from ethnic enclaves into mainstream cuisine, growing from emigrant support into general marketability.

The label Made in Italy constitutes much of Italy's international reputation, and it continues to grow in value with fashion, design, and performance brands like Versace, Armani, Ferrari, and many others. Italy's export success in the growing middle-class Chinese market, for example, validates an export strategy based upon reputation rather than price (cf. Yang, 2011).

Questions of population

With all the historic diversity of populations on the Italian peninsula, unification brought little clarification about the ethnic, national, or racial definition of what it meant to be Italian. Through the Liberal and Fascist periods, the words *stirpe*, *razza*, *popolo*, and *gente* were used with slippery meanings, descending into Italy's participation in the Holocaust and Mussolini's last stand under Hitler's aegis in the Repubblica sociale italiana (cf. Knudsen, 2010; Donati, 2007). The legal identification of Italians abroad was driven by changing citizenship laws at home, using the right of blood inheritance (*jus sanguinis*) rather than the right of soil (*jus soli*) based upon residence at birth. Italians born abroad therefore could claim the rights, and were imputed the duties, of Italian citizenship even after many generations outside of Italy. Citizenship only came through the Italian father's line, until Italian women gained rights of voting and citizenship under the Italian Republic in 1946. *Jus soli* for birth in Italy has remained partial and conditional.

The emphasis on blood runs counter to neoliberal sensibilities. Legally, Italian ethnicity is assigned by biologic inheritance. Italian emigration provided an ironic challenge to the categorical assumptions underpinning these simple definitions, made explicitly racist under the Fascist regime. As emigrants mixed and moved across borders around the world, they remained entirely Italian if descended from Italian fathers (and Italian mothers after 1947). Many in North and South America have successfully sought Italian citizenship, and a second passport to the European Union, through tracing and proving their blood ancestry (cf. Cook-Martín, 2008).

The lingering emphasis on racial inheritance has been exploited by Italian right-wing politicians. The Movimento sociale italiano, the Alleanza nazionale, the Popolo

di libertà, and Futuro e libertà, along with other iterations of right-wing party coalitions, have claimed the mantle of Italian family identity, opposing immigration, supporting traditional families, and defending Italians as a people, race, or ethnicity within Italy and worldwide. Mirko Tremaglia, still a right-wing member of Parliament, and a war veteran who fought for the Nazi-Fascist Repubblica sociale italiana, served from 2001 to 2006 as Italy's first Minister for Italians across the World as part of Silvio Berlusconi's second government. Lauded for winning Italians abroad the right to vote, Tremaglia used his office to treat Italians abroad as a racial category, glorify the Nazi-occupied Republic of Salò, and label all anti-Nazi opponents of Salò as true traitors to the fatherland, thereby using population policies as a vehicle for racist polemics (cf. Breda, 2001).

Population remains the primary challenge for Italy in the twenty-first century, with the potential to turn the Mazzinian ideals of the Risorgimento upside-down. With the peninsula's striking decline in birth rates, among the lowest in the world and past the crisis point a decade ago, immigration appears to be the peninsula's only demographic salvation to keep the Italian labor economy afloat. Return migration of Italian expatriate descendants, generations after the ancestor's first departure, has been proposed as a way to shore up Italy's population, but economic and political integration remains difficult. To solidify expatriate ties to Italy, and the generational loyalties of emigrant descendants, the Internal Ministry now sponsors an official registry, AIRE (Anagrafe degli italiani residenti all'estero), although only four million of the estimated sixty million qualifying Italians have registered. Most of Italy's needed immigrants have arrived from North Africa, West Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. But, rather than a welcoming assimilation and open-ended education, racist demonstrations have drawn clear lines between immigrants, berated as "foreigners," and Italians. Past assumptions about Italy's population do not match the current and future reality, and race and ethnicity must no longer be the key criteria for who can participate in Italian society.

Conclusions

For Italy in the twenty-first century, ethnicity is defined by an Italian and European Union passport, with overt economic, cultural, and transnational ties. Legally, *Italianità* was defined by blood inheritance; more broadly, by a rich inheritance of culture, language, and tradition, untrammelled by state regulation and political boundaries. In an age of global markets and globalizing values, ethnicity should survive not in negative xenophobic reactions, but as a historical culture separate from bloodlines. Rather than a fixed racial definition, culture should be open and alive through outreach and expansion. In this way, the public monuments, holidays, and educational efforts supported by Italian emigrants and their descendants, and by the Italian state internationally, represent the best of Italian cultural values, diversity, and character.

Italy faces a crisis this century very similar to that of a century ago whose epicenter is the issue of how Italian politics, society, and culture will approach mass immigration. Just as mass emigration was long ignored, and then sparked constructive and destructive policies, immigration is a challenge that can build a new Italy or tear the country apart (cf. Einaudi, 2007). Instead of denial of Italy's demographic crisis and economic reliance upon immigration, a positive attitude and constructive

approach can unite the country in a new way, much like Luigi Einaudi's campaign for support of Italian emigrants. Emigration was not a net loss for the mother country, but resulted in a radical expansion of Italy's political, economic, and cultural influence, turning the united peninsula into a truly global nation. As immigrants from around the world now make Italy their home, Italy must grapple anew with the ideals of the Risorgimento.

Even fifty years after unification, Giovanni Pascoli wrote passionately about how far Italy had strayed from the promise of the Risorgimento. Another century has extended the toll upon traditional national ideas. As for the future, just as the consequences of mass emigration could not be foreseen, it is impossible to predict what the next 150 years will hold for Italy. The country has adjusted poorly to the last three decades of falling population and rising immigration. No melting pot tradition greets immigrants in Italy (cf. Allievi, 2010; Alba and Nee, 1997). The future meaning of the term Italian remains murky, even as Italy desperately needs a multi-ethnic form of social unification and a more inclusive view of *italianità*, propagated, like for Italians Abroad, through laws, congresses, and new media.

A new and united Italian identity may still bring together the best of Italy's historical and cultural identity in today's modern, multi-ethnic, and globalized world. While in Afghanistan earlier this year, I saw such an attempt. With NATO forces I shot the attached photograph (Figure 1) at Herat Airfield, Afghanistan, at the Italian regional headquarters of the NATO task force. The simple azure blue "Italia" and tricolor "150" sum up what Italy means today far from home in a remote corner of



FIGURE 1 Italian headquarters of International Security and Assistance Force Regional Command West, Herat Airfield, Afghanistan, February 2011. Photo by the author.

the world, where an Italian restaurant is lauded as the finest in the country, with Afghan cooks trained in Italy. The military expatriates, temporarily away from home, still feel a part of Italy even when away under complex circumstances. An intangible reputation, with the light trappings of national tradition and worldwide ambitions, defines the brand Made in Italy 150 years after its founding, as new connections continue to redefine Italy in the world.

Notes

- ¹ Russo takes the context of emigration for granted and argues that Puccini should have made emigration even more dramatic and explicit (1990). See also Randall, 2005; Bouchard, 2010; Valesio, 1989; Verdicchio, 1997.
- ² On Corradini's contribution to the development of national socialism, see Sternhell et al., 1994; Choate, 2003).
- ³ For other precedents, see Archivio Storico della Camera dei Deputati, Incarti di Segreteria, index 1909–13, s.v. “Colonie Libere”: discussion in Chamber of Deputies June 22 1909, in Senate June 30–July 1 1909; in Chamber May 22 1912.
- ⁴ His original manuscript reads differently: “il primo bisogno d'Italia è che si formino Italiani che sappiano adempiere al loro dovere” (d'Azeglio, 1963: 6). See discussion in Patriarca, 2001; Soldani and Turi, 1993; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983.
- ⁵ Italian government subsidies went to 545 non-government schools with 55,877 students, and 93 state schools with 16,721 students (Istituto Coloniale Italiano, 1911).
- ⁶ See titles requested by the Italian consul in Patras, Greece, April 2 1886, Archivio Storico-Diplomatico Ministero degli Esteri (ASDMAE) Archivio Scuole 1868–88 b. 218.
- ⁷ See Lewin, 2010; <http://www.italianlanguagefoundation.org> (10/1/11).

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Notes on contributor

Mark I. Choate is a history professor at Brigham Young University, teaching courses in colonialism, migration, fascism, Italy, and Europe. Mark earned his undergraduate and doctoral degrees from Yale University. His book *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad*, (Harvard, 2008; Oscar Mondadori, forthcoming) won the Council for European Studies Book Award and the Marraro Prize. Mark is completing his second book, on scientific racism and international migration controls. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, London, and has published articles in *International Migration Review*, *French Colonial History*, *Modern Italy*, *California Italian Studies*, and *Forum Italicum*.

Correspondence to: mark_choate@byu.edu; Box 24446, Provo Utah 84602-4446 USA.