Chapter Title: INTRODUCTION. All at One Point: The Unlikely Connections between Italy's Emigration, Immigration, and (Post)Colonialism

Book Title: Pre-Occupied Spaces

Book Subtitle: Remapping Italy's Transnational Migrations and Colonial Legacies

Book Author(s): Teresa Fiore

Published by: Fordham University Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xhr720.4

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INTRODUCTION

All at One Point: The Unlikely Connections between Italy's Emigration, Immigration, and (Post)Colonialism

> But there were those who insisted that the concept "immigrant" could be conceived in the abstract. . . . It was . . . a narrow-minded attitude . . . that, basically, has remained with all of us, mind you: it keeps cropping up even today.
>
> —ITALO CALVINO

This book is above all a space for the analysis of stories. I will therefore begin with a story as a starting point for my discussion. The resistance exercised against the arrival and presence of immigrants, reductively perceived as subaltern subjects from a supposedly uncivilized area of the world, and the related conviction that certain people belong to one place more than others has been arguably best represented in Italo Calvino's short story "All at One Point," thanks to its hyperbolic flavor. A brilliant exploration of the absurdity and hypocrisy of this resistance and conviction, the story confirms Calvino's unique ability to intervene in the political arena as a storyteller by deploying inventive mechanisms of analogic shifts rather than the more common strategy of direct denunciation adopted by *engagé* literature. Included in *Cosmicomics* (1965), a collection entirely devoted to the imbrications of scientific theories in our daily lives, "All at One Point" addresses models of the development of the universe such as the Big Bang in order to analyze social conflicts and to gesture toward a not-too-utopian space of fruitful coexistence beyond the traditional distinction between the "inside" and "outside" spheres.

Calvino's "One Point" as a Departure Toward Pre-Occupied Spaces

In the story, Calvino invites the readers to picture an impossible space, one point: in an imaginary pre–Big Bang era. Before space was created, everything and everybody was concentrated in that one point. The inhabitants of this non-space obviously lived a quite

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claustrophobic life, although they were not aware of it since space did not yet exist, and time even less so. Nonetheless, they had a quite clear idea of what an immigrant was: The narrator himself—the story is told by the old Qfwfq as a historical account—distinguishes the local immigrant family, the Z'zus, from the rest of the inhabitants, by marking their cultural habits. A numerous family with too many mattresses and baskets in the yard and with the peculiar habit of hanging laundry on a rope stretching from one point to another . . . of the "one point," the Z'zus seem to be named after the Zulus, a term that in Italian has lost its actual reference to a South African ethnic group and has acquired the import of a generic offense against people considered as "boorish" and "ignorant" (Garzantilinguistica.it). For being different, these immigrants were automatically marked as aliens in the one-point world. The narrator clearly denounces the nonsensical nature of such racist attitudes in a space that cannot be pre-occupied because it never existed previously. In an environment with no time before or after, and "no other place to migrate from or to," it should be impossible to mark the difference between those who are allowed to stay and those who are rejected. Yet, this ancestral preoccupation over difference was pervasive. The narrator comments: "This was mere unfounded prejudice . . . but there were those who insisted that the concept 'immigrant' could be conceived in the abstract." Among those is the unfriendly Pber^{t} Pber^{d}, whom the narrator meets one day in the post–Big Bang era only to see his anti-immigrant sentiments confirmed with the same embittered preoccupation. Here is the narrator again: "It was . . . a narrow-minded attitude . . . that, basically, has remained with all of us, mind you: it keeps cropping up even today" (44). During a chat with Qfwfq at a café, Pber^{t} Pber^{d} remembers the good old days in the one point. While envisioning a possible return to that time, or rather non-time, he also remarks: "When we go back there . . . the thing we have to make sure of this time, is [that] certain people remain out. . . . You know whom I mean: those Z'zus" (45). This desire to cleanse even a prototypical space and to posit it as an ideal place to return to is criticized by a narrator who effectively conveys the author's perspective. Annoyed by the insinuations of Pber^{t} Pber^{d} against the immigrant family, Qfwfq criticizes this sense of superiority by recalling and celebrating the infinite generosity and abundance of another inhabitant of the one-point world, Mrs. Ph(i)Nk$_{o}$, a Felliniesque character whose desire to feed tagliatelle to the world results in the Big Bang, thus making her a mythic generator of space and time.

This fantastic tale, characterized by a comic and yet serious spirit, provides a set of considerations on the meaning of belonging to a space and by extension to a culture. To question forms of racism, Calvino does not resort to abstract intellectualism or simplistic morality. He does not intend to claim that people are undifferentiated, either; all his characters are indeed very peculiar in their idiosyncratic ways, and as such they are part of the one point, where everything and everybody has to share. The one-point metaphor allows Calvino not only to ponder on and condemn the forms of discrimination effected against immigrants, but to also hint at the genealogy of such discrimination in the colonial enterprise through referencing Z'zus/Zulus, who historically embodied resistance against colonial aggression as well as apartheid in South Africa. That this process of analysis of practices and this proposal of alternatives took place in the mid-1960s, when Italy was experiencing a decline in emigration and was not yet affected by the arrival of immigrants,

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makes this short story particularly representative of one of the functions of literature, namely, examining society in its historical developments and current mores, but also rethinking it imaginatively at a more universal level, thus sometimes anticipating future manifestations. As a witty and surreal piece demonstrating the absurdity of any territorial demand whether set in migratory or colonial spaces, this brilliant story sets the tone for a book like mine, preoccupied with space.

The Geostatistics of Italy's Migrations and Colonialism

Since migrations are perceived and described via geography, whether physical, social, or imagined, space is the central preoccupation of this book on migrations and, in particular, migrations from and to Italy. The book's main aim is to explore space in its complex forms and implications, embracing time within it. Migrations have to do with statistics as well: Migrants are constantly counted and assessed based on numbers. Thus, this book also looks at numbers, mostly to understand what stories cannot be told by numbers alone. However, numbers can play an important role in revealing flaws in most of the trite attacks leveled against migrants and demonstrate how the "preoccupation" around migrants can be dissipated by looking at past histories of migration and their effects, what I term as "pre-occupation." While the hyphenated word—"pre-occupation"—indicates the presence of prior experiences of relocation in space, the distinction, yet even more so, the intersection with the unhyphenated word—"preoccupation"—is what lies at the core of this book which, in order to identify and in the attempt to dissipate the reasons behind the concern over migrants, explores the linkages between the past and the present of human relocations. If we look at numbers, for example, this linkage becomes apparent. At the end of 2013 there are 4,636,647 Italian citizens registered in the list of Italians abroad (AIRE), that is, people who have moved to a new country and retained Italian citizenship or acquired dual citizenship, as well as descendants of Italians who recently acquired citizenship through the 1992 law.[1] These people are the result of contemporary migrations or the effect of past migrations originating from Italy, a departure point for worldwide migrations par excellence. Interestingly, according to the ISTAT data of January 1, 2014, there are 4,922,085 immigrants in Italy.[2] Their countries of origin practically span the entire globe, including, albeit in small part, former Italian colonies in the Horn of Africa and the Mediterranean region. The numerical comparison offered here—practically the same number of Italians live abroad as the number of foreigners living in Italy—dissolves the myth of "invasion" by showing that space cannot be represented one-dimensionally as overcrowded by new arrivals when its occupation is decreased by the absence of (previous or potential) residents whose entitlement to protection would entail high commitment and expenses for the state.[3]

Inscribed within a deeper and broader investigation of the country's historical outbound flows due to economic emigration and colonial expansion as well as its more recent inbound flows due to economic and political pressure, these statistics function as a starting point for a critical reading of Italy's intricate national formation project and its position in

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the present scenario of international exchanges as a result of its role as a sending country until the post–World War II era up to the 1970s. That Italy has since the mid- to late 2000s been one of the most active proponents and supporters of surveillance, discipline, and punishment for "Fortress Europe" is thus quite ironic. While one could argue that this controller's task is also forced on the country by its crucial geographical position and configuration as one of the main Mediterranean points of entry into the EU, it still seems paradoxical in light of the historical role played by Italy as a major point of departure for emigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as a colonial power, and today as a prominent sending country despite its presence in the G7. The current (as of this writing) government, which came into office in 2014, is adopting a markedly different approach to the arrival of migrants, and in particular political refugees. Albeit not without contradictions, it is showing a deeper awareness of the interconnected nature of transnational relations and the value of solidarity, in part as a response to Pope Francis's call to a politics of support and welcome; in his words, "the migrants are not a danger: they are in danger" ("Papa").

The fundamental premise of this book is that the contemporary history of Italian civilization cannot be understood without a rigorous reconsideration of the influence of its outbound and inbound migrations as well as its colonial and imperial experience, all of which I view as phenomena that are not marginal with respect to the country's national formation, but that rather are congenital to its complicated birth and development. A foundational tale of unified Italy is the long and hard process of stitching together over decades (from the first half of the 1800s all the way to World War I) territories that belonged to foreign powers or the Church, and which have in turn produced a diverse regional texture in the country (Figs. 1 and 2).

There is another powerful story that unraveled outside the national borders, even when they were still newly formed. From 1876, shortly after the unification of Italy, to 1976, approximately 27 million Italians left the country and emigrated to practically all continents (Franzina, *Gli Italiani* 145). According to the *Rapporto Italiani nel mondo 2012*, that number increases to 30 million if we count up to our decade (ibid., 1). Considering that in 1871 Italy had 27 million inhabitants (Golini 48), the outbound "flow" is probably more accurately described as a hemorrhage. Despite the high rate of return, about 50 percent,[4] Italy's diaspora constitutes the largest emigration from any country (Vecoli 114) with peaks in the 1880–1920 period and after World War II.[5] Italians emigrated virtually everywhere, giving priority to different continents and countries at different times for specific economic and political reasons (Fig. 3).

Because of their strong regional affiliations (North vs. South), they were treated differently in different places, but overall integration was never easy, not even in places where the Italian community, or colony as it was called back then, was large and mixed. On the contrary, their substantial numerical presence prompted more rooted prejudices that were only somewhat surmounted over time in some countries such as the United States, for example. Primary destinations initially included Argentina and Brazil (starting in the 1870s), especially from the northern regions of Italy, while with the mass emigration of 1880–1920, the United States became a major receiving country for Italian immigrants,[6]

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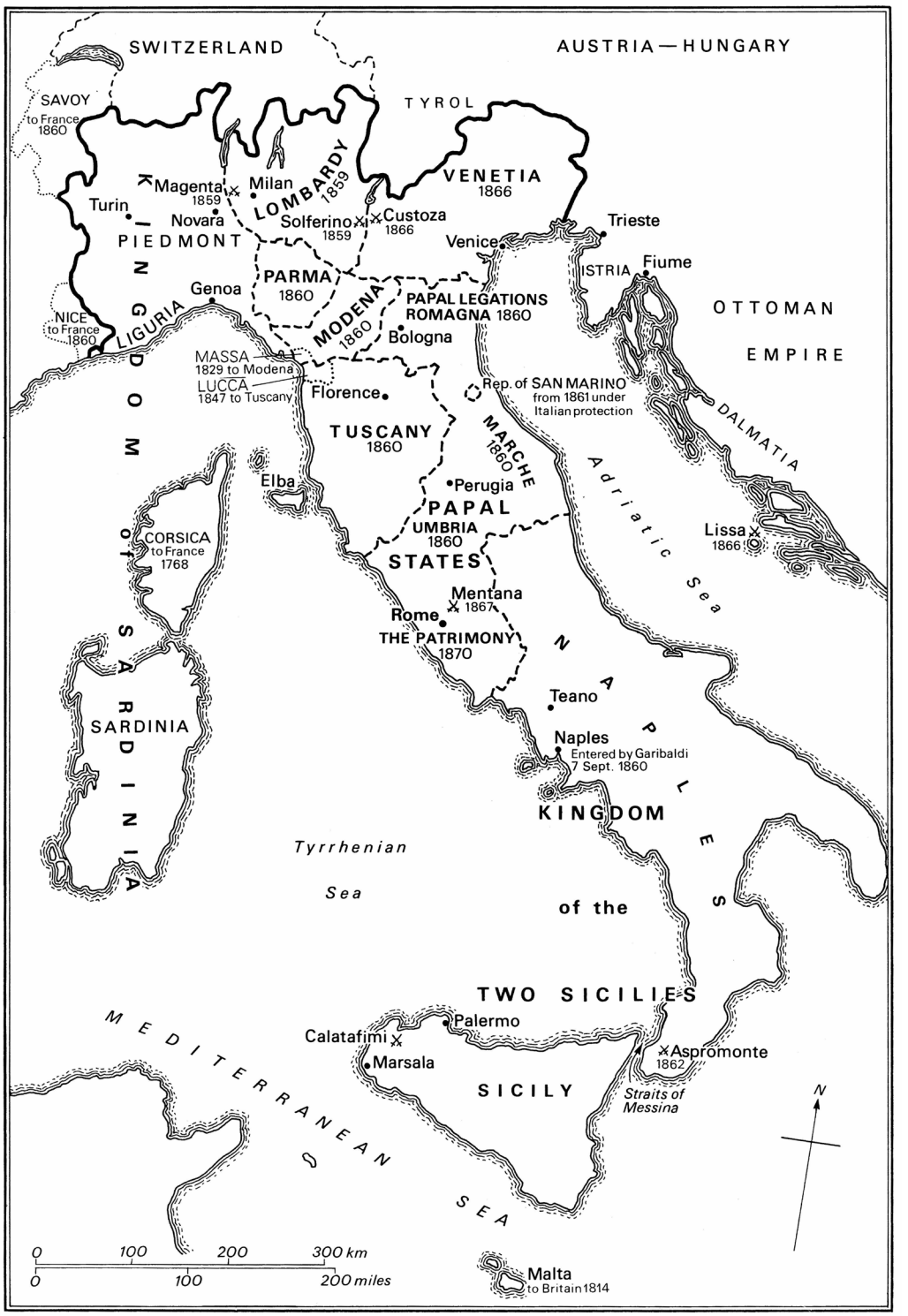

FIGURE 1. Italy's unification process, 1859–70.

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FIGURE 2. Italy's regions.

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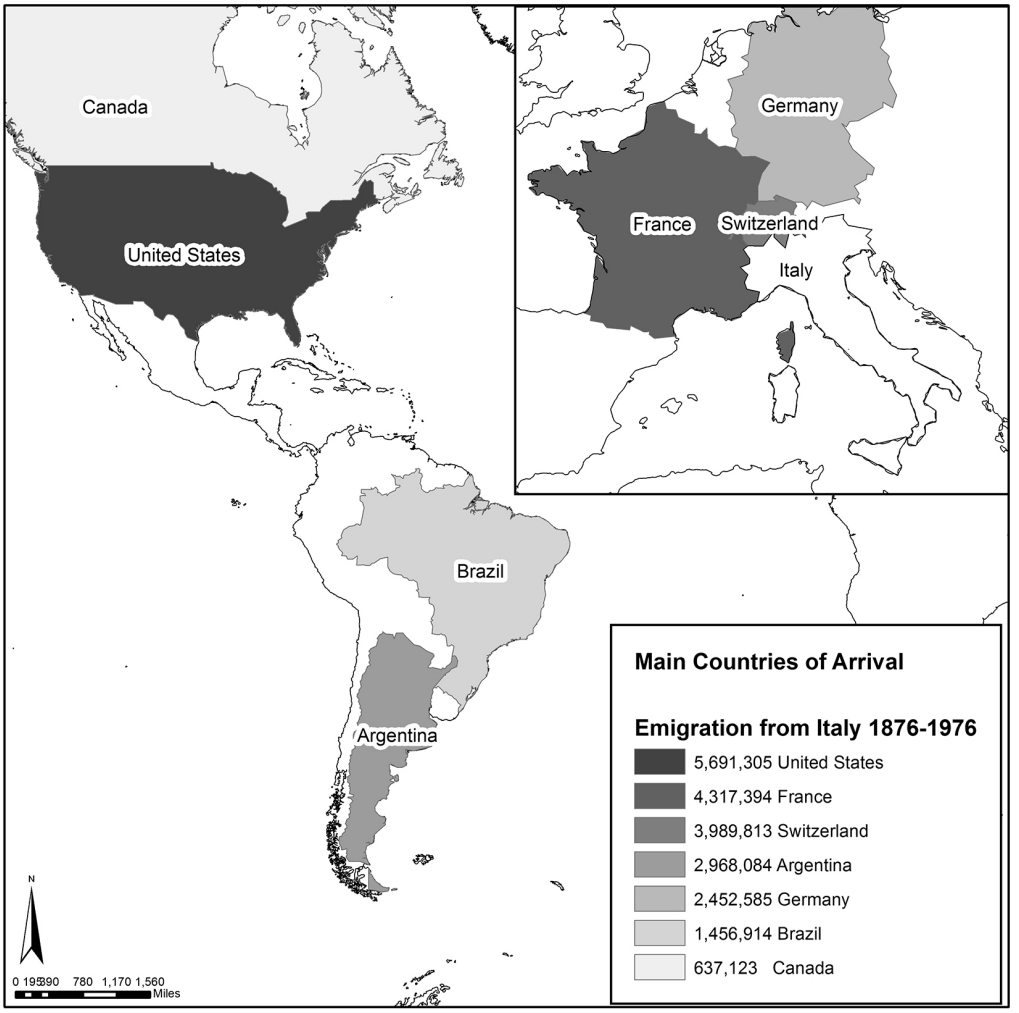

Figure 3. Italy's main emigration flows, 1876–1976.

especially from Italy's South. While Italian emigration is strongly linked to "America" in the common perception, in reality, Italians emigrated predominantly to Europe over the century under discussion, and added Canada and Australia to their routes mainly after World War II. This book travels to several countries of destination (Argentina, the United States, France, Tunisia) through the analysis of significant cultural texts that investigate the impact of the Italian presence abroad as well as the faint trace it has ironically left in Italy's collective imaginary, due perhaps to a shortage of public educational projects (emigration is often a subject of academic research).

Shortly after the official unification in 1861 and coterminous with the diaspora described above, Italy embarked on the colonial enterprise. Over the decades, this economic and military process created an offshore empire, known as Empire of Oriental Africa in the mid-1930s, comprising the Horn of Africa, Libya, the Dodecanese Islands, and Albania. The majority of the colonies were lost during and after World War II (Fig. 4).[7]

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Figure 4. Italian colonies.

Italian colonialism is a complex mosaic of both brief and extended forms of control of territories, which owing to its fragmentation has often been dismissed as secondary or harmless. Fraught with contradictions and omissions that the country has too slowly uncovered through historical studies of the records, Italy's colonialism/imperialism overlapped with emigration. Together, the two projects fundamentally contributed to the atypical formation of national identity outside the country, characterized as both these initiatives were by demographic relocations.[8] The apparently small percentage of Italians who moved to the colonies between the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century—2 percent of the total Italian emigrants in the world, as reported by historian Labanca, citing Sori ("History" 31)—indicates a multidirectional demographic flow that along with emigration shaped the modern nation of Italy away from its centuries-long fragmentation into small states and regions often subject to foreign powers. The nationalist propaganda accompanying both emigration and the colonial/imperial enter-

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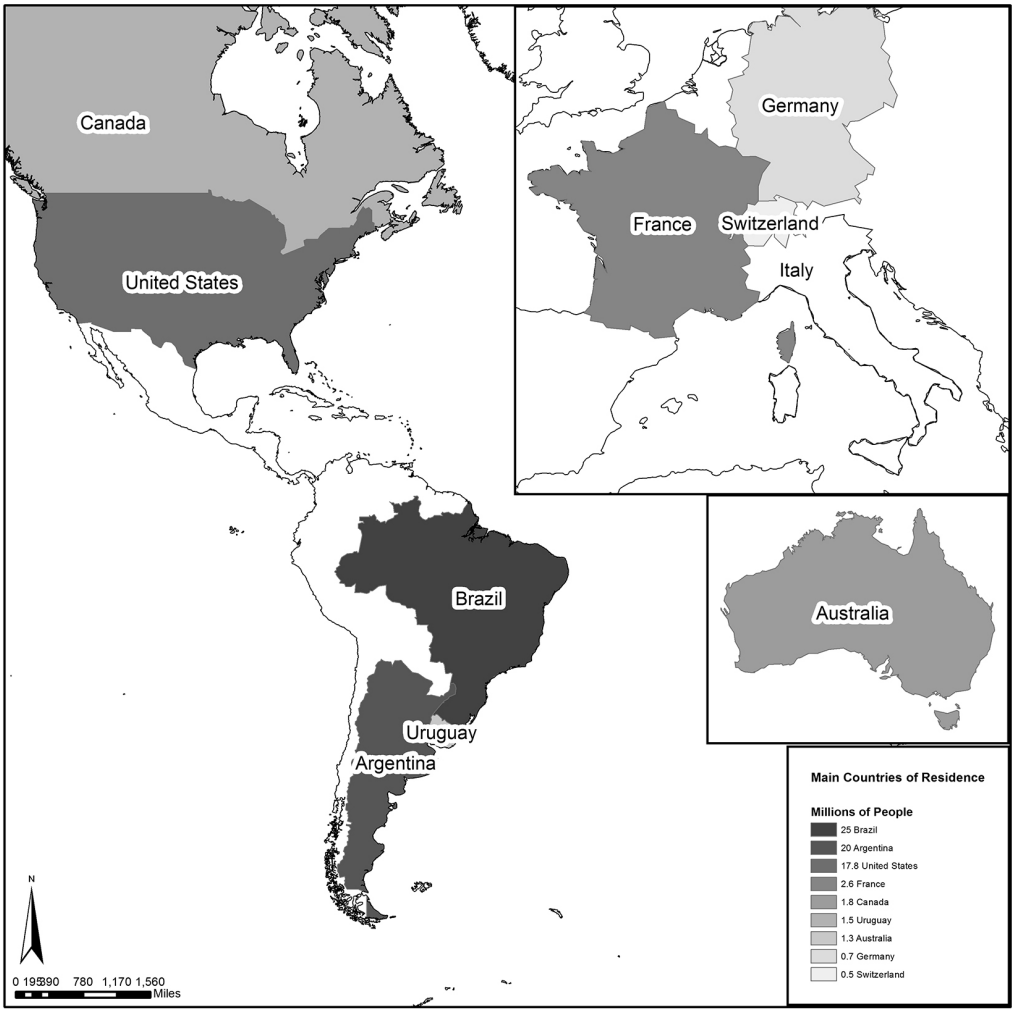

Figure 5. Italian descendants in the world, 1994.

prise functioned as cultural connective tissue for Italy and also Italians outside the country, while forming a model of a nation in motion variously characterized by brief seasonal and long-term definitive relocations of people for economic, military, and political reasons. This demographic dispersion has over time produced a population of an estimated 60 million descendants (*Rapporto 2012*, 2) scattered around the globe, a number curiously close to that of the residents of Italy in 2014 (almost 60 million) (Fig. 5).[9]

In an interesting reversal, Italy since the mid-1970s has become a country of destination, virtually as soon as it stopped sending emigrants abroad in large quantities. In reality, the Tunisian community in Sicily had been forming since the 1960s, and early cases of Chinese presence date back to the interwar period (Giustiniani 20). After the first arrivals of domestic helpers from Catholic countries such as the Philippines in the 1970s, the 1980s mark the more visible presence of immigrants from Africa; yet, it is with the following decade that the phenomenon becomes even more tangible, variegated, and

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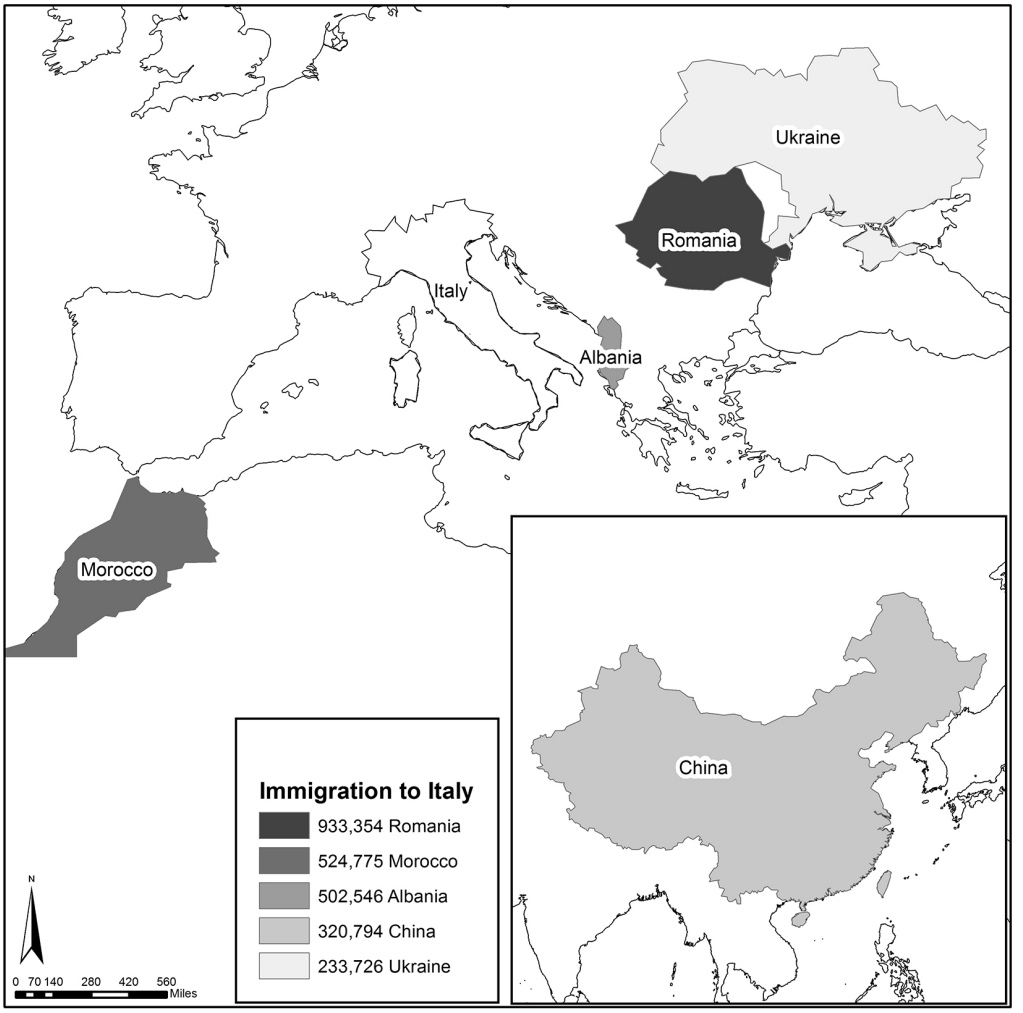

Figure 6. Immigration in Italy, 2014.

rooted. As we have seen, today Italy is home to a large and growing[10] foreign population, which is younger than the existing population of citizens ("La Popolazione" 3), thus more active in the economy, and more prolific (15 percent of newborns are of immigrant parents). Scattered throughout Italy in both urban and rural areas, with population densities reaching 11 percent of the local populace in some regions of the North ("La Popolazione" 6), immigrants come from a really wide range of countries, which has created a cultural, religious, and linguistic population of unprecedented diversity in Europe. In order, their primary areas of origin are Eastern Europe—especially Albania, Romania (a EU member), and Ukraine; Africa—particularly Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Senegal; and Asia—mostly China, the Philippines, and India (*Dossier* 2013, 4) (Fig. 6).[11]

Despite imbalances between men and women internal to the national groups, as a whole the immigrant population represents both genders rather equally ("La Popolazione" 1). Mixed marriages with Italians have been steadily growing, and the population of Italy-born

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children of immigrants now constitutes a solid group of "new Italians" whose presence is openly challenging enclosed perceptions of Italianness, as the Conclusion will show. Indeed, as the demographic and sociological studies have demonstrated for years, immigration to Italy is not a temporary or circumstantial phenomenon but an intrinsic fact in the current and future development of the country. Immigrants should exist in a space of the collective consciousness occupied by memory, as they are a contemporary reincarnation of Italians looking for economic opportunities, political freedom, and personal discovery until the 1970s (and even today, given the current exodus of Italians looking for jobs abroad).[12] Contemporary immigrants in Italy are just more educated, more connected and informed thanks to technology, and in some ways even more adventurous than those Italian emigrants who in some cases traveled to countries with open-door immigration policies (Giustiniani 30–32).

When the numerical coincidence observed between the number of foreign immigrants in Italy, and Italians registered in AIRE is seen in percentage form, the presence of immigrants, takes on a different meaning. As of January 2014, 8.1 percent of the Italian population consists of immigrants, while Italians abroad are equal to 7.6 percent of the resident population in Italy, based on ISTAT data. These coincidental numerical correspondences are mentioned here not just for anecdotal purposes or to fall prey to an empty numerology, but to actually expose the unfounded nature of invasion myths and to also prompt more careful readings of the country's past in order to contain certain anti-immigrant drives identifiable in the current national landscape, with the openly racist comments against former Italo-Congolese Minister of Integration Cécile Kyenge on the part of the Northern League Senator Roberto Calderoli being the tip of the iceberg.[13] As a country occupied by a multilayered history of migrations, today's Italy appears to be in large part preoccupied with safeguarding a national uniformity that in reality openly clashes with its pride in regionalism; its cultural role in the Mediterranean; uninterrupted North- and Rome-bound internal migratory flows since unification; the unsolved economic distance between North and South; the country's dramatically low birth rate;[14] the homogenizing forces of the EU supranational project; the current exodus of Italians due to the economic and political crisis; and the forces of financial and informational globalization affecting Italy as well as the entire world. Italy's shorter and less culturally impacting colonial enterprise, along with its unique postcoloniality (for the most part, immigrant flows are not linked to the country's colonial past), further complicate its position in the international scenario as a G7 country with this peculiar set of experiences.

Thus far, studies in Italian and English on the subjects of emigration and immigration have looked at these two phenomena as separate,[15] or only loosely connected them.[16] Relatively recent publications address the process of national formation and/or belonging in relation with the discrete areas of immigration, transnational diaspora, colonialism, or paired areas of only emigration/colonialism and colonialism/postcolonialism.[17] As I will explain in detail later, in the field of social history, sustained comparative analyses of both emigration and immigration exist but do not address culture, while those volumes that do so in the areas of literature and film set each subject as independent from the other in the single essays anthologized. In contrast, *Pre-Occupied Spaces* integrates Italy's two-way

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migratory movements in a systematic way and within a colonial and postcolonial context, as part of a study on national identity that, in embracing the precious contributions of historical, economic, and sociological studies, places the cultural text at its core. If Italian society at large has never fully given voice to its own experience of leaving, much less to that of its colonial enterprise, and is resisting dealing comprehensively with the lives of its new immigrants, what do its cultural products—writing, film, visual art, and even urban architecture—have to say about these experiences? More generally, what does it mean to be "Italian" in a culture defined by boundary crossing, movements, displacements, and differences, especially not long after the sesquicentennial of Italy's unification in 2011? Various scholars have investigated all these questions in different ways. What I am instead proposing in *Pre-Occupied Spaces* is to either connect the analysis of texts on emigration from and immigration to Italy that address similar issues despite their spatial and temporal distance, or to analyze texts that directly address the unlikely connections that I have discussed in this introduction.

Space, Pre-Occupation, and Culture

By positing space, and in particular what I call "pre-occupied space" as the focus of my investigation into these issues, I consider the layered forms of both material and intangible occupation encountered by migrants, but also affected by them. Immigrants arrive in spaces (neighborhoods, workplaces, etc.) that are already occupied by others and start interacting with these spaces by borrowing fragments of past traditions and leaving new signs. This is the first definition of the term *preoccupied*, according to Merriam-Webster: Like the verb "to preoccupy," this adjective finds its etymological root in the Latin *praeoccupare* (to seize in advance) and means "already occupied," "taken possession of," "filled beforehand or by others." The use of the hyphen for this term in my book signals this temporal connotation.

At the same time, the impact of the immigrants' arrival and settlement in local environments is a source of concern: These spaces are therefore "preoccupied"—the second definition of the term, this time without the hyphen, is "absorbed in some preoccupation"—in the sense that they host worries among both newcomers and locals, who perceive each other respectively as defensive occupants of and illegitimate intruders into natural, urban, and domestic spaces.[18] The resulting emotional landscape in Italian society is a "geography of preoccupation" (227), to use sociologist Corrado Bonifazi's term, which is a source of tension but, as I argue, also holds a potential transformative power. This preoccupation not only has bearing on the question of control over physical space, but also implies a necessary theoretical rethinking of the forms of being in space and of possibly changing it. Being preoccupied with space—the more abstract meaning of the word, being lost in thought, absorbed, *impensierito*—opens a new cognitive route into people's movements from, to, and around Italy that, I suggest, is eventually characterized by recognition of shared stories among people beyond space- and time-based separations. As unexpected parallels between the experiences of Italian emigrants and immigrants are

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revealed along the diachronic and synchronic axes at once and within post/colonial contexts, Italy is remapped on a larger space, preoccupied with, rather than by, the richness of human experiences in motion. My use of the hyphenated version of the term in the title of the book brings attention to the type of philosophical and political quarrying that I am engaged with in order to link history and consciousness: Somewhat paradoxically, the hyphen functions as a sort of cognitive caesura that allows me to activate connections.

The concept of pre-occupation and preoccupation I am proposing effectively intertwines notions of space and time, which are normally seen as separate. Migrations are usually read historically, that is to say according to a temporal paradigm that sanctions its beginning, development, and, if applicable, end. This is the reason why Italian emigration has been officially considered a concluded phenomenon of dispersion: In the mid-1970s, ISTAT net flows for migration became positive, meaning that more people entered rather than left Italy. The apparent sense of historical completion that characterizes the emigration experience as well as the colonial one in the general perception is at odds with the presence, in reality, of epiphenomena or legacies of these experiences. Whereas it is often claimed that Italians do not emigrate anymore, as a matter of fact work-related relocation, seasonal emigration, and even "illegal" emigration from Italy continue to occur, and not only occasionally, as a plethora of books on the subject are revealing.[19] Additionally, in 2012, the migration net flows turned negative again for the first time in decades, due to the precarious political, economic and social situation in Italy, as well as the easy mobility granted by the EU, which have prompted a surge in outbound flows, reaching over 100,000 in 2014 (Nava, "La Fuga"). By the same token, while it is believed that Italy's colonialism is a closed historical chapter, its knowledge and analysis is essential to understanding race relations in Italy today.[20] The visibility of epiphenomena and legacies of emigration and colonialism—which belong to the time trajectory—can indeed be traced in the space of today's immigration in Italy.

In setting the question "where" at the core of human existence in my cultural analysis (Derrida 52), I embrace Foucault's proposal that "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space" and his belief that "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time" (22–23).[21] I thus consider space as a crucial paradigm to examine the links between old and new forms of migration. Concepts such as "heterotopia" (Foucault), "thirdspace" (Soja), "delinquent space" (de Certeau, *Practice*), "dissemiNation" (Bhabha), "imagination" (Cassano), "imagining planetarity" (Spivak), along with Lefebvre's critique of urban space in the direction of "the possible . . . elsewhere" (182), and Sassen's reflections on the socioeconomic modalities of globalization and postmodernism have then been adopted and rechanneled in this book toward the issues of migration and nationhood within the Italian transnational context. In reality, space descriptors are never absent from studies of migration, but they tend to define other spaces (destinations), external to the departure point, and thus make the experience of migrants alien to the space discussed. So, for example, on the map of Italian emigration, Argentina, one of the main destinations for Italian emigrants up to World War I, is an elsewhere with respect to Italy and by the same token, on the immigration map Albania is not Italy. I am instead interested in showing how such seemingly disconnected places have

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affected Italy and were affected by it over time through the experiences of emigration and colonialism and how these connections become obvious in specific pre-occupied spaces at specific historical moments. Space, in other words, hosts time in my definition of pre-occupied spaces, as I consider concrete, metaphorical, forgotten, recuperated, and (re)invented realities.

In particular, I analyze three types of pre-occupied spaces that correspond to the three parts of the book: oceans/seas, and metonymically boats and ships, as spaces of the crossing, where emigrants turn into immigrants; houses, or more generally places of residence, where migrants live (sometimes work) and interact with other migrants and/or so-called locals; and workplaces, those sites where immigration is partially more visible, but also simplistically flattened to an economic issue. Directly and indirectly, many other spaces such as neighborhoods, schools, as well as worship and entertainment sites are also considered, but these three spaces are crucial in terms of being able to look at emigration, immigration, and (post)colonial experiences in a connected way, as they pertain to the fundamental acts of traveling, living, and working.

In disrupting linearity and opening up to the coexistence of migration experiences that history sees as discrete, these pre-occupied spaces simultaneously allow for a remapping of Italian culture and identity which challenges fixed forms of belonging in a fast developing multiethnic country like Italy. At the center of this remapping lies the cultural text, because of its simultaneous powers of documentation, evocation, and imagination at the crossroads of the local, the national, and the transnational. How do human experiences of relocation and their translation into cultural production complicate and mediate migrations? What new paradigms do they suggest to conceive and effect intercultural coexistence? In my view, culture constitutes an integral part rather than just an epiphenomenon of migrant experiences: If culture is seen as involving "simultaneously work, pleasure, consumption, spirituality, 'aesthetic production,' and reproduction" (Lowe and Lloyd 26), it then represents a complex foray into migratory phenomena otherwise often treated exclusively from socioeconomic perspectives in the media and policymaking.[22] The challenge, embraced by my study, remains that of seeing in the cultural text the presentation of concrete realities with socioeconomic purport, but also the representation, in the sense of invention and imagination, of new possibilities for the coexistence, creation, and exchange of ideas. Analyzed for their aesthetic quality as well as their sociopolitical impact and anthropological meaning at once, cultural texts—a term that I apply interchangeably to visual, written, oral, filmic, and architectural works—function as spaces in themselves, in which the artistic moment is both the result and the source of new theories and practices of living across borders.

The Book's Pre-Occupied Spaces

Within a framework conceptually shaped by the humanities, my reading of spaces is therefore mediated by specific cultural texts that are by definition spatial. In ranging from novels to short stories, nursery rhymes, memoirs, *testimonios*, films, songs, and documentaries,

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they account for that which is not immediately observable, like memories, desires, and motivations, and tackle the meaning and consequences of relocations from the perspective of both the places of departure and those of arrival. In this respect, the texts foreground a notion by Abdelmalek Sayad that an emigrant is also an immigrant and vice versa, that is, s/he embodies a double location often reflecting a double form of erasure, what he calls "double absence," both in the country of origin and in the new one.[23] Yet, this condition can also provide a "double vision," an enriching and unconventional view of the world.

In each of the book's three sections, I aim for a thematically focused composite of migrant and nonmigrant authors in order to reveal the unlikely connections of their subjects, spaces, and aesthetic modes. Each part is introduced by what I call an Aperture, a term in photography that refers to the opening of a camera lens to control the amount of light that passes in. Apertures in this book open the section by using a text (or several short texts) able to capture the theme at hand. By highlighting the analytical and propositive quality of the notion of the pre-occupied space in that specific text (or texts), this overture paves the way for the reflections offered in the chapters of the single parts. The individual chapters address two or three authors/artists in tandem and critically analyze their different media, often created in different languages (Arabic, English, French, etc.). While some authors are from and reside in Italy and write or make films about either emigration or immigration (in a number of cases their personal stories are in one way or another linked to these experiences), the majority of them are originally from countries other than Italy (among them Eritrea, Algeria, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and India) and reside in Italy today, or are from the countries of destination of their family's migratory routes (the United States, France). As for works on emigration by emigrants or their descendants, the book attempts at least partially to reflect the vast range of destinations Italians reached and contributed to culturally. The predominance of the United States is somewhat counteracted by the inclusion of works on emigration to three important countries of destination for Italians in three different continents: Argentina for South America, France for Europe, and Egypt for Africa, while several references to Tunisia are made as both a country of destination for Italian emigrants and of departure for contemporary immigrants. Finally, in light of the international nature of immigration in Italy, the works analyzed comprise stories pertaining to a much wider palette of provenances, including Eastern Europe and Asia.[24]

Following this architecture, Part I opens with an Aperture on the multimedia show *L'orda*, based on Gian Antonio Stella's book of the same title and adapted to a music and storytelling performance featuring Gualtiero Bertelli and the Compagnia delle Acque along with Stella himself. The stories of perilous voyages and shipwrecks that have silently punctuated the more than 150-year-long history of Italian emigration are used as a platform to reread Italian history at large, especially in light of the current arrivals of immigrants from all over the world. The two chapters of Part I embrace this same parallel between emigration and immigration by focusing on the pre-occupied/preoccupied space of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea respectively. I look at the songs of Gilda Mignonette, diva of Naples and New York in the first half of the twentieth century, who was cast within an iconography of nationalism connecting emigration and colonialism, and Emanuele Crialese's 2006 film *Nuovomondo*, which offers a nuanced reading of the

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"nationalizing" and "transnationalizing" function of the voyage. Also considered are three texts that more clearly point to the sea as a palimpsest of stories of people's relocations: Vincenzo Marra's 2001 film *Sailing Home* links contemporary emigration from and immigration to Italy in a tale about shifting identities in the waters between Sicily and Tunisia; Kym Ragusa's 2006 memoir *The Skin Between Us: A Memoir of Race, Beauty and Belonging* connects emigration and slavery to the United States in a woman's tale of reconciliation unraveling in fluid spaces; and Feven Abreha Tekle's 2005 *Libera* describes a postcolonial flight from Eritrea, comparable to the middle passage, that finds in the Mediterranean the golden door to a world that the protagonist perceives as free. The Mediterranean and the Atlantic are thus spaces whose pre-occupations and preoccupations can be turned into an occasion to forge new linkages. In their waters, these texts design a thick tapestry of forced and chosen migratory routes, and of the cultural connections that they have woven over the centuries.

Part II as a whole is a cultural recognition of the spaces where immigrants reside or resided, that is, residential *loci* that have been or are intrinsically linked to the migration experiences from/to Italy as well as so-called ethnic neighborhoods. The Aperture focuses on an area of Rome which has come to represent the immigrant section of the capital: Through Agostino Ferrente's documusical *L'orchestra di Piazza Vittorio*, the square at the center of the Esquilino neighborhood is explored for its several layers of immigrant occupation. The creative project Ferrente's work portrays is an interesting example of how preoccupations over the presence of immigrants can be substituted by new visions, especially in an area where the very meaning of "ethnic neighborhood" has been taken to a transnational level (multi-multiethnic) given the diversity of the immigrants' origin. The two chapters address more specifically the residential spaces inhabited by the immigrants and the galaxy of experiences, emotions and values that these sites have prompted due to the highly mixed presence of tenants inside them. Chapter 3 looks at the *conventillos* as described by Laura Pariani in her novel *Dio non ama i bambini* (2007) and at a residential building (*palazzo*) inhabited by locals and immigrants in the same Vittorio Square, as depicted by Amara Lakhous in his novel *Clash of Civilizations Over an Elevator in Piazza Vittorio* (2006). Despite the different locations of these buildings and the different time periods of the stories (turn-of-the-century Buenos Aires vs. contemporary Rome), the two novels successfully render the challenges and possibilities presented by the coexistence of people from different backgrounds, in part for their captivating employment of the detective genre, in part for their innovative narrative structure, suggesting the need to investigate immigrant societies with new questions in order to find new answers. In looking at yet another two immigrant residential spaces, Chapter 4 stays in Rome for the first half and then moves to New York through the analysis of Mohsen Melliti's 1992 novel *Pantanella: Canto lungo la strada* and Melania Mazzucco's 2003 novel *Vita*, respectively. In the process, the chapter switches from the 1990s to the early 1900s, yet stays focused on the dynamics of tension and cooperation among immigrants living in desperate conditions. Both novels are characterized by a unique combination of domestic and economic activities that complicate the reading of a residential space inhabited by immigrants, and in the case of *Pantanella* postcolonial immigrants from colonies other than the Italian ones in what I call

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the phenomenon of "indirect" postcolonialism in Italy.[25] The time shift of these two chapters, which was reversed to heighten the connections between the past of emigration from and colonialism on the part of Italy and the present of immigration to Italy, is an occasion to examine the echoes of these three experiences in the intimate and yet transnational space of immigrant living places where layers of human occupation preoccupy the local governments and yet create unique occasions for invention.

Part III shifts attention to the theme of occupation, not in terms of claiming a space as it was for example in the novel *Pantanella* in Chapter 4, but in terms of working in a space. Of all the numerous job sectors that one could analyze in connection to Italian emigrants abroad and foreign immigrants in Italy, two were chosen for their specific relevance in the historical and contemporary scenario: construction labor and domestic help. The Aperture introduces the topic through texts that focus on bricklayers (Gianni Rodari's nursery rhymes from *Favole al telefono*) and babysitters (Gabriella Kuruvilla's children's story *Questa non è una baby-sitter*). The superficially light tone of these texts written for a young readership conceals a very subtle discussion of the abusive work conditions and prejudices that migrants face, complemented by a recognition of their ability to endure and react. Such themes are addressed in Chapters 5 and 6 through texts that, by relying on different genres ranging from theater to fiction, create a galaxy of constant reverberations between the occupations of emigrants and immigrants. Chapter 5 shows how the current exploitation of foreign immigrant workers in the construction sector in Italy today is not dissimilar from the experiences that Italian emigrants encountered some years ago: Mariana Adascalitei's Romanian protagonists in her "Il giorno di San Nicola" are quite reminiscent of François Cavanna's Italian bricklayers in France, as recounted in his 1978 novel *Les Ritals*. The connection between emigration and immigration offered by these two texts through a combined reading can also be traced in Chapter 6 where demographic movements are additionally defined by the colonial routes. In particular, Renata Ciaravino's script for the 2005 play *Alexandria* about adventurous women from the Friuli region who emigrated to Egypt in the 1920s to work as wet nurses and maids anticipates the silent yet profoundly important role of today's domestic helpers and caretakers in Italy as portrayed by Gabriella Ghermandi's colonial/postcolonial "The Story of Woizero Bekelech and Signor Antonio," included in her 2007 novel *Queen of Flowers and Pearls*. In this sense, Part III is concerned with giving visibility to some of the most invisible or anonymous jobs. By foregrounding the preoccupation of the protagonists of all four texts over housing, health, safety, emotional well-being, and personal gratification, Part III attempts to show how these two job sectors are occupied by the memories of similar preoccupations among Italians abroad. In the process, this part of the book moves preoccupation away from the locals, normally concerned about the danger and threat posed by the immigrants, and suggests forms of empathy that can be developed even within unlikely spaces such as a construction site or a private kitchen.

The Conclusion opens a space of discussion over a thorny and pressing issue that Italy is currently dealing with: the reform of the citizenship law (n. 91) toward the inclusion of a mild *jus soli* that would recognize the presence of hundreds of thousand of young people who were born from immigrant parents and have no access to citizenship until the age of

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eighteen, if not longer. In attempting to define Italy as a potentially unique laboratory in migration matters, perhaps conducive to Franco Cassano's "imagination," the proposal is to read current immigration through the experience of past migrations and colonial legacies, painful and contradictory as they may be. In lieu of sterile or nostalgic forms of national identity spurred by territorial defense and economic insecurity, Italy can use its transnational archive "to update interpretive and practical tools in the new reality of the phenomenon" (Bonifazi 82).

Recollections and Connections toward Empathy

The concept of pre-occupation and the interpretive practices it offers across space and time are meant therefore to dispel preoccupations by actively linking the phenomena of emigration and immigration, as well as colonialism, in the overall reading of Italy's modern and contemporary history. This operation is virtually absent in the current collective discourse, where the separation is instead heightened by the usual trite considerations: "we as emigrants worked hard and pulled ourselves up by our own bootstraps," or "we went to countries that were openly seeking a foreign labor force and were consequently willing to provide services and support in return," or "we were not illegal/clandestine." Stories of struggle and discrimination experienced by Italians abroad are erased by this approach. While it is true that many communities abroad eventually reached a high level of integration if not success, the price that had to be paid for many Italians was equally high. In any case, this often unchallenged and revisionist view of the history of Italian emigration achieved national and international attention with the publication of Oriana Fallaci's *La rabbia e l'orgoglio* (2001).[26] Her supercilious invective against the immigrants, in particular Muslim immigrants, and eulogy of Italian emigrants sealed a dichotomy between "foreign invaders" and "successful" Italians abroad that was as much incorrect as it was widely accepted. In her book, the once progressive feminist journalist Fallaci went as far as stating that "those who associate the migratory waves hitting Italy and Europe with the ones that hit America in the second half of the nineteenth century are wrong" (127). My book rejects this conclusion and attempts to illustrate the unlikely connections between the two migrations in order both to recover Italian emigration's uncomfortable history (made up of destitution, social threats, political extremism, and so on) and to recognize the ways in which current immigrants in Italy are able to defy through their hard work the common depictions of poverty, marginalization, and the like associated with them.

Fallaci's dichotomy has been challenged by other works that in connecting the past and present of Italy's migrations create a different public awareness based on empathy. Stella's bestselling *L'orda*, published two years after Fallaci's book in 2003, was a clear response to such simplistic readings of Italy's past and espoused an uncompromising thesis advocating the need to see in contemporary immigration a space pre-occupied by emigration: Similarly, Italians were once criminals, prostitutes, street vendors, undocumented, illiterate, naïve, and on and on. With its effective subtitle, "When we were the Albanians," which has by now become a commonly used phrase in Italy, the book offered a new way of looking at

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the two phenomena by prompting a reconsideration of emigration via a closer look at history and immigration via empathy. While Stella's *L'orda*, similar to his following book *Odissee*, remains anchored in the history of emigration and lets the reader develop connections to the present through an implicit mirroring technique, the general parallelism set up by the author offered useful tools to the general public for a more nuanced reading. The adaptation of the two books for the stage discussed in Aperture I has further emphasized this view of emigration as a cognitive premise for today's immigration. The most notable among the works that offer an integrated look at Italy's migrations is Amelio's *Lamerica* (1994), which brilliantly embraced the connections among the outbound and inbound flows, as well as post/colonialism, and effectively constitutes the implicit matrix of *Pre-Occupied Spaces*.[27]

Even though to this day the three phenomena are generally kept separate in scholarly and nonscholarly publications for reasons related to the areas of specialization of the authors, they are almost always connected by way of a mention in the prologue (books on immigration refer to emigration at the outset, as is the case for Parati's *Migration Italy*) or the epilogue (books on emigration refer to immigration in the conclusions, as in the case of the comprehensive two-volume work *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana*, edited by Bevilacqua, Franzina, and de Clementi in 2001 and 2002). To put it succinctly, emigration precedes immigration, and immigration follows emigration, with colonialism being intermittently addressed. These are the two trajectories acting as the scaffold to the three fields, which remain for the most part independent from each other, except for occasions such as the Oxford University series of conferences and similar initiatives.[28]

A number of books have distinctively adopted a connected reading, but they have usually focused on only two of the three phenomena.[29] A few scholarly volumes have instead opened up to all of them but these are for the most part collections of essays in which the three phenomena are still treated separately by individual authors (Burns and Polezzi's 2003 *Borderlines: Migrazioni e identità nel Novecento*, and Parati and Tamburri's 2011 *The Cultures of Italian Migration*). Pasquale Verdicchio's *Bound by Distance* (1997) is the only single-author work that embraces all these phenomena and actually addresses internal migrations within Italy as well, yet it does so through the specific lens of the Southern subaltern, in Gramscian terms.[30] Inspired by Verdicchio's encompassing view but also eager to make the dialogue across spaces and times more intimate, my book brings events, people, and experiences linked to the three phenomena even closer within an empathic vision of the humanities.[31]

This integrated reading of emigration and immigration, which in addition regularly incorporates the experience of colonialism and the resulting postcolonial condition, breaks traditional boundaries and calls for a more porous disciplinary approach.[32] While aware of the cautionary tales coming from scholars active in disciplines that are less prone to favor boundary-crossing approaches,[33] I am interested in emphasizing the cultural value of these unlikely connections for the form of empathy they can engender (see in particular Aperture I for the striking parallel between migrant voyages of yesterday and today). It is precisely this function that historian Paola Corti signals in her analysis of emigration and immigration in which she coincidentally uses a pivotal adjective for my work: "What

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one reads by comparing that experience with the more recent experiences allows to assess the recent phenomena in a less preoccupied way" (*Storia* 133).[34] *Pre-Occupied Spaces* embraces this view as a working premise: In the process, it shares useful tools aimed at avoiding the risks of collective amnesia over Italy's past of emigration and colonialism, of manufactured celebratory discourses on Italian emigrants' success abroad, and of discriminatory rhetoric against current immigrants in Italy. Whether through visual correlations, linguistic parallelisms, philosophical correspondences or political analogies, the connection of the three phenomena are based on and in turn foster a fundamental empathy that can only be constructive and ultimately necessary from a pragmatic point of view. Concluding that immigrants are less than we were may provide a temporary sense of social and political control but eventually creates a two-tier society that is intrinsically unstable over time because of its us-versus-them paradigm.[35] *Pre-Occupied Spaces* is instead concerned with conjunctions such as "like" or "as if" ushering a similarity, a metaphor, or even a hypothetical relation. The forms of empathy offered in this book signals the necessity of cognition that rests on recognition via memory and imagination and rethinks the national in the transnational dimension. In revolving around specific spaces, the cultural texts addressed incorporate the macro and micro levels of human pre-occupations and preoccupations.

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