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RESEARCH REPORT / NOTES DE RECHERCHE

Women, Work, and Protest in the Italian Diaspora: An International Research Agenda

Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta

HOW DO WE THEORIZE global migration, family economies, and labour activism from a women-centred perspective? How do feminist and gendered frameworks challenge histories of diasporas, nationalisms, and the international proletariat? We aim to explore these questions by focusing on the roughly 27 million people who in the 19th and 20th centuries left the geographical expression called Italy. Our work brings together colleagues from four continents in a collaborative project on Italian working women in Italy, Europe, North and South America, and Australia.[1]

We intend to probe persistent myths and distorted images of Italian women, and rethink some of the categories central to migration and diaspora scholarship. Indeed, our project should help historicize social scientific analyses of migration that treat step-migration, return migration, and transnationalism as new phenomena

[1]Participants include Paola Corti (France), Anne Morelli (Belgium), Jennifer Guglielmo and Diane Vecchio (USA), Ros Pesman (Australia), Robert Ventresca (North America), Linda Reeder, Maddalena Tirabassi and Andreina deClemente (Italy), Carina Silberstein (Argentina), and Chiara Vangelista (Brazil).

Donna Gabaccia and Franca Iacovetta, "Women, Work, and Protest in the Italian Diaspora: An International Research Agenda," *Labour/Le Travail*, 42 (Fall 1998), 161-81.

characteristic of today's migrants in contradistinction to the settler immigrants of the past. The latter term has emerged in anthropological studies of contemporary migration, which generally focus on one migrant group in the sending and receiving regions (usually the US) and depict transnationalism as a life-style or an identity facilitated by a post-modern, high-tech, late 20th century global economy.[2] This approach slights the long history of migration and the migrant workers who in the past also criss-crossed the globe and built cross-border lives.

The sheer volume of Italian migrations of the past two centuries suggests the centrality of migration to modern Italian life. The total number of Italians who left home in these years about equalled the population of the newly unified Italian nation. The demographic impact abroad was dramatic and enduring. Early 20th-century Buenos Aires and Sao Paolo emerged as semi-Italianized cities. Both New York and Toronto at times have claimed Italian populations larger than Rome's. Italians have also composed a sizeable component of the labour forces of France, Switzerland, and Germany. Today, the numbers of descendants of Italian migrants, estimated at more than sixty million, exceeds the population of Italy. Still, historically, Italian immigrants did not fit the settler profile very well. Between 1870 and 1970, about half of Italy's migrants returned home, and a large but unknown proportion emigrated repeatedly over several decades. Migration thus became an ordinary way of life for generations of people. Most of Italy's citizens probably enjoyed ties of kin and friendship to Italians abroad. In certain regions of heavy emigration, such ties persisted, giving rise to a culture in which emigration, transnational families, and politics abroad were normal and integrated features of everyday life.[3]

Reflections on Current Scholarship

HERE, WE REFLECT critically on the theoretical implications of recent scholarship for writing a woman-centred, gendered, and proletarian history of the Italian diaspora. Diaspora scholarship generally highlights questions of identity and language, usually to the neglect of analyses of class, state, and society. Recent comparative studies in Italian migration, including one now underway on labour migrants and militants, have appropriately drawn attention to class, politics, economy, and culture, but have not satisfactorily integrated women's lives or gender dynamics into their frameworks.[4] In considering the relevant literatures, we offer some suggestions for rethinking the connections among gender, culture, class, and

[2] A seminal work is Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, eds., *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York 1992).
[3] Gianfausto Rosoli, "Le popolazioni di origine italiana oltreoceano," *Altreitalie*, 2 (1989).
[4] On the "Italian Workers Around the World" project, see Donna Gabaccia and Fraser Ottanelli "Diaspora or International Proletariat?" *Diasporas* 6 (Spring 1997); their newsletter, and conference program, "For Us There are No Frontiers" Tampa, Florida, April 1996.

state in the history of immigrant workers and communities. So doing, we have had to confront a wide variety of national historiographies and considerable variation in quality and quantity of research undertaken on Italians in different nation states. More particularly, we explore the complex ways in which economy and culture have shaped male and female agency during periods of Italian migration and labour activism. We seek to move beyond the polarized character — or, the culture versus economy impasse — that characterizes historical work on Italian women. In place of reductionist explanations of Italian immigrant behaviour that privilege either structural or cultural explanations (usually to the neglect of the other) we grapple with ways of understanding the interplay of structural determinants, cultural traditions, political identities, and human agency.

Several literatures have informed our efforts to combine gender and international approaches to Italian migration. Our debt to women's history is plainly evident in our focus on women's material lives within peasant and industrial family economies, the links between women's reproductive lives and waged work, and female activism — though we also draw on gendered histories of men, work, and community. Our theoretical thinking is most directly influenced by three bodies of work. First is the literature on women and development, largely in today's "third world" or written by scholars of world systems analysis.[5] Given that today's migrations are increasingly female in composition, this scholarship offers relevant insights regarding unwaged work and the economic parallels between peasant subsistence production and modern housework, and the triple oppression of minority women.[6] Complex issues related to the cultural preferences for either individualism or group solidarity and the possibility of measuring cross-culturally either patriarchy or female autonomy also emerge in this literature, and are shaped in part by troubled relations between "rich world" and "third world" feminists.[7] Second, we draw extensively on feminist labour history, especially in the USA, Britain, and Canada, where scholars have grappled with the links between women's waged and

[5]See the seminal works, Joan Smith, *et al.*, *Households and the World Economy* (Beverly Hills 1984) and Joan Smith and Immanuel Wallerstein, coordinators, *Creating and Transforming Households: The Constraints of the World Economy* (New York 1992). More attentive to women are Sharon Stichter and Jane L. Parpart, *Women, Employment and the Family in the International Division of Labour* (Houndsmill, Basingstoke 1990); Joan Nash and Patri'cia Ferna'ndez-Kelly, *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (Albany, NY 1983).

[6]Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990* (Bloomington 1994), ch 2; Lourdes Beneri'a, ed., *Women and Development: The Sexual Division of Labor in Rural Societies* (New York 1982); Eleanor Leacock, *et al.*, *Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labor by Gender* (South Hadley, MA 1986).

[7]Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," in Mohanty, *et al.*, *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington 1991).

unwaged work, between family responsibilities and labour activism, and women's relations with male co-workers and political comrades.[8] Gendered labour studies have probed crucial interconnections among workplace and household, and highlighted the deeply politicized and gendered cultural world of ethnic radicals.[9] Third, we find highly suggestive Victoria De Grazia's work on the nationalization of Italian women under fascism — which explores women's relationship to the state under a regime that laid claim to their loyalties and reproductive capacities as mothers of the race while denying them the entitlements of citizenship (including the vote).[10] Thinking about gender and nation-building also links our work to a broader multi-disciplinary literature on nationalism, post-colonialism, and subaltern peoples originating in the work of Benedict Anderson, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak.[11] Feminist scholars particularly remind us that men and women

[8]US works include Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920* (Urbana 1981); Nancy Shrom Dye, *As Equals and as Sisters: Feminism, the Labor Movement, and the Women's Trade Union League of New York* (Columbia, MO 1989); Jacqueline Jones, *Labour of Love, Labour of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York 1985); Alice Kessler-Harris, *Out to Work: A History of Wage-earning Women in the United States* (New York 1982); Ruth Milkman, ed., *Women, Work, and Protest: A Century of US Women's Labor History* (Boston 1985). Canadian works include Linda Kealey, "Canadian Socialism and the Woman Question, 1900-1914," *Labour/Le Travail*, 13 (1984); Varpu Lindstrom-Best, *Defiant Sisters: A Social History of Finnish Women in Canada* (Toronto 1988); Joan Sangster, *Dreams of Equality: Women on the Canadian Left, 1920-1950* (Toronto 1989); Janice Newton, *The Feminist Challenge to the Canadian Left, 1900-1918* (Montréal 1995).

[9]For Britain, Cynthia Cockburn, *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* (London 1983); for Canada, Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto 1991); Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto 1993); Ruth Frager, *Sweatshop Strife: Class, Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Labour Movement of Toronto, 1900-39* (Toronto 1992); Franca Iacovetta, *Such Hardworking People: Italian Immigrants in Postwar Toronto* (Montréal 1992). For the US, Jacqueline Dowd Hall, *et al.*, *Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill 1987); Ava Baron, ed., *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor* (Ithaca 1991), especially Mary H. Blewett's "Manhood and the Market: The Politics of Gender and Class among the Textile Workers of Fall River, Massachusetts, 1870-1880"; Nancy A. Hewitt, "In Pursuit of Power: The Political Economy of Women's Activism in Twentieth-Century Tampa," in Nancy A. Hewitt and Suzanne Lebsock, eds., *Visible Women: New Essays on American Activism* (Urbana 1993); Donna Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants: Rural Sicilians Become American Workers* (New Brunswick, NJ 1988).

[10]Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley 1992).

[11]Benedict and Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London 1991); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in Donna Landry and Gerald McLean, eds., *The Spivak Reader* (New York 1996).

may acquire national identities in differing fashion and with differing consequences.[12]

Men without Women?: Gendered Dimensions of Migration

ITALIAN LABOUR migrations in the 19th and 20th centuries were overwhelmingly — as high as sixty to eighty per cent — male during particular periods.[13] In explaining this pattern, however, we face two possibly conflicting interpretations. One emphasizes the demands of a segmented labour market and growing demand for specifically male workers in receiving countries. The other stresses the conservatism of Latin patriarchal culture: men seek to control female sexuality by limiting them to a narrow, physical community (usually the village) in which women and their gossip effectively regulate female behaviour. In this and other ways, it is argued, an enduring code of family honour that attached enormous value to the sexual purity of wives, daughters, and sisters, allowed for the strict supervision of women's lives.[14]

Can these interpretations be reconciled? On the economic side, we know that Italian men responded to a growing international demand for two types of male labour in the 19th century: most worked either in plantation agriculture or as the "human steam shovels" who built the infrastructure of the capitalist world economy, including railways, streets, tunnels, sewers, subways, and factories. The search for wages in the global economy took men near and far: the mines of Belgium, Germany, north Africa, western Canada, and southern US; sugar and cotton plantations of South America and Louisiana; orchards and vineyards of California and western Australia; and public works projects on several continents. Desired for their capacity to perform hard labour but despised as racially inferior and as economic competitors, Italian male migrants were frequently excluded from local labour movements and stigmatized by derisive labels such as "sweatback," "dago," "the Chinese of Europe," and Australia's "olive peril."[15]

[12]For differing approaches see Deniz Kandiyoti, "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation," in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory* (New York 1993); Anna Ward, *et al.*, *Women and Citizenship in Europe: Borders, Rights and Duties; Women's Differing Identities in a Europe of Contested Boundaries* (Stoke-on-Trent 1992). See also Vickie Ruiz and Lillian Schliessel eds., *Western Women: Their Land, Their Lives* (Alberquerque 1998).
[13]The main data on Italian migration arranged by receiving country is in Walter F. Willcox, *International Migrations* (New York 1931).
[14]Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*, ch 3.
[15]The earliest global analysis of Italian men's work is Robert F. Foerster, *The Italian Emigration of Our Times* (New York 1968 [1919]). See also Gabaccia, "The 'Yellow Peril' and the 'Chinese of Europe': Global Perspectives on Race and Labor, 1815-1930," in Jan and Leo Lucassen, ed., *Migrations, Migration History, History: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives* (Bern 1997); George Pozzetta and Bruno Ramirez, eds., *The Italian Diaspora: Essays in Honour of Robert Harney* (Toronto 1992).

A growing demand for female migrant labour during the 19th century was closely associated with two different developments: the rise of the middle classes and an accompanying demand for domestic servants in urban areas; and, to a far less extent, increasing job opportunities in the "female industries" that developed in tandem with the "deskilling" and displacement of (generally male) artisanal workers during "the second industrial revolution."[16] In Italy, too, where Latin understandings of patriarchy reigned, textile factories and "light" manufacturing, as well as domestic service, offered large numbers of single women and daughters new work opportunities beyond the agrarian worlds where their earlier migrations had occurred.[17] This suggests that the "code" of female "honour and shame" was malleable and class-specific, although it presumably intensified with the growing cultural hegemony of the urban middle classes in Italy after national unification (1861). We thus caution against easy generalizations about peculiarities of Italian culture; the concept of women's shame, and the view that women's mobility was strictly controlled, need more scrutiny.

Some 19th-century patterns may help us to sort out the interaction of economy and culture in shaping Italian migrant sex ratios. First, gender ratios varied considerably from region to region and across time, and appear to have been largely determined by several related factors: the destination of migrants, the nature of the particular labour markets to which migrants responded, and the patterns of peasant economy and agricultural change in their home regions. (See Table 1.) Table 1 shows that the supposedly more modern, Europeanized north of Italy actually had lower rates of female migration than the supposedly conservative south. To emphasize a cultural explanation, then, we must stress that patriarchal concerns made women's migration (as parts of family) more common in the south, whereas northerners tolerated long periods of separation between husbands and wives and children.

But work opportunities also mattered. In much of mountainous northern Italy, where peasant families maintained fairly firm access to their own lands, older women's work on the land freed younger women to migrate to textile factory jobs in nearby cities, such as Biella, Turin, and Milan. Also freed to migrate were men, many of whom took up seasonal jobs as construction workers in neighbouring trans-alpine Europe (including Switzerland, France, and Germany) or travelled abroad, for example, as golondrine (seasonal wheat harvesters) to the pampas of

[16]Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York 1978), ch. 2-3; Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernization of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (New York 1976); essays in Betty Boyd Caroli, *et al.*, eds., *The Italian Immigrant Woman in North America* (Toronto 1978).

[17]M. Pelaia, "Mestieri femminili e luoghi comuni: Le domestiche a Roma a meta' Ottocento," *Quarderni storici*, 68 (1988); Franco Ramella, *Terra e telai: sistemi di parentela e manifattura nel Biellese dell'Ottocento* (Torino 1983); Elda Gentili Zappi, *If Eight Hours Seem too Few: Mobilization of Women Workers in the Italian Rice Fields* (Albany, NY 1991).

TABLE 1

Per Cent Female of Total Migrants from Italy by Province
1876-1925*

Province	Per Cent Female
Piemonte	22
Liguria	29
Lombardia	17
Veneto	16
Emilia	19
Toscana	21
Marche	21
Umbria	18
Lazio	14
Abruzzi/Molise	19
Campania	27
Puglie	21
Basilicata	30
Calabria	19
Sicilia	29
Sardegna	15

**Annuario statistica della emigrazione italiana* (Roma, 1926).

Argentina. In Sicily, by contrast, where fewer peasants controlled their own land, and men had effectively excluded women from wage-earning on the large landowners' commercial estates, women could not so easily feed their families while men were away. Here, more families migrated and sex ratios among migrants were far more balanced overall.[18] It may also be the case that overseas destinations such as the US (and its female industries) offered better opportunities for female employment than did trans-alpine Europe, thus raising women's migration among the southerners who preferred American over European destinations. In Switzerland

[18]Patrizia Audenino, *Un mestiere per partire. Tradizione migratoria, lavoro e communità in una vallata alpina* (Milano 1990); Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants*, ch 3; her "In the Shadows of the Periphery: Italian Women in the Nineteenth Century," in Jean Quataert and Marilyn Boxer, eds., *Connecting Spheres; Women in the Western World, 1500 to the Present* (New York 1987).

and Germany where labourers for construction jobs were in demand, men dominated migration streams. But where landowners in plantation economies experimented with sharecropping schemes to replace slave labour or the "coolie" trade, as in Brazil and Australia, respectively, whole families of Italians were also more likely to be recruited.[19]

The familiar litany of woes pushing Italians from their homeland — overpopulation, strained family landholdings, the endless suffering called "*miseria*," collapsing industries or disappearing markets for exported crops — also need to be gendered as they probably affected men and women differently. We know, for example, that the decline of a cottage-based textile industry in most of rural Italy during the late 19th century significantly altered women's productive work and the families that depended on their contributions,[20] but few have studied the impact this had on southern family economies, or on the migrations from regions of collapsing proto-industry. Likely, different patterns of male and female migrations developed in regions where, as in Calabria in the south, no industrial production of textiles replaced cottage production, and other regions, such as Biella in the northwest, where employment in textile factories (much of it female) symbolized Italy's entry into the world of industrializing nations. Gender ratios of out-migration could also change significantly over time. Migrations from southern and central regions, such as Calabria and the Abruzzi respectively, remained heavily male for only a period of roughly twenty years, and then either men returned or wives and children joined them abroad. Here, women's migration depended largely on men's capacity to find wage-earning alternatives to seasonal labour abroad, usually by landing jobs in urban economies that also provided jobs for semi- and low-skilled women workers — either in domestic service or the "female industries." But there was nothing inevitable about this evolution of male-to-family migration. Transalpine migrations from Italy's northwest and northeast, for instance, remained male dominated into the post-World War II era, when men travelled under "guest worker" schemes.[21] A different balance developed in interwar America where, under the impact of restrictive immigration policies, overall migration from southern and eastern Europe to the US actually became female dominated. US laws exempted close family members of naturalized citizens from the harsh quotas if their arrival

[19]Rene' Del Fabbro, *Transalpini; Italienische Arbeitswanderung nach Süddeutschland im Kaiserreich 1870-1918* (Osnabrück 1996); Angelo Trento, *La dove' la raccolta del caffe'* (Sao Paulo 1989); William A. Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland* (St. Lucia, Queensland 1995).

[20]Christopher Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy* (Cambridge 1995), 135; on local studies of the north, Ramella, *Terra e telai*; Patrizia Sione, "Industrial Work, Militancy, and Migrations of Northern Italian Workers in Europe and Paterson, N.J., 1880-1913," PhD Thesis, State University of New York at Binghampton, 1992.

[21]Federico Romero, *Emigrazione e integrazione europea, 1945-1973* (Roma 1991).

re-unified families divided by earlier migrations. Many more women than men took advantage of these provisions.[22]

Migration Cultures, Transnational Families

IN AREAS where male migration persisted over decades or became a permanent feature of Italian men's incorporation into the capitalist world economy, a culture of migration — what social scientists now call transnationalism — emerged as a way of life for Italian men and women. Scholars have probed the lives of the migratory "men without women."[23] Largely neglected and woefully misunderstood, however, are the many women who remained behind. The "women who wait"[24] and their links to male migrants deserve serious attention. Contrary to popular belief, such women could not always fall back easily on the financial support of male breadwinners abroad or spend the money sent them from overseas. After all, the goal of male migration was usually the creation of surplus savings — the proverbial nest egg intended to finance a better home, more land, and daughters' dowries — and not the maintenance of idle women and children along bourgeois models.

Linda Reeder's fine study of a Sicilian village which sent many men abroad suggests ways of theorizing the connections between men "on the move" and the "white widows" (as they were called in 19th-century Sicily) who remained. It illustrates how family economies functioned in a part of Italy where women, during men's absences, had enormous difficulties finding waged work or pursuing subsistence agriculture as peasants on family lands. Women's efforts focused on reserving men's earnings from abroad for the purchase of land and houses for the next generation, and thereby the reproduction of their families and indeed the entire community. Male absences also pushed women into new relationships to the state, as the family and household representative, though what impact such newly forged relations with state, church, and bureaucratic officials had on them remains open for investigation. Reeder's work also demonstrates how the difficulty of long-distance communication and the anticipation of possible migration (in this case, to

[22]Marion F. Houstoun, *et al.*, "Female Predominance of Immigration to the United States since 1930: A First Look," *International Migration Review*, 28 (Winter 1984), 908-63; Gabaccia, "Women of the Mass Migrations: From Minority to Majority, 1820-1930," in Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Moch, ed., *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives* (Boston 1996).

[23]For example, Michael La Sorte, *La Merica: Images of Italian Greenhorn Experience* (Philadelphia 1985); Robert Harney, "Men without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930," in Caroli, *Italian Immigrant Woman in North America*; and on recent efforts to explore same-sex practises among immigrant men, George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York 1994).

[24]We borrow the phrase from Caroline Brettell's important work, *Men Who Migrate, Women Who Wait: Population and History in a Portuguese Parish* (Princeton 1986).

the US) improved attitudes toward female literacy. All this suggests that we cannot treat the women who stayed behind as stock characters leading static lives.[25]

What remains unclear from Reeder's work, and from comparable studies of northern Italian regions marked by persistent seasonal male migration to Switzerland, France, and Germany, is the connection between women's unwaged, subsistence and reproductive work at home and men's wages earned abroad. As world systems theorists note, employers in developed countries could pay migrant workers (most of whom hailed from peripheral economies) lower wages than "native" workers because migrant workers' wages did not support the reproduction of the next generation of workers: peasant agriculture and women's work in the migrant's home country paid those costs. At the same time, migrant men's wages, though one-third lower than that of "native-born" workers', were always considerably higher than could be earned at home.[26] But how these transnational family economies actually functioned remains somewhat of a mystery. How did Italian male earnings abroad intersect with women's activities back home? The particular economic niche that women occupied, whether as peasants, spinners and weavers, workers in proto-industry, housewives, or consumers and managers of family incomes and savings, likely mattered. Knowing how would shed light on the gender negotiations and strategies that informed "family" decisions about migration.

Also under-studied is the relationship between women's waged work in Italy and men's waged work abroad. In northern Italy, where subsistence agriculture and industrialization of textile production sometimes went hand-in-hand, divergent patterns emerged. Some women entered the new factories while others took over agricultural duties to provision families; some men found industrial jobs nearby, while many more ventured abroad.[27] We also suspect some correlation between family patterns of labour and the presence of male and female activism. Relevant work by US historians suggest that work choices affected the extent and form of women's participation in unionization and strike activity at home and abroad.[28] Nor did female activism occur only in industrial settings. As the managers of family budgets, women often assumed special leadership in tax protests in rural and urban areas.[29] During the Sicilian peasant revolts of the 1890s, women played a visible

[25]Linda Reeder, "Widows in White: Sicilian Women and Mass Migration, 1880 to 1930," PhD Thesis, Rutgers University, 1995.

[26]Michael Burawoy, "The Functions and Reproduction of Migrant Labor: Comparative Material from Southern Africa and the United States," *American Journal of Sociology*, 81 (March 1976).

[27]Ramella, *Terra e Telai*; Audenino, *Un Mestiere*; Sione, "Industrial Work, Militancy, and Migrations."

[28]Louise Tilly, "Paths to Proletarianization: Organization of Production, Sexual Division of Labor, and Women's Collective Action," *Signs*, 7 (Winter 1981), 400-17; Carole Turbin, *Working Women of Collar City: Gender, Class and Community in Troy, New York, 1864-1886* (Urbana 1992).

[29]Jole Calapso, *Donne Ribelli: Un secolo di lotte femminili in Sicilia* (Palermo 1980), ch 5.

role when their communities occupied estates, demanded better land contracts, and trashed the offices and homes of tax collectors.[30] Unfortunately, women's role in subsequent forms of activism has received short shrift in Italian labour history, where at best women emerge as junior partners in the formation of northern peasant leagues, the modern labour movements of Piemonte and Lombardia, and the anti-war activism and food riots that preceded the outbreak of World War I.

We would also venture the hypothesis that activism could be linked to the dynamics of male and female emigration and return. A comparative analysis of the interconnections among female work, male migration, and labour activism in the textile industry is especially needed. Indeed, preliminary work on the US reveals intriguing links between Italy's textile workers and employment in New World centres of Italian anarchist and syndicalist activism such as Paterson, New Jersey. Many of Paterson's women, not just its men, had been labourers and sometimes activists in Italian textile centres prior to migration.[31]

Working Out: The Domestic Service Conundrum and Other Parables

AS LABOUR MIGRANTS in the diaspora, Italian women, like men, performed distinctive types of waged work. Significantly, domestic service, the most important motor of female migrations of the 19th and early 20th centuries, never became the major economic niche for Italian women globally that it did for Irish women and, to a lesser extent, women from Norway, Germany, Sweden, Poland, and Finland.[32] Italian women did not categorically shun this work. After agriculture, domestic service was the largest employer of females in Italy until well into the 20th century, and Italian women abroad sometimes worked as laundresses, cooks, and house servants. In Argentina and Brazil they generally constituted the largest group of immigrant domestic servants. Though few remained in their placement, Italian domestics were also recruited by Canada after World War II.[33] Even in the US, where comparatively few Italians took such jobs, most Italian women listing an occupation for Ellis Island record-keepers called themselves domestic servants, though this

[30]Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants.*

[31]Sione, "Industrial Work, Militancy, and Migrations."

[32]On the importance of domestic service, see Janet Nolan, *Ourselves Alone: Women's Emigration from Ireland, 1885-1920* (Knoxville 1989); Joy K. Lintelman, "'Our Serving Sisters': Swedish-American Domestic Servants and their Ethnic Community," *Social Science History,* 15 (Fall 1991), 381-96.

[33]Judith L. Sweeney, "Las lavanderas de la ciudad de Buenos Aires en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX," VI *Jornadas de historia Econo'mica,* Rosario, mimeo, 1985, cited in Alicia Bernasconi and Carina Frid de Silberstein, "Le altre protagoniste: italiane a Santa Fe," *Altreitalie,* 9 (gennaio-giugno 1993), 138; Loraine Slomp Giron, "L'immigrata in Brasile e il lavoro, *Altreitalie,* 9 (gennaio-giugno 1993), 108-9; Franca Iacovetta, "Primitive Villagers and Uneducated Girls: Canada Recruits Domestics from Italy," *Canadian Women Studies,* 7, 4 (Winter 1986).

may have reflected the greater respectability accorded domestic as opposed to factory work.[34]

Still, Italian immigrant women did not cluster in domestic service. Their relative absence from a sector that in many countries became an immigrant female job "ghetto" has not been satisfactorily addressed. Most scholarship deals with the United States and compares the heavy Irish migrations of domestics with Italian women's limited association with service jobs. It also reveals conflicting interpretations of Italian women's work patterns, ones that parallel in striking ways the economic versus culturalist explanations of Italian women's limited migration. In short, either economy or culture produced an Italian "aversion" to domestic service. Some writers stress the belated timing of Italian women's arrival *vis-à-vis* Irish women and economic developments in the US. The arrival of large numbers of Italian women, they suggest, coincided with the decline of domestic service as a employer of females generally after the 1870s, and the corresponding rise of "female industries." Given a choice, Italians opted for the higher wages of the garment and other industries.[35] Others stress the differing composition of the migration streams: the Irish migrated as young single women, in need of residence as well as work, while many more Italian women migrated as wives, mothers, and daughters, that is, as parts of nuclear family migrations. And many scholars have isolated as a critical or contributing factor Italian cultural opposition to women living among "strangers" and the possible threat it posed to female modesty.[36] While such influences probably did operate, again we are struck by the degree to which codes of female honour/shame or male desires to regulate women's sexuality and mobility are presented as a peculiarly Italian (or southern Italian) trait. It smacks of cultural determinism and reveals a lack of sensitivity to how patriarchy restricted women in other cultures and societies. As for the Italian case, we might begin to work through the economy/culture split by comparing local economies that exhibited different patterns. A comparison of Italian women in New York (where their domestic service profile was low) and Buenos Aires (where they were the largest group of immigrant domestics) or Naples or Palermo (where large numbers worked as domestics) would provide a refreshing way of examining the problem.

Across the diaspora Italian women also worked in significant numbers in agriculture, especially in Argentina, Brazil, southern France, parts of Australia, and certain North American locales, including Louisiana, California, and, to a lesser

[34]Gabaccia, "From Minority to Majority," 94; thanks to our anonymous assessor for reminding us of this point.

[35]Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America* (Boston 1981), ch 6.

[36]See the early debate about domestic and factory employment: Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "A Flexible Tradition: South Italian Immigrants Confront a New Work Experience," *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), 429-55; Louise A. Tilly, "Comment on Two Papers on British and American Working Class Families," *Journal of Social History*, 7 (1974), 452-9.

extent, British Columbia. Again, differing patterns emerge. In Brazil and Argentina, most worked as members of sharecropping families.[37] Brazil consciously recruited family groups from Italy to replace emancipated slaves who associated work on coffee plantations with slavery and sought to escape waged labour in freedom by turning to subsistence-oriented agriculture. In Argentina, the families of *golondrine* who had earlier migrated to seasonal harvesting jobs on the pampas relocated *en masse*, usually in rural wheat-growing regions of the country where they could lease or sharecrop land. They thus combined production of wheat for the market with subsistence agriculture, much as peasant families did in Italy's Po Valley and in parts of the southern grain-growing regions of Apulia and Sicily. Australia's recruitment of Italian families for sharecropping was also informed by racial politics. In response to widespread opposition to the importation of largely male indentured Chinese and Kanaka (Pacific island) seasonal workers to harvest sugar in Queensland's expanding plantations, Australian employers introduced sharecropping and recruited Italian peasant families. They hoped, but did not always succeed, in attracting "whiter" northern Italians.[38] To choose yet another pattern, Italian women in southern France figured among the seasonal agricultural labourers harvesting flowers, saffron, and grapes.[39] Such comparisons alone caution against easy generalizations about Italian women's work patterns, but we also need more closely textured analysis of work settings and their implications for women's daily experiences, family responsibilities, and power. Whether women's work in these varied contexts reproduced or challenged pre-migration gender and class dynamics is a central question that begs for comparative analysis.

In numerical terms, the most important form of waged work for Italian women in the diaspora was factory operative in the garment, textile, cannery, and cigar industries.[40] Italian women themselves identified the fixed hours, higher wages, and "modern environment" that attracted them to these "female industries."[41] In the US, the most studied case, the majority of Italian female factory workers were

[37]Carina Silberstein, "Labor and Migration in an Agricultural Economy: Italians in Argentina," paper presented at "'For Us There Are No Frontiers,'" Tampa, April 1996; Chiara Vangelista, *Le braccia per la fazenda, Immigrati e caipiras nella formazione del mercato del lavoro paulista (1850-1930)* (Milano 1982).

[38]William A. Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland* (St. Lucia 1995); Franca Iacovetta, Michael Quinlan, and Ian Radforth, "Immigration and Labour: Australia and Canada Compared," *Labour/Le Travail*, 38 (Fall 1996) and *Labour History*, 71 (November 1996), 90-115.

[39]Paola Corti, "I movimenti frontalieri al femminile, Percorsi tradizionali ed emigrazione di mestiere dalle valli cunesi alla Francia meridionale," Special Issue "L'esodo frontaliero: gli Italiani nell Francia Meridionale," ed. by Paola Corti and Ralph Schor, *Recherches Regionales* (1995), 71-4.

[40]See the early scattered notes in Foerster, *Italian Emigration of Our Times.*

[41]Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, *Memories of Migration: Gender, Ethnicity, and Work in the Lives of Jewish and Italian Women in New York, 1870-1924* (Albany 1996).

young single women, usually daughters living at home with their parents. (Unlike Jewish women, the group to which they are usually compared, many young Italian wives also continued working until the birth of their first or second child, or returned to work later in life.)[42] Anecdotal evidence for Canada suggests that here too single daughters dominated the ranks of wage-earning Italian women, at least until World War II. Few Italian women in American cities "opted" for the female boarding houses or other forms of shared accommodation that attracted many turn-of the-century urban American "working girls."[43] A pattern of Italian female lodging did emerge elsewhere, including in northern Italian cities and in Switzerland, where employers experimented with paternalistic, Lowell-style dormitory housing for unmarried women textile workers.[44] But the predominant profile was of Italian women workers living at home as daughters in family groups.

Recent scholarship on sexuality shows that single wage-earning women in North America challenged parental control over their labour and free time. While the question whether Italian working girls participated fully in the commercialized amusements of the early 20th century has provoked some disagreement among historians, research shows that Italian working daughters experimented with "American" ways and challenged conventional familial authority. Most turned over their pay packets to their mothers, the organizers of consumption, but they also "earned" allowances enabling them to pursue in limited ways commercial American youth culture, particularly mass-produced "city clothes," make-up, and movies. Comparative studies of Italians and Jews agree that while Italian girls enjoyed less social autonomy many did succeed in challenging their parents' customary right to choose a marriage partner. And at least some Italians defied parents by breaking curfews, neglecting after-work house chores, and taking up with "American" friends.[45] In Canada, where studies of the "girl problem" have only begun to appear, historians have uncovered few Italian or immigrant "bad girls." But the slim evidence suggests that Italian girls who "got into trouble" were more likely to do so within their own households and communities than in the public streets or

[42]Valuable recent studies of Italian women in US garment work include Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, *Memories of Migration*; Miriam Cohen, *From Workshop to Office: Two Generations of Italian Women in New York City, 1900-1950* (Ithaca 1992); Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890-1925* (New York 1985).

[43]Joanne Meyerowitz, *Women Adrift: Independent Wage Earners in Chicago, 1880-1930* (Chicago 1991); Franc Sturino, *Forging the Chain: A Case Study of Italian Migration to North America, 1880-1930* (Toronto 1990).

[44]Nancy G. Eschelman, "Forging a Socialist Women's Movement: Angelica Balabanoff in Switzerland," in Caroli, *Italian Immigrant Woman in North America*.

[45]Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*; Cohen, *From Workshop to Office*; Kathy Peiss, *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia 1985); Judith Smith, *Family Connections: A History of Italian and Jewish Immigrant Lives in Providence, Rhode Island, 1900-1940* (Albany 1985).

nickelodeons. Both consensual sexual relations or rape by male boarders or neighbours, for example, could result in a girl's incarceration in training school or reformatory.[46]

Unwaged Labour Abroad: More or Less Work for Mother?

STUDIES OF ITALIAN WOMEN in the diaspora generally have focused on their wage-earning, yet most migrant women engaged initially in unwaged domestic labour. Scholars have noted the connections between women's household responsibilities and the spread of industrial homework and "sweatshops," but we do not know if this pattern was more typical of the US or of Italian industrial communities in Europe or Latin America.[47] Even less understood is how Italian migrant women's domestic work changed with migration abroad. Some studies have considered the issue by focusing on changing levels of childbearing and fertility,[48] but little is known about housework in rapidly industrializing settings such as New York in the 1910s or Buenos Aires in the 1930s and 1940s.[49] We know that numerous Italian women transformed their housework into waged work by selling their services to male boarders, though they did not define it as "work."[50] But many related issues require study, including whether city life actually lightened the work load of former peasant women by providing them with running water, modern stoves, and the like. Did modern technology for immigrants, as for women in general, mean "more work for mother;"[51] or did Italians interpret "modern conveniences" differently because their point of reference — rural Italy — was different? Such research promises not only to "add" immigrant women to feminist scholarship on consumption, house-

[46]Carolyn Strange, *Toronto's Girl Problem: The Perils and Pleasure of the City, 1880-1930* (Toronto 1995); and unpublished research she generously shared with us; Franca Iacovetta, "Gossip and Hearsay in the Making of Delinquent Girls: Toronto 1940s-50s" paper presented to Canadian Historical Association, St Catherines, June 1996.
[47]For some comparative material, Louise Tilly, *Politics and Class in Milan, 1881-1901* (New York 1992), 48; Silberstein, "Becoming Visible: Italian Immigrant Women in the Garment and Textile Trades in Argentina, 1890-1930," paper presented to the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Chapel Hill, June 1996.
[48]John W. Briggs, "Fertility and Cultural Change Among Families in Italy and America," *American Historical Review*, 91 (December 1986), 1129-45; S.P. Morgan, *et al.*, "Generating Americans: Ethnic Differences in Fertility," in *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census* (New York 1994); Ira Rosenwaike, "Two Generations of Italians in America: Their Fertility Experience," *International Migration Review*, 7 (Fall 1973), 271-80.
[49]Gabaccia, "Housing and Household Work, Sicily and New York, 1890-1910," *Michigan Occasional Papers in Women's Studies* (1981); *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street*, 94-6.
[50]Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, "Italian Women and Work: Experience and Perception," in Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie, eds., *Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker* (Westport 1977).
[51]Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York 1983).

hold technology, and reproduction, but should help us understand why, despite the hardships of migration, Italian women, like other female immigrants, adjusted to their new circumstances. Contemporary work on rural Latin Americans in the US note that women's satisfaction with domestic consumer goods reconciles them to settlement while men dream of returning home.[52]

We need also to address Italian peasant women's generally unquestioned "power of the purse" in a global economy. North American scholars in particular have shown that women maintained their position as managers of family finances, but few have analyzed how much power, as opposed to responsibility, really resided in that position, or whether its meaning changed abroad. Extant studies are suggestive, however. In Italy, women's financial position was associated with their responsibility for arranging marriages and bargaining the dowries and marriage gifts that provided the material basis for reproducing the next generation, while in North America it more often focused on strategies of consumption for the maintenance of day-to-day life in a two-generation or recently arrived immigrant household. Whether these changed contexts affected women's power and influence over children and wider kinship circles requires further exploration.[53]

Female Protest and Labour Activism

PERHAPS the least understood aspect of Italian women's diasporic lives is their role as resisters, protesters, and activists. Studies of Italian male labourers (as opposed to committed leftists) have noted men's high rates of transiency and occasional fierce workplace militancy coupled with their general indifference to formal labour organization and politics.[54] By contrast, few works on immigrant women's activism actually isolate Italians for in-depth investigation. Scholars have tended to compare Italian female militancy to that of more politicized women, and have found Italians

[52]Patricia Pessar, "The Dominicans: Women in the Household and the Garment Industry," in Nancy Foner, ed., *New Immigrants in New York* (New York 1987).

[53]Gabaccia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street*; Sturino, *Forging the Chain*; Iacovetta, *Such Hard Working People.*

[54]For a global analysis, see Gabaccia, "Worker Internationalism and Italian Labor Migration, 1870-1914," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 45 (Spring 1994), 63-79; for the US: Rudolph J. Vecoli, "Italian Immigrants in the United States Labor Movement from 1880 to 1929," in Bruno Bezza, ed., *Gli italiani fuori d'Italia: Gli emigrati italiani nei movimenti operai dei paesi d'adozione 1880-1940* (Milan 1983), 157-306; Edwin Fenton, "Italian Immigrants in the Stone Workers' Unions," *Labor History*, 1 (1962), 188-207; his *Immigrants and Unions, A Case Study: Italians and American Labor, 1870-1920* (New York 1975); Bruno Ramirez, "Immigration, Ethnicity, and Political Militancy: Patterns of Radicalism in the Italian-American Left, 1880-1930," in Valeria Gennaro Lerda, ed., *From 'Melting Pot' to Multiculturalism: The Evolution of Ethnic Relations in the United States and Canada*, (Rome 1990), 115-41; for Canada, Ramirez, "Ethnic Studies and Working-Class History," *Labour/Le Travail*, 19 (Spring 1987), 45-48; Iacovetta, "Immigration and Labour."

wanting. In the well-developed US literature, writers have differentiated between the activism and union leadership of Irish and Jewish women in female industry and Italian women's comparative reluctance to join campaigns and their occasional strike-breaking. The explanations, moreover, have drawn on familiar notions of Italian women's vulnerability to a patriarchal Latin culture.[55]

We are not questioning that Italian women workers in early 20th century US cities were "less militant" than their Jewish counterparts. The 1909 New York garment workers' strike is a case in point. Similarly, in Chicago and New York, the Women's Trade Union League, an alliance of female trade unionists and sympathetic middle-class women, produced several prominent immigrant women leaders in the garment trades, but none of them Italian.[56] Rather, we caution against static snapshots of militancy and note Italian women's pivotal role in later strikes and class-conscious activism. The US evidence suggests that Italian female militancy grew over the course of the 20th century and was closely linked with overlapping ethnic loyalties and networks of family and community. Italian women's activism increased as Italian men's membership in unions, and especially in the Industrial Workers of the World, increased — suggesting that the IWW's mass-based form of industrial organization effectively tapped into the discontents and demands of whole communities.[57] Studies of immigrant communities on strike — including the textile communities of Lawrence, Massachusetts and the cigar factory neighbourhoods of Tampa, Florida — reveal Italian women as aggressive street fighters, rent strikers, and food boycotters — what Ardis Cameron calls "radicals of the worst sort."[58] Like other women committed to their working-class communities, Italian housewives and daughters in mining and industrial towns across North America engaged in class-conscious forms of resistance and protest. A depression-era community "relief strike" in Welland, Ontario witnessed tremendous cross-ethnic class solidarity, which second-generation Italian-Canadian women played a role in nurturing. A postwar women's strike in the same region saw Italian women marching and chanting on the picket-line and joining the human

[55]For example Maxine Seller, "The Uprising of the Twenty Thousand: Sex, Class and Ethnicity in the Shirtwaist Makers' Strike of 1909," in Dirk Hoerder, ed., *Struggle a Hard Battle — Working Class Immigrants* (DeKalb 1986); Kasaba-Friedman, *Memories of Migration*; Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars*.

[56]Alice Kessler-Harris, "Organizing the Unorganizeable: Three Jewish Women and their Union," *Labor History*, 17 (1976), 5-23; Annelise Orleck, *Common Sense and a Little Fire: Women and Working-Class Politics in the United States, 1900-1965* (Chapel Hill 1995).

[57]Jean Scarpaci, "Angela Bambace and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union: The Search for an Elusive Activist," in George Pozzetta, ed., *Pane e Lavoro: The Italian American Working Class* (Toronto 1980); Columba M. Furio, "The Cultural Background of the Italian Immigrant Woman and Its Impact on Her Unionization in the New York City Garment Industry, 1880-1918," in *Pane e Lavoro*.

[58]*Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Urbana 1993).

blockade preventing vehicles from entering the factory. Such findings suggest too that studies of working women's respectability consider closely distinctions based on race/ethnicity and culture.[59]

Although a minority, Italian-American women did become labour organizers. During the 1930s in East Harlem, New York, such activists emerged within the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), where they enjoyed the support of Italian male co-unionists and invoked a metaphor of community to organize the women of their neighbourhoods. (Such ethnic solidarities between Italian women and men did not preclude ongoing gender conflicts, and indeed the patronizing practices of Italian male leftists also require scrutiny.) Some Italian women organizers remained in their communities; others, including Angela Bambace, abandoned the ILGWU's Italian-American "enclave" to organize African-American, Hispanic, and other minority women, in this case, in Baltimore.[60] Portraits of radical Italian women anywhere in the diaspora are all too rare. Throughout the Italian-speaking world, small communities of anarchists, syndicalists, and socialists took root, producing newspapers, a rich cultural scene, and organizers. Yet, we know almost nothing about the women who inhabited and contributed to these communities, or those who, like Virgilia D'Andrea, belonged to a network of Italian militants who criss-crossed the globe, forging alliances with comrades in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere.[61] Of course, such women were in the minority and economic or cultural arguments could be invoked to explain that fact.[62] Far more important, however, is to begin to recover the history of Italian female leftists worldwide, in order to understand their place in the history of the less-active majority.

Beyond individuals, we need also to document and compare Italian women's activism across the globe. Studies of the garment or textile mills of Argentina and France could prove fertile ground for testing the hypothesis, based on US work, that Italian women's militancy was linked to ethnic solidarities with men. Indeed, an obvious place to start is countries where — unlike the USA, Canada, and Australia — Italians played leading roles in creating national labour movements or encouraging internationalist models. In late-19th century Argentina, Italian immigrant

[59]Carmela Patrias, *Relief Strike* (Toronto 1985); Robert Ventresca, "Cowering Women, Combative Men?: Femininity, Masculinity and Ethnicity on Strike in Two Southern Ontario Towns, 1964-1966," *Labour/Le Travail*, 39 (Spring 1996), 125-158.

[60]Jennifer Guglielmo, "Italian Women's Workplace Organizing Strategies" paper presented to Canadian Historical Association, St Catherines, June 1996.

[61]Gabaccia and Ottanelli, "Diaspora or International Proletariat?"; Robert Ventresca, "Virgilia D'Andrea," paper presented to "Italian American Radicals" Conference, New York City, May 1997.

[62]An economic argument might explain it as a logical consequence of women's concentration in sectors outside the heavily capitalized male-dominated industries where left and labour movements usually flourished; a cultural argument would invoke the Latin bogeyman.

radicals figured prominently among labour leaders and influenced the country's nascent national labour movement generally along anarchist and syndicalist lines. Italian anti-fascist radicals in inter-war France and Belgium helped strengthen and expand ties between Italian immigrants and national working-class movements influenced by left ideologies. Italian men gained a reputation for labour militancy and by the 1930s became the backbone of anti-fascist, often Communist, initiatives.[63] Did Italian men's heightened labour activism in these locales affect Italian women's militancy? If so, did it differ from the few comparable North American examples, such as Ybor City, Florida?[64] Preliminary work shows that Italian women textile workers in interwar Buenos Aires and Rosario, Argentina exhibited fierce activism,[65] but fuller analyses are needed. A comparison of US, French, and Argentine cases would help to discern the factors encouraging or discouraging female militancy in labour movements as different as the reform movements of the Anglo-American world, the social democratic movements of Germany and Switzerland, and the anarchist and syndicalist movements of Latin America.

Migration, Nationalisms, and Gendering National Identities

HOW FOREIGNERS acquire national identities and begin participating in the state as citizens invariably arises in studies of migratory workers. Did men and women initially possess different types of regional or national identity? Before the creation of an Italian national state, men and women presumably had family, kin, communal, and perhaps regional identities. Even after 1861, few men, and fewer women, spoke the "national" language and fewer women than men attained the level of education that would have exposed them to the history essential to the creation or mythologizing of an Italian people. Diaspora studies suggest that migrants often "became Italians" while abroad, where they met "Italians" from other regions and came to understand that receiving nations viewed them all as one Italian race. It might well be that men underwent a process of "becoming Italian" abroad while women maintained regional and local loyalties at home.

But if women in Italy resisted the incursion of the new nation-state until the 20th century, their relationship to it was not unchanging. As Reeder shows, "white widows" represented their households to the local governments that symbolized the nation-state, and even turned to the national government in Rome with concrete requests, such as locating a missing husband. Probably the chief factor forcing the

[63]Samuel Baily, "The Italians and the Development of Organized Labor in Argentina, Brazil, and the United States, 1880-1914," *Journal of Social History*, 3 (1969), 123-134; Gabaccia and Ottanelli, "Diaspora or International Proletariat?"
[64]Gary R. Mormino and George E. Pozzetta, *The Immigrant World of Ybor City: Italians and Their Latin Neighbors in Tampa, 1885-1985* (Urbana 1987); Nancy Hewitt, "'The Voice of Virile Labor': Labor Militancy, Community Solidarity, and Gender Identity among Tampa's Latin Workers, 1880-1921," in Baron, *Work Engendered.*
[65]Silberstein, "Becoming Visible."

question of national identification on Italian men and women was fascism. In a context of diminished migrations and aggressive demands for loyalty and participation in a unified nation and fatherland, fascism compelled many men and women to come to terms with their identities as Italians. De Grazia's work outlines the gendered dimensions of Mussolini's program — he wanted virile and masculine workers and soldiers but from women, loyalty as mothers and biological reproducers — and explores how northern urban women negotiated these demands. Still to be explored are the rural areas where most Italian men and women still lived, and that produced most postwar emigration.[66]

We know even less about the nationalization of Italian men and women abroad. Rates of naturalization among Italian immigrants remained quite low into the 1930s, though they were slightly higher in France than in the US or Canada. For the US, we know too that immigrant men fought in disproportionate numbers as soldiers during both world wars, and oral histories with men born into immigrant families in the 1920s date World War II as a defining moment in their self-identity as patriotic Americans. Citizenship, it appears, was not a pressing issue until war forced questions of national loyalty on Italian citizens, especially during World War II, when so many countries were at war against the homeland.[67]

By contrast, in many receiving countries in the early 20th century immigrant women's citizenship changed automatically with that of husbands, and their relationship to new states could be quite different from men's. In the US, Americanization programs for men stressed civics (the moral, and republican, lessons of George Washington's life) and political responsibilities of citizenship, while those for women taught the skills of American domesticity —consumption, childrearing, cooking, and housekeeping — suggesting that Americanizers, much like Mussolini, expected national loyalties from women as mothers and wives more than as voters or politically active citizens. Some similar observations can be made about the gendered nature of Canadianization programs in this period.[68]

Nor can we ignore the racial status of women who belonged to those "in-between peoples" that since the turn of the century have composed a significant proportion of North America's working classes. Recent work suggests that south and east European workers saw their economic integration into North America as simultaneously a racial process of disassociation from the most marginalized and despised minorities, Blacks and Asians. Italian women and men likely shared a desire to "become white" but their experiences probably differed. Immigrant women, like Black women, were constructed as exotic and erotic, or, alternatively, as neglectful or ignorant mothers. Exploring how Italian women negotiated this

[66]De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 1-16.

[67]Gabaccia and Ottanelli, "Diaspora or International Proletariat?"

[68]Gabaccia, *From the Other Side*, 115-6; Robert F. Harney and Harold Troper, *Immigrants: An Urban Portrait* (Toronto 1983); Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada* (Toronto 1991).

terrain and how they sought to transform themselves into "Americans" should lead us into fruitful analyses of the gender and racial politics of sexuality, morality, marriage, and motherhood.[69]

Conclusion

OUR DISMAY at the neglect of women and gendered analyses in migration and diaspora studies prompted us to begin the work of gendering and theorizing connections suggested by the literature on Italian migration. Women, we have insisted, do not stand outside categories such as transnationalism and international proletariat, even when they are not migrants. Even a largely male diaspora cannot be properly understood without attention to the women who stay behind and the transnational family economies and communities that link people across oceans and continents. More particularly, we suggest some new ways of thinking about Italian immigrant working women. We now take the next logical step of continuing our international project, which is intended not solely to address our queries or hypotheses but to offer a forum for exchanging research findings and encouraging international comparison. We are also excited about the potential of projects like ours to rewrite world history from the vantage point of women, workers, and humble migrant peoples rather than from the lofty heights of "civilizations," "world systems," or the "international relations" of states through warfare or diplomacy.

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[69]James R. Barrett and David Roediger, "In Between Peoples: Race, Nationality and the 'New Immigrant' Working Class," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 16 (Spring 1997), and Gabaccia, "Becoming White Women: The Perspective from Immigration History," Roundtable on "Becoming American/Becoming White — The Assimilative Functions of Racism," Kansas City, American Studies Association, November 1-4, 1996.

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FROM SUNBELT TO SNOWBELT: FILIPINOS IN CANADA

Anita Beltran Chen, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Lakehead University

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