The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy

History, Politics, Society

Edited by Andrea Mammone, Ercole Giap Parini, and Giuseppe A. Veltri

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY ITALY

The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy provides a comprehensive account of Italy and Italian politics in the twenty-first century. Featuring contributions from many leading scholars in the field, this Handbook is comprised of 28 chapters which are organized to deliver unparalleled analysis of Italian society, politics, and culture. A wide range of topics are covered, including:
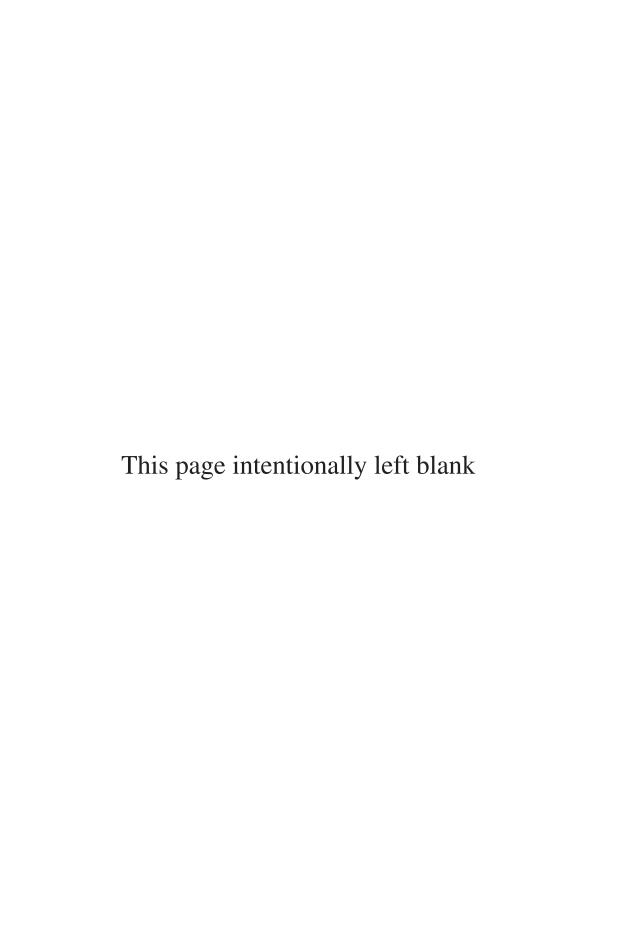
- politics and economy, and their impact on Italian society;
- parties and new politics;
- regionalism and migrations;
- public memories;
- continuities and transformations in contemporary Italian society.

This is an essential reference work for scholars and students of Italian and Western European society, politics, and history.

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INTRODUCTION

Notes on Italy in recent decades
and the Handbook

Andrea Mammone, Ercole Giap Parini,
and Giuseppe A. Veltri

Writing on Italy

Traditionally, a foreign reader always finds a good number of books dedicated to Italy. A great emphasis is usually given to the artistic heritage of the nation, cuisine, travel guides, and its significant past, from ancient Rome to Mussolini and fascism. For social scientists, the usual attempts to analyze Italian society have instead regularly focused on Italy's politics and institutions. In other fields, Italian culture, literature, and arts are continuously attracting the attention of scholars. In many ways, Italy matters, and this Handbook wants therefore to reinforce this belief, and it is grounded on the acceptance of the geopolitical, intellectual, social, and economic significance of the Italian peninsula for the Western world. For example, the experience of the "Berlusconi years," the so-called Second Republic, and the advent of a new wave of political and social actors have been, and are going to be, at the center of attention. In truth, many recent works especially, though not exclusively, in Italy seem to be devoted to the "Italian case," its somewhat bizarre democracy, and the various examples of corruption, bribes, and waste of public funding. They, at times, provide some generic (if not sensationalist) journalistic accounts of Italian society and politics (whilst the scholarly production tends to be narrower). This has inflated the market for more scientific overviews.

Some of these books, naturally, relate to the analysis of the controversial experience of "Berlusconismo," the particular political style that has characterized the Italian agenda, system, and external image in recent decades. There are, of course, exceptions to some of the non-academic accounts of this political phenomenon. The controversial figure of Silvio Berlusconi, in fact, attracted writers, readers, and the international media. Yet, besides some space in this introduction and in a limited number of chapters, we have usually resisted the temptation to focus on all this, and, given the wider aims of our book, on the quality of Italy's democracy. We are well aware how studies have often described the nation as a specific example of Western democracy (and this would, at least partially, explain the rise of Berlusconi's political agenda and his enduring appeal). Some of the contributors to this Handbook have also participated in this debate by calling Italy a "sick man of Europe," and wondering how normal the nation has been recently. Others took a diverse approach, though not many works have been able to focus on Italy in a really broad framework as we have done with this edited volume.

Not many books offer, for example, a collection of essays about the social and cultural transformations and continuities of contemporary Italy. In this Handbook, we aim to fill this gap by publishing contributions that analyze contemporary Italy from a sociological and cultural point of view, and they have been organized for this purpose into five parts. This goes along with discussions on memory, reflections on politics, an overview of the economy, and the role played by some institutions. *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy* has the goal, and perhaps the ambition, of becoming a fundamental tool of support to scholars and readers interested in understanding Italy in recent decades. It tries to provide a panoramic view of Italian society and its related narratives, policies, and Italian culture that, although not complete (as this would be impossible to achieve), is as wide and diverse as possible.

As we mentioned before, a very large number of books have a very journalistic tone, whereas others suffer from the editorial and thematic constraints which very often limit discussion. Some of them do, nonetheless, offer interesting perspectives (though they are narrow in their aims), and students of Italy might wish to find out more about them. Journalist Bill Emmott, for example, recently published *Good Italy, Bad Italy* (2012). Emmott's work is based on a number of interviews, and essentially compares some reasons that contributed to Italy's downward turn with the "positive" sides of the country. Maurizio Viroli published a more intellectually complex book on contemporary Italy. His *The Liberty of Servants* (2011) is based on the assumption that Italy, under Berlusconi, became a land of humble servants and courtiers. Whilst we share some of the frame brightly provided by Viroli, the *Routledge Handbook* aims to add some further dimensions. There is the necessity to broaden the understanding of the implications of Berlusconism (this latter perceived as a sort of culture and worldview) and the functioning of Italian society, politics, and mentalities, which is probably larger than a modern Middle-Ages-like court. Other quite successful books include David Gilmour's *The Pursuit of Italy* (2011), which provided, on the other hand, another long-term history of Italy. In addition, his book devoted a few pages to the recent era. The beautifully written *The Force of Destiny* (2007) by Christopher Duggan similarly devotes only some sections to the postwar years, and this book mostly deals with the building of modern Italy.

Another interesting recent work is Silvana Patriarca's *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (2013). It analyzes the public rhetoric about the "national character" that became a favorite explanation for a good number of Italy's problems. Such debate about the remedies for transforming Italians from being undisciplined and inefficient into almost heroic people shaped the country's political and social discourses. This also permeated culture in the 1950s and 1960s (particularly popular culture), and it was present in the 1990s. Another fine book on the cultural aspects of Italy is Emanuela Scarpellini's *Material Nation: A Consumer's History of Modern Italy* (2011). This is an exploration of the evolution of consumer culture in which an underlying contradiction is in the background: Italians' capacity for aesthetic beauty and commercial success and, at the same time, the presence of difficult living conditions. Scarpellini observes that it was Italian, rather than American or French, craftsmanship that truly democratized luxury. Yet, according to the author, many contemporary Italians, who are now glued to television sets and shopping in supermarkets, have sunk to the culturally and aesthetically lowest common denominator. These books are examples of a social and cultural perspective that would be, at times, useful for understanding Italy. The Handbook also offers some contribution to this.

Interestingly, in the last few years, Italian nonfiction literature has also been revamped by neo-Southerner revisionism, which is an attempt to rewrite the history of the unification process. It believes that, essentially, the Savoia family and patriots like Cavour and Garibaldi (and, generally, Northern Italian ruling groups), (allegedly) subjugated Southern people, during and after the

Risorgimento era, to exploit their resources and start a process of underdevelopment in favor of industrial growth in the regions of the North. The most representative book is *Terroni. Tutto quello che è stato fatto perché gli italiani del Sud diventassero Meridionali*, which was written by journalist Pino Aprile (2010) and which sold hundreds of thousands of copies. This trend, though based on controversial documentation also overestimating Southern regions' wealth before 1861, feeds an inveterate sense of discontent. For historian Salvatore Lupo, this is "a 'simplistic revisionism' which stems from the political attempts to find into the past what does not exist in it, a recriminatory mentality which looks in the history for the responsibilities of contemporary disease" (Petti, 2012).[1] However, as we suggest in Parts I and V of the Handbook, this shows the role played by political movements, media, and other vectors, the legacy of some historical developments, and the relevance of historical interpretations in shaping national society and local cultures in recent years in Italy.

Static and fluid Italy

Interest in Italy is generally due to the fact that this country really represents a fascinating case, as this Mediterranean nation might look like a land in a state of long-term emergency, and surely relevant for the developments of modern democracies and societies. However, all this, along with some of the things mentioned above, and including the challenge after more than 150 years to national unification, might give the related impression (and this is often a well-accepted opinion, at least amongst some Italian people) that many things change in Italy, though with no huge transformation in the general set-up of society and the political setting. As we all know, a century ago, Italian writer Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa stated, in his masterpiece *Il gattopardo*, how "all changes so that nothing changes." It is therefore believed that this involves other sectors, from the economy to elites, from family models to religious institutions, and from labor relations to the inner features of capitalism. In other words, one may say that many changes take place, but they do not often actually materialize (at least in the long term), and this gives the, at times, false belief in a static Italy. At the same time, and as the Handbook shows, it is evident that there is an increasing recognition that Italy has been transformed from the late 1980s until today. For a while, and as suggested before, this was labeled as a decline of the country not only economically (as we will mention briefly, in respect of globalization, the financial crisis, EU-led austerity, the loss of competitiveness, and the public debt), but also in its political, cultural, and social life.

Under the influence of global transformations, the Italian social fabric has, in fact, greatly changed in recent decades. Italy, for example, used to be characterized by a system of permanent jobs. This fact assured, for a long time, social stability. It represented a genuine support for a society based on stable nuclear families and ties, and, in other words, with a familiar structure consistently linked with the typical values of the Catholic Church. Starting from the 1980s, the diffusion of more "atypical" forms of job contracts, which have decreased job security, together with the scaling down of the welfare system, has strongly influenced people's perspectives on their lives. Young people delay their decision to marry and have children, and keep living with their parents, in many cases until their forties. The Istat 2013 Report tells us that the average age for getting married in 2012 was almost 31 for women and 34 for men, and this trend seems destined to rise. In 2013, there were fewer than 200,000 marriages, which represents the lowest level in Italian history (Istat, 2014). This led to a significant reduction in the birth rate. Even if this represents a diffused trend in the industrialized Western world, in Italy, it has reached alarming levels: for an Italian woman the average number of children is less than 1.3, and this is hardly balanced by immigrants living in Italy, since their birth rate is similarly decreasing

(according to the Istat 2014 Report in 2013 it was 2.20). At the same time, and in a way that is variably connected to the trend we have mentioned, the decay of traditional values and calls for new model of life organization (and a positive approach toward diversity) seem to have strongly influenced family models. At least since the 1990s, different family models have been developing, in particular, the so-called *more uxorio* unions, the majority of which are constituted by people coming from a previous marriage. Same-sex couples who decide to live together are also growing and pushing for formal recognition. The strict connection of cultural changes with the economic situation is revealed by the fact that many people who are living *more uxorio* are young couples waiting for better conditions in order to get married and to have children.

In the background of these cultural, economic, and structural transformations, there is the process of the secularization of religion, especially with reference to the Catholic Church, which is traditionally assimilated to Italian culture and history. The weakening of traditional religious authority in people's daily life, the decrease in the number of people – even amongst those who consider themselves believers – who attend religious services, in short, "privatization" (religion as a more intimate fact), seem to be the most important aspects of secularization in Italy. Besides that, sociologist Vincenzo Bova has identified an inner process regarding the Catholic Church: the pluralization of the ways individuals or even groups interpret and put into practice their religious beliefs (Bova, 2013). Another sociologist, Enzo Pace, rightly mentioned how "though religious practice is decreasing, together with belief in religion [la credenza religiosa] and adherence to Catholic doctrine, Italians, in the majority, continue to think of themselves as not 'against the Church'" (Giorda).

Significantly, Italy is also becoming a multicultural country, though much more slowly than other European nations, and even if migratory flows toward Italy have been decreasing in recent years (for example 307,000 in 2013, as opposed to 350,000 in 2012: Istat, 2014). Second- and third-generation immigrants living in Italy are making a series of requests in terms of citizenship, and access to and quality of the education system. In particular, it is difficult to satisfy this with an education system characterized by high levels of bureaucratization. In recent years, Italy has also suffered from relatively indiscriminate spending cuts because of the Italian and the international economic crises.

A new wave of immigration from the southern regions to Northern Italy and Europe is, once more, taking place. It involves, especially, people who are highly educated. This is further reducing the number of well-educated workers in some historically disadvantaged geographical areas. It is, in fact, worth remembering that Italy's overall economy has faced a very difficult period. As we know, it was initially the challenges of globalization that posed a major threat to the national manufacturing sector with increasing competition from developing nations (and their less expensive labor costs). This had specific effects on the economic environment because of the dominant presence of small and medium-sized firms, often family-owned. Once praised as a model of flexibility and, in some cases, of innovation, the nature of Italy's industrial actors opened up a wider discussion about the status of national capitalism and governance (Minetti, 2010). Indeed, the long-standing issue of political and governmental influence in many sectors persisted, and with additional costs also for the inefficient bureaucracy and the lack of infrastructure. Another unresolved issue, as mentioned before, is the complex and nowadays dualist labor market, with a core of "old" workers who tend to be well protected, whilst "new" (and usually young) workers have experienced extremely volatile and precarious contractual conditions. The macroeconomic picture of the country has been shaky for the past few years with steady negative or low growth and high youth unemployment, which, as we have suggested, has had an influence on people's lives, family structures, and, therefore, society at large.

This long "winter" of Italy's economy endured even after the first difficulties of globalization and entry into the Eurozone. It is still debated whether Italian firms were more penalized than helped by the adoption of the Euro. The financial and economic crisis which started in 2007–8 hit Italy hard precisely because it was struggling with some previous and ongoing challenges. At the same time, the Italian banking sector, though not greatly exposed (initially and at least compared with some foreign banks), did reduce what was already difficult access to credit for firms and families. In sum, the Italian economy was not really helped nationally. Indeed, it was also greatly affected by the range of (poor) actions by the governments (when, in truth, they were not characterized by immobility). The political economy of the country, then, has been dictated by national contingencies, the international environment, and European constraints (like the absolute respect of European economic targets for member states' public finances). All this helped the rhetoric and success of anti-European movements.

The overall picture of the Italian economy is, once more, mixed, with reasons for optimism and other more negative issues. The gap between northern and southern areas, as mentioned before, is very large. The increasing presence of the organized mafia, which has expanded its economic and financial influence to the central and northern regions thanks to the huge amounts of cash it has available, often has effects on (lack of) growth. The north-eastern regions, moreover, which have been for years the strong driving economic force of the country as a whole, suffered terribly from worldwide competition, difficult access to credit, and limited innovation. Yet, unsystematic spots of modernization emerged. A number of companies have found a way to be competitive again in the global market, particularly those that managed to increase their exports. Clusters of innovation have emerged also in the South (for example, in Sicily, and Apulia's renewable energy and the ICT technology sector). Somehow, the Italian economy has regained a few signs of vitality, but it is too early to say whether these will stabilize and become something more. Because of the political instability but also the lack of comprehensive and long-term goals, this economy is, at times, like a patient trying to recover at home without a doctor. Economic, political, and social reforms are, nonetheless, very difficult in Italy because of the enormous number of vested interests and lobbies that have a rather good record of resistance to change. However, as we suggested earlier, the Italian economic sector is not fully static. It might also be dynamic, especially when supported by politics, innovation, and, of course, meritocracy.

It is evident that some of these transformations do not often find a political manifestation and the space they need in public opinion debates. This does not mean that Italian politics has not evolved in recent decades. It is easy to play with the usual (and real) historical feature of "trasformismo," from Liberal Italy to today, with politicians, deputies, and their followers changing political sides merely for personal interests. We all know how the nation was affected by the above-mentioned *Berlusconismo*, the crisis in political representation, the transformation of parties into electoral machines, the mediatization of the political discourse, and, recently, the appearance of novel forms of political mobilization. What we find even here is possibly another mixture of innovations and continuities, adaptation of old features, and other types of political socialization. If one, for example, looks at it from an international media standpoint (which is how a number of foreign students initially approach Italy), there is, then, a never boring Italian political merry-go-round. In their view, Italy's politics is indeed exciting, innovative, and backward-looking, at times unintelligible, and surely full of surprises. One example is what happened with the latest change in leadership, namely the downfall of Enrico Letta's government and the rise of the center-left leader Matteo Renzi, the mayor of Florence, and the secretary of the Democratic Party.

Renzi is young, appealing for the media, and very straightforward. His meetings with world leaders were greeted with enthusiasm by some international newspapers. He is also Europe's youngest prime minister (and this is very surprising in an Italian politician). All this led, nonetheless, people in Italy and abroad to overlook a significant anniversary. In 1994, a successful businessman officially announced the start of a political enterprise which would later generate consternation, admiration, and also hilarity in much of the Western world. This was the day that media tycoon Berlusconi decided to enter the political arena with a newly born movement. Much ink has already been spilled on his political trajectory, one that ended with sexual and financial scandals and an uncomfortable, not to mention unpleasant, ban from public office. Yet, not even this has deterred one of Europe's longest-serving political leaders. He has been, in fact, discussing the implementation of reforms in Italy with Renzi. The government, moreover, needs votes for key laws, and Berlusconi's movement plays an important part in this game. The media tycoon wants his voice to be heard. Was his political trajectory an innovation in a somewhat "static" Italian political life?

To answer some of this, one has to start by looking back at Italy's past and the European sociopolitical environment. Berlusconi, as we are all aware, won because there was a vacuum in the political system. A number of traditional parties collapsed under trials and judicial investigations in the last decade of the last century. Bribes and illegal party funding were the rule rather than the exception, and magistrates became venerated as almost divine beings. The Christian Democrats, the leading political actors in postwar Italy, quickly disappeared. The Socialists were completely pulverized. Suspicion of the traditional ruling elites was very strong. This led, for example, to a series of victories for local mayors with roots outside the political world, though they were often left-leaning.

This was, however, not enough for the center-left to take control of Italian politics after historically leading some of the best-organized regions (Emilia Romagna and Tuscany, amongst others). The parties generated from the once powerful Italian Communist Party were often not able to elaborate significant and dynamic policies, and, most importantly, a shared agenda. In sum, they suffered, like other fellow European movements, as a result of the decline of international communism. In Italy, since at least the 1980s (if we ignore the tumult of 1968, and the communists' refusal to understand the demands of Italian youth and intellectual innovations), the leftist world had also abandoned some of its key reference points. In the decades following, the prominent role of high political and scholarly culture in shaping society and generating policies was no longer in place. "Pop" and "low-profile" values, including those backed by Berlusconi's commercial television stations, became exciting magnets (though leftists showed an evident incapacity to make use of the media as a powerful outlet and spread its political and social vision). Once they got Berlusconi, with his strong media expertise and almost unlimited funding, they encountered an unknown world. Imagine Dante alone, without a guide like Virgil. This left the tycoon with virtually no realistic opponents. There was almost no comparison with other European nations.

The center-left was also unable to maintain power when it did win elections. Romano Prodi, a moderate and internationally respected figure, beat Berlusconi twice but was failed by his coalition, which eventually dispensed with his services. The left was a quarrelling galaxy of disparate voices, whilst Berlusconi was often able to keep control of his allies and govern for longer than any other postwar Italian leader. The left was not even immune from scandals, and this had a negative influence on its usually loyal voters. Berlusconi, for his part, managed to tell people "his" own stories, promising the earth, accusing the now disappeared communists and existing elites and judges for the decline of Italy, and spreading clear, simple, and demagogic

messages through the TV channels he controlled. This mediatization of politics is, however, not peculiar to Italy, and, in some ways, placed the country in a wider Western framework.

As the above-mentioned economic troubles started to hit the nation in the wake of the global financial crisis, and it appeared that traditional politics was ineffective, some citizens understood that not even a miracle-working king like Berlusconi had magic powers. Yet, rather than voting for the left, the solution for many was found in the Five Stars Movement, initially an online network of citizens led by the comedian Beppe Grillo. This represented the complete rejection of most Italian politicians, and a call for innovation and, above all, novelty. They gained, in fact, millions of votes in 2013. They entered parliament and promoted the moralization of politics, society, and the nation (although this theme was not novel in historical terms). This was unique in modern Italian history, and there are, so far, not many similar examples in the West.

It is open to discussion whether this is really helping to improve Italy's political life. How Grillo managed all this is yet another story. The style of the message rather than its content might have been, nonetheless, once more significant. His movement, however, started to be observed with curiosity abroad, taken as a role model by other European movements, and its EU parliamentary alliance with UKIP ensured more articles in foreign media. Is Italy, then, in this sense, an innovator in some forms of political socialization and citizens' mobilization?

Renzi is, in some ways, in line with this Western tradition, along with the low quality of the Italian public debate. He is naturally different from many other left-leaning politicians (though some notice in him the style of the socialist leader Bettino Craxi). He likes to foresee a better Italy. He also looks abroad for inspiration (and this is quite common for the Italian moderate left in recent times), and particularly at Tony Blair (bizarrely, given the evolution of Blairism, even if this might show some limited knowledge of international politics).

His enthusiasm, rhetoric, and decisiveness look exciting to many disillusioned voters (as this almost never happened before), even if he has yet to explain fully how he can turn Italy into a wealthy nation, find resources for the reforms, and, above all, decrease pressure from the Euro elites, who show little flexibility. Moreover, the traditional elites of his own movement are opposing him. The vote in May 2014 for the EU parliament showed how appealing this politician may be. However, and most interestingly, this vote put Italy politically in a better place compared with other nations where anti-EU, protest, and anti–establishment forces won the election. What it is evident here is that Italy offers an interesting platform for Western democracies, and some of its historical developments appear old and new at the same time.

Outline

It is true that all these Italian developments may hardly be covered in a single volume (and the Handbook discusses some of them). Instead of giving a whole picture of what Italy is today, the aim of this Handbook is to provide readers with a framework for and an overview of some of the key factors in Italian history, politics, economy, memory, and society in order to understand the main developments. Connections between chapters flow throughout the book, but there is not a common thread: that is not the aim of this work. Instead, each chapter aims to perform the double function of informing the reader about contemporary Italy and, at the same time, being a starting point for further research and investigation. It will be up to the reader to navigate through the sections and explore the common threads and interlinkages that are sometimes highlighted by the authors and in other instances are implicit.

The first section contains sociological contributions that analyze a number of aspects of contemporary Italian society. Chambers discusses one of the most resilient and pervasive of social issues, which is the Southern Question (and how it may be perceived today). Veltri explores

the validity of another very vigorous trope about the cultural differences between Italian geographical areas, and in particular, between the macro-regions of the North, Centre, and South. Tintori and Colucci analyze an old plague of Italian society, notably emigration and its recent developments. Levy examines xenophobia in a nation which has never before experienced a large presence of immigrants. Ruspini considers the role of women in society after many years of lagging behind other European countries. Argentin, for his part, focuses on another relevant story in contemporary Italy, namely the social and economic conditions of young Italians. Parini's contribution concludes Part I, analyzing the mafia, and removing some conceptual and geographical misconceptions.

Part II focuses on democratic life and political institutions. Bull gives an account of the functioning of Italian democracy and the many attempts at institutional reform that often resulted in unsuccessful outcomes. Verzichelli discusses the nature and quality of the political class and its strong resistance to renewal. Padovani tackles another peculiar feature of national democracy, which is the relationship between the mass media, politics, and society. Conti adds the European variable in our understanding of contemporary Italy, as this has become an increasingly important dimension of domestic life. Loprieno looks at another feature of Italian society, in particular the relationship between the state, religion, and the Vatican.

Part III aims at providing an overview of the most recent political actors and developments. Agnew starts with an analysis of a political geography of the country, and discusses regional differences in terms of political traditions and voting behavior. Raniolo and Tarchi discuss the right-wing end of the Italian spectrum, an environment usually mostly known for Berlusconi's leadership. Lazar and Giugni examine the often quarreling left-wing parties, which have intermittently led the nation in recent decades. Donovan then scrutinizes what is left of the once dominant Italian Christian Democrats, the leading force for a very long period of time. Cento Bull presents a detailed account of the Northern League's political trajectory, and, therefore, how it may be better understood. Newell considers the relationship between magistrates and politics, discussing the example of Antonio Di Pietro and his (almost disappeared) political party. Diani and Fabbri shed light on the nature of the above-mentioned very recent political development represented by Grillo's Five Stars Movement.

Part IV contains contributions on the sociopolitical environment. Lynch and Ceretti analyze the trajectory of (often not fully implemented) welfare reforms in Italy, and also the lack of long-term planning. Briquet discusses the costs and consequences of corruption and clientelism, two key pervasive problems in Italy. Leonida, Maimone, and Navarra examine the relationship between economic growth and political competition. Giovannini and Minetti offer an analysis of the nature of Italian firms, from their governance structures to their capacity for innovation and exports. Iona, Leonida, and Silipo examine the Italian banking sector, often considered a critical aspect of capitalism.

Part V contains essays on some cultural themes that have a relevance, which should not be left out, also for their significance in public discourses, politics, and society. Jedlowski discusses the role of the Italian filmmaking industry in shaping the cultural identity and memory of the country. Gori examines the Risorgimento in the political and cultural debate, including its uses. Cooke analyzes anti-fascism, once very powerful, and its place in recent history. Pergher, for her part, examines Italy's overlooked colonial past and its influence on national identity.

In sum, this might therefore be considered as a kind of open handbook, at times more oriented toward posing questions than giving full answers, whilst covering many aspects of Italy. This means also being attentive to the historical, political, and social processes taking place. We are convinced that, in order to understand this nation, it is necessary to construct a new way of looking at it, possibly an interdisciplinary one.

Note

1   Two books are very different in tone, though they were probably not successful like some of the anti–unification literature. One is *L'unificazione italiana* (2011), also by Lupo, in which the entry of Southern Italy into the Italian nation is mainly a social and political fight and at the same time a clash between different patriotisms. The other is *Borbonia felix. Il regno delle due Sicilie alla vigilia del crollo* (2013) by Renata De Lorenzo, which tries to get over the anti-Risorgimento rhetoric through an insightful analysis of the social, economic, and political conditions of Southern Italy before 1861.

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PART I

Old and new tensions in contemporary Italian society

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1

THE 'SOUTHERN QUESTION' . . . AGAIN

Iain Chambers

Viewed from London, Los Angeles, New York, Berlin, Paris and Milan, the south of the world is invariably considered in terms of lacks and absences. It is not yet modern; it has still to catch up. It remains, as Dipesh Chakrabarty would put it, an inadequate place (Chakrabarty, 2000). The south is spatially and temporally located elsewhere, at the edge of the map. Of course, as we know from Edward Said, and through him from Antonio Gramsci, this is a geography of power. It is about being placed and systematised in a manner not of your own choosing. It is about being rendered subordinate and subaltern to other forces, and being exploited, not only economically, but also politically and culturally, in order for that subalternity to be reproduced and reinforced. The south of the world is framed, not only conceptually enclosed, but also falsely accused of failing to respect a modernity being triumphantly pursued elsewhere. To return to the south as a critical, political and historical problem is, ultimately, to return to the north and its hegemonic management of the planet. The ills, failures and breakdowns that are located down there, across the border, are precisely the products of a northern will to make the world over in its image and interests. This is the political economy of location. Here the south, of Italy, of Europe, of the Mediterranean, of the world, is rendered both marginal but paradoxically central to the reproduction of that economy. If the whole world were equally modern, then modernity as we know it would collapse. The cancellation of the inequalities, property and differences that drive the planetary machinery of capitalist accumulation would render what we today call modernity superfluous. The subversion of linearity and the lateral redistribution of 'progress' and development would undo historical time as it is currently understood. The 'south' is a political question and also a historical one; in both cases, it is about the power and the exploitation of those held in its definitions.

Brigands, lazy peasants, mafia and corruption

If by the end of the nineteenth century a stereotypical image of southern Italy had already been established as a land inhabited by brigands, lazy peasants and corruption, we need, as a minimum, to understand the historical processes that led to this state of affairs. But then history provides us with an ambiguous archive. Irreducible to simple causality and a transparent rationality, the 'south' emerges as a category, a construction, an invention (Petrusewicz, 1998). Its definition reveals the semiotics of power. The 'south' is always destined to experience that combination

of repression and refusal that is the foreclosure of hegemony seeking to negate the trauma of its violent affirmation (Mellino and Curcio, 2012).

It is within this matrix that we might turn to the unification and the creation of the modern nation of Italy, engineered on the back of the conquest of one sovereign state (the Bourbon kingdom of the Two Sicilies) by another (the Piedmont monarchy of the House of Savoy). Behind the offensive labelling of its inhabitants, and the reduction of rebellion against, resistance to and refusal of that conquest as 'brigandage', there existed an altogether more complex social and political world. This was characterised by the brutal exercise of feudal powers, whose representatives willing allied themselves with the new national Parliament and political order in order to continue their rule over the land and its peasantry. In brokering hegemonic interests, agricultural reform was deliberately avoided by the new unitary state. This recycling of change in order to sustain the status quo, what the Neapolitan historian Vincenzo Cuoco and Antonio Gramsci referred to as 'passive revolution', might be considered one of the central subtexts of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's *Il Gattopardo*, also well caught in Luchino Visconti's film of the novel. It is really only after the conclusion of the Second World War that a certain degree of post-feudal land reform occurs in Italy. In the terrible conditions of agricultural life and labour, the fact that the 'bosses' live in Naples or Turin, and state authority shifts from Naples to Rome, makes little difference. Reading Carlo Levi's *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli* (*Christ Stopped at Eboli*), published in 1955, and registering the nuanced critique of Italian unification in Mario Martone's recent film *Noi Credevamo* (based on Anna Banti's beautiful novel of 1967), one stumbles across the persistent repression and exclusion of a subaltern peasantry from the national narrative. This, of course, is the key motif in Gramsci's analysis of the 'failure' of Italian unification.

Here it would be hypocrisy to talk in terms of historical progress directly attributable to the transit to the modern nation. The military occupation and juridical enforcement of unification in southern Italy, in the wake of military operations that witnessed the deployment of 120,000 troops and resulted in at least 30,000 dead, was followed by mass migration from rural poverty to the Americas. Subsequent colonial adventures in east Africa and Libya (home at one time to 150,000 Italians) were also considered a potential safety valve for relieving the pressure of southern destitution. There is no linear progress here but rather a contorted spiral of development in which the resources of southern Italy often fuelled northern interests and advancement. If the feudal regime of the Bourbons was suppressed and forcefully incorporated into the modern Italian state, the latter tended to govern this southern acquisition through the biopolitical grammar of alterity. The Mezzogiorno was inferiorised as the racialised object of anthropological and biological categories. It was considered closer to Africa and the Arab world in its customs and culture than to Europe (Moe, 2002). Forms of social opposition, political resistance and alternative modalities of government were reduced to questions of criminality, public order and corrupt practices inherited from the *ancien régime*. These were persistently contrasted with the industrious modernity of the north.

The responsibilities that a centralised national government should have exercised in economic and cultural, and not just political, terms were both conceptually and structurally evaded. This inferiorisation of the south affirms that its subordination to northern concerns was not a historical accident but a power relationship. It was justified in the languages of colonialism and racism, and it rendered the south inferior, less European, inherently underdeveloped. This, of course, was a particular instance of the far wider appropriation of the Mediterranean and the south of Europe (Spain, Italy, Greece and the Balkans), not to speak of the extra-European world, when viewed and framed from London, Paris, Berlin, Turin and, later, Rome. The south is relegated to the margins of the national epic; its existing conditions are considered an impediment to the

realisation of 'progress'; its history is yet to come. In this sense, Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli* becomes a profoundly instructive political text.

The long national debate on the 'Southern Question' that accompanies the history of modern Italy and the incorporation of the ex-kingdom of the two Sicilies into the new nation constantly veers between outcries against an aggressive northern act of deliberate colonisation and the more academic discussion of national and international cycles and rhythms evidencing uneven development. If, on the one hand, the north apparently robbed the south of its financial assets in order to establish its industrial base, and in the process waged a war on the population in order to exercise this right, this was counterbalanced by a liberal paternalism that saw its task of dragging the south out of decadent government and feudal inefficiency in order to make it modern. If the colonising imperative that saw in the south an exotic world of disturbing alterity still remains very much in play today in internal racisms (and the Northern League is symptomatic of that virulent syntax), the liberal insistence on educating the south through a programmed 'progress' also continued to dominate the state policy of post-1945 Italy. The clearest manifestation of the latter approach was the creation in 1950 of a national fund – Cassa del Mezzogiorno – for financing the development of southern Italy. This was to launch the era of the notorious 'cathedrals in the desert': industrial plant parachuted into rural southern Italy that was supposed to kick-start the local economy. Despite the massive amounts of money involved it was a historical failure; or, rather, its economic and social aims were largely side-tracked into the machinery of sustaining and reproducing political power. In this sense, it was by no means an exclusively 'Southern Question', but rather a component in the composition and management of a national mosaic of powers, interests and political groups.

One of the more obvious examples of this mechanism is that of the complex interweaving of national and local powers which witnessed political party machinery and organised crime allied in the creation and reproduction of political and cultural hegemony. This had already been encouraged by the Allied war authorities in their conquest of Sicily and southern Italy from Fascism after 1943. Such an alliance stretched from the maintenance of everyday local consensus through political patronage and organised crime to domestic Cold War containment of political unrest and the subsequent crisis management of national emergencies and disasters (the 1980 earthquake in Campania is here emblematic: massive state funding simultaneously consolidated and extended political power and organised crime, both locally and nationally). The details, of course, are complicated, but I think that it is once again clear that the seemingly separate specificity of the 'Southern Question' has consistently played a fundamental role in the political and economic arrangements that compose the national (and international) picture.

The continuing twentieth mass migration of the reserve army of labour of southern Italians to northern Italy and northern Europe, on the back of migration to the Americas and North Africa, also alerts us to this structural reality. It touches the essential dimension of alterity and the periphery in composing and reaffirming the 'centre'. This needs to be consistently borne in mind if we want to avoid being dragged into an endless and fruitless debate overdetermined by stereotypical language, racialising prejudices, and a biopolitics passing for common sense. Migration also reminds us of the shifting conditions of international labour. While migration from the south of the world has serviced the north, the Italian south itself is today clearly destined never to be industrialised – today that nineteenth-century model of 'progress' has literally migrated elsewhere, to be charted in the megapolises of China, India and Brazil. The labour pool has been outsourced along global networks that draw upon capital gains and infrastructures that the Mezzogiorno will never have. It is now necessary to change perspective and seek to reformulate the 'Southern Question'. To do this, I suggest we need to adopt another series of coordinates and maps.

The dead end of localism

I believe that Antonio Gramsci helps us to identify a series of elements that pull the question out of its immediate historical and critical coordinates in post-unification Italy and allows us to better consider its contemporary implications. Here we will discover that it is no longer possible to talk of a 'Southern Question' within the boundaries of the Italian nation state, and perhaps, despite all the immediate peculiarities of the 'Mezzogiorno', it never was. Without anticipating the argument, there lies here the suggestion that the 'Southern Question', identified as a political problem, and as a historical and cultural question, was not external to the modernity that it was presumed could resolve it. It was, and is, *internal* to modern Europe and the formation of its nation states. In an important sense, seeking to respond to the 'Southern Question' ultimately implies replying to the structural inequalities and distribution of power that accompany the formation of nation building and Occidental modernity. I feel, as Gramsci himself once put it, that this 'thinking globally' is of significance in casting what seems an almost unresolvable historical, cultural and political dilemma into an altogether more extensive critical space that throws a suggestive critical light back into the specificities of the Italian case.

So, it seems to me imperative to acknowledge wider landmarks when referencing the 'Southern Question'. To avoid remaining trapped in a tangle of historical and cultural debate that reconstructs and deconstructs the question, it is perhaps time to apply a critical cut. A local inheritance can never be cancelled, but it can be exposed to other questions, examined with new critical coordinates. To step beyond the south's location in existing knowledge–power relationships, and follow Edward Said's proposal to de-orientalise the logic that reconfirms subordination in a self-perpetuating discourse, is to adopt a postcolonial approach that insists that the colonisation and construction of the 'periphery' is essential for the sustenance and extension of metropolitan power. The rest of the world is not simply an accessory and witness to Occidental progress but is deeply stitched into its fabric of production and reproduction. It does not simply absorb and consume modernity; in its labour power, cultural forces and political antagonisms, it produces modernity. It is not simply where modernity recycles and dumps the refuse of 'progress'; it provides the very matrix of a modernity that requires the world, and not simply the West, in order to extract, circulate and accumulate its riches and authority (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013),

Beyond the pertinent provocation of Franco Cassano's 'southern thought' refusing a subaltern status, a postcolonial engagement allows us to promote an understanding of the Southern Question from the south itself (Cassano, 2011). This is not simply to overturn prevailing accounts that tend to reduce the Mezzogiorno of Italy to a stable and homogeneous object of analysis, robbing it of subjective agency. It also permits a wider exercise in challenging the premises and protocols of the critical machinery that believes that its version of 'modernity' and 'progress' is unique and hence universal. At the same time, this also allows us to relocate the Italian 'Southern Question' on a wider map, beginning in immediate terms with the Mediterranean. Here we are forced to annotate the annexation of southern Italy and subsequent national unification within the same temporal frame of the French conquest of Algeria and the British takeover of Egypt. Modalities of appropriation were different, the combination of histories never the same, although there was always the constancy of military might, death and destruction to back up and enforce the enterprise. In the extension of one rule and law over another we find ourselves in the common nineteenth-century matrix of colonialism that extends, without request, the civilising mission of the west to the rest. As a minimum, this establishes the Italian 'Southern Question' in a colonial framework, not too dissimilar to the experiences of Scotland and Ireland and their political, administrative, cultural and military subordination to London and the unification of Great Britain.

In *The Southern Question* (1926), the Sardinian intellectual Antonio Gramsci offered a lucid analysis of the structural impoverishment of southern Italy in terms of existing economic, political and cultural forces. He spoke of stagnation characterised by the mass of peasantry in the economic and political clutches of large, often absentee, landowners. He also spoke of southern intellectuals supplying the administrative personnel of the Italian state, both locally and nationally, and of the role of such intellectuals (he was referring in particular to Benedetto Croce) in reproducing the status quo. Ten years later, incarcerated in a Fascist prison, he was to observe:

> The poverty of the Mezzogiorno was historically incomprehensible for the popular masses of the North; they could not comprehend that national unity was not achieved on the basis of equality, but as the result of the hegemony of the North on the Mezzogiorno and the territorial relationship of the city to the countryside; the North was an 'octopus' that enriched itself at the cost of the South, its industrial and economic progress was in a direct relationship to the impoverishment of southern industry and agriculture.
>
> *(Gramsci 1975: 2021–2)*

Much of what Gramsci had to say then continues to echo within the existing political economy of the south and in its one-time capital, Naples. Yet the 'sources' of this malaise perhaps lie not only in local coordinates, but also in a deep-seated inheritance that today would be considered part and parcel of the processes of 'globalization' (Chambers, 2008).

Naples, unlike Genoa and Venice, was never a major port and commercial centre in the manner of its northern cousins. Up to the end of the sixteenth century Venice and Genoa were 'world ports', central to a trading system that stretched from Beijing to Lima. The port of Naples served mainly for the importation of foodstuffs from Sicily and Puglia to feed its metropolitan population and immediate hinterland. In 1615 Naples was buying pepper from Livorno that had arrived from London. By then it was no longer the Mediterranean that sold spices to England and northern Europe, but spices arriving from London and Amsterdam that were now sold to the Mediterranean in the ports of Livorno, Naples and Istanbul. By the end of the seventeenth century virtually all of the seaborne commercial traffic of the Kingdom of Naples was transported on English merchant ships. In the second half of the century the hegemony of English commerce in the Mediterranean, reinforced by the regular presence of the Royal Navy, supervised the structural undoing of the relationship between a commercial and industrial northern Italy and its complementary relationship to the agricultural south (Pagano de Divitiis, 1997). Both the north, with its own commerce, cloth and silk industries subordinated to the needs of London and the emerging English textile industry, and the agricultural south were equally transformed into sources for primary materials for the markets and merchandising of northern Europe and the Atlantic seaboard. By 1680 the conditions of the 'Southern Question' – economic underdevelopment, social backwardness and cultural isolation from northern Italy – had been established, not so much through Spanish domination of the Kingdom of Naples, or northern Italian 'progress', where capital once invested in seagoing ventures was now conserved in the security of land and revenue, as by English mercantile hegemony in the Mediterranean.

These historical observations might provide one way to reopen the 'Southern Question'. They serve, above all, to insist on the critical necessity of adopting a diverse cartography in order to step out of the straightjacket of a debate, overwhelmingly shaped by regional and national concerns, that urgently needs to be 'provincialized' (Chakrabarty, 2000). The pauperisation of the peasantry in the rural fringes of an emerging modern Europe – both in Calabria and in the Highlands of Scotland – are as interconnected as the price of pepper on the London Stock

Exchange and in the markets of Naples and Istanbul. In the following century, the nascent Neapolitan Republic, directly inspired by the French Revolution, will be crushed in May 1799 by a peasant army overseen by the presence of the British fleet in the Bay of Naples. Part of that fleet, together with its commander Admiral Horatio Nelson, had the previous year destroyed French naval forces in Egyptian waters in the Battle of Aboukir Bay. In the very same period, republican France was refusing the demands of the slaves in revolt to extend the terms of the French Revolution to its Caribbean colony Saint-Dominique. Freedom, equality and brotherhood were denied until the 'Black Jacobins' successfully expunged French control and established the black republic of Haiti in 1804.

These wider coordinates are not intended to stifle the local narrative. If anything they serve to deepen and extend that account in the belief that they help us to grasp the historical and cultural density of the question in the context of the 'global colonial archive' (Conelli, 2013). What holds this particular picture together in the first instance is the struggle for world hegemony between Britain and France, waged in the many corners of Europe from Spain and Italy to the steppes of Russia, as well as across the seas and islands of the world. This exercise of power, its administrative, military, economic and cultural organisation – frequently outsourced to non-nationals (Polish troops deployed in the unsuccessful French attempts to reconquer Saint-Dominique, black African sailors in the British fleet) – was in the last instance about the control of resources, riches and markets required in order to command the world and ensure the planetary reproduction of its political economy.

With this in mind we could now move back to the 'Southern Question' with a further set of concerns. One of the central features that emerges from the incorporation of the ex-Kingdom of the Two Sicilies into the new Italian state in 1861 is that of the systematic racialisation of the south (Moe, 2002). The evidence – drawn from Piedmont officers and government officials involved in the 'pacification' of the Mezzogiorno, to subsequent endorsement by sociologists, anthropologists and criminologists – is overwhelming. Southern Italy, whether explained in biological or historical terms, is populated by an inferior 'race'. As we have already noted, the racialisation of southern Italy was an essential part of its subordination to colonisation by the nascent national state that in turn applied verdicts already rehearsed by visitors in English, German and French. Anthropological generalisations quickly flowed into a more precise institutional regime of knowledge through the criminalisation of dissent and revolt. It produced a pathology to be catalogued, studied and defined, and the figure of Cesare Lombroso is central to this project and its becoming 'common sense'. Historical and cultural differences were transformed into arbitrary distinctions. These acquired the legislative force to incorporate, discipline and educate the captured, subordinated body. Once defined, catalogued and located, that body reconfirmed the manner and procedures of its objectification. Even if we might want today to consign such perspectives to the closed chapter of European positivism, such practices seeped down into the practices of everyday life and cast long historical shadows. In the opening sequences of Luchino Visconti's film *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960), the arrival from Lucania of the Parondi family in a Milanese housing estate is simply greeted with the exclamation 'Africa'.

The transference of landed property to financial gain and commercial profit, of the revenue of rural estates to industrial and financial capital and urban life styles, accompanied by the passage from peasantry to the national and international labour market, is a constant rhythm in the formation of the modern political economy since 1500. In the planetary processes induced by capitalist accumulation there is obviously much regional differentiation, within the nation as well as beyond its frontiers. Some would call them time lags and apply the terminology of backwardness and underdevelopment to explain their presence. Here history is a train called

Progress that carries us into the future. However, when slavery coexists with the foundation of republican democracy, as in the Atlantic world of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and feudal land ties with the establishment of modern industrial plant, as in Italy in the first half of the twentieth century, it is perhaps critically more instructive to consider their political interaction and historical complementarity. Rather than assuming that one dimension (modern, democratic and industrial) is separate and superior to the negative survival of the seemingly archaic histories of slavery and feudalism, we need to consider their being coeval. And if we are understanding these to be planetary, and not merely national, conditions and forces, then we are required to recognise this dissonant and heterogeneous history to be integral to modernity, that is, to be *the* history of modernity itself.

The violent accumulation of capital does not simply lie back there with slave labour, colonialism and racialised hegemony, or with expropriation of the commons, the expulsion of peasantry from the land and its subsequent enclosure by a landowning class seeking to invest its gains elsewhere (in the colonies, in industry, in buildings, transport and cultural goods). It continues. There is no simple passage from an original or primitive accumulation to a subsequently more civil and ordered one. Eighteenth-century Scottish crofters dispatched to Canada after the crushing of the 1745 Rebellion, peasants moving from Lucania to Milan and the Alfa Romeo factory in the 1950s and 1960s (the subject of Visconti's *Rocco and His Brothers*) and present-day Chinese labour migrating in millions from rural areas to the high-tech belts of Guangdong, Shaanxi, Qingdao and Shenzhen, are part of a shared temporality. In other words, the creative destruction of territory and time by capital that produces a mobile constellation of effects on a planetary level is not to be explained in terms of the linear succession of circles of development radiating out from a primary centre in Europe. The resources that went into European development, as the history of modern racial slavery so powerfully portrays – both in its labour and in its abolition and compensatory payments – always depended on a planetary network of conquest, exploitation and management (Hall, 2013). Dispossession, expropriation and unilateral control of land, law and political licence are not simply the prerogative of seventeenth-century England and life in the North American colonies; they are very much part of our world today. That 'original' violence persists – from seeking to patent medicinal plants to bulldozing villages and towns into dams. It is part, as Kalyan Sanyal has argued, of the very reproduction of capital: it is not a trace of the past, but is a constant and unstable universalism oriented to the future (Sanyal, 2007). Rather than localised transitions to accumulation, registered in the linear fashioning of time, there are transformations that reach through a mosaic of temporal and spatial scales and coordinates, sometimes subtle and with subterfuge, more usually brutal, violent and without redress.

These considerations throw a very different light onto the 'Southern Question'. Here we discover not pockets of underdevelopment, inhabited by those who apparently live outside the measured time of modernity and who have not yet been invested by progress, but 'traces of autonomous initiatives' as Gramsci referred to them. These signal the multiple contours of the modern world where a hegemonic pulse is folded into local performances, crossed by translation and mixed by tradition, sounded and sourced in the ongoing construction of place and belonging. The blueprint and template are dirtied and deviated, punctuated by the dense grammars of cultural immediacies, by a resistance to a singular will (Chambers, 2013).

What lies 'south of the border' in the undisciplined excess of life that seemingly does not respect the rules is clearly a threat to the disciplined productivity of the linear accumulation of a capitalist and cultural redemption. These other, southern, spaces, however, are not merely decadent and unruly peripheries, expelled from the motor of modernity. They propose the

challenge of heterotopia. Although constantly seeking to establish borders, set limits, monitor unrest and patrol confines, modernity is unable to produce a distinct exterior, a not yet modern or still primitive elsewhere. What is maintained at a distance, transformed into a separable 'other' and then rendered subaltern and subordinate within the institutions and practices of 'advanced' capitalist culture is at the same time structurally integral to the very production and reproduction of dominance and subordination. The negated, feared and despised 'native', black, Arab, Muslim, Rom, and migrant other is inside the modernity that seeks to define, discipline and decide his or her place. No matter how objectified and anonymously rendered, the subaltern is nevertheless a historical actor, a subjectivising force *within* a shared but differentiated modernity (Guha, 2003). It is this negated conviviality that sets the terms for unrecognised communalities. The chains of power are here tested (and not simply suffered), stretched and sometimes snap. If, then, there is no absolute outside to house the excluded and the damned, there is also no untouched or pure alternative to the historical network and assemblage in which these political and cultural relations are inscribed. It is precisely in this sense, that the 'Southern Question' irrupts within the midst of a modernity still to be registered and recognised.

Exemplified in Carlo Levi's *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, Ernesto De Martino's ethnographic field research in the Mezzogiorno of Italy in the 1950s and the cinema of Pier Paolo Pasolini, seemingly pre-modern practices, beliefs and customs are not 'back there', in an abjured or primitive past, but are 'in here', part of the stratified and subaltern complexities of the present. Through rendering the familiar unhomely and out of joint, the present becomes plural and incomplete, that is, irreducible to a single point of view or manner of narration. Along this critical path lies the injunction to think less *of* the south and rather *with* the south. Here, where historical, cultural and structural conditions have been formed in subordination to the needs of the north of the world, the predictable critical frame is decentred and destabilised. The powerful lessons of the Subaltern Studies group in India, of the lengthy tradition of Black Atlantic intellectuals and artists, of the critical constellation of radical Latin American thought and political practices clearly confirm this point. The abstract universalisms of 'progress', 'humanism' and 'democracy' unwind in the cruel insistence of their being historically embedded in power, exploitation and unjust cultural detail. This observation, most obviously drawn from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, allows us to register the structural inequalities of economic, political, social and cultural justice that characterise the souths of the planet while at the same time harvesting the specificities of a precise elaboration of space and time that distinguishes one place from another.

Radical rurality

To return to the rural south of Italy again also allows us to continue to cultivate further lines of flight from conventional accounts of this region as a political problem. I, personally, have had some involvement in projects that have sought in abandoned mountain areas to encourage a radical revaluation of contemporary rurality in the light of modern memories of migration (Chambers *et al.*, 2007). Associated with this involvement is the ethno-literature and proposed 'ruralogy' (*paesologia*) of the writer Franco Arminio, who poetically reworks a received inheritance into a modality of modern connections (Arminio, 2011). In a form of psychogeography, Armino's words drift in rural landscapes that actively query their subaltern location in the mappings of modernity. What comes to be registered is an impossible set of roots: village life is neither autonomous nor separated from the modernity that produces it as its alterity. There emerges the awareness that belonging simultaneously draws upon a series of locations: from a high mountain village in Matese to a suburb of New York. It is a process impossible to confine to

a single place. This provides another critical compass with which to navigate the multiple spaces of modernity. Perhaps this is a lesson that was first learnt by rural folk. If their lives were subordinated to the demands of the metropolis, they experienced migration, social upheaval and transformation under the sign of the city long before the inhabitants of the city began querying their own assumed stability. In the same manner, the rest of the world has experienced precarious livelihood, structural unemployment and the violence of capital in a colonial condition for many decades prior to the ingression of these coordinates into the heartlands of the metropolitan West.

The seemingly external rural interruption is, of course, not really external, only repressed and negated, consigned to the margins. Today's metropolis is the modern world. And if the city does not fully absorb the surrounding world, it does, however, profoundly discipline its horizons of expectancy. In this sense, the rural scene provides one of the places and temporalities of modernity. It is not on the outside. It circulates within as a potential critical seed. It proposes another rurality that lies both beyond the placid Romantic framing of the sublime or the brutal vitalism of imposed economic 'progress'. Its very hybridity – after all, today hardly anyone simply lives in the countryside, whether in Irpinia in southern Italy or in rural Bangladesh, without the presence of television, mobile phones, computers and the Internet – suggests an altogether more extensive critical cartography. In a truly political and poetical sense this renewed sense of rurality promotes a subaltern and minor history able to challenge and deviate hegemonic versions of a unilateral modernity. Defending seed banks in rural India against Occidental monopolies or contesting economically and ecologically unviable high-speed trains in the Alpine valleys of northern Italy is, in however ragged and unsystematic a fashion, to express local democracies that are witness to a modernity that is not simply authorized by the existing institutions of political and economic power.

Here the rural world is no longer something left over from yesterday, an appendage to today's urban life, providing foodstuffs, recreation and relics of superseded lifestyles, but rather reveals the potential of a critical interrogation. A seemingly 'lost' world actually proposes new points of departure. The elaboration of the 'loss' can lead to the proposal of beginnings for those seeking to escape both the claustrophobic localism of blood and soil and the terrible costs of earlier rural life. To elaborate that inheritance and work it through is also to re-elaborate modernity itself. Emigration, exploitation and poverty, both yesterday and today, are woven together along global axes. The abandoned village in the Apennines is not merely the sign of a local drama; it is the also the symptom of the processes of a planetary political economy. The question, then, is how to narrate this complex suturing of time and place, of modernity and rurality, in a manner that leads to a new, critical sense of 'place' and temporality that simultaneously exists along multiple scales of belonging: from the local bar to the Internet.

At this point, where do a place, a locality, a village and territory conclude, and something else commence? Perhaps the limited linearity of this reasoning suggests another configuration in which 'place' and belonging are simultaneously proposed and lived in multiple sites. These propose other narrative forms. In an altogether more fluid topography, specificities such as poverty, organised crime, structural unemployment, migration and peripheral 'underdevelopment' are charted on multiple maps that simultaneously conjoin the local with those wider, transnational conditions that also produce the local. Modernity at this point is opened up to interpretations that challenge a unitary logic. And alterity, as both the past that has never passed and the presence of the extra-European world, radically interrupts the present. Such proximities invite us, as a minimum, not so much to speak for these negated matters, and thereby reproduce our authority, as to speak in their vicinity in a manner that leads precisely to the undoing of that authority (Djebar, 1999).

The south of the world

Borrowing this suggestion from the Algerian writer Assia Djebar, I would like to propose a final perspective that consists in considering the interruption of the structures that produces the 'south' as a delimited space (Bhambra, 2007). This obviously extends the Italian 'Southern Question' through a geography of powers onto a planetary scale. It also fruitfully intersects a growing intent to rethink modernity outside the geopolitical structures and ethnographic dividends of European colonialism and their installation in the assumed methodological 'neutrality' of the social sciences (Connell, 2007). Brought into the multiple folds of a postcolonial revaluation, such a critical configuration permits us to reopen the archive in order to expose the present-day coordinates of a multilayered modernity: the latter now emerges as a global networked formation in historical process, rather than as a conceptual bloc or place (the Occident). If this is to world the west, it is also to re-engage with the 'Southern Question', and with it the south of Europe and the south of the world, with a very different set of critical languages and questions.

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2

FRATELLI D'ITALIA

Differences and similarities in social values between Italian macro-regions

Giuseppe A. Veltri

Introduction: a divided country

According to many scholars, politicians and opinion makers, the social, economic and cultural differences within Italy are of such magnitude to speak of 'three Italies': the North, the Centre and the South. For example, the GDP per capita of the South is around 58 per cent of that of the North and Centre, with 36 per cent of the Italian population (Malanima and Zamagni, 2010).

Debates about the disparity between the North and South have been present almost from Italy's creation as a unified state in the nineteenth century. A hundred and fifty years later, during the national celebrations of 2011, the presumed cultural differences remain at the core of the public debate on Italian national identity. The later distinction between the North, Centre and South introduced the idea of 'three Italies'. Surprisingly, since the publication of Edward Banfield's famous 'The moral basis of backward societies' (1965) and Robert Putman's *Making Democracy Work* (1993), there has been a lack of recent research on the nature and extent of these cultural differences. There have been some historical studies on the stereotypes of the South in Italian history and culture (Dickie, 1999; Lumley and Morris, 1997; McCrae *et al.*, 2007), but most studies are from the social capital literature (Leonardi, 1995; Girlando *et al.*, 2005) and little else has been published on the topic of cultural difference within Italy using more complete and larger sets of cultural indicators beside 'social capital' proxies. Recently, Tabellini (2010) investigated the role of cultural factors for economic development in European regions, including Italy, which he analysed at a regional level using the NUTS–2 classification. Similarly, De Blasio and Nuzzo (2009) studied the role of social capital on local economic development indicators, finding the presence of an effect. Yet, whilst there is a great deal of research on the differences in the economic performance and social structures of the Italian 'macro-regions', there are very few recent studies available on the issue of cultural differences that are based on more than one or two indicators.

Over 20 years after Putnam's work, the differences within Italy continue to be exploited by political parties – in particular the Lega Nord (Northern League) – and have therefore assumed an even more central role in the political and cultural arena. The ostensible cultural differences

between the North and South have become so politically charged that some scholars describe these as a form of 'internal orientalism' (Schneider, 1998). However, the attribution of regional characteristics to individuals is problematic and runs the risk of falling into the trap of the ecological fallacy (Robinson, 1950; Hofstede, 1980, 2001).

This study will analyse carefully the cultural differences between the Italian macro-regions within the context of 'social values'. The most important step is to identify suitable definitions of cultural differences that can be used to identify and compare supposed geographical clusters. In this sense, the conceptualization of 'culture' is defined by the psychological and social construct of 'values'. In the social sciences, values are conceptualized in different ways (Hitlin and Piliavin, 2004). Tsirogianni and Gaskell (2011) define social values as 'socially collective beliefs and systems of beliefs that operate as guiding principles in life' (p. 2). The sociological perspectives on social values follow the example of Zerubavel (1997) and his proposed cognitive sociology. The next section describes in more detail the theoretical aspects underpinning each set of indicators.

The aim of this study is twofold: first, to determine and assess the differences in social values between macro-regions in Italy, exploring the existence of culturally homogeneous areas distinguishable among them; second, to contribute to the debate in sociology about culture as a 'latent variable'. Data from the European Value Studies (EVS) will be used to carry out a multilevel variance components analysis to identify and determine regional differences.

Social values as cultural indicators

What constitutes 'culture' is a long-standing debate in the social sciences, and the use of this term outside academia appears to be even more vague and equivocal. However, when the aim is to compare different cultures, the emphasis is given to cultural traits that are trans-situational, long-standing and social. The notion of 'values' – and of social values, in particular – points precisely in this direction. It refers to the more abstract beliefs that are immune to sudden change and has a solid research tradition in the fields of social and cross-cultural psychology and sociology. At the same time, the choice of theoretical approaches is limited by the availability of empirical data specifically collected to measure dimensions of social values. This chapter applies different conceptualizations of the notion of 'values' drawn from the literature on cultural sociology, which implement differently the notion of 'values' as a way to measure ideological dimensions: economic conservatism-liberalism (Middendorp, 1978); a democratic/authoritarian dimension (Eckstein, 1966); generalized trust as the foundation of civic participation; and social capital (Uslaner, 2002; Putnam, 1993).

Economic attitudes are measured in the EVS (2008) in terms of economic liberalism and conservatism versus a progressive economic agenda (Middendorp, 1978). The items are designed to capture individual preferences regarding welfare, unemployment, competition, commercial freedom and income inequality. This set of indicators is of particular interest given the significant differences in GDP per capita between Italian regions and the differences in economic development between the more advanced 'North' and the rest of Italy (Malanima and Zamagni, 2010). Cultural 'compatibility' is often considered an independent variable of economic performance (Huntington and Harrison, 2000).

The set of indicators in the EVS (2008) that relate to the attitudes of Italian citizens towards political systems and democracy includes items on leadership, the role of experts, democracy as a system, democracy and the economy, and democracy and law and order. These indicators represent the conceptual legacy of Harry Eckstein's congruence theory (Eckstein, 1966), which argues, in essence, that political systems tend to be based on authority patterns that are congruent