identities based on individual experiences in the context of the revolutions and the newly acquired civil rights. Multiple allegiances and the patriotic fear of nationalism are the focus of Dominique Reill's brilliant essay on the 'multinational' dimension of some Risorgimento protagonists, such as Niccolò Tommaseo, who had a Slavic-Dalmatian background. This group, like the Protestant Waldensians, were '[fascinated] with the idea of Europe that Chabod so famously discussed', not because of Mazzini's influence, but because of 'a broader, inherent concern of a post-Napoleonic generation with the idea of a holistic nation' (p. 266). (For a recent reassessment of the Waldensians see Maghenzani 2012.)

In a way, the real conclusion of the volume comes in the penultimate chapter, in which Maurizio Isabella examines the origins of the Italian colonialist tradition. While a number of other scholars, from Chabod to Gentile, have linked such tradition to the Risorgimento, they have tended to consider the problem in the light of later developments. By contrast, Isabella places it firmly it in the intellectual context in which it originated between the 1830s and 1871. Most patriots, with the partial exception of Cattaneo, preached about Italy's 'civilizing mission' and duty to 'invade and colonize Tunisian lands' (Mazzini in 1871, p. 248). This must give pause for thought, but also reminds us of the extent to which the men and the women of the Risorgimento were firmly rooted in, and limited by, the cultural assumptions of their age.

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Eugenio F. Biagini
Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge
efb21@cam.ac.uk

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Italiani senza padre: intervista sul Risorgimento, by Emilio Gentile (edited by Simonetta Fiori), Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011, vii and 177 pp., €12.00, ISBN 978-88-420-9499-9

Laterza has a long and distinguished record of publishing 'Interviste'. Who does not remember from the 1970s those of Renzo De Felice (with Michael Ledeen) on Fascism, Giorgio Amendola (with Piero Melograni) on anti-Fascism, or Giorgio Napolitano (with Eric Hobsbawm) on the PCI? Such works have kept coming, and in 2011, it was natural for Simonetta Fiori, a journalist on *La Repubblica*, who had already completed an interview with Alberto Asor Rosa in the series (2009), to move across departments at the University of Rome and ask Emilio Gentile to reflect on the current meaning and historical roots of the nation's 150th anniversary. It was a good choice, given Gentile's curriculum of work and because, rather than following the course of his predecessor, De Felice, Gentile has not defined his career as that of the 'archive rat' but has made his way as a thinker about the history of ideas. Moreover, although he is the first to assert his own objectivity in what sometimes seems to his critics an anti-diluvian Rankeanism, he has also readily assumed the task of advising the present about what we are getting right and what wrong in our comprehension of the past. Gentile fits very well, then, the purpose of a Laterza *Intervista*.

The interview is divided into four segments. It begins with grand generalisations in what Gentile insists on more than one occasion is a realistic but not a pessimistic vein about the lack of any serious connection between the Italy of 2010 (when he talked with Fiori) and that of the Risorgimento. In the second and longest chapter, Gentile escorts Fiori through Italian history and its discontents from 1861 to the present, with passing reflection on historiographical controversies and on his own practice as a historian and that of others. In the next part of the interview he focuses on some of the more acute or noisy debates since 1945, always with an eye on the current Italian situation and sometimes with a reflex to earlier interpretations. In this regard, Gentile sees advantage in the gradual overcoming of simply hostile or positive readings of the Risorgimento and is ready to praise the work of A. M. Banti. Fiori mentions Lucy Riall but, in reply, Gentile switches the focus to Italian historians. Derek Beales and Eugenio Biagini, Denis Mack Smith (at some length) and Christopher Duggan are written off more peremptorily. Gentile and Fiori end with a return in the fourth chapter to what might or might not be valid and virtuous in explanations of the Risorgimento tradition or rather the traditions of the Risorgimentos since Gentile dislikes the idea of the simple and singular formula (although he does continue to insist on the key role of hopes in freedom, progress and a surpassing of Catholicism).

There are some predictable absences or blind-spots in the interview. In an account of a people 'without fathers', who may have failed to retain a sense of civic 'brotherhood', there is no reference to gender. An automatic Eurocentrism ensures that both emigrants and immigrants are ignored (except for a passing note of those internal migrations that Italians experienced from the 1950s). Gentile is troubled by what he fears is a growing Vatican hegemony in contemporary Italy, but there is no reference to Italians of Muslim or other non-Christian religions and no reckoning with multiculturalism being what some might claim as a necessary accompaniment to any modern version of the nation. Gentile strongly denies that his own writing is ever influenced by anything other than a search for truth; in his mind, he records what the sources say. Yet he does spend quite a bit of time talking about his own background and placing his conclusions into an intellectual lineage. Given his own interests, the interview therefore is a study of the history of ideas about the Italian nation and, except in the most generic sense, the social history of peasants, workers, bourgeois and the rest is given scarce attention. Finally, globalisation does win brief notice but what neoliberal hegemony might mean in Italy is not discussed.

For all that, taken on its own terms, the *Intervista* has plenty in it to justify reading, whether in Gentile's commentary on the thoughts of most leading Italian intellectuals about their state and nation over the last 150 years or in his frequent asides about his discipline. In such a short work, it is mainly the implied questions that matter. Are historians utterly committed to the rational and compelled to explain apparent irrationality in rational terms? Are there no accidents in the past's story, except when historians fail to do their duty? Did Fascism (and anti-Fascism), with their determination to split Italians into 'real' and 'false', drastically damage the possibility of the nation-state winning the support and sympathy of its citizens and in turn being able to deliver freedom and equality before the law? Was the Italian Resistance really the equal of the Yugoslav one and so the most effective in Europe, and how could its pledge to a 'second Risorgimento' be so easily given up after 1947? Did the parties, especially the Marxist and Catholic ones, further hamper what still could have been a positive legacy from the Risorgimento? Have Bossi and the Lega Nord, the Vatican and Berlusconi (this last a constant present in Gentile's commentary, but curiously unexamined in the open) built on earlier troubles to create a present-day country at serious risk of being a failed nation? Do Italians badly need a clear and united history or are they lucky to possess so many pasts and so much wrangling about their meaning? With this much

and more to discuss, Fiori's interview with Gentile is another valuable divulgative product of Laterza publishing.

R. J. B. Bosworth
Jesus College, Oxford
richard.bosworth@jesus.ox.ac.uk

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Cavour, by Adriano Viarengo, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2010, 564 pp., €28.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-88-8402-682-8

One cannot but admire the bravery of Adriano Viarengo. In Cavour he has chosen a subject who, if we consider the balance between results achieved and available means, can be legitimately regarded as the greatest European statesman of the second half of the nineteenth century. In addition, Rosario Romeo's biography of Cavour (3 volumes, 1969–1984) remains one of the great masterpieces of twentieth-century Italian historiography. Viarengo's courage, though, has been rewarded with a work of commendable balance. His careful interpretation of the sources and his shrewd analysis of his protagonist give us a biography that is not only very enjoyable as a narrative but also capable of emphasising some of the often overlooked 'environmental' aspects which helped to shape Cavour, for example the 'domestic context of the Savoyard state in which he made his name' (p. 9) and where, on several occasions, he risked both political and personal defeat. The Cavour we all know, the politician capable of taking advantage of a constantly shifting Europe, the great orchestrator of international politics, was not the fruit of a natural superiority but rather the product of a tough apprenticeship and a harsh confrontation with hostile realities. The coldness and lack of understanding shown by his own family, the hostility of a large part of the Piedmontese political and cultural milieu, the resentment of the Church, the malicious nature of the court and of the King in particular, as well as his personal struggle with his own disappointments, aspirations and restlessness, constituted the daily apprenticeship that Cavour later transformed, thanks to his lively and practical intelligence and his ambitious personality, into an unequalled capacity for leadership. The 'bourgeois' aristocrat, animated by profound ideals, expert on the cultures and economies of the main European countries, learnt quickly how to use 'many different registers' (p. 14) and above all how to 'master' the many languages of politics, from those of business and technical and moral progress, to those of journalism, intrigue and 'party' organisation.

The art of politics cannot be improvised and Cavour's convictions were clear from the moment he entered the parliamentary arena. There were two main principles that shaped his actions after 1848: 'domestically to resist any reactionary tendencies and at the same time to promote the progressive implementation of the political, economic and administrative liberties allowed under our Statuto. In foreign affairs, we should prepare the ground and put Piedmont in the position to achieve Italy's independence from foreign control' (p. 227). The cynicism that characterised large parts of his political life never led him to waver from these deep beliefs: the objective could not be disconnected from the means to reach it and unification would have been pointless or even impossible without his faith in constitutional freedoms and economic progress. This may seem obvious if we fail to understand that these goals were pursued – within a