

CONTEXTS AND DEBATES

Italy's diasporas: a discussion between Donna R. Gabaccia, Lucy Riall, Pamela Ballinger, and Konstantina Zanou

Konstantina Zanou

Columbia University, New York, United States
Email: kz2269@columbia.edu

(Received 19 January 2024; accepted 7 February 2024; first published online 11 March 2024)

Introduction

It has been over 20 years since Donna R. Gabaccia's seminal work *Italy's Many Diasporas* was published (London & New York, 2000), an overview of the social, cultural and economic history of Italy's various migrations. Much has changed since then, but this book remains a classic. In this roundtable, historians Lucy Riall, Pamela Ballinger and Konstantina Zanou reflect on the value of Gabaccia's work and on the historical moment of its production. They discuss with the author the developments in the historiography of Italian and other diasporas during the last two decades, and offer insights on new avenues of research including settler colonialism, race and belonging, migration and environmental change, global microhistory and biography, and the Mediterranean context of Italy's migrations.

This article is based on a public conversation, which took place online on 20 October 2023, between Donna R. Gabaccia, Lucy Riall and Konstantina Zanou, organised by the latter within the framework of the 'Italian and Mediterranean Colloquia', Columbia University.¹ The event was co-sponsored by the Italian Department and the European Institute at Columbia University, New York and the Department of History and Civilization of the European University Institute, Florence, and is available to watch online.²

Lucy Riall: Italian diasporas and global migration

The publication of *Italy's Many Diasporas* was a landmark moment. I remember reading the book shortly after its publication in 2000 on a long train ride from Trieste to Naples, and immediately recognising its importance; I marvelled at Gabaccia's ability both to synthesise a vast historiographical tradition and to use the synthesis to look at modern Italian history in an entirely new way. In the almost 25 years since the book was published, my positive first impression has not changed at all. *Italy's Many Diasporas* remains a major inspiration, an encouragement to us all to think outside the box of national history and imagine new historical trajectories and narratives.

Italy's Many Diasporas begins with the Middle Ages and a Genoese poet, and the author's observation that 'the residents of Italy exercised their greatest cultural influence on the

© The Author(s), 2024. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of Association for the Study of Modern Italy. This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution and reproduction, provided the original article is properly cited.

wider world when they were most divided' (16). Here, in the opening pages, Gabaccia lays down her challenge to the geography and chronology of contemporary Italian history. Individual chapters go on to look at the Risorgimento, workers' activism, Fascism, and postwar Italy, all using a transnational lens to displace nationalist certainties. Gabaccia points out that 'one in three Italian nationalists [in the Risorgimento] migrated abroad' (35–36), and she reminds us that 'no other people migrated in so many directions and in such impressive numbers' (60) as Italians between 1830 and 1930. She traces the close links forged between Italian migrant communities, the Catholic Church, Fascist propaganda, and new American national identities; she also explains the process through which, in the postwar years, Italians left the rural South to migrate north within the peninsula, and how Italy itself has been transformed from a 'sending' to a 'receiving' nation. Describing the development of hyphenated belonging in the many diasporic Italian communities across the centuries, Gabaccia concludes that while Italian identity is rooted in a sense of *patria* tied to a specific place, 'that place can be anywhere in the world; it is not necessarily Italy, but a well-known village, neighbourhood, or city anywhere in the world' (191).

In our public discussion about *Italy's Many Diasporas* which preceded the present publication, Donna Gabaccia referred to her book as a 'premature synthesis', suggesting a book published before all the implications of new research could be assessed. I don't see this as a shortcoming of the volume, rather as a reflection on its originality and ambition. Nevertheless, I would like to reflect on how the book might look different if published today. First, I should mention the relatively confident tone of *Italy's Many Diasporas*, reflecting perhaps the period of economic growth (at least in some Italian regions) in which it was written, or the self-assurance of Italian foreign policy around European integration and the single currency. A lot has changed in the interim. There is hardship, poverty and suffering aplenty in the volume, and discussion of anti-Italian stereotypes and their consequences, but on the whole *Italy's Many Diasporas* has optimism at its core. Gabaccia is far from naive about Italy in general or national identity in particular, and she does not endorse a view of Italians as *brava gente*. Still, an idea of economic improvement and a positive sense of home, based on food and family and anchored in the 'proletarian diaspora', makes reading the book almost an exercise in nostalgia, a reminder of how Italy and the world looked strikingly different just over two decades ago.

Two other related points of observation spring to mind. In the years since *Italy's Many Diasporas* was published, scholarly interest has moved towards the study of migrant or settler colonialism (Choate 2008; Pergher 2018) and the environmental consequences of migration (Armiero and Tucker 2017; Mazzoli 2021, 2023). This move also marks a shift towards a recognition of the violence attendant upon migration, whether as an arm of the Italian state's policies of sexual and social exclusion during Fascism (Forgacs 2014) or involving processes of indigenous dispossession in the forests of Brazil or the Peruvian Amazon (Brunello 1994, 2020; Riall 2022a, 2022b). Equally, the recent history of Italy as a 'receiving nation' has been marked by xenophobia and tragedy, a development that was already clear two decades ago but has since become a prominent trope in political debate. Recent work on race in Italian society (Patriarca 2021; Patriarca and Deplano 2018) suggests the longer-term importance of categories of exclusion within Italian citizenship, and their grounding in historical notions of family and gender, religion, and 'whiteness'. I wonder whether, in the many diasporas described in Gabaccia's book, we might these days give more space to the racist aspects of Italian identity (or identities), and to questions of indigenous erasure and sexual violence?

Italy's Many Diasporas is only one part of Gabaccia's broader concerns with labour and gender history, and with global migration studies. She has published widely in these fields, most recently as the general editor of the two-volume *Cambridge History of Global Migrations*

(Gabaccia et al. 2023). In these volumes a host of scholars point us away from an older historiography that assumed the primacy of a European (Atlantic) framing of migration, towards a consideration of non-Europeans with different kinds of mobilities and alternative chronologies. The volumes also introduce what Gabaccia calls a ‘mobility lens’ to the study of migration, with a focus on ‘the terminologies and typologies of migration’ and how these ‘have shaped scholarship, governance, communication, and even public discourse about human movement’ (Gabaccia et al. 2023, 5). With this new lens comes a closer attention to the ways population movements have conditioned many of the transformations in global history, from exploration to trade, war, and slavery, and a greater consideration of the relationship between migration and state structures of control and coercion. As a final point, therefore, I am curious to know Gabaccia’s view as to how the global migration approach might change our view of Italian diasporas. More generally I’d like to find out how she sees these two – global and national – aspects of her research fitting together.

Pamela Ballinger: *Italy’s Many Diasporas: setting an agenda for transnational Italian studies*

Over two decades ago, historian Donna Gabaccia published her groundbreaking study, *Italy’s Many Diasporas*. In the preface, she revealed that the project’s genesis, ironically, lay in her decision to *stop* writing about Italian migration. As she put it, “I always wanted to write books”, I had scribbled in frustration one day while riding the train home to Westchester from the New York Public Library, “but not books that no one reads” (xii). While determined to close the chapter on her Italian migration research, Gabaccia still had to prepare a paper for the meeting of the American Italian Historical Association annual conference. Having the good fortune to encounter there a cohort of colleagues thinking about Italian mobilities through comparative, transnational and global frames led Gabaccia to craft a book that many would read, reread, and continue to read in the present day.

As Gabaccia puts it, *Italy’s Many Diasporas* offered a ‘general overview of Italy’s migrations, in which theoretical exegesis takes second place to descriptive and empirical material’ (xii–xiii). Yet the book achieved much more than Gabaccia’s overly modest claim suggests. *Italy’s Many Diasporas* laid down a productive agenda for modern Italian history and studies, simultaneously anticipating and inspiring several major strands of current scholarship. Gabaccia’s capacious vision of what she and colleague Fraser Ottanelli jokingly labeled ‘Italians Everywhere’ has borne fruit in flourishing bodies of work on Italian mobilities, citizenship, and the reconceptualisation of modern Italian Studies through a transnational perspective.

Italy’s Many Diasporas put into dialogue several then-emergent approaches, notably transnational history, global history, transnational migration studies, and work on diaspora (Brubaker 2005; Glick Schiller, Darieva and Gruner-Domic 2011; Iriye 2004, 2007; Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995; Glick Schiller and Caglar 2011; Hopkins 2006; Mazlish and Iriye 2004; Safran 1991; Seigel 2005; Tyrell 2009). These literatures had tended to run on parallel tracks that only occasionally intersected. Moreover, within the historiography of modern Italy, migration had often occupied a surprisingly marginal space, perhaps reflecting the pervasive sense of shame around emigration (Loriggio 2004, 19). Italian migration thus often constituted an ‘other’ history or was refracted through the national immigration histories of host/receiving countries. Di Camerana contends: ‘there isn’t a single history of Italy but rather two histories of Italy: that of Italians in Italy and those of Italians outside of Italy’ (Di Camerana 2003, 5).

At first glance, Gabaccia’s conceptualisation of *altre italie* (other Italies) sounds similar to Di Camerana’s description of ‘two Italies’. Gabaccia, for example, devotes particular

attention in her analysis to colonies or communities of migrants – that is, both to *other Italies* and *other Italians*. In this, she highlights the blurriness of *coloni/colonie* (settlers/colonies), a point subsequently elaborated by Choate (2008) regarding competing yet entangled models of formal colonies and expatriate colonies. Thus while the identities of Gabaccia's actors remain territorially grounded in their *paesi* (understood in multiple ways), her analytical frames advance beyond reductive binaries such as local/national or national/global.

Although at one point Gabaccia muses 'I nevertheless believe it heuristically helpful to imagine the possibility of a single Italian diaspora' (9), she ultimately concludes that 'While their lives were transnational, the "*italiani nel mondo*" did not form a "nation unbound", or a "deterritorialised nation state", as some scholars describe contemporary migrants' (11). For Gabaccia, then, Italy's many diasporas actually constitute 'a diaspora that never was' (13). In this, Gabaccia's title may be a misnomer, since on closer inspection the term diaspora appears to have less purchase here for understanding the dynamics of Italian migration³ than does transnationalism. That said, Gabaccia's vision importantly brings together different types of migrants – economic and political – in distinct territorial and temporal contexts that are usually kept apart.⁴

Perhaps more significant for the field of modern Italian Studies, however, has been Gabaccia's rethinking of Italy itself as a cultural, political and territorial space realised through transnational flows and imaginings. In this, *Italy's Many Diasporas* offered one particularly productive model for transnational Italian Studies. Its transnational agenda has been taken up by journals like *California Italian Studies* and programmes of study, notably the transnational Italian Studies major at University of California Santa Barbara.⁵ The transnational perspective has also shifted the conventional focus away from migrations to North America and towards those within the Mediterranean (Black Mediterranean Collective 2021; Carminati 2023; Hawthorne 2022; Isabella and Zanou 2016; Malia Hom 2019) and Latin American contexts (Gaggio 2021; Riall 2022b; Riccò 2022). Scholars have thus taken to heart Gabaccia's observation that the disproportionate scholarly attention paid to Italo-American communities obscured the reality that the US was not the 'preferred destination' of migrants from the Italian peninsula in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather, job prospects in Latin America were often more enticing, drawing Italians to destinations like Brazil and Argentina, where they became the largest communities of European migrants in proportional terms (Gabaccia 2000, 77–78).

Furthermore, Gabaccia acknowledged the entangled nature of African, Italian and other diasporas across the Mediterranean and Atlantic (for a recent discussion of these entanglements, turn to Ballinger 2024). She queried: 'Who would replace emancipated African workers, populate the plains of Argentina and the United States, mine the iron and coal demanded by new factories, build the canals, railroads, tunnels to transport them, and work in the factories themselves?' (59). In answering this question, Gabaccia emphasised the mobile labour necessitated by mobile capital. Scholars like Camilla Hawthorne (2022) have situated such flows of mobile, including coerced, labour within the transnational logics of racial capitalism. A new generation of scholars is thus taking up and developing questions of race and Italian citizenship present but relatively underdeveloped in *Italy's Many Diasporas*.

The publication of Gabaccia's book in 2000 coincided with a wave of publications exploring Italian citizenship, publications that participated in broader debates over forms of Italian juridical belonging and exclusion. Gabaccia made clear how the 1912 citizenship law, formulated partially in response to the needs of Italians abroad, marked a shift towards biological or racialised conceptions of identity (embodied in the principle of *jus sanguinis*). Likewise, Gabaccia remarked upon the (for her) surprising subversion

of cosmopolitan ideas of *civiltà italiana* by nationalism and fascism (33, 140–141). Scholars have pushed these insights in new directions, questioning her premise of a shift from ‘voluntaristic’ forms of identity by exploring racialised logics baked into *civiltà italiana*, whether it be those of the Venetian Adriatic with its chauvinisms against Slavic peoples or the civilising ideology that pushed Italy towards East Africa. Two decades on, would Gabaccia revise her characterisation of *civiltà italiana*, given its millennial optimism and ‘confident tone’, to borrow Riall’s phrasing from her contribution to this forum?

As scholars today reconceptualise Italian histories of race and belonging, of emigrants and immigrants, they take not only inspiration but possibly hope from the alternative histories that Gabaccia laid bare. *Italy’s Many Diasporas*’ concluding lines thus serve as an apposite conclusion for my reflections here: ‘The *civiltà italiana* of Italy’s proletarian diasporas was a surprisingly modest one. Ever aware of its humble and often disparaged roots, it nevertheless still offers an important alternative to all modern nationalisms, even those of Italy’ (191). How are we to understand the legacies of these proletarian diasporas in our contemporary moment?

Konstantina Zanou: Italian diasporas or global microhistories across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean?

Almost 25 years have passed since the publication of Donna Gabaccia’s seminal book *Italy’s Many Diasporas*. Yet, for all the times I have read and taught it, its richness, sophistication and pioneering outlook still have the capacity to surprise me. One could go on for pages praising this book, but I will limit myself to mentioning only what I consider to be its two most significant contributions. First, Gabaccia’s truly remarkable achievement in writing a book about Italy’s diasporas that dismantles the very notion of ‘Italian diaspora’. ‘Migration rarely created a national or united *Italian* diaspora’, she writes in the Introduction. ‘But it did create many temporary, and changing diasporas of peoples with identities and loyalties poorly summed up by the national term, Italian’ (5–6). By liberating diasporas from the nation, the book thus enables a more complex and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the two. Diasporas here are seen not as extensions of the Italian homeland, but as sites where national consciousness was either rejected or originally shaped. On the one hand, by manifesting itself as a number of ‘village-based diasporas’, Italian migration ‘helped keep alive the localism Italian nationalists sought to overcome’ (73). On the other hand, ‘the modern Italian nation often seemed to find form more easily outside of Italy than within it’ (35), and not because of the activities of the state – at least not until the mid-twentieth century – but because of the initiatives of independent actors such as the Catholic Church or Italian exiles, intellectuals and labour activists. In fact, Gabaccia disentangles her history from that of the Italian state. By adopting a Gramscian view of the Italian nineteenth century, she depicts the Risorgimento as a *rivoluzione mancata* (failed revolution), which produced a state distrusted by most of those it sought to govern. Thus, she concludes, ‘excluded from the nation and political life at home, the poorest Italians by the 1890s seemed poised on a threshold’ (36).

And this brings me to my second point. It can be summarised in the author’s own words: ‘Even a diaspora that never was can tell us much about the making of the modern world and of a modern Italy’ (13). This is exactly what the book does: it talks about diasporic Italians in order to talk about the world. In short, Gabaccia globalised Italy before the global turn recast the field of historical studies. She did so by connecting Italy’s mass migration to various global developments, such as the emancipation of slaves, the anti-imperial revolutions in the Americas, settler colonialism, and the migration of industrial capital to Africa and Asia (59). In sum, it is a central contention of Gabaccia’s work that

Italian history, like any other, is part of global history. What is more, the author understands globalism, not in abstract terms, but as a landscape made up of the specific and circumscribed places the migrants inhabited (their villages, their neighbourhoods, their communities, and so on). Said differently, hers is a trans-local history on a global scale.

What I will briefly do in the space that remains to me is to focus on two aspects of the work that deserve, in my view, to be further discussed by the historian Gabaccia of 2024.

The first concerns the book's geographical focus and overarching questions. As a historian who studies Mediterranean diasporas in the long nineteenth century, I find it surprising how little, still, the field of Italian diaspora studies engages in a dialogue with that of the history of trans-Mediterranean mobilities. A handful of recent exceptions aside (Isabella 2009; Gorman and Kasbarian 2015; Viscomi 2019; Ballinger 2020; McGuire 2020; Fogu 2020), it seems to me that the history of Italian diasporas has been framed mostly through the transatlantic experience of mass migration, and perhaps also by Italy's current condition as a 'receiving nation'. Understandable: since the nineteenth century, the numbers of those who crossed the ocean exceeded by far the numbers of those who moved across the shores of the Mediterranean. Yet, by incorporating the geography of the Mediterranean and by entering into closer dialogue with works that study its multiple mobilities,⁶ the field would perforce engage with questions that largely remain outside of its space of inquiry today. A list of such questions might include (but would not be exhausted by) trans-imperial mobility and belonging, settler colonialism, multilayered systems of citizenship (and their relation to the Ottoman capitulations), decolonisation, refugees, overlapping national allegiances, religion, and race.

My final observation concerns the book's methodology. A sociologist by formation, Gabaccia also writes like one. She focuses on the big picture, analyses structures and trends, and speaks with numbers (indeed, the book contains several statistical tables). It goes without saying that all this is essential if we as historians are to make sense of the past. What I missed in this book, however, are the personal stories that make history come alive. Biography, for long discredited by social scientists and especially Marxist historians – and for good reasons – has recently made its dynamic comeback in the guise of 'global microhistory'. More emphasis is now placed on the craft of writing historical narrative. What is more, there is an increasingly widespread belief that zooming in on individual lives enables the historian to tell a more complex and multilayered tale of mobility, one that merges together different contexts and sets of questions. Would it be useful, I want to ask the Gabaccia of 2024, to reframe Italy's diasporas as global microhistories of people on the move across the Atlantic and the Mediterranean?

Donna R. Gabaccia: An author responds

What author would not be pleased to respond to such astute, careful and provocative readings of her work as those offered here by my sympathetic critics Lucy Riall, Pamela Ballinger, and Konstantina Zanou? I have read their reflections on *Italy's Many Diasporas* with great interest, and I hope I can address some of their questions about the book's origins, legacy and relationship to current and future scholarship.

Italy's Many Diasporas was very much a creation of the 1990s, a decade when social scientists obsessed over globalisation, millenarian thinkers hoped transnationalism could move humankind beyond the murderous and often suicidal state-based nationalisms of the past, and global historians struggled to assert their counter-intuitive insight that recent population movements and global cultural and socio-economic dynamics were not as new or unprecedented as observers, in and outside the academy, believed. As all three critics recognised, *Italy's Many Diasporas* was also written at the intersection of scholarly trends with my individual intellectual trajectory,⁷ which included the organisation of

the 'Italians Everywhere' collaboration (Gabaccia and Ottanelli 2001; Gabaccia and Iacovetta 2002; Blanc-Chaleard et al. 2007; Gabaccia and Baldassar 2010). Teaching too played a role: beginning in the 1990s I developed an introductory world history lecture course, which drew heavily on the theoretical and empirical work of Immanuel Wallerstein.⁸

My three critics have captured many essential dimensions of that particular moment in scholarly time as reflected in *Italy's Many Diasporas*. Konstantina Zanou neatly grasps my intentions when she calls the book a 'trans-local history on a global scale' (thereby 'liberating diasporas from the nation') and notes how its focus on diasporic migrants links global and national historiographies. To this I would add only the book's insistence in documenting how significantly multiple nation states continued to shape and constrain the vast transnational movements of the past. Pamela Ballinger emphasises how the book reconceptualised Italy as 'a cultural, political and territorial space realised through transnational flows and imaginings' and astutely notes that transnational dynamics were far more central to its analysis than any concept of diaspora – a point often missed by early critics who ignored my deconstruction of the term and objected to my use of 'diaspora' as either trendy new jargon or as an inappropriate claim to migrants' status as historical victims comparable to the classical diasporas of Jews and Africans or to more recent colonial and post-colonial diasporas.

Lucy Riall provides a good springboard for assessing the book's legacy when she comments on my characterisation of it as a 'premature synthesis'. I am still unsure where to locate the origins of my penchant for the writing of premature syntheses but I do label two books I wrote in the 1990s in this way: the other was *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Gabaccia 1998).⁹ Both offered, in Ballinger's words, 'not only inspiration but possibly hope from the alternative histories that Gabaccia laid bare'. It is possible that my interdisciplinary training – first sociology, then history and anthropology – and autobiography (upward mobility; a working-class transnational family life; a personal scholarly history of crossing the Atlantic ocean a dozen times to study, research, and teach) generated an archetypally 'marginal [wo]man' capable of thinking, in Riall's words, 'outside the box of national history' to 'imagine new historical trajectories and narratives'.

Ballinger's reference to hope tracks neatly on Riall's discussion of the inherent optimism and nostalgia of the otherwise realist *Italy's Many Diasporas*, and it is from that shared vantage point that all three critics ask me to consider the book's relation to twenty-first-century trends in Italian Studies. The optimism of *Italy's Many Diasporas* was rooted not only in perceptions of economic developments in Italy and the formation of a European Union but also in my parallel readings of histories of earlier eras of globalisation and specifically of how nineteenth-century radical movements' notions of internationalism and cosmopolitanism were rooted in the globalisation of early modern and modern eras and especially in the so-called forced migrations and proletarian mass migrations that developed after 1500. Early in this century, I did hope that transnationalism and diasporic politics might generate late-twentieth-century equivalents to the working-class internationalisms of the past. That optimism was short-lived, however, and foundered in the face of the rising and increasingly powerful nationalist and authoritarian movements of the twenty-first century. These are probably best viewed as predictable backlashes against the previous half-century of globalisation. In short: I would write a very different book today.

I have welcomed the new research that explores the darker implications of human mobility, expanding and making analytically more central elements such as race, citizenship, xenophobia, environmental degradation, colonialism (whether in its liberal, fascist or neo-liberal expressions) and Italy's transition from a sending to a receiving society. Most of these themes were present but undeveloped in *Italy's Many Diasporas*. For example,

I worked with an understanding of race rooted in early modern Italy-centred rural/urban dynamics and not in the dynamics of modern colonialism. I did little with the refugees that Ballinger has explored so helpfully. Almost completely ignored, too, was the structural position of labour migrants as settler colonisers.

I currently see Italian Studies as ripe for a new synthesis, but it too may be a premature one as current scholarly understandings of colonialism and race have to date far outpaced a global and comparative analysis of indigeneity and the proletarian mass migrants' potential impact as settler colonists. My own plea – and I believe an important part of the legacy of *Italy's Many Diasporas* – is for an Italian Studies that can embrace longer periodisations and the unique insights that broader temporalities generate. Italianists have more often adopted new geographies and new scales of analysis than new temporalities (Gabaccia 2014). *Italy's Many Diasporas* was my first effort to bring together histories of late medieval, early modern, and modern worlds into a single narrative and to present them as they may have looked to millions of mobile people leaving, returning to, and passing through the Italian peninsula and its adjacent islands. I thus see a direct intellectual line stretching from the book's writing in the 1990s to my conceptualisation as general editor of the recent *Cambridge History of Global Migrations* (2023), that treats a similarly broad period of time. A broader periodisation would do much to meet Zanou's concerns about the limited engagement of Italian Studies with Mediterranean Studies, a field that has flowered again recently after the doldrums of all area studies in the 1990s. A longer temporality would also generate different insights into analyses of indigeneity, race, and colonialism that have emerged largely from analyses of European expansion and domination of the past two centuries. These were not the first empires and comparisons still need to be made across vast swathes of time. I admire the many scholars seeking to write microhistories of globalisation, often with biographical methods, as Zanou advocates, although I suspect that only extensive scholarly collaboration can offer the kind of *longue durée* analysis I attempted with historical sociological methods in *Italy's Many Diasporas*.

Do I then ultimately see any positive legacy of the culture of the proletarian diasporas, which the book described as rooted in transnational wage-earning and homely values of food and family? Certainly not in current, transnational Italian Studies. Nevertheless, I do see glimmers of comparably optimistic readings of transnational and diasporic life in the work undertaken by scholars of urban conviviality in contemporary multicultural cities with their large post-colonial populations and I would urge Italianists to engage with that new scholarship, too (Samanani 2023).

Notes

1. <https://italian.columbia.edu/content/italian-and-mediterranean-colloquia>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCPKzQguxM8>
3. On Gabaccia's recognition of the limits of diaspora for the Italian case, see pp. 5–6, also Brubaker (2005, 3).
4. One notable exception is the Italian 'national refugees', constituting a very particular type of return migrant, which I studied in my recent book, *The World Refugees Made* (Ballinger 2020). These migrants, as well as members of 'autochthonous' Italian communities in places like Istria, figure little in Gabaccia's analysis. Nor do the Istrian Italians' kin in exile (many of them within today's Italy), who perhaps most closely approximate the concomitant 'shared loss' and trauma that Gabaccia associates with diaspora proper.
5. <https://www.frit.ucsb.edu/academics/italian#transnationalitalianmajor>
6. Consider, by way of example, Clancy-Smith 2010; Khuri-Makdisi 2010; Chatty 2010; Arsan 2014; Isabella and Zanou 2016; Zanou 2018.
7. I sometimes address this in recent publications, e.g. Gabaccia 2022.
8. For a quick introduction, see Wallerstein 1974.
9. The book helped to make mobility an important theme in the then-new field of Food Studies; see Bender and Cinotto 2023.

References

- Armiero, M. and R. Tucker. 2017. *The Environmental History of Modern Migrations*. London: Routledge.
- Arsan, A. 2014. *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ballinger, P. 2020. *The World Refugees Made: Decolonization and the Foundation of Postwar Italy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Ballinger, P. 2024. 'Thinking with Citizenship in Italy Past and Present: Race, Empire, and Diaspora'. *Contemporanea*: forthcoming.
- Bender, D. and S. Cinotto, eds. 2023. *Food Mobilities: Making World Cuisines*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Black Mediterranean Collective. 2021. *The Black Mediterranean: Borders, Bodies and Citizenship*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Blanc-Chaleard, M.-C., A. Bechelloni, B. Deschamps, M. Dreyfus and E. Vial, eds. 2007. *Les Petites Italies dans le monde*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes.
- Brubaker, R. 2005. 'The "diaspora" diaspora'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28 (1): 1–19.
- Brunello, P. 1994. *Pionieri. Gli italiani in Brasile e il mito della frontiera*. Rome: Donzelli.
- Brunello, P. 2020. *Trofei e prigionieri. Una foto ricordo della colonizzazione in Brasile*. Verona: Cierre.
- Carminati, L. 2023. *Seeking Bread and Fortune in Port Said, 1859–1906: Labor Mobility and the Making of the Suez Canal*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chatty, D. 2010. *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Choate, M. 2008. *Emigrant Nation: The Making of Italy Abroad*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Clancy-Smith, J. 2010. *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800–1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Di Camerana, L. 2003. *Il Grande Esodo: Storia delle migrazioni italiane nel mondo*. Milan: Corbaccio.
- Fogu, C. 2020. *The Fishing Net and the Spider Web: Mediterranean Imaginaries and the Making of Italians*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Forgacs, D. 2014. *Italy's Margins: Social Exclusion and Nation Formation since 1861*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gabaccia, D.R. 1998. *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gabaccia, D.R. 2000. *Italy's Many Diasporas*. New York: Routledge.
- Gabaccia, D.R. 2014. 'Time and Temporality in Migration Studies'. In *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines*, edited by C.B. Brettell and J.F. Hollifield, 37–66. New York: Routledge.
- Gabaccia, D.R. 2022. 'Terminologies of Mobility: Activism and the Politics of Language'. *Voci: Annuale di Scienze Umane fondato da Luigi M. Lombardi Satriani* XIX: 35–54.
- Gabaccia, D.R. and F.M. Ottanelli, eds. 2001. *Italian Workers of the World: Labor, Migration, and the Making of Multi-Ethnic Nations*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Gabaccia, D.R. and F. Iacovetta, eds. 2002. *Women, Gender, and Transnational Lives: Italian Workers of the World*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Gabaccia, D.R. and L. Baldassar, eds. 2010. *Intimacy and Italian Migration: Gender and Domestic Lives in a Mobile World*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Gabaccia, D.R., C. Antunes, E. Tagliacozzo, M. Borges and M.Y. Hsu, eds. 2023. *The Cambridge History of Global Migrations* (two vols). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Gaggio, D. 2021. 'Pioneers or mere labor force? Post-World War II Rural Migration to Brazil and the Legacies of Colonialism'. *Journal of Social History* 54 (3): 920–943.
- Glick Schiller, N. and A. Çağlar, eds. 2011. *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Glick Schiller, N., L. Basch and C. Szanton Blanc. 1995. 'From Immigrant to Transmigrant: Theorizing Transnational Migration'. *Anthropological Quarterly* 68 (1): 48–63.
- Glick Schiller, N., T. Darieva and S. Gruner-Domic. 2011. 'Defining Cosmopolitan Sociability in a Transnational Age. An Introduction'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34 (3): 399–418.
- Gorman, A. and S. Kasbarian, eds. 2015. *Diasporas of the Modern Middle East: Contextualising Community*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Hawthorne, C. 2022. *Contesting Race and Citizenship: Youth Politics in the Black Mediterranean*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hopkins, A.G., ed. 2006. *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local*. New York: Red Globe Press.
- Iriye, A. 2004. 'Transnational History'. *Contemporary European History* 13 (2): 211–222.

- Iriye, A. 2007. 'The Transnational Turn'. *Diplomatic History* 31 (3): 373–376.
- Isabella, M. 2009. *Risorgimento in Exile: Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Isabella, M. and K. Zanou, eds. 2016. *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long 19th Century*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Khuri-Makdisi, I. 2010. *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860–1914*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Loriggio, F. 2004. 'Italian Migration Outside Europe: Cultural, Historical and Literary Issues'. *Neohelicon* 31 (1): 19–42.
- Malia Hom, S. 2019. *Empire's Mobius Strip: Historical Echoes in Italy's Crisis of Migration and Detention*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Mazlish, B. and A. Iriye, eds. 2004. *The Global History Reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Mazzoli, G. 2021. 'Italianness in the United States between Migrants' Informal Garden Practices and Agricultural Diplomacy'. *Modern Italy* 26 (2): 199–215.
- Mazzoli, G. 2023. 'Portable Natures: Environmental Visions, Urban Practices, Migratory Flows. Agriculture and the Italian Experience in North American Cities, 1880–1940'. European University Institute, Florence: Unpublished PhD thesis.
- McGuire, V. 2020. *Italy's Sea: Empire and Nation in the Mediterranean, 1895–1945*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Patriarca, S. 2021. *Il colore della Repubblica. 'Figli della Guerra' e razzismo nell'Italia postfascista*. Turin: Einaudi.
- Patriarca, S. and P. Deplano, eds. 2018. 'Special Issue: Nation, "Race" and Racisms in Modern Italy'. *Modern Italy* 23 (4): 349–472.
- Pergher, R. 2018. *Mussolini's Nation-Empire. Sovereignty and Settlement in Italy's Borderlands*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Riall, L. 2022a. 'Offshore Nation: Italians "Overseas" in the Nineteenth-Century World'. *Storica* 254: 9–51.
- Riall, L. 2022b. 'Hidden Spaces of Empire: Italian Colonists in Nineteenth-Century Peru'. *Past and Present* 254 (1): 193–233.
- Riccò, G. 2022. 'São Paulo/San Paolo: Notes on a Transnational Approach to Italian Studies'. *Italian Studies in Southern Africa* 35 (1): 102–106.
- Safran, W. 1991. 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return'. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1(1): 83–99.
- Samanani, F. 2023. 'Conviviality and its Others: For a Plural Politics of Living with Difference'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 49 (9): 2109–2128.
- Seigel, M. 2005. 'Beyond Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn'. *Radical History Review* 91: 62–90.
- Tyrell, I. 2009. 'Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice'. *Journal of Global History* 4 (3): 453–474.
- Viscomi, J.J. 2019. 'Mediterranean Futures: Historical Time and the Departure of Italians from Egypt, 1919–1937'. *The Journal of Modern History* 91 (2): 341–379.
- Wallerstein, I. 1974. 'The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16 (4): 387–415.
- Zanou, K. 2018. *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: Stammering the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Konstantina Zanou is Associate Professor of Italian, specializing in Mediterranean Studies, in the Italian Department at Columbia University. She is a historian of the long nineteenth century in the Mediterranean and of the trajectories and ideas of people on the move. Her book *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: Stammering the Nation* (Oxford University Press 2018) won the 2019 Edmund Keeley Book Prize in Modern Greek Studies, the 2019 Marraro Prize in Italian History, and the 2020 Mediterranean Seminar Best Book Prize, and was translated into Italian and Greek. She has also co-edited the volume *Mediterranean Diasporas: Politics and Ideas in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Bloomsbury 2016). Her current book project, *Sea of Antiquities: The Cesnola Brothers, the Global Mediterranean, and the Making of the Modern Museum*, is forthcoming by Oxford University Press in 2025.

Italian summary

Sono passati più di 20 anni dalla pubblicazione dell'opera fondamentale di Donna R. Gabaccia *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London & New York, 2000), una panoramica della storia sociale, culturale ed

economica delle varie migrazioni italiane. Da allora molto è cambiato, ma questo libro rimane un classico. In questa tavola rotonda, le storiche Lucy Riall, Pamela Ballinger e Konstantina Zanou riflettono sul valore dell'opera di Gabaccia e sul momento storico della sua produzione. Discutono con l'autrice gli sviluppi della storiografia sulle diaspore italiane e su altre diaspore negli ultimi vent'anni, e offrono spunti per nuovi filoni di ricerca, tra cui il colonialismo di insediamento, la razza e l'appartenenza, le migrazioni e i cambiamenti ambientali, microstoria e biografia globale e il contesto mediterraneo delle migrazioni italiane.

Cite this article: Zanou K (2024). Italy's diasporas: a discussion between Donna R. Gabaccia, Lucy Riall, Pamela Ballinger, and Konstantina Zanou. *Modern Italy* 29, 383–393. <https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2024.8>