

well as the ideological entanglement between Risorgimento republicanism and Uruguayan republicanism.

In Bourne's view, South America was the political cradle of a man destined to become the archetypal Risorgimento patriot. On the one hand, Garibaldi's experience on the far-away, savage battlefields in the New World provided him with the basics of commanding troops, directing a military campaign, and facing the risks of a civil war. It was an apprenticeship for future conflicts in Europe against the Austrian and Bourbon armies. On the other hand, fighting in a foreign land, commanding a legion of émigrés, alongside French, Spanish, and American volunteers, redefined the meaning of *italianità*, and the related values of brotherhood and national identity, in a more cosmopolitan framework. Furthermore, it served to persuade his comrades-in-arms that they were involved in a greater epic, not circumscribed within the cause of a faction or a party, but addressing the supreme achievement of human emancipation. Taken as a whole, these ideological and political elements were the pillars of *garibaldinismo* itself in the following decades on both sides of the Atlantic.

Nevertheless, as the author recognises in the third section of the book, the legacy of Garibaldi has now vanished. Despite his story remaining a reminder of the links between Europe and the New World, it is increasingly rare in the memory of modern Latin American public opinion, apart from a few commemorative events or anniversaries. One of the reasons for this, according to Bourne, has been the lack of interest by the new left parties in Brazil and Uruguay, which focus their campaigns on social reforms and attempts to erase the traces of recent dictatorships. This illustrates the ideological inclination of Latin American parties towards the political legacies of the twentieth century, an attitude that obscures the complex, but maybe more enduring, heritage of the age of revolutions and the era of civil wars. Finally, from a global perspective, it clearly explains the distance – and not only in chronological terms – between nineteenth-century society and the world we are living in.

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La Lega. Una storia

by Paolo Barcella, Rome, Carocci, 2022, 238 pp., €19.00 (paperback), ISBN 9788829013364

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The result of a long-term research project by Paolo Barcella, professor of Contemporary History at the University of Bergamo, this book examines the history of the League party (*Lega*) since its beginnings as a movement pushing for autonomy in the northern Venetian region, through its successive experiences in government and until the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Together with *I Rom. Una storia* by Sergio Bontempelli, Barcella's book inaugurates a new series – *Nodi dell'Italia repubblicana*, published by Carocci – which examines key topics in Italy's republican history. Edited by Michele Colucci, the main aim of the series is to introduce readers to central issues present in current political debates. Each volume backtracks to the origins of a selected topic, offering an overview of the social, political and

economic dimensions impacting its historical evolution during different phases of the Italian republic.

Barcella uses the Lega party as an entry point to reconstruct the last 40 years of Italian history. A specialist in post-Second World War Italian migrations, the author has dedicated particular attention to the phenomenon of the *Gastarbeiter*, a German word which indicates specific kinds of workers: those whose daily commute implies crossing national borders while remaining residents in their own country; or those who mostly live as temporary guests in a foreign land, without specific demands or long-term civic engagements in their host nations. Among these 'guest workers', Barcella has focussed on those from Northern Italy (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Lombardy and Piedmont regions), the heartlands of the Lega party. In this way, the author has tackled issues related to xenophobia, anti-immigration movements and right-wing politics in Western Europe: a topic closely linked to his latest book.

The reconstruction starts by tracing the first steps of the autonomist movement during the 1970s and 1980s: the birth of the *Liga Veneta* ('the mother of all the leagues'); the invention of a closed territorial identity; and the rise of the Lega Nord political party embodied by its founder Umberto Bossi, a young leader largely snubbed by the press. In this first chapter (*Storie di provincia: dalle origini alla Lega Nord*) the legacy of the past is evident, as are the memories of the *Gastarbeiter* experience, which remain strong in northern Italy, where migrants from southern Italy are perceived as threatening, due to their hope of becoming permanent residents. In this period, a slogan encompassed these anti-south feelings while exposing the new dream of northern Italians: they should once again become 'masters in their own homes'.

The second chapter (*Dalla provincia alla città e ritorno 1990-2000*) tells of the growth of immigration to Italy. Starting with the first congress of the Lega Nord held in Pontida (near Bergamo) in 1990, Barcella shows the transformation of the party from a regionalist experiment into a national political subject. While the nation is shocked by a political corruption scandal (*Tangentopoli*), residents of the wide valleys of Lombardy and Veneto make themselves heard in Rome. They begin appearing on television when Gad Lerner, a journalist with expertise in working-class dynamics, invites them, understanding the broader relevance of this (apparently) local experience. With its first participation in government in 1994 (under Berlusconi), the Lega Nord adopts a new rallying-call, combining the promise of resistance with the responsibilities of governance (the so-called '*Lega di lotta e di governo*').

Until this point, the book tells an essentially Italian story. Everything changes in the third chapter (*Governo, territorio e consenso 2001-11*), when the politics of the Lega Nord meets global history. The 11 September 2001 attacks are a turning point for the Lega Nord as well. At the beginning of the new millennium, the party launches its new political challenge, with its vision of a white, Christian movement centred on the Po Valley and characterised by a strong xenophobic and Islamophobic ideology. At the same time, the party falls into great confusion due to the sudden and serious illness of Senator Umberto Bossi and the issue of his political legacy.

The last chapter (*Dalla crisi del 'cerchio magico' alla pandemia 2012-22*) is dedicated to the party's most recent mutation from an autonomist movement into a conservative, nationalist and populist right-wing party. This occurs as Matteo Salvini takes over the leadership in 2013. Thanks to an effective social media team (directed by Luca Morisi and called 'The Beast'), Salvini enjoyed opportunities that were unavailable in the Bossi era, exploiting the internet to reach all citizens, bypassing traditional media or intermediaries. In this way, Salvini could bridge the divide between north and south Italy, moving away from the party's original focus on northern autonomy to adopt more of a national outlook. By 2018, Salvini formally rebranded the party as the *Lega*, shedding its northern character.

To conclude, the book covers the rise and fall of the ‘yellow-green coalition’ (the League and the Five Star Movement) in which Salvini assumes the posts of Italian Interior Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, up until the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, which strikes first in the Val Seriana in northern Italy, the historical heart of *leghismo*.

Overall, the book gives most space to external representations of the Lega; unfortunately, activist voices are largely absent. That said, the narrative will be very useful for those who seek a better understanding of a subject in constant evolution. Like a chameleon, the Lega party has changed significantly over the last 40 years. Nonetheless, a watchful reader cannot but notice several elements of continuity. Among these, distrust of the public health sector (which the author links to the collapse of first-line care during the pandemic); and its underlining conservatism.

Barcellona highlights one aspect of Lega populism that is still barely studied: the strength and prominence of a patriarchal ideology based on a sense of sexual honour that attributes control (and defence) of female bodies to males in the community. If during the 1990s the conservative attitude was expressed through pseudo-ironic slogans – such as ‘*Noi della Lega ce l’abbiamo duro*’ (‘We of the League have it hard’) – in the recent past this hegemonic masculinity has been adapted to a new era and, in particular, to a new relationship with the Church (and the Catholic faith more generally). The original patriarchal imprinting has been shaped by a neo-conservative and nationalist pattern which could appear so radical as to seem ridiculous and, consequently, harmless. Yet it can be considered truly inoffensive only as long as a right-wing government (led by post-Fascist politicians) does not make it real.

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Searching for Japan: 20th Century Italy’s Fascination with Japanese Culture

by Michele Monserrati, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2020, xi + 246 pp., £29.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-78962-107-5.

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Italian representations of Japan in the twentieth century were not merely depictions of a distant land, of interest only for its exotic thrill; they often also entailed comparisons and processes of identification based on real or imagined similarities. Since the late nineteenth century, Italian culture has paid increasing attention to Japan, both because of the influence of the aesthetic movement known as *japonisme* and through a sense of curiosity about a country that, just like Italy, was longing for a place among the world powers after a turbulent phase of political, social, and economic transformation. Italian interest in Japan grew during the 1930s, as these two ‘late-developed’ countries joined forces – together with Nazi Germany – triggering a spiral of mutual influences, reciprocal radicalisation, and rampant belligerence. After the Second World War, despite the severance of many ties established in the framework of the military alliance, Japan continued to occupy a special place in the Italian imagination. Both countries faced similar challenges