9

Italian Fascism and Diasporic Nationalisms in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay

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> And the bystanders, seven or eight merchants from Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, long emigrated from Italy, exclaimed in choir:
> "We are still Italians! We are still Italians!"
>
> Enrico Corradini, *La patria lontana* (1910)

The opening scene of the 1910 novel by the Italian nationalist Enrico Corradini, *La patria lontana* (The distant fatherland), confronts a patriotic Italian traveler on a visit to Brazil with a wine merchant of Italian origin from the Argentine province of Mendoza. The European visitor accuses the Italian Argentine businessman of having betrayed his fatherland by producing wine in Argentina, thereby contributing to the decline of Italian viticulture. Against these charges, several people of Italian origin from various South American countries vociferously protest their *italianità* (Italianness). But to no avail, as Corradini's readers learn. The patriotic visitor, surely an alter ego of Corradini, who when writing the novel had just returned from a long trip to South America, always prevails with his argument that emigrants to South America had long lost their true ethnic identity to a shapeless melting pot.[1] Emigration to South America, according to Corradini's message, sucked the blood out of Italy's veins and diluted the country's essences by scattering its people all over a world where they languished in servitude to other nations. A vigorous and youthful military expansionism, especially in Africa, was needed instead. Consistent with such views, Corradini's Nationalist Association would merge with the Italian Fascist Party in 1923. Benito Mussolini adopted a similar stance and in the 1920s sought to curb emigration, especially to Argentina, the country with the highest proportion of Italians outside Italy.

Corradini's opinion differed markedly from the vision outlined only ten years earlier by the liberal economist Luigi Einaudi in his book *Un principe mercante* (A merchant prince).[2] Here, Italian settlement in far-flung Argentina was portrayed as a peaceful conquest for the mutual socioeconomic benefit of brother peoples. Rather than decrying assimilation into the host society as a dilution of Italianness, Einaudi celebrated Italy's allegedly amicable diaspora and contrasted it to the belligerent imperialism of other European countries. The difference between Corradini's account and that of Einaudi betrayed much wider discrepancies in the appreciation of the value and purpose of emigration for Italy's national development. It also testified to a broader shift in which, around the turn of the century, ethnicity was increasingly privileged as the defining element of *italianità*.

Although the association of this shift with debates about emigration was perhaps especially intimate in Italy, such a nexus between ethnic nationalism and the diaspora developed in other European countries too. Ethnic nationalists in turn-of-the-century Germany invoked the German community in southern Brazil as a repository of a pristine Deutschtum untarnished by the perils of modernity, as Stefan Rinke's and Frederik Schulze's articles in this volume demonstrate.[3] Diasporas, in other words, fed the nationalist imagination at home. There was, however, a telling difference between the Italian and the German case. While German nationalists pointed to Brazil as an idyllic rural haven of the purest essences of "Germanness," they scorned the United States—where Germans formed a much larger proportion of the population than they did in Brazil—as an amorphous melting pot that in no time watered down the arrivals' national identity.[4] Italian nationalists, by contrast, singled out South America—particularly Argentina—as the place that through admixture most endangered the emigrants' identity. Although such nationalist discourses were in good measure projections, the difference between German and Italian appreciations of their diasporas also suggests that they were not entirely independent from the social experiences of overseas migrants on the ground.

By discussing different diasporic nationalisms among Italians in three Latin American countries, this chapter makes two contributions to the study of migration. First, as the comparison with the Germans indicates, it shows that the social history of migration and the political and intellectual history of diasporic nationalism are intimately connected to each other. This should go without saying, perhaps, but all too often the social history of migration and the intellectual history of various types of nationalism continue to be divorced. Second, the chapter demonstrates that,

just as migrants themselves were not homogenous groups, their diasporic nationalisms were not either. In other words, there was more than one nationalism among the various Italian diasporas of Latin America and the different kinds often competed with each other. To tease out these two main arguments, the chapter adopts a comparative angle, examining fascism and diasporic nationalisms among Italians in Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina during the period of the Italian kingdom.

It emerges that, contrary to Corradini's vision, Italian migrants were, in Emilio Franzina's words, "living agents" in the worldwide spread of nationalism.[5] Even though this was true for the nineteenth century, too, much of the historiography on Italian diaspora nationalism, whether in Latin America or elsewhere, has so far concentrated on one particular period, namely that of fascism. As this literature has shown, the identification of Italian emigrants with fascism was in many cases the outgrowth of a vague and much older identification with the homeland, now represented by the strongman Mussolini rather than a wholesale adherence to fascist ideology.[6] In many instances, joining local branches of the Fascist Party could thus be an expression of a much broader diasporic nationalism. Opponents of fascism, on the other hand, similarly drew on certain tropes allegedly embodying *italianità* to defend their political position. While fascism can therefore be treated as one instance of diasporic nationalism, there was no straightforward path from one to the other.

Comparing the different American countries in which many Italians settled, it has been argued that fascism kindled less support in Latin America than it did in the United States, where scholars have cast it as an instance of "defensive nationalism," a rallying behind Mussolini based on ethnic pride in reaction to discrimination by the receiving society.[7] With more specific regard to the cases under consideration here, João Fábio Bertonha has maintained that the Italian communities of the Rio de la Plata countries remained more immune to fascism than those in Brazil.[8] While this chapter supports this comparative argument in general terms, it adopts a more long-term perspective on various kinds of nationalism and patriotism among the Italian communities of the three countries in order to arrive at a better understanding of how the social, economic, and cultural features of these communities interacted with political developments over time. The chapter examines these variations counterchronologically, starting with some observations on the comparative weight of fascism in the Italian communities of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

Fascism and Italian Migrants

Mussolini's policy regarding emigration followed a two-pronged approach.[9] On the one hand, his regime viewed emigration to the Americas and Europe, if not to Africa, as a sign of national weakness that had to be assuaged. On the other hand, Mussolini saw Italians abroad as a promising bridgehead to buttress fascist foreign policy. The regime therefore sought to strengthen homeland ties among overseas Italian communities and harness them to the fascist state and its ideology either through the diplomatic corps or party organizations. Among the latter, the foremost vehicles for this purpose were the *fasci all'estero* or, a few years later, local branches of the leisure organization Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, which Italian consuls and other public envoys were supposed to spread. By the 1930s Italian ambassadors and consuls were simultaneously the bosses of local branches of the Fascist Party.[10]

In Latin America, efforts at bringing Italians abroad into the fascist fold were most clearly directed toward Brazil and Argentina.[11] Not only did Italian foreign policymakers consider them to be the most influential Latin American nations (besides Mexico, which was still marred by internal conflicts). More significantly, they were also the two countries with by far the largest Italian populations in Latin America. Almost 1 million Italian citizens lived in Argentina at the eve of World War I, and roughly 560,000 in Brazil shortly after the war. Although absolute numbers were lower than those of Italians in the United States (approximately 1.6 million according to the 1920 census), the share of the Italian-born population in Latin America's principal destination countries of overseas migrants was much larger. Roughly one-third of all overseas immigrants in Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil between 1850 and 1950 were Italians. Their proportion was highest in the Rio de la Plata countries of Argentina and Uruguay, particularly if the population of Italian origin is included in the count, not only—as was customary in Latin American censuses—those born in Italy. Just like immigrants as a whole, Italians clustered especially in large cities, first and foremost Buenos Aires and São Paulo, but also in the region's secondary cities, such as Montevideo, Rosario, and Porto Alegre (see figures 9.1 and 9.2).

The degree of success that crowned the fascist government's attempts to enthrall overseas Italians to the new regime in the homeland varied between countries as well as over time and within the communities. Initially

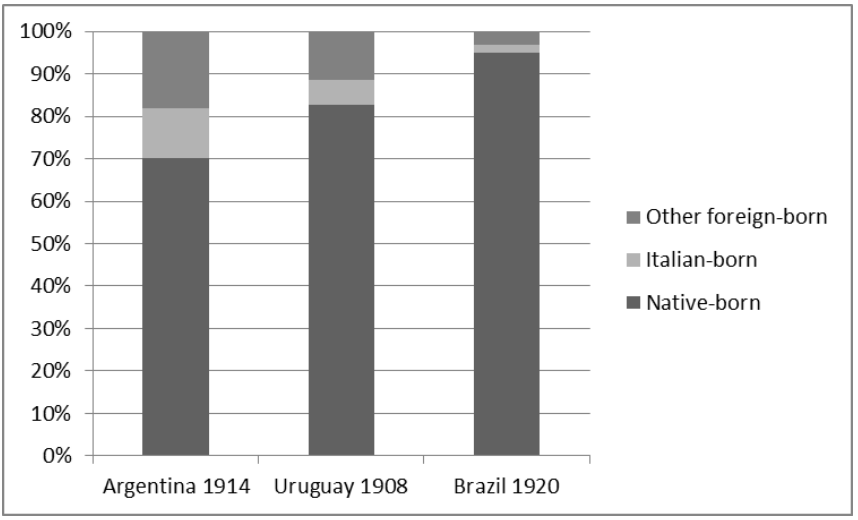

Figure 9.1. Chart depicting Italians as a percentage of total population in the nations of Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil.

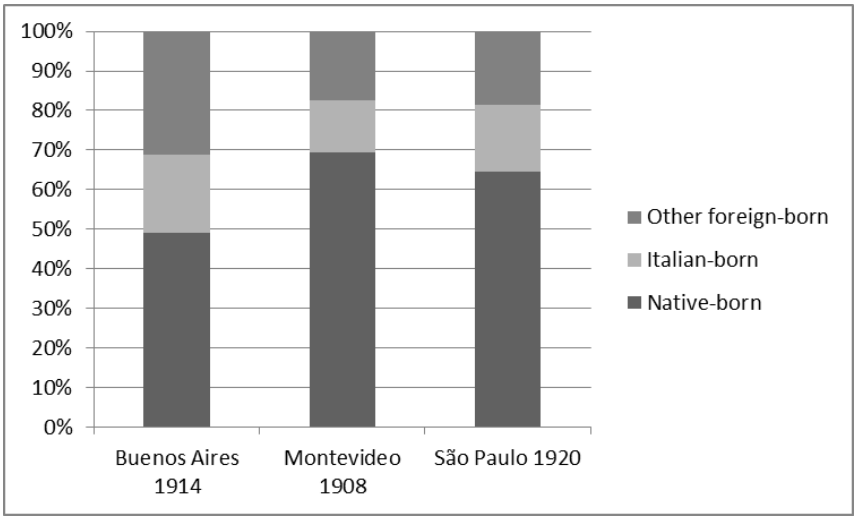

Figure 9.2. Chart depicting Italians as a percentage of total population in the cities of Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and São Paulo.

Italian World War I veterans, who had left Latin America for Europe to fight on Italy's side during the war and returned to Latin America thereafter, played a crucial part in setting up local fascist branches, sometimes spontaneously and without previous approval from Italy. In many cases the Italian Fascist Party even withheld official recognition on the grounds that

a local branch contained too many unreliable or undesirable members.[12] The fascist regime's intention of merging a broader sense of *italianità* with fascist ideology took time to sink in more deeply as the emigrants' daily dealings with Italian community organizations or diplomatic representatives brought them into closer touch with fascist imagery and ideas. The Italian–Ethiopian war of 1935 marked a highpoint of patriotic identification with the homeland as well as with the fascist regime.[13] Political conjunctures and government attitudes in the respective Latin American host countries either hampered or facilitated fascist efforts at proselytizing as well as antifascist activities. Organizational endeavors of whatever political couleur proved more arduous in rural areas than in urban settings. Historians have argued that the middle and upper social strata of Italian communities in Latin America were more receptive to the fascist message than workers were.[14]

While for all these reasons comparing the "success" of fascism among the Italian communities of various countries is difficult, most indicators suggest that Italians in the Rio de la Plata embraced fascism less enthusiastically than their compatriots in Brazil, let alone in the United States, did. The number of *fasci* that were founded in the early 1920s in the respective countries reflected this: by 1924–25 Brazil counted more than forty such branches, but only eight had been established in Argentina.[15] Whereas Brazil's major Italian newspaper, *Fanfulla* of São Paulo, wholeheartedly embraced fascism, its Argentine equivalent, *La Patria degli italiani*, did not.[16] Similarly, a memorandum about the influence of Italian fascism written by the French Foreign Ministry in 1938, worried about France's waning influence in intellectual circles in Latin America, confirmed this viewpoint, commenting at length on fascist influences in Brazil while noting that in Argentina, "in spite of the numerical importance of the Italian colony . . . we do not think that a very noticeable effort has been made by the fascist groups with a view of influencing the official actions of the Argentine government."[17]

Different approaches to Brazil and Argentina in fact harked back to earlier reports of fascist envoys to South America, which also confirmed the impression that fascism made greater inroads in Brazil than in the Rio de la Plata. In 1927 Amadeo Fani, a delegate of the secretary general of the *fasci all'estero*, Cornelio di Marzio, informed his boss that Argentina's nature as a materialist melting pot, in which social ascent meant everything, entailed that large parts of the Italian Argentine community had irrevocably lost their interest in the homeland and consequently did not identify with the

fascist government. In Brazil, by contrast, Fani wrote with some surprise that Italian immigrants and even their descendants felt strongly Italian and that there were many ardent supporters of Mussolini among them. Fani explained that this was the case because Italians in Brazil were less assimilated than in Argentina. Consistent with Corradini's vision, Fani thus correlated assimilation in the host society with a lack of patriotic fervor and, by inference, with distance from the fascist regime.[18] Or, put differently, greater ethnic segregation equaled more nationalism, which equaled more fascism, according to Fani's reasoning.

While differences in the degree of support for the fascist regime seem to have been real enough, the underlying assumptions on the basis of which Fani and others accounted for this difference—namely, the correlation of ethnic segregation in the host society with both nationalism and fascism—merits two comments. First, the conflation of fascism with diasporic nationalism tout court requires qualification. Antifascist groups in the Italian diaspora, after all, also drew on a myriad of symbols of *italianità*. In particular, they sought to mobilize the symbols of the Risorgimento for their political purposes. For example, on the occasion of founding a periodical in Buenos Aires in 1929 with the title *Il Risorgimento*, the recently exiled Italian socialist Francesco Frola, who became a leading antifascist activist in various Latin American countries, explained that "the *risorgimento*, I note as an Italian, cannot be but anti-fascist: for liberty against violence, for justice against arbitrariness, for democracy against dictatorship."[19] Both the fascist regime in Italy and antifascists at home and abroad laid claims to being the rightful heirs of the nineteenth-century national hero Giuseppe Garibaldi.[20] The republican leader Giuseppe Mazzini also served as an emblem for antifascists, of whom many emerged from republican groups that in the nineteenth century had been Mazzinians.[21] Fascists and antifascists alike celebrated September 20, the date on which the Italian army captured Rome in 1870, marking the unification of Italy. The degree of support for fascism, in other words, was not simply a matter of how patriotic the various Italian communities felt but which political group proved more effective in appropriating a series of elements derived from nineteenth-century ideas about Italian national identity.

The second comment concerns the relationship between assimilation in the host society and attachment to fascism. It has been argued for the case of Italians in the United States that identification with the fascist regime indeed had to do with the migrants' low degree of assimilation. Cheering for Mussolini, so this argument holds, was a reaction against discrimination,

segregation, and socioeconomic marginalization.[22] The comparison between the Rio de la Plata countries and the United States, where fascism struck a stronger chord among Italians, seems to bolster such an argument: on most of the usually applied yardsticks—such as socioeconomic standing and mobility in relation to the host society, marriage patterns, or residential segregation—Italian immigrants and their descendants appeared to be more "integrated" in Argentina and Uruguay than in the United States.[23] The argument does not work well, however, if one compares Brazil, in particular São Paulo, and the Rio de la Plata. To be sure, as Samuel Baily has shown, there were significant differences between the Italians of Buenos Aires and those of São Paulo in terms of community organizations. Associational life was more developed, organized, and effective among Italians in Buenos Aires than in São Paulo, an observation that speaks against Fani's and Corradini's view that Italians in Argentina lacked a sense of community.[24] But there is little evidence of substantial dissimilarities with regard to the overall socioeconomic standing, marriage patterns, residential integration, or discrimination. The level of ownership of industrial properties around the time of World War I, for instance, was roughly similar for Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and São Paulo.[25] Nonetheless, identification with the fascist regime seems to have been more widespread in São Paulo than in the River Plate.

Explaining Differences

There are several alternatives to the simple formula of "assimilation" in order to explain the greater support for fascism among Brazil's Italians compared to those in the River Plate countries. A first option, which scholars have rarely considered, has to do with the regional origins of migrants within Italy. After all, fascism found more adherents in some Italian regions than in others. As is well known, the proportion of southerners within the respective Italian communities of the Americas was much higher in the United States than in Latin America, where the immigrant stream was more evenly divided between northern Italians, who on average arrived earlier, and those from the Mezzogiorno. Moreover, among the American areas of settlement, São Paulo received a disproportionately high number of families from the Veneto who, after the abolition of slavery in 1888, arrived on subsidized tickets to work on coffee *fazendas*.[26] Variance in regional origins, however, does not serve well as an explanation in and of itself. If anything, by the early twenties Mussolini had more active supporters

and voters in the north than in the south, which would make stronger adherence to fascism in the United States difficult to explain. As for Brazil, Veneto did not stand out as a "particularly fascist" region.[27] In a migratory context such as this, an explanation based exclusively on premigratory factors is not convincing.

The contemporary politics in the receiving countries at first glance appear to be a more persuasive explanatory factor. Italian antifascists, for example, often linked up with local socialists and other left-wing groups whose political power must have reflected back on the effectiveness of antifascist networks within the Italian communities and may by extension have hampered the prospects of fascist emissaries to inspire overseas Italians for the new regime in Rome.[28] Socialism had indeed taken deeper roots in Buenos Aires and Uruguay than in Brazil, which might have been a reason for the relative weakness of antifascism in the latter country. The issue could be broadened further. Citing the Brazilian government of Getúlio Vargas of 1930–45 and its anticommunist repression after 1935, Bertonha has even claimed that political culture in Brazil was generally more authoritarian and, hence, akin to Italian fascism than in Uruguay and Argentina. In his view, such affinities between Italian fascism and the political culture and the government in Brazil partially explain the greater resonance of fascism among Italians in that country.[29] Similarly, the aforecited French memorandum opined that, in contrast to Brazil, the reason for the more limited repercussions of fascism in Argentina was "that the great majority of the Argentine people has sincerely democratic sentiments."[30]

The relationship between Italian fascism and national politics in Latin America therefore deserves some closer scrutiny. Vargas' propaganda department signed an agreement of mutual cooperation with the Italians, from whose perspective it was designed to favor and sway public opinion in Brazil in Italy's favor. Brazilian newspapers often received cables from the Italian news agency Stefani, and Brazil was the only country in Latin America where a truly professional Italian radio, supervised by the fascist state, operated. Italian schools in southern Brazil and the Dante Alighieri Society, both designed to spread Italian culture abroad but supervised by the fascist government, served as vehicles for fascist indoctrination and propaganda among both Italian immigrants and native-born Brazilians.[31] Moreover, the extreme right-wing Brazilian Integralist Action (AIB), a party founded by Plínio Salgado in 1932 with generous borrowings from Italian fascist ideology and mobilization practices, operated freely until 1937. Including

many first- and second-generation Italians who sympathized with Mussolini, the AIB was cofinanced by the Italian embassy in Rio de Janeiro and liaised with fascist foreign policymakers in Rome.[32] By the mid-thirties at least, in many ways the highpoint of fascist foreign propaganda, Brazil indeed appears to have offered a more hospitable climate for Mussolini's proselytizing.

There are numerous caveats to such a straightforward explanation, however. Even the more specific claim regarding the importance of socialism is problematic. After all, Mussolini himself was a former socialist and, with the exception of Piedmont, fascism initially found greater support in Italy precisely in those regions that also had an important socialist constituency.[33] The formula according to which more socialism equaled less fascism is therefore not especially convincing. Concerning the broader argument about political culture as a whole, there are even weightier problems. It would be difficult, for instance, to accommodate the case of Italians in the United States in such a model. Few historians would be prepared to argue that political culture in the United States was generally more authoritarian and akin to fascism than in Latin America. The political comparison between the three Latin American countries has serious pitfalls too. If we follow the above-cited report by Fani or the number of *fasci* as indicators, differences between Brazil and Argentina predated Vargas' rise to power and the foundation of the *integralistas*. The assertion that Argentina's political culture as a whole was more liberal than Brazil's is debatable too. As Federico Finchelstein has shown, Mussolini's message did find a positive echo among right-wing Argentine *nacionalistas*, whose movements were no less important than that of their Brazilian counterparts, the *integralistas*.[34] The case of Uruguay sits uncomfortably in this scheme. While some scholars have depicted Uruguayan political culture as distinctly liberal and democratic in comparison to Argentina, the right-wing Uruguayan government of Gabriel Terra (1931–38) maintained unusually cordial relations with Mussolini's Italy to the extent that the Italian envoy to Montevideo became something close to a Uruguayan government adviser. At the same time, Uruguay had a particularly active and internationally well-connected scene of antifascist Italian exiles.[35]

At any rate, Italian fascist cooperation with local right-wing nationalist groups such as the *nacionalistas* in Argentina and the *integralistas* proved to be a double-edged sword. As David Aliano has demonstrated for Argentina, Mussolini's geopolitical goals in South America provoked strong

reactions and attempts to "nationalize" politics and curb fascist influence.[36] Right-wing nationalist movements in Latin America were torn between the attraction that fascism exerted on them and their rejection of foreign meddling. From the viewpoint of fascist foreign policy, too, cooperation with these movements could thus be a treacherous matter. Until the 1920s at least, as Jeane DeLaney's chapter in this volume reveals for the case of Argentina, these movements showed their nativist anti-immigrant roots, which mitigated their attractiveness from the perspective of both Italian foreign policy and Italian immigrants.[37] In the 1930s *nacionalistas* and *integralistas* gradually shed this nativism and became less elitist and more populist in what amounted to a growing ideological convergence with Italian fascism. These borrowings not only revealed how the rise of rightist nationalism in Europe fed into its Latin American counterparts but also recommended them as potential tools for fascist envoys in their attempts to influence politics in South America. Yet, instead of filling the ranks of local branches of the *fasci*, those descendants of Italian immigrants potentially attracted to fascism now joined these extreme right-wing Latin American movements in increasing numbers. This prompted new worries for Italian envoys in the host countries about the "Brazilianization" or "Argentinization" of "their" diaspora. For example, the Italian ambassador in Rio, Vincenzo Lojacono, reported to Rome in 1937 that he had heard of "specialists within the country [Brazil], some of whom are good Fascists, who speak of Integralism as the tomb of *italianità*."[38]

Similarly, although the Argentine army, in which *nacionalista* ideas spread during the 1930s, included many middle-ranking officers who sympathized with Mussolini's message (most famously the later president Juan Perón), the army was also a formidable vehicle for the social integration and ascent of Italian immigrants.[39] This, too, ran against Italian foreign policy designs of preserving the patriotic fervor of Italy's emigrants in order to draw on them as a bridgehead of fascist influence in the world, of which the Argentine army from another angle appeared to be a promising bridgehead. When Italian diplomats were forced to decide, geopolitical aims usually overrode their concerns about the emigrants losing their *italianità*. Lojacono thus chose to continue his backing of the *integralistas* and even pushed their plans to unseat the Vargas government through a military coup—a plan that backfired because Vargas outlawed the AIB and instituted the infamously authoritarian Estado Novo, which again drew some inspiration from the Italian fascist model.[40] In spite of, or because

of, its borrowings from fascism, Vargas' various governments were in fact especially nationalist in their intolerance regarding any expression of ethnic particularity, especially in combination with foreign attempts to influence Brazilian politics. Well before the Estado Novo, Vargas had moved against Italian schools in southern Brazil. As is well known, his government joined World War II in 1942 on the side of the Allies, whereas the military regime of Argentina (1943–45), equally inspired by aspects of Mussolini's corporatism, remained neutral until March 1945, in good part because of its leaders' sympathies with the Axis Powers. For all these reasons, politics or the political culture in Brazil and Argentina cannot wholly account for the greater receptiveness for fascism of Italians in Brazil compared to those in Argentina. In short, even if one were to accept the problematic argument that a more illiberal political climate prevailed in Brazil in contrast to the River Plate countries, it is not clear whether this facilitated or undermined the spread of Italian fascism in Brazil.

This is not to say that origins in Italy and politics in the receiving societies played no role in determining the specific course that Italian diasporic nationalisms were to take in the respective countries. The problem is that isolating factors specific to origin from those relating to the receiving context makes little sense. It is in the history of the connection between places of origin and destination where the most convincing explanations can be found. One argument often mentioned but rarely spelled out in the historiography deserves particular attention here: it has been maintained that the previous resonance of liberal Mazzinian nationalism, greater in the Rio de la Plata and perhaps also southern Brazil than in São Paulo, hindered the later acceptance of fascism in Latin America's Italian communities.[41] The argument sounds odd at first because after all a liberal Risorgimento nationalism existed in Italy, too, without deterring Mussolini's rise to power. It is therefore not so much the emergence of an earlier nonfascist patriotism linked to nineteenth-century liberal republicanism that mattered per se; what mattered were the specific ways in which it related to the organizational development of community life and, crucially, to political elites in the host countries. Attention to these questions shifts emphasis away from the assumption that there was "more" or "less" diasporic nationalism among Italian communities of different countries, pointing instead to the importance of competing interpretations of Italianness. The argument ultimately accords greater importance to the issue of timing of the migratory process and, with this, generational matters, which proved pivotal.

Risorgimento Nationalism in the Rio de la Plata

In order to understand differences between Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil in this respect, the long-term history of Italian migration to Latin America has to be considered in some more detail. Although statistical data relating to immigration in nineteenth-century Latin America are notoriously unreliable, sketchy, and problematic to compare, it is clear that Italian migration to the River Plate began much earlier than to Brazil, where it really took off on a larger scale only from the late 1880s (see figures 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5). This difference appears to be even greater if one bears in mind the size of the existing population by the mid-nineteenth century, which of course was much greater in Brazil than in Argentina, let alone Uruguay. In Uruguay, the proportion of Italians among the population as a whole was particularly large already by the middle of the nineteenth century, so scholars have spoken of "a case of precocious migration."[42] As early as the late eighteenth century there had been a significant migration of Ligurian traders to the Rio de la Plata, in particular via Cádiz. During the decades following Argentine independence these pioneers were joined by growing contingents from northwestern Italy, including political exiles of the Piedmontese insurrection of 1821.[43]

As Maurizio Isabella has shown for the case of Mexico, exiled Risorgimento activists were intimately involved in state- and nation-building attempts in Spanish America, not least because their undertakings at home had been so bound up with events in Spain in the first place.[44] In the Rio de la Plata, a close relationship between local political elites and Italian exiles

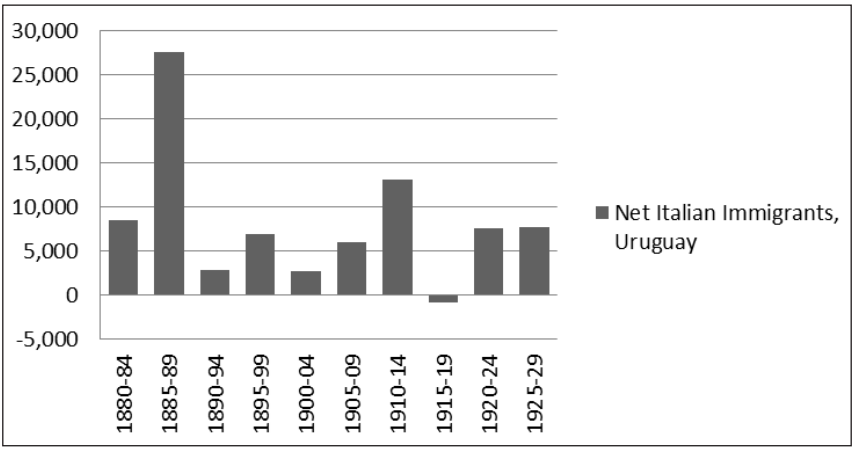

Figure 9.3. Chart depicting net number of Italian immigrants to Uruguay, 1880–1929.

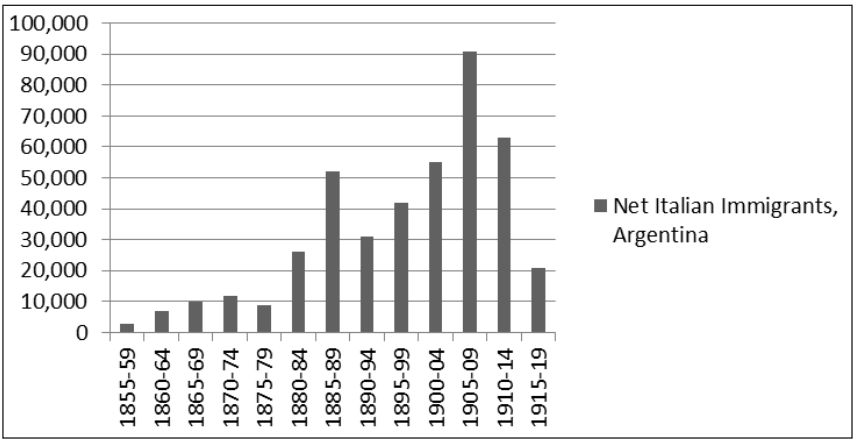

Figure 9.4. Chart depicting net number of Italian immigrants to Argentina, 1855–1919.

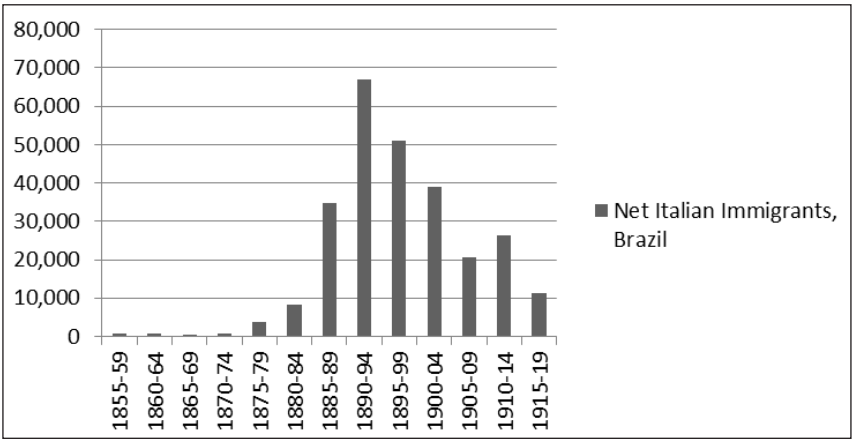

Figure 9.5. Chart depicting net number of Italian immigrants to Brazil, 1855–1919.

developed. Even though his roots do not seem to have played a central role for him, one of Argentina's founding fathers and foremost national heroes, Manuel Belgrano, was the son of a Ligurian merchant. The so-called Generation of 1837, from which the leading Argentine statesmen-writers during the period of "national organization" after 1852 hailed, borrowed heavily from the ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini and the Giovine Italia in general.[45] The most important mediator in this ideological exchange was the Ligurian Giovanni Battista Cuneo, who had left Italy after the failed uprising in Genoa in 1837 and then helped organize some of the leading Argentine intellectuals in Montevideo, where they were exiled during the dictatorship of Buenos Aires' governor Juan Manuel de Rosas. Even the arguably

xenophobic Rosas himself could count on a prominent Risorgimento exile as a panegyrist, Pedro de Angelis.[46]

The most famous of these exiles was Garibaldi himself, whose extended stay in South America earned him the nickname "hero of two worlds" and, through the iconic gaucho attire he sported during his later military exploits in Italy, fed back into Italian popular culture. After being sentenced to death in Genoa, he set sail for Rio de Janeiro in 1835 but soon became entangled in the political and military strife that at the time was endemic in southern Brazil and the River Plate region. He first fought on the side of Rio Grande do Sul's republican *farrapos* against Brazil's imperial government in Rio de Janeiro and from 1842 joined the liberal *colorados* in Uruguay's civil war of 1839–51. With his Brazilian wife and remnants of Uruguay's "Italian legion," he returned to Italy in 1848, where he put the military expertise he had acquired in South America at the service of Italian unification. While Garibaldi unsurprisingly became a central national symbol for Italians in Latin America, memories of his adventures additionally lived on in local political traditions. In southern Brazil, republican regionalists often invoked Garibaldi as a hero, whereas in Uruguay he was frequently hailed by the *colorados*, who became the dominant political faction in the early twentieth century.[47]

Since Italian communities in the River Plate region reached a critical mass much earlier than they did in most of Brazil, ethnic associations flourished earlier too. Given their customary interests in the politics of the homeland, many such institutions were steeped in the liberal brand of unification nationalism espoused by figures such as Mazzini or Garibaldi. The most famous case is that of Buenos Aires' mutual-aid society Unione e Benevolenza, founded in 1858, whose success in bridging divisions between Italians of different regional origins in Italy even preceded the unification of Italy itself. As Samuel Baily and Andrea Scarli have underlined, the early development of such community organizations was crucial in bestowing a sense of identity on both settled migrants and, more importantly, new arrivals.[48] Arguably, the point could be made even more forcefully for Montevideo. In 1885, for instance, the director of Montevideo's Italian school wrote: "The Italian colony of Montevideo is perhaps, among all those of the Americas, the one that has most social clubs in relation to its size."[49] Due to the size and richness of the Italian immigrants' organizational life, the boundary between migrant community institutions and state-building efforts in Argentina and Uruguay became blurred. Mutual-aid societies or Italian hospitals, for example, were crucial in the general development of

a public health sector. Around the turn of the century Argentina's most important Italian newspaper, *La Patria degli Italiani*, was the country's third-largest daily in terms of sold copies, and its editor-in-chief, Basilio Cittadini, was simultaneously vice president of the Argentine press association.[50] In short, Argentina's and Uruguay's Italian communities developed ethnic institutions at an early stage and in conjunction with the nation-building efforts of those countries' elites, with whom they held close ties during much of the nineteenth century.

This cordial relationship, to be sure, was challenged from the late nineteenth century onward, especially in Argentina, owing to a combination of factors. Parallel to the growing ethnicization of national identity in Europe, growing parts of Argentina's native elite turned away from the preceding liberal nation-building model and began to valorize authentic criollo cultural customs. As Lilia Ana Bertoni has observed, the Italian community, widely associated politically with the ideas of the Generation of 1837, was often singled out as a target in the arguments of the emergent cultural nationalists.[51] Even former advocates of immigration, such as Domingo Sarmiento, began to criticize the "Italianization" of Argentina as immigration reached a truly massive scale from the 1880s onward.[52] With a greater proportion of Italians now coming from the impoverished Mezzogiorno, even in Uruguay Italians, especially if they came from the south, began to suffer from prejudice.[53] Over time anti-immigrant attitudes were coupled with anxieties about working-class activism, leading to the Argentine law of residency that eased the expulsion of foreigners in 1902. In his 1909 book *La restauración nacionalista*, Argentine cultural nationalist Ricardo Rojas—discussed in some detail by Jeane DeLaney in this volume—complained about the existence of prominent statues of Mazzini and Garibaldi in central Buenos Aires. Garibaldi at best stood for a specific political tradition in the River Plate, Rojas argued, whereas Mazzini "as a thinker does not reach universal proportions. Our nationality does not owe this man anything," he concluded.[54] The same nativist elites, meanwhile, revalued the Spanish heritage and language as an element of national identity fanned by the Spanish–American war of 1898 and a rising anti-imperialism across Latin America, which pitted Anglo-Saxon "materialism" against Hispanic "spirituality." In Argentina this reconsideration culminated in the institutionalization of the pan-Hispanic festivity of the Día de la raza (October 12, when Columbus landed in the Americas) as a national holiday in 1917.[55]

However, as Rojas' musings on Garibaldi reveal, the rejection of Italian republican influences was targeted as much against Argentina's

nineteenth-century political traditions associated with the Generation of 1837 as it was against liberal Italian nationalism. The problem, rather, was the extent to which the two strands had become merged in the eyes of posterior cultural nationalists in Argentina. Rojas' principal complaint was about "*our* cosmopolitan culture," which had led to prioritizing statues of Garibaldi and Mazzini in prominent places over those of homegrown national heroes. On other occasions Rojas highlighted Garibaldi's military skills and likened them to those of the native gauchos, who at the time were transformed into a prime marker of Argentine national identity.[56] The overriding point when comparing the River Plate countries to Brazil, therefore, is the lasting link between Mazzinian traditions and nation-building elites in mid-nineteenth century Argentina and Uruguay. As late as 1932, for instance, both Italian antifascists in Buenos Aires and the local press likened Garibaldi's political achievements to those of Argentina's liberator, José de San Martín.[57] That the drawing of such parallels was possible was the result of the early establishment of a sizeable Italian community with powerful organizations that developed in convergence with the politics of the host country and hence led to intimate political ties between Italian exiles and local political elites.

Longue-durée Paths

For several reasons, this was much less true for Italians in Brazil. First, the timing and nature of Italian immigration, especially in the principal area of settlement (São Paulo), was different. There were, quite simply, far fewer Italians in the region before 1890 than there were in the Rio de la Plata. When they arrived in larger numbers, most were initially poor Venetian families settling in the countryside with little access to Brazilian institutions. Such circumstances hindered the development of the kind of ties between an immigrant elite and the politics of the host country that had developed in Argentina and Uruguay. Second, the principal areas of settlement of Italians in Brazil, again in contrast to Argentina and Uruguay, were geographically removed from the center of national political power. Although the Brazilian capital, Rio de Janeiro, did have an Italian community, this was not nearly as important as that of Buenos Aires or Montevideo. Hence, if community leaders could establish close contacts with political elites in the host country, these ties were usually regional, not national. Third, even if the possibility of links with the national political elite had existed, Brazil's imperial decision makers would most probably have shown

themselves far less enthusiastic about republican ideas, whether from Italy or elsewhere, than the political leaders of Spanish American countries. The endemic military troubles and the political fragmentation of nineteenth-century Spanish America arguably made politics in those countries more permeable for outsiders to begin with when compared to the elitist stability of imperial Brazil.

Such an overarching comparison between three national cases masks important variations within Brazil. Because, in contrast to immigration in Uruguay and Argentina, immigration in Brazil was primarily a regional, not a national, affair (and was perceived as such by contemporary observers), immigration as a marker of identity or as a fountainhead of political traditions was assimilated in differing ways by the political elites of different provinces (or states after 1889). Though not specifically related to Italians and their diaspora nationalism, *paulista* regionalists drew on their state's history of European immigration in order to distinguish a supposedly "white" São Paulo from the "dark" rest of the country.[58] The more pertinent example, however, is that of Rio Grande do Sul. In many respects, the area's social, economic, political, and cultural history as well as that of its Italian immigrants was more similar to that of the River Plate countries than to the rest of Brazil. It has even been argued that Rio de Grande do Sul should be considered historically as a part of a common "Platine" region.[59] Italian settlement in Rio Grande began much earlier, was more spontaneous than that of the initially state-sponsored immigration in São Paulo, and included a significant number of Risorgimento exiles. As Garibaldi's involvement with the *farrapos* testifies, Rio Grande do Sul's Italians, similarly to those of Uruguay, also became engaged in local politics. There emerged a lasting discursive link between Italian diaspora patriotism and gaucho (Riograndense) regionalism, as can be derived from the names of towns and hamlets in the "Italian zone" north of Porto Alegre, such as Farroupilha, Bento Gonçalves, or Garibaldi.

As one would expect on the basis of this argument, fascism indeed found fewer followers among the Italians of Rio Grande than it did in São Paulo, notwithstanding the common idealization of Rio Grande do Sul's immigrant enclaves as pristine rural repositories of authentic *italianità*—a trope similarly found in German nationalist literature by the turn of the century.[60] In part this difference can be attributed to the overwhelmingly rural character of Italian settlement in southern Brazil, which complicated organizational efforts of any kind. The parallel with Argentina and Uruguay, however, suggests that another factor also played a decisive role. Similarly

to the River Plate countries, yet in contrast to São Paulo, the development of an organized Italian community with a crucial contingent of liberal professionals and political exiles had from early on allowed for a close overlap of local politics with that of the Italian diaspora. An early conflation of Italian national symbols with local ones made it subsequently more difficult for Italian fascism to construe an aggressive version of *italianità* in marked contradistinction to local identities.

The timing of the migratory process, in other words, appears to be the most crucial variable in explaining different trajectories of Italian diaspora nationalism and different receptions of fascism in the Americas. There is ultimately also a demographic component to this argument. Italians in Argentina and Uruguay, but also in Rio Grande do Sul, were older on average than those of São Paulo. Moreover, Argentina's and Uruguay's "Italian" communities naturally contained a much larger contingent of locally born people of Italian—and more often partial Italian—ancestry than in Brazil. Unsurprisingly, Italian-born younger generations were more likely to have direct ties with the politics of their home country as well as contact with consulates and other institutions of the Italian fascist state. As Robert Newton has observed for the case of Argentina, enthusiastic supporters of the fascist cause were disproportionately found among the younger cohorts of the Italian community.[61] Too often forgotten by the scholarship, this generational issue applied to Italy itself, where fascism was more warmly received among younger people than among the elderly.[62] The generational makeup of overseas Italian communities thus likely had an impact on their reception of fascism.

Conclusion

Contrary to the view of contemporary fascist observers, the prospects for the success of fascism among Italians in Latin America could not simply be reduced to the question of whether respective communities were more or less "assimilated" and whether they espoused more or less patriotic attachment to their homeland as a consequence. Nor could the reasons for the varying fate of diasporic nationalisms among Italians in Latin America be found unilaterally in either Italy or Latin America. Rather, it was the history of the transnational connection itself that shaped the experience of several generations of migrants and their relationship to both homeland and host country. These histories differed among the three cases examined in this chapter. As Fernando Devoto has put it in a catchy phrase, "everything in

Argentina seems Italian, but at the same time it is difficult to single out what really is [Italian]."[63] The statement could certainly be extended to Uruguay, and perhaps also to Rio Grande do Sul, but much less to the rest of Brazil. There was, in other words, not simply "more nationalism" and "less assimilation" among the "living agents" in the spread of nationalism and their descendants in one country than in another. Instead the political history of Italian immigrants in Latin America took varying paths over time stemming from the history of transatlantic ties between Europe and Latin America. There were different types of diasporic nationalisms, some of them competing, in different places and at different times. Just as Italians in Latin America were not a homogenous group, neither was their nationalism.

Notes

1. Corradini, *La patria lontana*.

2. Einaudi, *Un principe mercante*. For a similar juxtaposition between Corradini and Einaudi, see Choate, *Emigrant Nation*, 49–53 and 159–68; and Pagano, "From Diaspora to Empire."

3. Conrad, *Globalisierung und Nation*, 229–78.

4. Ermarth, "Hyphenation and Hyper-Americanization."

5. Franzina, *Gli italiani*, 15.

6. A concise global overview is de Caprariis, "'Fascism for Export'?" The most researched case has been that of the United States: Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism*; Cannistraro, *Blackshirts in Little Italy*; and Luconi, *La "diplomazia parallela."* On Latin America, see Scarzanella, *Fascistas en América del sur*; and Bertonha, *O fascismo e os imigrantes*. On Paris, see Milza, "Le fascisme italien." On Australia, see Cresciani, *Italians in Australia*, 73–97. On Canada, see Principe, *Darkest Side*. On Tunisia, see Bessis, *La Méditerranée fasciste*.

7. Bertonha, "Italiani nel mondo anglofono," 24.

8. Bertonha, "Fascismo, antifascismo."

9. Cannistraro and Rosoli, "Fascist Emigration Policy" provides a concise overview.

10. "Memorandum confidentiel sur l'activité du fascisme . . . ," n.d. [1938], 8, Centre des Archives Diplomatiques (CAD), 6CPCOM39.

11. A useful overview is Mugnaini, *L'America Latina e Mussolini*.

12. Gentile, *Struggle for Modernity*, 145–60.

13. Bertonha, "A 'Foreign Legion'?"; Rodríguez Ayçaguer, *Un pequeño lugar*, 279–85; and Scarzanella, "Cuando la patria llama." A similar assessment about the slow inroads and the peak of fascism in "Memorandum . . . ," n.d. [1938], 1–2 and 12, CAD, 6CPCOM39.

14. From a Marxist perspective, this argument has been made especially for Rio Grande do Sul: Giron, *As sombras do littorio*. A critical discussion can be found in Bertonha, *O fascismo e os imigrantes*, 220–23, who nonetheless maintains this overall argument. A more nuanced discussion for Argentina is Newton, "Ducini, Prominenti, Antifascisti."

15. Caprariis, "'Fascism for Export'?," 158. More generally, see Trento, "I fasci in Brasile";

and Zanatta, "I fasci in Argentina negli anni trenta." As usual, information on Uruguay is hard to come by.

16. Trento, "L'identità dell'emigrato italiano"; and Bertagna, *La stampa italiana*, 9–10 and 57–60.

17. "Memorandum . . . ," n.d. [1938], 31, CAD, 6CPCOM39.

18. Sanfilippo, "Il fascismo"; and Sergi, "Fascismo e antifascismo."

19. Quoted in Bertagna, *La stampa italiana*, 56.

20. Fogu, "'To Make History'"; Bresciano, "El antifascismo," 96 and 103; and Cattarulla, "Orgoglio italiano."

21. Contu, "L'antifascismo italiano," 458.

22. A useful overview is Pretelli, "La risposta del fascismo."

23. Klein, "Integration"; Baily, *Immigrants*; and Goebel, "*Gauchos*, *Gringos* and *Gallegos*."

24. Baily, *Immigrants*, 228–31.

25. Alvim, *Brava gente!*, 141–42; Goebel, "*Gauchos*, *Gringos* and *Gallegos*," 216–21; and Beyhaut et al., "Los inmigrantes en el sistema ocupacional argentino." Rates of ethnic endogamy were remarkably low among Italians in Brazil: see Klein, "Social and Economic Integration," 325.

26. Holloway, "Creating the Reserve Army?"

27. Petersen, "Elettorato e base sociale," 644.

28. See, e.g., Cane, "'Unity for the Defense of Culture.'"

29. Bertonha, "Fascismo, antifascismo," 123.

30. "Memorandum . . . ," n.d. [1938], 1–2 and 12, CAD, 6CPCOM39.

31. Ibid., 2–3, 9, and 25–28.

32. On its membership, see Seitenfus, "Ideology and Diplomacy"; Bertonha, "Between Sigma and Fascio"; and Zega, "'Italiani alta la testa!,'" 88.

33. Petersen, "Elettorato e base sociale," 645.

34. Finchelstein, *Transatlantic Fascism*; and Deutsch, *Las Derechas*. The French "Memorandum . . . ," n.d. [1938], 29–30, CAD, 6CPCOM39, singled out the Legión Cívica Argentina, the Legión de Mayo, and the Asociación Nacionalista Argentina as the three Argentine groups closely cooperating with the Italian embassy.

35. Aldrighi, "Luigi Fabbri en Uruguay." On Terra and fascism, see Marocco, *Sull'altra sponda del Plata*, 89–125; and Oddone, "Serafino Mazzolini." See also "Memorandum . . . ," n.d. [1938], 28, CAD, 6CPCOM39. For a comparison of political culture in Argentina and Uruguay, see Spektorowski, "Nationalism and Democratic Construction."

36. Aliano, *Mussolini's National Project in Argentina*.

37. Deutsch, *Las Derechas*, 41–44 and 99–112.

38. Quoted in Seitenfus, "Ideology and Diplomacy," 521.

39. Nascimbene, "Assimilation of Italians."

40. Seitenfus, "Ideology and Diplomacy," 521–34.

41. From a global perspective, see Gabaccia and Ottanelli, *Italian Workers*, 1–20; and Franzina, *Gli italiani*, 369–71. On Latin America, see Bertonha, "O antifascismo," 23; Fanesi, "Italian Antifascism and the Garibaldine Tradition."

42. Devoto, "Un caso di migrazione precoce."

43. Devoto, *Historia de los italianos*, 48–54. On the influence of early Ligurian traders, see Brilli, "La diaspora commerciale."

44. Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile*, 32–64.

45. Gallo, "Esteban Echeverría's Critique"; Myers, "Giuseppe Mazzini"; and Marani, *El ideario mazziniano*.

46. On Cuneo and de Angelis, see, generally, Scheidt, *Carbonários*.

47. Examples are Collor, *Garibaldi e a guerra*; and Pereda, *Garibaldi en el Uruguay*.

48. Baily and Scarli, "Las sociedades de ayuda mutua."

49. Bordoni, *Montevideo*, 163.

50. Baily, "Role of Two Newspapers," 327 and 329.

51. Bertoni, *Patriotas*.

52. Sarmiento, *Conflicto y armonía*.

53. Oddone, *Una perspectiva europea*, 83.

54. Rojas, *La restauración nacionalista*, 455.

55. On Argentine elite attitudes to Spanish and Italian immigrants in comparison, see, generally, Moya, *Cousins and Strangers*, 332–84.

56. Rojas, *Eurindia*, 214 and 216; Rojas, *Historia de la literatura Argentina*, 406.

57. Fanesi, "Italian Antifascism," 168.

58. Weinstein, "Racializing Regional Difference."

59. See, e.g., Jochims Reichel and Gutfreind, *As raízes históricas*.

60. Bertonha, *O fascismo e os imigrantes*, 218–26.

61. Newton, "Ducini, Prominenti, Antifascisti," 44–45.

62. See Wanrooij, "The Rise and Fall"; and Linz, "Some Notes toward a Comparative Study," 81.

63. Devoto, "Italiani in Argentina," 4.