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Italian scientific migration to the United States of America after 1938 racial laws

Abstract: This paper analyzes Italian scientific migration to the United States, following the introduction of the Fascist regime's anti-Semitic laws in 1938. While German, British and American historiography has devoted considerable attention to the issue of 1930s scientific migration to the US, scholars have mostly overlooked the Italian case. Drawing on individual biographies, institutional histories, and theoretical contributions, the paper provides a new analytic approach on the scientific migration from Italy. Using various sources, especially the records of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, deposited at New York Public Library this paper challenges the idea that Italian scientific wave to the United States can be considered not just as an exile or an escape, as the Italian historians use to do, because it present certain traits typical of migrations. The placement of scholars, for example, took place through a series of migration networks, which are analyzed as well as the integration/assimilation process.

Key Words: Fascism, anti-Semitism, New York Public Library, migrated mentors, migration networks, assimilation process

1. Exiles, refugees, or emigrants? A historiographical quandary

While celebrating a *Giornata Linceiana* in memory of Bruno Rossi, the physicist and scholar at Lincei Academy, Giampiero Puppi recalled that "in Italy, the birth of modern physics is due to the work of two leading physicists: Enrico Fermi, who was active in Rome, and Bruno Rossi, who worked in Florence". Then, he added, "in the aftermath of the Second World War, the rebirth of modern physics must be ascribed to their early apprentices who remained or returned to Italy or became more accom-

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plished in the United States, often continuing their association with their emigrated mentors".[1]

The definition of emigrated mentors is worth noting because it is quite uncommon in Italian historiography and in public discourse. Indeed, very seldom the intellectual wave which left Italy – earlier because of the worsening of politics, then because of racial persecution and the outbreak of war – have been regarded a migration. In fact, it must be emphasized that even the third section of the first monumental volume *Storia dell'emigrazione italiana – Partenze*[2] – in which migration movements are examined starting from the 1930s – pays no attention to the theme under discussion.

The dramatic events in which these scholars and intellectuals were involved – particularly the violent anti-Semitism – have given rise to terms such as 'exiled' or 'refugee'. These two terms are often used in random and interchangeable way; they reveal a lot, but do not justice to the complexity of the phenomenon, thus requiring some elucidation. Indeed, the semantic shift, which I propose here, from terms such as 'flight' and 'exile' to 'migration' is neither accidental nor secondary. In the meanwhile, out of my research on various sources and especially on Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars Records, deposited at New York Public Library, I challenge the idea that Italian scientific wave to the United States present certain traits typical of migrations. The placement of scholars, for example, took place through a series of migration networks, which should be analyzed as well as the integration/assimilation process.

In Italy, without any doubt, reluctance in using interpretative tools relating to migration in order to read this phenomenon proved to be persistent. Eventually the semantic uncertainty became chronic and favoured the spread of several labels. Even the wording 'emigré' did not gain ground within Italian academic works.[3]

On both sides of the Atlantic a tendency seems to have prevailed to see the intellectual wave as an emigration 'apart', to be studied with separate categories. On the contrary, the well-established interpretative categories of migrations shows their fertility even in the analysis of intellectual wave. On the other hand, difficulties in entering the new social world are in fact due not only to restrictions imposed by crises, which reduces funding and material assistance but also the lack of contacts and personal links. This seems very obvious for the vast majority of intellectuals who could not count on strong relationships procured by their reputation and legacy. Their paths of integration in the new society seem to develop in ways that lend themselves to be seen with the same lens and the same tools that we generally observe the movements of individuals in the geographic space.

It must be noted that the dispute has never stopped in the international context and was rekindled thanks to the recent work of the former music critic of *New York*

Times, Joseph Horowitz, entitled *Artists in Exile. How Refugees from Twentieth-Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Art.*[4] In this book Horowitz examines the creative environment that talented women and men with different cultural backgrounds were able to establish within the arts and the society of the new world.

However, former editor of the *New Yorker* Robert Gottlieb criticised the book judging the expression 'artists in exile' as inaccurate and misleading. He drew attention to the fact that "many of them weren't refugees at all but immigrants in the great American tradition. After all, we all came from somewhere else".[5] Looking at Gottlieb's words, the interpretative controversy seems to be still alive in the U.S. context. In the meantime this same issue appears to be assiduously ignored by the Italian historiography which devoted itself to deep analysis only of the mass emigration that drained the population from several Italian regions during the late 19th century and the early 20th century.

If we compare numbers involved, it can be safely asserted that intellectual migration during the 1930s and 1940s was limited compared to the major waves of previous emigration. If the usual interpretative categories were to be applied, this would explain why Italian historiography has tended to consider the phenomenon, if not irrelevant, but as one that defies an easy reading of the situation.

At the same time, the emigrant stereotype – namely that of the *cafone* (peasant) without means and skills so obstinately embedded until new and more cogent interpretations could be worked out[6] – made it impossible for a long time to regard those expatriate intellectuals between the wars emigrants.

The professors' image did not match with the one of misery and dependence connected to the Great Migration. Hence we have a denial based on prejudice when it comes to regarding the similarities by virtue of the macroscopic differences. So the macro-analysis prevailed, thus eclipsing the opportunity to investigate closely the individual paths followed by the intellectual migrants.

The emigration of Italian scholars and intellectuals, especially which followed the promulgation of Racial Laws in 1938, "has been described rather than interpreted and studied".[7] The aim of this paper is to give a more rigorous outline to these events. In fact, although it did not expand to a large extent, this migration embodied features that are peculiar in the histories of migration processes (e.g. migration chains), and had significant repercussions in the political, social and cultural contexts for both the homeland and the countries to which they went.

While the phenomenon has been neglected by the Italian scholars until these last years,[8] Austrian, German, and Anglo-Saxon scholars acknowledged it as worthy of further investigation, giving rise to a prolific series of studies focusing on Central Europe where the intellectual migration was numerically more important than in Italy.[9]

At the same time, there is a consistent body of literature of that same era (papers, statistics, surveys) produced by North American scholars focusing on European intellectual migration dating back to the 1940s.[10]

However, on both sides of the Atlantic the analysis has been afflicted by the same interpretative uncertainty: Emigration or exile? Maurice R. Davie who, in 1947, published an analytical report over the European arrival in the US, chose the expression *refugee movement* to characterise the phenomenon.[11] In 1953, while introducing the work *Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, W. Rex Crawford stated that "the uprooted and transplanted intellectual deserves our study quite as much as the Polish peasant in America".[12]

It is not by accident that later on, in a work that was never translated into Italian and explicitly entitled *Illustrious Immigrants,* Laura Capon Fermi openly dealt with this essential terminological quandary. Even being uncertain herself in "giving a name to the thing", she wanted to point out that "not all in the cultural wave were refugees, and those who were resent the term if it is applied to themselves".[13] On the basis of her first-hand knowledge, mainly of the Italians, she went on to state that: "the 'most refugee' among my friends (if I am allowed this solecism) claimed that they left their homes of their own free will. And this is true."[14]

The annoyance of being called 'exiled' perceived by the majority of them is confirmed by Alvin S. Johnson. He founded – with Charles Beard, Thorstein Veblen, James Harvey Robinson, Wesley Clair Mitchell, John Dewey – the New School for Social Research in New York in 1918 modeling the school after the *Volkshochschulen* for adults established in Germany after 1918. In 1933, with the financial support of philanthropists like Hiram Halle and the Rockefeller Foundation, Johnson created the *University in Exile*, as a graduate division of the New School for Social Research.[15]

In his memoir, Johnson recalled how the name *University in Exile*, that he personally thought to be extraordinarily evocative, spread deep unrest among the newly arrived intellectuals. They felt belittled, being extremely concerned that this sort of label could negatively affect their status and damage their process of inclusion and assimilation.[16]

2. Italy/United States of America

In June 1933, Mr. Charles E. Clark, Dean of the Yale School of Law, asked the Rockefeller Foundation to make a grant to enable professor Max Ascoli, an Italian jurist and political expert who had been in the United States since 1931, to take up service at that University.[17]

In 1933 the news of the foundation of an Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars[18] appeared in the influential magazine *Science* "as a result of the disturbance in Germany" where "many scholars of undoubted merit, some of them among the most distinguished in the world, have been removed from their chairs and must begin life anew with very inadequate means or with no means at all. Many will have to leave the land of their birth and seek opportunity, temporarily at least, in other lands".[19]

The Committee established itself on 45th Avenue in New York with Livingstone Farrand, at that time head of the Cornell University as chairman.[20] With him as secretary was Stephen Duggan,[21] professor at the City College of New York and Fred M. Stein on duty as treasurer. Committee proponents openly stated that the circumstances required "a call not only upon our sympathy, but also upon our resources" despite being "aware that as the result of the present economic depression, university revenues in our own country have been sadly reduced and teachers have been dropped from the rolls and are suffering severe deprivation". Given that the United States was facing the harshest economic crisis ever, the statement was extremely pertinent. Furthermore, at that time the American immigration policy was fixing a course directly opposed to the one adopted previously. Between the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, millions of people seeking their fortune arrived at American ports. However, since the early 1920s, the US policy changed shutting their frontiers to European immigrants. The drastic change had a lot to do with the saturation of the labour market; the xenophobic wave triggered by the fear that revolutionary ideas could spread across Soviet Union borders; the election to the presidency of a Republican who supported isolationist policy.

In 1921 and then in 1924, the US Congress approved the introduction of immigration quotas. Quotas had to correspond to the 2% of each national minority already established on American soil.[22]

Between 1933 and 1941 countless arrivals could be registered thanks to the aid given by organisations and private foundations while over 12 million unemployed people were queuing up for bread.

Despite this all, some institutions decided to 'invest' on the arrival of displaced foreign scholars.

The welcome was not unanimous, especially at universities where there was a "genteel anti-Semitism"[23] and European competitors were not always accepted. On the contrary, several scholars and academics spent all their energies to reverse the flow of migrant scholars. The depression hit the young in the academic world, both immigrant and natives, more than those already well established in their careers. In an article which appeared in the Yale Review in June 1933 Alvin Johnson estimated that 5,000 American Ph.D.'s were unemployed. To them the foreigners seemed unfair

competition, and they often strenuously opposed their appointment. Colleges and universities as well as relief agencies could not fully disregard these sentiments.[24] Scientists, however, usually fared better than other intellectuals as the Italian case can confirm. Physicists fared better than mathematicians.

Anyway, appealing to human rights did not succeed as much as the call to "national utilitarianism" devised by Bruce Bliver, editor of the *New Republic*. He wrote an article entitled *Thank you, Hitler* in which he stated that the professors just immigrated represented a high monetary value for the United States.[25]

Stephen Duggan himself declared that "in terms of intellectual and cultural life, the loss suffered by the totalitarian States was incalculable. To us the benefit has been at least equal to their loss".[26] So, despite the government's reluctance, the "brain gain" policy was not abandoned. Even during the Depression, it was formalised with the contribution of the main private foundations.[27]

Table 1: The Rockefeller Foundation Aid Program for Displaced Scholars, 1933–1945

Academic field	%
Social Sciences	37
Natural Sciences	24
Humanities	19
Medicine	19

Table 2: The Rockefeller Foundation Aid Program for Displaced Scholars, 1933–1945

Nationality	
German	191
French	36
Austrian	30
Italian	12
Polish	11
Hungarian	6
Spanish	6
Czech	5
Scandinavian	2
Dutch	2
Belgian	2

Source: Thomas B. Appleget, The Foundation's Experience with Refugee Scholars, p. 2, Rockefeller Foundation, Record Group 1.1, Series 200, Box 47, folder 545a, Rockefeller Archive Center.

The Emergency Committee placed $800,000 at the disposal of 335 scholars until 1945, while the Oberlaender Trust invested $317,000 into the project.[28] With $1,4 million, the Rockefeller Foundation financed 303 scholars from 1933 to 1945, dividing the scholars according to origin and discipline as shown in table 1 and 2.[29]

3. Italy, 1938

Emigration from Italy became particularly intense after the promulgation of the Racial Laws, when scholars, researchers and university professors left Italy by the dozen.

Benito Mussolini's government passed the first of a series of anti-Semitic laws during the autumn of 1938 which affected more than 48,000 people. They barred Jews from public life and subjected them to a wide range of humiliating restrictions and persecution. Among other things, they barred Jewish students and teachers from public schools and universities. They barred Jews from marrying non-Jews, working in a long list of professions, serving in the army, employing Christian servants, staying in hotels, vacationing at resorts and placing classified ads in newspapers.[30]

Specifically were expelled over one hundred directors and teachers of primary school; at least 279 head teachers and teachers from middle school and junior high school; about a hundred full professors were removed from their academic positions, two hundreds *liberi docenti* (professors without chairs or tenure) were banned from universities. The Turin School of Biology founded by the famous Italian histologist, Giuseppe Levi[31] was disbanded. Salvatore (later Salvador Edward) Luria, Renato Dulbecco, and Rita Levi-Montalcini were students of him and all of them were future Nobel prize winners.[32] In medical schools, physiology, more than other discipline, lost the most prominent faculty members. Of the 17 full professors of Human Physiology, five were of Jewish descent, and all were evicted: Mario Camis from Bologna, Carlo Foà from Milan, Amedeo Herlitzka from Turin, Ugo Lombroso from Genoa and Camillo Artom from Palermo.[33] At the end of World War II, Camis, Foà, Herlitzka, and Lombroso returned to Italy and resumed their previous academic positions, whereas Artom – who had reached the Bowman Gray School of Medicine of Wake Forest University (North Carolina) in 1939 – remained in the United States. Demographer and statistician Roberto Bachi emigrated in 1938 to Palestine soon after the decree of the Racial Laws. He worked as a statistician in the Hadassah Medical Organization, and during 1945–47 in the Department of Statistics of the Mandatory Government. From the early 1940s he taught statistics at the Hebrew University and was appointed full professor in 1947. With the foundation of the State of Israel Bachi was appointed government statistician. He founded Israel's

Central Bureau of Statistics, which he directed until 1971. We must add the famous geographer Guido Almagià, Attilio Momigliano, professor of literature at University of Rome, the philosopher Rodolfo Mondolfo, the jurists Gino Arias, Giorgio del Vecchio, and Guido Tedeschi. This last one emigrated to Palestine.

In the field of mathematics one must recall Salvatore Pincherle who was one of the creators of the modern infinitesimal calculus; Vito Volterra who established the basis of functional calculus; Corrado Segre who established the Italian school of geometry, and Tullio Levi-Civita who was associated with the differential absolute calculus which was used by Einstein to elaborate his theory of relativity. Also Guido Fubini was forced to retire from his chair in Turin. When he received an invitation from the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton in 1939, he and his family emigrated to the United States immediately, although Fubini himself was in rather poor health by this time.[34]

The peak of the emigration of mathematicians was reached in 1939, a year after the start of increased persecutions in Europe, the year in which the war broke out. Many of "those who came in 1939 had of course made preparations long in advance, so that this high tide reflects events of the preceding years probably to a larger extent than those of 1939".[35]

Beppo Levi, professor of mathematics at the University of Cagliari, Parma and Bologna had to leave Italy because of the anti-Semitic laws and reached University of Rosario in Argentina.

Among the ones who reached the US there were the chemist Mario Levi Malvano; the biochemist and physiologist Camillo Arton, and the physicist Nella Mortara. The Italian school known as the boys of Via Panisperna,[36] renowned for its pioneering studies on nuclear physics, suddenly ceased to exist: Enrico Fermi (who was awarded of the Nobel prize in nuclear physics in 1938), Bruno Rossi, Emilio Segrè (also a Nobel prize winner with Owen Chamberlain in the field of particle physics in 1959), and Eugenio Fubini emigrated to the United States. Eugeni (later Eugene G.) Fubini attained a high position in the U.S. government in 1963 when he was appointed Assistant Secretary of Defense and Deputy Director of Defense research.

Franco Rasetti, in spite of being "aryan" decided not to stay and left for Canada and then landed at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Mario Salvadori, the young engineer Roberto Fano, and Gino Fubini emigrated also to the United States. Ugo Fano, brother of Roberto, who received a postdoctoral training by Enrico Fermi in Rome and by Werner Heisenberg in Leipzig between 1936 and 1937, in 1939 decided to emigrate to the US.

Furthermore, the Emergency Committee archives hold files related to Enzo Bonaventura and Renata Calabresi,[37] who studied with Francesco de Sarlo at the *Scuola di Psicologia Applicata* in Florence.

The physicist Giulio Racah known for the powerful theory of angular momentum and Umberto Cassuto, rabbi and professor of Hebrew at the University of Rome, applied for a grant to the New York Committee after having already emigrated to Palestine, at that time a British Mandate.

Generally speaking, the trend of the arrivals in the U.S. showed social scientists leading the wave while among the Italians natural scientists were more prominent. Not all of whom had applied received a positive response from the Committee.[38] Most of the time, social capital and contacts showed to be crucial for the professors as well. In spite of possessing means and a reputation, a way to move or finding removal companies was hardly found without networking.

For example, Bruno Rossi, who gained international prestige after graduating in physics at Bologna University in 1927, and teaching as a professor at the University of Padua since 1932 immediately tried to activate his networks. In September 1938, Rossi was deprived of his position at the university and left Italy. After a brief stay at the Bohr Institute, he was invited by Patrick Blackett to the University of Manchester. That same year he wrote to professor Arthur J. Compton at Ryerson Physical Laboratory of Chicago University:

> "Dear Prof. Compton, I hope you will excuse me appealing to your friendship and kindness to obtain your good advice and help in a very difficult moment of my life. You are certainly aware of the new measures of the Italian government concerning the Jewish professors. In consequence of this, I foresee that I shall be obliged to leave my chair at the University of Padua; this is so much the more painful to me because I have just finished my new laboratory to the construction of which I have dedicated nearly all my activity during the last three years. Now I fear there remains to me nothing else but to try to begin a new life somewhere abroad. I hope, if no further difficulties arise to spend about two months at Kopenhagen, in professor's Bohr laboratory. […] But afterwards I should like very much to go to America where the physical studies are so much developed and find there the possibility to continue my scientific work and gain sufficient living for myself and my wife (I married just 5 months ago)".[39]

Professor Compton immediately addressed the Emergency Committee appealing on behalf of Bruno Rossi for an annual grant. However, the Committee declined the application considering that the reputation and the high competence of the Italian physicist "could bring him into competition with American scholars which would be decidedly unfortunate".[40]

In April 1939, professor Compton presented a new appeal to the Committee asking a monthly grant reduced to $1,500 (much less than he asked the first time), relying on the promise of further $1,500 by the Rosenwald Family Association. Rossi arrived in July 1939. He stayed at Chicago University until 1940 when he moved to

Cornell University; in 1946, Bruno Rossi later joined the *M*assachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he founded the Cosmic Ray Group.

It is worth noting that some official reconstructions of Rossi's arrival in the U.S.A. are contradicted by these archival sources. For example, George W. Clark writes in the pages of the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* "in 1939 Rossi was invited by Arthur Compton to participate in a cosmic-ray symposium at the University of Chicago. With great reluctance to leave Europe, the Rossis sailed to New York".[41]

4. Migration chains

> "On my arrival in Berkeley, I immediately tried to look up my friend Lorenzo Emo, but he was away for a few days. The owner of the house where he lived had another room for rent and I took it. […] Lorenzo was of the greatest help to me in my early days at Berkeley. First, he explained to me the university minuet that one danced at Berkeley, as one does in all universities; then he guided me a little among the various personalities I met. In addition, Lorenzo introduced me to Dr. Giacomo Ancona, a physician from Florence living in San Francisco."[42]

These memoirs belong to Emilio Segrè. He was born into a wealthy family of Jewish descent.[43] With Rasetti and Fermi he was one of the boys of Via Panisperna and then professor of physics in Palermo. He landed in New York on the 13th of July 1938 for a study and research programme at Berkeley "with the purpose of coming back to Italy in autumn to start the academic year". While travelling to California, the news reached him that in Italy a Race Manifesto had been published, thus suddenly feeling "in a new dimension of instability and uncertainty". Aware of that, his academic prestige was not set to rise that high to enable him to find an academic place easily and then send for his family, he tried immediately to appeal to his network of contacts and to activate the "migration chain" among his colleagues who had left in advance.[44] Given these facts, it is evident how crucial was the role played by personal networks – in terms of spreading information – in discovering job opportunities and as it was in his case, obtaining a scholarship or an annual contract.

Networks usually influence the willing migrants in choosing their final destination so as to facilitate access to the job market that would otherwise appear opaque to the newcomers.[45] Segrè recalls how

> "from the moment of our arrival we had had an immediate and important problem: obtaining an immigration visa. My tourist visa was for six months so it lapsed in January 1939. […] Immigration restrictions were steadily

> increasing as Hitler exacerbated his persecutions and more people tried to flee Europe; there was no time to waste. I remembered Rasetti's instructions in the subtle and marvellous points of Section 4(d) of the Immigration Law then in force but when I tried to obtain some help from a service in San Francisco that was supposed to help immigrants, I concluded that it was better to do everything myself."[46]

The "do-everything-myself" approach seems to imply mainly the useful tips yielded by networking. Wrote Laura Capon, Fermi's wife:

> "the European who were fully grown, as I was, when they came to the United States did not learn of the laws regulating immigration in history courses or in collections of American documents. They became aware – often painfully – of the provisions affecting them while going through the laborious process of getting visas and while sharing their anxieties with other prospective immigrants in consular offices abroad. Even before leaving Europe they were more familiar than most Americans with the machinery of the quota system and with the provision that saved the lives of a good number of scholars."[47]

It is evident that information on how to access the new society was provided through community relationships. One year later, in 1939, Emilio Segrè's brother, Angelo, arrived in New York with his wife and his two daughters and he immediately tried "to get into Columbia University and work in his field of studies: economic history".[48]

As has been written before, migration chains "are endless and always open".[49] In our case, the chains reveal themselves through the master-pupil relationship. Bruno Rossi, in fact, tried to open the way for the arrival of Sergio de Benedetti who had previously moved to France to work at the Curie Laboratories in Paris. The Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars refused to give a grant to Benedetti – who had been Rossi assistant – and he received a fellowship from the Bartol Research Foundation of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania only later, in 1942. It is worth noting a pencil scratch addressed to Stephen Duggan of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars probably by Miss Betty Drury, the executive secretary:

> "This man, Benedetti, the physicist recommended by the emer. Bruno Rossi, came in here last night to see you. He looks a little Jewish but is a nice young fellow of 28. It's particularly hard to get a very good assistantship because of course the Americans want and should have them." [50]

5. Losing and gaining reputation

> "People looking for many *giobbi* but *giobbi* are just a few. Gina [Castelnuovo] has got a temporary and awful *giobb*[51] in Phila[delphia]. Eugenio [Fubini] is still at Columbia. Gino Fubini unemployed. Fano seems to have a position for next summer in Cold Spring Harbour."[52]

These are the words used by Franco Rasetti in a letter addressed to his colleague Edoardo Amaldi in which he described with irony the difficulties in obtaining a grant or find a permanent job.

It must be said that European scientists were used to share overcrowded rooms inside old buildings inadequate to their needs. To them "American scientific laboratories seemed vast, extremely well equipped, and understaffed".[53] The same should be said about colleges and research institutes. However, even if the US could attract people because of the quality of their technical equipment and locations, upon their arrival scholars' employment seemed to follow a usual migratory trend: it was very possible that the first job would be underpaid and temporary.[54] For example, if we look at migration from southern to industrial northern Italy in the 60s of the 20th century, relatives and friends, already settled, provide useful information to find a job. In the meantime such information sent immigrants to the peripheral positions of the labor market: construction or the myriad of small workshops that arise around the large factory. So, it's not unusual that the first job of an immigrant is poorly paid and irregular.[55]

Seeking a new life away from persecution and discrimination as well as new opportunities would sometimes mean scholars and intellectuals having to restart their careers from scratch. It happened sometimes that they left a stable and recognised position to find themselves into a precarious one. Short-term assignments were offered to those who did not have a proper contract with any University, and were most of the time financed by the Rockefeller Foundation. It is also true that the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars never made generous grants. Typical awards were in the range of one to two thousand dollars per year, and in all only slightly more than 300 grants were made. Each of these awards, however, carried with them a priceless asset: a U.S. Visa.[56]

Skills, experience, and recognition are pivotal to this story. It was possible to leave Europe with a good reference letter inside one's pocket but one could not take it for granted that one's own social distinction would be recognised overseas. With the exception of a few and very well known figures who were internationally renowned, they had to realise soon that the esteem and the influence gained in their fatherland was with the those who stayed at home.[57]

The disconsolate wife of a professor in zoology once expressed herself with these words:

> "My husband is a zoologist. As a scientist he was known in many lands, and everywhere he was received as a distinguished and honoured guest. […] He who has been an esteemed collaborator, whose advice in special questions had always been appreciated, was now only an immigrant – one among thousands of immigrants coming to America as a haven of refuge, seeking employment and a chance to begin life anew in a strange land."[58]

Professors' social status was not the same in Europe and in the United States. For example, the status accorded to universities professors was very different. Discomfort was frequent but most of the time, its motivation appeared to be incomprehensible to the American colleagues.

A vivid memory of the "bitter bite so hard to swallow" is given by Alvin Johnson who remembered how European scholars could not "accept teaching in a school for adults" as the New School for Social Research in effect was.[59]

It is undeniable that these steps could shake one's self-esteem without taking into account the obstacles implied in using a new language, a real shock that made everything harder for whoever was used "to work with words". Although scientific communities have their own standardised language, for some professors it was a trauma to lose command of the language in use. "To a man on an advanced intellectual level, loss of language is an almost insuperable shock"[60] said a refugee medical doctor, adding that whoever had a deep sense of responsibility toward language in use felt quite humiliated by the infantile status they were forced to adopt.

> "Certainly language was a barrier which frequently came between the refugee professor and his American students […] Although many educated foreigners while still in Europe acquired a book knowledge of English as part of their cultural equipment and, once in the United States, were not long in achieving a close enough acquaintance with the spoken language to suffice for simple conversational exchanges, they were apt nevertheless to find it an exasperating and emotionally frustrating experience to have to lecture clearly and precisely before a classroom of undergraduates. When the lecture must be followed by a period of open discussion and debate, the situation became a severe test of linguistic ability and nervous equilibrium."[61]

On the other hand, it was immediately noted that women, wives, and not least female colleagues showed more capacity in adapting and learning. It can be argued that a more flexible attitude and less concern for their status made them "quicker in acquiring the language and in assimilating new customs" as was made clear by the report of the Commitee for the Study of Recent Immigration, edited by Maurice R. Davie.[62]

6. Changing tune

If emigrants could be said to demonstrate a willingness to change their attitudes, plans and strategies for living and surviving[63] the majority of intellectuals who arrived between the wars in the US proved to be no exception. Some transformed their versatility into resources. In many cases they had to wait for their chance after they had moved from the continent of Europe and losing their social standing position which they had in the countries they came from. Ones they got to America, they had to accept various occupations such as being liftmen, labourers, dishwashers, salesmen. Understandably, in their biographical sketches they sometimes neglect to include these years of tribulation. Not infrequently, a man "disappears" from his last European position in the early thirties and reappears in the United States many years later. [64]

Eugenio Fubini, one of Enrico Fermi's students, considered himself a lucky person because when he arrived in New York he managed to find employment at the Columbia Broadcasting Company as a technician. His duties included adjusting the microphones' sound during live shows broadcasted from theatres and concert halls.[65]

Luigi Jacchia from Trieste, graduated in physics at Bologna University in 1931. In 1933 he was assistant professor in the astronomy department and then he became an observer in Turin. He was removed from his chair due to the enforcement of the Racial Laws of 1938. He was forced to write a reference letter in his own favour to professor S. A. Mitchell, head of Leander McCormick Observatory at University of Virgina who then brought it to the attention of the Emergency Committee of New York. When the 28-year-old Luigi Jacchia wrote his letter from Italy he used these words:

> "I'm chased from my place without any practical possibility of earning my livehood in this country. I have not a cent of personal fortune and I must care of my mother. […] Now, having considered the matter thoroughly, I have decided to desist from any attempt to pursue elsewhere my scientific career and to leave off the luxurious science that is astronomy. It's a terrible renouncing for me […] I speak and write nearly as well as my mother languages: French, German, English, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Netherlandish, Romanian, Russian, Hungarian. Besides I write well and speak sufficiently well Polish […] I think that with this knowledge of languages it shall not be impossible for me to find an employment in some school, industry or commercial firm. Europe offers very few possibilities and therefore my aims are directed toward America. Unfortunately I have no acquaintances there and so I have thought of you."[66]

Jacchia was aware of the fact that his social network was narrow and his personal fortune even smaller. So he chooses to play on his multiple competences, his versatility and his readiness to adapt to new circumstances.

Epilogue

In summary it's possible to suggest that Italian scientific wave to the United States presented certain traits typical of migration and cannot be simply considered just as an exile or an escape. The sources tell how the placement of scholars, for example, took place through a series of migration networks, which should be analyzed as well as the integration/assimilation process.

This gives an idea of how a rigid geometry of interpretative models can end up hiding the dynamics which are fundamental in analysing people's mobility into a geographical space. It seems to be a fruitful approach which deserves to be continued and the argument could be further developed in a profitable way, taking into account that these events happened while the main structures of the scientific enterprise were deeply changing and the social weight of knowledge rethought under new codes and finally asserted. This means that should be more deeply analyzed the important role that Italian Intellectual migrations had to what H.S. Hughes has called the "deprovincialization of the American mind".[67]

Notes

1 Giornata lincea in ricordo di Bruno Rossi. Maestro, fisico e astrofisico (Rome, 21 april 1994), Atti dei convegni Lincei, Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Roma, 1995, 14. In the early thirties Rome had become, along with Arcetri (Florence), the main center for research in physics.

2 Piero Bevilacqua et al., eds., Storia dell'emigrazione italiana – Partenze, Roma 2001.

3 While it is rather used in the international bibliography. Two references among all: Roger H. Stuewer, Nuclear physicists in a new world: The émigrés of the 1930s to America, in: Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte vol. 7 (1984), 23–40 and the monumental biographical dictionary of W. Roeder and H. A. Strauss, eds., International Biographical Dictionary of Central-European Émigrés 1933–1945, 3 vol., New York/Munich 1980–1983.

4 Joseph Horowitz, Artists in Exile. How Refugees from Twentieth-Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts, New York 2008.

5 Robert Gottlieb's review, in: New York Review of Books, vol. 55 (2008), no. 8, May 15.

6 See Josef Ehmer et al., Premessa, in the monograph Issue Migrazioni, in: Quaderni storici, vol. 106 (2001), 3–23; Andreina De Clementi, International and Transatlantic Migration in Italy, in: Annemarie Steidl et al., eds., European Mobility. Internal, International and Transatlantic Moves in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, Göttingen 2008, 135–148.

7 Roberto Finzi, Le leggi razziali e l'università italiana, in: Angelo Ventura, ed., L'università dalle leggi razziali alla Resistenza, Padova 1996, 49–129.

8 See Giuliana Gemelli, ed., „The unacceptables". American Foundations and the Refugee Scholars Between the Two Wars and After, Bern et al. 2000. Ariane Dröscher, La migrazione di medici e biologi italiani in Germania tra l'Unità d'Italia e il secondo dopoguerra. In: Italiani in Germania tra Ottocento e Novecento. Spostamenti, rapporti, immagini, influenze, a cura di Gustavo Corni e Christof Dipper, Bologna 2006, 363–383. The Special Issue of the journal Memoria e Ricerca: L'Europa in esilio. La migrazione degli intellettuali verso le Americhe tra le due guerre, vol. 31 (2009).

9 H. Stuart Hughes, The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930–1965, New York 1975; Lewis S. Feuer, The Stages in the Social History of Jewish Professors in American Colleges and Universities, in: American Jewish History, issue 71 (1982), 432–65; Lewis A. Coser, Refugee Scholars in America: Their Impact and Their Experiences, New Haven and London 1984; Barry Katz, The Accumulation of Thought: Transformations of the Refugee Scholar in America, in: The Journal of Modern History, vol. 63, (1991), no. 4, 740–752; Susanne Klingenstein, Jews in the American Academy, 1900–1940: The Dynamics of Intellectual Assimilation, New Haven 1991; Claus D. Krohn, Intellectuals in Exile: Refugee Scholars and the New School for Social Research, Amherst 1993; Mitchell Ash and Alfons G. Söllner, eds., Forced Migration and Scientific Change: Émigré German-speaking scientists and scholars after 1933, Cambridge 1996; Marjorie Lamberti, The Reception of Refugee Scholars from Nazi Germany in America: Philanthropy and Social Change in Higher Education, in: Jewish Social Studies, vol. 12, (2006), no. 3, 157–192; Christian Fleck, Transatlantische Bereicherungen. Die Erfindung der empirischen Sozialforschung, Frankfurt am Main 2007.

10 Harold Fields, The refugee in the United States, New York 1938; "Report of the National Committee for Resettlement of Foreign Physicians", in: Journal of the American Medical Association, 29 November, 1941; Alvin Johnson, The refugee scholar in America, in: Survey Graphic, April 1941; Alfred Cohn, Exiled physicians in the United States, in: American Scholar, summer 1943; Donald P. Kent, The Refugee Intellectual: The Americanization of the Immigrants of 1933–41, New York 1953.

11 Maurice R. Davie, Refugees in America: Report of the Committee for the Study of Recent Immigration from Europe, New York 1947.

12 W. Rex Crawford regretted that "in spite of all the attention that has been given to the making of America by mass migration from Europe, one important aspect of the movement has received scant attention" and he took the occasion to criticize the American social sciences that revealed to be "inclined to think in terms of millions rather than of individuals", cited from Franz L. Neumann et al., Introduction, in: Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America, Philadelphia 1953, 1.

13 Laura Capon Fermi, Illustrious immigrants. The intellectual migration from Europe 1930–41, Chicago/London 1968, particularly see page 15 to 17. She was Enrico Fermi's wife and she was Jewish. In 1938, the Fermis emigrated to the US. They traveled to Stockholm to receive Fermi's Nobel Prize, and left from Stockholm to the United States, without ever returning to Italy. In 1944, they were both nationalized as Americans.

14 Fermi, Illustrious immigrants, 15.

15 See Krohn, Intellectuals in Exile.

16 Salvati, Da Berlino a New York: crisi della classe media e futuro della democrazia nelle scienze sociali degli anni trenta, Bologna 1989, 184.

17 Max Ascoli, was born into a Jewish family in Ferrara. Trained in political philosophy and law, in 1928, he was arrested after his name was found in the address book of another intellectual charged with carrying on clandestine political activities. With his university career in Italy over, Ascoli immigrated to the United States in 1931. Affiliated then to New School of Social Research, he created *The Reporter* in 1949, a magazine that became a leading voice for liberalism in America for the next 20 years. In correspondence with a fellow exile of Italy, Ascoli observed that there were two currents among Italians in America: "those exiles who did not intend to become Americans and who live like pilgrims in expectation of returning to Italy, and those American citizens of Italian origin, including himself, who did not think about returning to Italy". In connection with Max Ascoli see Rosario J. Tosiello, Max Ascoli: A Lifetime of Rockefeller Connections, in: Gemelli, ed., "The unacceptables", 107–140; Alessandra Taiuti, Un antifascista dimenticato. Max Ascoli fra socialismo e liberalismo, Firenze 2007; Renato Camurri, Idee in movimento: l'esilio degli intellettuali italiani negli Stati Uniti (1930–1945), in: Memoria e Ricerca, vol. 31 (2009), 43–62; Davide Grippa, Un antifascista tra Italia e Stati Uniti. Democrazia e identità nazionale nel pensiero di Max Ascoli (1898–1947), Milano 2009.

18 Then named Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars. The Emergency Committee has left a conspicuous archives preserved at the Manuscripts and Archives Division of the New York Public Library. The 200 boxes had been moved there in June 1946 by reason of a resolution adopted by the Committee during its last summit in which it was also decided not to disclose the files to the public before 25 years time.

19 "The Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars", in: Science, vol. 78 (1933), 52–53. The magazine Science, established by the New York journalist John Michaels in 1880, became in 1900 the official organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) founded in 1848.

20 At that time, Livingston Farrand was the 4th dean of Cornell University. During his mandate, international connections at Cornell University were intensified. In spite of the Great Depression, enrolments and resources assigned to the Athenaeum increased.

21 Dr. Stephen Duggan founded in 1919 the Institute of International Education (IIE) with Elihu Root and Nicholas Murray Butler, both winners of the Nobel Prize for Peace. Supported by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Duggan became the institute's first director.

22 Roger Daniels, Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy and Immigrants since 1882, New York 2004.

23 In the '20s the Ivy League's schools limited the access to the Jewish students while the Jews enrolled at colleges and universities were less than a hundred. See Lamberti, The Reception of Refugee Scholars from Nazi Germany in America, 159.

24 Fermi, Illustrious immigrants, 28.

25 Bruce Bliven, The New Republic, 10 November 1937. See Tibor Frank, Double exile. Migration of Jewish-Hungarian professionals through Germany to the United States, 1919–1945, Bern 2009, 280.

26 Stephen Duggan, Eighteenth Annual Report, Institute of International Education, New York 1937, 8.

27 More about Rockefeller Foundation's policy in Giuliana Gemelli, Scholars in Adversity and Science Policies (1933–1945), in: Gemelli, ed., „The unacceptables", 13–34.

28 Other organizations involved were the Carnegie Foundation, the Academic Assistance Council-London, the American Friends Service Committee, the American Committee for Christian Refugees, the International Student Service, the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Emigrants Coming from Germany, the National Refugee Service, the Notgemeinschaft Deutscher Wissenschaftler im Ausland.

29 Cited from Krohn, Intellectuals in Exile, 31.

30 See among others Michele Sarfatti, Gli ebrei nell'Italia fascista. Vicende, identità, persecuzioni, Torino 2007, 213.

31 About Giuseppe Levi see also the novel by Natalia Ginzburg (his daughter), Family Sayings, New York, 1989 (first Italian edition: Lessico famigliare, Torino 1963).

32 Renato Dulbecco, who learned Histology and the rudiments of cell culture as Levi's student, won the Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine in 1975 with Howard M. Temin and David Baltimore. Salvador Luria won the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1969 and Rita Levi-Montalcini won the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1986.

33 Diana Troiani and Ermanno Manni, A tribute to Italian physiologists of Jewish descent evicted during the persecution ordered by the Fascist Regime in 1938, in: Advances in Physiology Education, 31 (2007), 123–128.

34 Fubini's interests in mathematics were wide. In addition to the areas of analysis he worked on the calculus of variation where he studied reducing Weierstrasse's integral to a Lebesgue integral. He also worked on the expression of surface integrals in terms of two simple integrations. Still, despite health problem, he taught for a few years in New York but, 5 years after emigrating he died.

35 Arnold Dresden, The migration of mathematicians, in: American Mathematical Monthly, vol. 49 (1942), issue 7, 415–429.

36 Via Panisperna in Rome hosted one of the most important physics research centres. It was established by Orso Mario Corbino who gained in this scope turning on his own influence firstly as MP, then as Minister of Education and then Minister of Economics in the first Mussolini's Cabinet between in 1923–24. The first national competition for the chair in theoretical physics was hold in 1926 and won by Enrico Fermi. Then Corbino wanted another young promising scholar, Franco Rasetti to join the via Panisperma centre. Then it was the time of Emilio Segrè and Edoardo Amaldi, both passed from

engineering to physics. The last to join the team was the young Bruno Pontecorvo. On Franco Rasetti see V. Del Gamba, Il ragazzo di via Panisperna. L'avventurosa vita del fisico Franco Rasetti, Torino 2007; Judith R. Goodstein, A Conversation with Franco Rasetti, in: Physics in Perspective, vol. 3 (2001), no. 3, 271–313.

37 Renata Calabresi left Italy to the United States in 1940 where she taught at the New School for Social Research and at the Hunter College. See Liliana Albertazzi, Scienza e avanguardia nella Firenze del primo Novecento, in: Axiomathes, vol. 5, (1994), no. 2–3, 243–278; Simonetta Gori-Savellini, Ricordando Renata Calabresi, in: Bollettino di psicologia applicata, no. 43 (1996), 59–60; See also the article published on the New York Times as her obituary on the 20th of December 1995.

38 To the list of the Italians who applied at the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars one must add Leonardo Olschki, Fausto R. Pitigliani and the sculptor Dario Viterbo. In this article I chose not to cite the already well known cases of Gaetano Salvemini, lecturer in Italian History at Harvard; Guido Ferrando director of the Italian Language and Literature department at Vassar College and Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, enlisted by the University of Chicago.

39 Cited from Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars Records, 1933–1945, Grantees and Fellows Series – box 30, Rossi, Bruno, 1938–1942, New York Public Library, New York.

40 Ibid.

41 See George W. Clark, Bruno Benedetto Rossi, 13 April 1905–21 November 1993, in: Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, vol. 144 (2000), no. 3, 329–341. This biographical paper initially had been written for the Biographical Memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C.

42 Lorenzo Emo Capodilista belonged to the team-group of physicists of the Astronomical Observatory in Arcetri (Florence). Emilio Segrè, A Mind Always in Motion: The Autobiography of Emilio Segrè, Berkeley 1993, 132–133.

43 In his autobiography Segrè wrote about his own relationship with Judaism: "my parents asked Dante Lattes, a noted jewish scholar, to give me some lessons on Judaism but they did not impress me and neither did I read the Bible with veneration or celebrate a Bar Mitzvah. The only Jewish religious rites I attended when I was young where in Synagogue in Florence. I found them interesting and especially later, after I had grown up, even moving not for theological or religious reasons. Their compelling force came from the traditions they evoked, from family history and from feelings rooted in the subconscious", in: Segrè, A Mind Always in Motion, 34–35. The autobiographies written by many of those protagonists give us a variety of analytical cues that we won't be able to discuss here. For example, one could focus on the deep changes produced by migrations on the multiple identities of emigrants (e.g. gender, profession, nationality, ethnicity, worship). Further consideration deserves the topic of "autobiography" as it does emigration within the Jewish environment. See on this subject Alberto Cavaglion, L'autobiografia ebraica fra Ottocento e Novecento. Memoria di sé e memoria della famiglia, in: Zakhor, vol. 3 (1999), no. 2, 171–180; N. Zemon Davies, Fame and Secrecy: Leon Modena's *Life* as an Early Modern Autobiography, in: History and Theory, vol. 27 (1988), no. 4, 103–118.

44 He went back to Italy only in 1947 when he was already an American citizen.

45 See Mark Granovetter, Getting a job. A study of contacts and careers, Chicago 1995 (2nd edition); Franco Ramella, Immigrazione e traiettorie sociali in città: Salvatore e gli altri negli anni sessanta, in Angiolina Arru and Franco Ramella, eds., L'Italia delle migrazioni interne. Donne, uomini, mobilità in età moderna e contemporanea, Roma 2003, 353.

46 Segrè, A Mind Always in Motion, 192–193.

47 Fermi, Illustrious immigrants, 18

48 Subsequently, Angelo Segrè "quarreled with everybody and gave up teaching, devoting himself entirely to painting. He exhibited in New York and had a certain critical success, but no financial reward, and did not persist in trying to sell his work." Ibid., 194.

49 Andreina De Clementi, Caratteri storico-antropologici dell'emigrazione italiana, in: Ornella De Rosa and Donato Verrastro, eds., Appunti di viaggio. L'emigrazione italiana tra attualità e memoria, Bologna 2007, 33.

50 The reference letters presented to the Committee in order to finance the arrival of De Benedetti are kept at the E. C. Records, 1933–1945, Grantees and Fellows Series – box 41, de Benedetti, Sergio, New York Public Library, New York.

51 The word *giobbo* from the English "job".
52 Cited from Giovanni Battimelli and Lucia Orlando, Scienze della natura e questione razziale. I fisici ebrei nell'Italia fascista, in: PRISTEM/Storia, no. 19/20 (2007), 63–105.
53 Fermi, Illustrious immigrants, 28.
54 Ramella, Immigrazione e traiettorie sociali in città, 353.
55 See Goffredo Fofi, L'immigrazione meridionale a Torino, Milano 1976.
56 Benjamin Bederson, Fritz Reiche and the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, in: Physics in Perspective, vol. 7 (2005), issue 3 453–472. See also Stephen and Betty Drury, The Rescue of Science and Learning: The Story of the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, New York 1948.
57 See Coser, Refugee Scholars in America, 5.
58 Cited from Davie, Refugees in America, 305.
59 Johnson remembered that "I told them they could establish their own Committee, with their own board and that they would be independent from the New School, except in legal issues. These guarantees convinced them", Alvin Johnson, Reminiscences, 1960, in: Columbia University Oral History Collection, Microfilm, 176–188 cited from Salvati, Da Berlino a New York, 184.
60 Kent, The Refugee Intellectual, 306.
61 in Davie, Refugees in America, 306.
62 Davie, Refugees in America, 143–144. Language was a fundamental element as it is proved by the ending paragraph of the article dedicated to Enrico Fermi in the American National Biography: "his personal appearance was short and stocky and he had an heavy Italian accent", cited in: American National Biography (published under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Society), Oxford 1999.
63 De Clementi, Caratteri storico-antropologici, 30–32.
64 See Fermi, Illustrious immigrants, 14.
65 Cited from G. Battimeli and L. Orlando, Scienze della natura e questione razziale, 91.
66 E. C. Records, 1933–1945, Grantees and Fellows Series – box 16, Jacchia, Luigi, New York Public Library, New York. Jacchia, arrived in the US, obtained a job in Cambridge, MA, where he was immediately hired as a Research Associate at Harvard College Observatory. During the war, his considerable linguistic skills were exploited by the blockade of the Allies. After the war, he returned to Harvard in 1956, then moved to the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, where he remained until 1980.
67 H. Stuart Hughes, Social Theory in a New Context, in: Jarrel C. Jackman and Carla M. Borden, eds., The Muses flee Hitler: Cultural transfer and adaption 1933–1945, Washington 1983, 95–110.