

ITALY AND THE USA
CULTURAL CHANGE THROUGH LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVE

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Italy and the USA

Cultural Change Through Language and Narrative



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INTRODUCTION



Mapping Cultural Change: Italy and the USA during the 'Long American Century'

A Theoretical and Methodological Note

The multi-disciplinary, composite structure of this book is the result of a number of theoretical and pragmatic premises. Together, they combine to produce the frame which both hosts the individual chapters and uses them to suggest a macrotextual cohesion. For this reason, it is important to address these premises right at the start. The method will follow a linear, although unorthodox, form of reasoning: each single expression chosen for the title of this introductory chapter will be used as a stepping stone, from the verb 'Mapping' to the phrase 'Long American Century'. After this, a few pages will be devoted to the individual contributions of the fifteen chapters which constitute the book, and a concluding section will suggest future developments and point to still uncultivated areas of study.

The intention to 'map' a field is in itself a declaration of intent. It suggests an interest in defining and categorizing phenomena. The challenge, as always, is to find the right balance between the inevitable simplifications of the 'bigger picture' and the need to respect the variety and complexity of each individual case. The latter is, we hope, well-evidenced by the rich and overflowing content of the fifteen chapters. The former is a more contentious issue. This book is the product of a collective endeavour for which each of the fifteen contributors was free to choose the parameters of their own specialist study. It would be foolish to expect a tightly-knit pattern from such an operation. The fragmentation is even more inevitable as a consequence of the different disciplines involved and the different objects of study. At the same time, the attempt at 'mapping' a phenomenon is indicative of the intention to favour a historical approach and a systematic use of data, capable of suggesting trends and tendencies. The presence of a substantial number of linguistic studies is a corollary to this. Within the humanities, the quantitative approach which is typical of the social and hard sciences has been adopted especially in linguistic studies. Although this is no magic wand to the study of the complexities of human culture, it is nonetheless a reminder of the need to produce hard data, systematically collected, in order to try to understand the main developments within a certain

community, however fluidly defined. Each chapter, within its confines, attempts to do that.

‘Cultural change’ is the object of our study. Human evolution is marked by a constant process of change at both an individual and a social level. The factors at play are innumerable, hence the challenge of trying to define the set of influences which drive development in a certain direction. When it comes to cultural change the challenge is twofold. The first relates to the definition of ‘culture’. The concept we envision here is a trade between the anthropological notion of culture — as the distinctive customs, social behaviour and products of a certain community — and the one traditionally associated with the humanities, where culture relates to a more specific ambit, that is, the artistic and intellectual products of said community. This is a well-trodden territory, first defined by the Cultural Studies ‘turn’ of Stuart Hall’s Birmingham School in 1960s Britain and, with regard to Italy, already set out by Antonio Gramsci thirty years earlier, with his reflections on popular culture and on the key notion of hegemony.¹ Our approach does not aim at a discussion of the economic and political dimension which subsumes the approach of Cultural Studies: a choice dictated by the scholarly boundaries of this volume, certainly not because this dimension is not part of the relationship between Italy and the USA. As already mentioned, the historical element is the one which drives our approach, hence the field of Cultural History, as more recently defined by Peter Burke, is the one which probably best reflects the theoretical premises of this book.² A multi-disciplinary approach is necessary in any such study, but equally necessary is defining its disciplinary spread. Language is at the centre as the most evident cultural trait defining an individual’s identity (however multilingual and subjectively conceived). Around it, we have imagined a wider field loosely defined as narrative. By narrative we mean storytelling in its more traditional manifestations — that is, tales told through written as much as visual and performative means — but also other forms through which the story of a community takes shape. This line of approach has produced scholarly forays into relatively less institutionalised areas of study such as itinerant shows, the car industry, folk music, and the study of places as ‘contact zones’ between different cultures.³

The second challenge concerns the study of ‘change’. Nobody would deny that individuals and societies change over time. They also change in space, and within this discourse we are comfortable with a fluid definition of space as proposed by Doreen Massey.⁴ The definition of change, however, has not received much theoretical attention. Once again, we thought that the discipline of linguistics could provide some inspiration. Contact linguistics aims to study the consequences of the reciprocal influence of languages when, for a number of different reasons, they come into contact with each other. One must distinguish between two different categories of contacts: those involving human mobility, and the cases of indirect cultural influence and exchange. Languages — and, we implicitly argue, cultures — can change both as a result of their encounter with other languages and cultures, through direct speaker interaction, and as a result of the indirect influence exerted by other languages or cultures thanks to their perceived prestige but without regular,

large-scale speaker interaction (here most Cultural Studies theorists would warn us of the unequal economic and political prestige of the languages and cultures in contact: and, once again, the Italy/USA case would provide fertile ground).⁵

This eventually takes us to the core of this book: the choice of 'Italy and the United States of America'. The previous comments about contact linguistics indirectly suggest that a most stimulating field of study should contain examples of both direct and indirect contact. The cultural history of the interaction between Italy and the USA during the twentieth century provides precisely that context. On the one hand we have the transnational phenomenon of Italian migration to — and return from — the USA, and on the other the influence of US culture on Italian society, which was based on political, economic and technological factors, but did not involve large-scale human mobility. There is therefore a methodological attraction to this two-way relationship. This, moreover, is amply strengthened by the importance of the cultural relation in both directions. On the one hand, the recent fortune of the transnational approach to the study of culture makes it particularly relevant to reflect on the case of the impact of Italian culture (again, however, accurately sub-defined) in a country, the USA, which has built its own identity under the continuous cultural stimulation from new waves of migrants from all over the world. At the other end of the spectrum, it would be difficult to deny that so-called 'Americanization' was a major, possibly the biggest cultural influence on Italian society in the twentieth century. The actual presence of the US army during the liberation of Italy in 1943–45 and the subsequent presence of US troops in various bases throughout the country was certainly a factor at play, as Charles L. Leavitt IV's chapter on Tombolo in this book shows. At the same time, other chapters will show how the influence of US culture began to permeate Italian culture well before the Second World War, and even in the second half of the twentieth century, its influence acted well beyond the effect of the direct contact with the few thousand US troops on Italian soil.

Finally, the notion of a 'long American century' is no foolish attempt to mimic Eric Hobsbawm's erudite and paradigm-shifting notion of a 'long nineteenth century', nor to compete with his later definition of a 'short twentieth century'. Our rationale is more pragmatic, dictated first and foremost by the chronological boundaries marked by some of the fifteen chapters in this volume. At the same time, this has revealed a logic which has historical and cultural implications too. At one end, when considering the rise of the USA as a world-leading economy, historians would agree that the expansion of the use of electricity in the latter part of the nineteenth century coincided with the capacity of US entrepreneurs to embrace this new technology in order to bring industrial production in all sorts of different fields to levels which progressively left the European continent behind. In other words, the century of US economic supremacy has its roots in the last years of the nineteenth century.⁶ At the other end of the spectrum, one could argue that it is in the early years of the twenty-first century that the USA has begun to lose its dominant position. In economic terms, according to the International Monetary Fund, in 2014 China began to overtake the USA as the country with the largest

Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).⁷ Culturally, however, the process is far from having reached a tipping point. If nothing else, the English language (imposed by US President Woodrow Wilson as the language of diplomacy back in the aftermath of the First World War) is today even more pervasive than in the previous century. Within the confines of our study, it is also evident that the reciprocal influence of Italian and US culture is far from over. At the same time it is taking different shapes, with new waves of Italian migrants arriving in the USA with levels of education and skills which were unthinkable during most of the twentieth century. Equally, the global economy in which the USA as much as Italy has to operate is producing effects which, once again, seemed impossible only a couple of decades ago. A symbolic episode is the *de facto* acquisition of a giant of the US car industry, Chrysler, by the Turin-based firm FIAT, and the subsequent merger and ‘globalization’ of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles as a London-based corporation. Once again, it would be tempting to allow the political and economic discourse to be part of the conversation. As shall be mentioned in the concluding considerations of this Introduction, it is a dimension which might well be part of future studies stemming from this volume. However, within the linguistic and narrative confines of this book, a passing comment related to this episode can be made in relation to storytelling. A highly popular animation film produced by Pixar in 2006, *Cars*, contains an endearing narrative featuring anthropomorphic cars. The plot is entirely set in the most iconic of US settings, a fictional Monument Valley, and the characters display a variety of personalities associated with types of cars. In one case, two characters are explicitly associated with their migrant origin: they are Luigi and Guido, proud owners of a tyre shop, and comically presented in the humble shape of a yellow Fiat 500 and a small forklift. Only at the end of the film, the more glamorous side of the Italian car industry makes a brief cameo appearance when a Ferrari turns up (voiced by Michael Schumacher himself) to the irrepressible excitement of the two Italian migrants who end up fainting on the spot. One could suggest that what is at play here is a fairly old-fashioned representation of US society, with the Italian migrant playing a minor, comic role (it is a ‘functional’ use of the migrant as Giorgio Bertellini convincingly shows in his chapter). Very interestingly, when the sequel *Cars 2* came out in 2010, an Italian character played a much more central role, and this time it was not a migrant: Francesco Bernoulli (voiced by Italian American actor John Turturro) is an Italian Formula One champion who challenges the US hero of *Cars* to a world grand prix. The fact that the year before, in June 2009, Sergio Marchionne added to his role of Chief Executive Officer of FIAT that of CEO of the Chrysler Group (the major step which led to the merger in 2014) is an indication of a tell-tale coincidence (in the literal sense) between history and fiction which might inspire further insights.

Finally, the twentieth century is sometimes called ‘the American century’, and it is from there that we have borrowed the term for our title.⁸ This, however, should also be complemented with a clarification. Throughout this book we have endeavoured to offer a homogeneous use of the abbreviation and acronyms used to define the United States of America. In particular, the adjective ‘American’ and

the noun ‘America’ imply a degree of ambiguity since they can be equally used to define the wider concept and geographical reality of the two American continents. For this reason, unless it is imposed by specialist usage or, naturally, when part of a solidified expression — such as ‘American Dream’ — we have decided to propose uniformity and overall clarity with the adoption of two simple acronyms: ‘USA’ as a noun, and ‘US’ as an adjective. It goes without saying that there is also an ideological dimension behind this choice. The use of ‘American’ as referring strictly to the USA somehow imposes a hegemonic stamp on the expression. Since unambiguous and ideologically neutral expressions are at hand, we thought we should rely on them.

Fifteen Takes on Cultural Change

As already suggested, this collection of chapters explores the impact of cultural contact and human mobility on two countries which reciprocally influenced each other. It brings together a series of overviews and specific case studies of the relationship and exchanges — linguistic, literary and visual — between Italy and the USA, from the last years of the nineteenth century to the first two decades of the twenty-first. The cross-disciplinary and transnational approach brings it into a number of different directions but in other ways they all address the same question, namely, how and to what extent cultural contact can affect long-term historical change.

As far as language is concerned, several studies have suggested that Anglo-American influences increased during the second half of the twentieth century, but no book-length contribution exists that takes a detailed diachronic approach to this expansion: our volume focuses on a period which is long enough to study the gradual transformation of the Italian language as a whole, but also specific enough to assess the impact of contacts with English in particular varieties of the language, and in different communicative domains, socio-cultural milieus and historical contexts. Another understudied aspect of the contacts between Italian and English is the role of US English — in other words, the question of how and to what extent a distinction can be made between the influence of the USA and that of Britain and other English-speaking countries.⁹ Addressing this question and weighing up US influences are indeed two of the aims of our volume.

With regard to literary and visual narratives, the radically different kind of contact between mass migration of Italians to the USA and the great influence of US culture in twentieth-century Italy comes to the fore. In the first case, a number of chapters tackle a range of issues related to the movement, preservation and transformation of Italy’s national and regional heritage once Italian migrants settled and integrated in the USA. In the latter case, the challenge is to examine the channels through which US culture has been progressively perceived as a model — to adopt as much as to contrast with — in different fields, such as popular culture, literature, cinema, etc. Again, a diachronic approach allows for a better perception of the varying speeds with which different areas of culture reacted to

this phenomenon. A fundamental issue which concerns language but has powerful wider implications with regard to the absorption of US culture concerns the field of education, that is the slow process through which English replaced French as the first foreign language of study.

The fifteen chapters are divided into four parts. In the first, ‘Historical contexts and channels of contact’, five chapters introduce the role of language, education, literature and film, and their importance for a discussion of cultural contact and change between Italy and the USA. The following three sections open up to a wide range of case studies. Parts II and III are divided into broadly defined chronological sub-periods: ‘From the late nineteenth century to the Second World War’ and ‘From the Second World War to the twenty-first century’. The distinction between the two halves of the century is adopted not only because of the periodizing value of the Second World War in modern history at large, but also because of the widely recognized role of the war and its aftermath as a turning point for the Americanization of Italian society (which, in itself, has been the object of a considerable amount of scholarship in a number of disciplines).¹⁰ The fourth and final part focuses on ‘Long-term influences and effects’, providing wider perspectives over the course of the twentieth century and in some case touching upon more recent, ongoing trends.

Our approach is not to group the chapters by discipline, but rather to order them chronologically and according to scope, to better allow a dialogue between topics, and provide a clearer picture of the processes of cultural contact that have been taking place. The volume also showcases new research — quantitative, interpretative and archival — which can illuminate basic questions of cultural contact in an original way and are inspiring beyond their disciplinary boundaries.

Part I opens with Matthew Reza’s broad study of oral narrative culture in Italian migrant communities in the USA during the twentieth century. Drawing from a range of sources from the Eastern and North-Eastern States — New Jersey, New York State, Minnesota and Illinois — as well as the West Coast, and California, Reza’s chapter addresses the question of the survival of Italian fairy and folk tales and the influence of written and non-Italian sources in the documented stories. Reza also focuses on changing generational attitudes to heritage through accounts of Americans learning about their Italian forebears through college assignments, all of which argues for a coexistence of literary, non-literary, oral and written cultures.

Virginia Pulcini’s chapter addresses the attitudes towards the English language in twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century Italy. These linguistic attitudes have been influenced by different views on Anglo-American culture and lifestyles, ranging from a mixture of fascination and wariness at the beginning of the twentieth century, to overt political opposition during the Fascist regime, and finally to generally welcoming and favourable sentiments since the Second World War. Pulcini’s overview focuses especially on the stances taken by lexicographers and linguists engaged in the compilation of Italian dictionaries and in the description of the state of the language vis-à-vis the substantial inflow of Anglicisms. Finally,

Pulcini considers recent debates on the adoption of English as a language of instruction in Italian universities, which have stirred new hostile feelings against the expanding role of English.

The following chapter, by Giancarlo Schirru, looks at the process through which Italy's educational system moved away from French as the traditional foreign language being taught in schools at all levels. Through a historical narrative supported by an original set of statistical data, Schirru shows the complex progress of English teaching in Italian schools during the twentieth century within the context of the national debate on language education and foreign-language teaching. Particular attention is paid to the development of lower secondary education and, overall, on how the political and intellectual debate influenced the particular field of educational policies. The chapter also shows how this influence reflected Italy's geopolitical position between the European and US spheres of influence.

The discussion then moves on to film studies with Giorgio Bertellini's stimulating overview of the ways in which US cinema portrayed Italy and Italians during the first half-century of its existence. The identification of four key moments, with the early representations in silent movies and Italian neorealist cinema at the two ends of the spectrum, provides a stimulating analysis of the ways in which the binary notion of Italians as either migrants in the USA or citizens in their homeland has evolved. Bertellini's original contribution lies in moving beyond the erudite, historical outline in order to offer an insight into continuities which somehow question received scholarly opinions. In particular, an issue such as the reception of Italian neorealist cinema in the USA, which one would take as uncontroversially settled, is revealed to be intricately attached to the wider discourse of US policies and a general tendency toward 'US-centric liberal compassion' in the early post-Second World War years.

The final chapter brings us into the twenty-first century, with Teresa Fiore's chapter that draws a distinction from the first phase of the migration of Italians to the USA, and considers the highly educated 'New Italians' of the new century. Fiore focuses closely on work by Elena Attala-Perazzini, Chiara Marchelli and Tiziana Rinaldi Castro, showing how their narratives resist easy categorization and labels by belonging both to Italian literature abroad and to American literature in Italian. Fiore's analysis goes beyond a simple binary approach of looking at the interactions of two cultures, and engages with the interplay of numerous cultures on the level of the individual. Fiore reveals the complexity bound up in the issue of the migration of New Italians, and the need for a plethora of labels to reflect the variety in their experiences, a plurality of identities for a nexus of numerous cultures, interactions and atypical migration experiences, all of which questions and reconsiders the traditional narratives of Italian migration to the USA.

Part II presents some specific cases related to the first half of the so-called long twentieth century. Luca Cottini looks at the impact of the first arrival of US culture on Italian soil through the itinerant show which the legendary Bill Cody, otherwise known as Buffalo Bill, took to Italy on a European Tour in 1890 and 1906. This is a cultural event which achieved the rare objective of impacting on both popular

imagination and the Italian intelligentsia. The first is indicated by the sheer popularity of the show, thanks also to Bill Cody's sophisticated use of publicity and to his organizational skills which, it could be argued, were in themselves an example of the emergence of the USA as a great entrepreneurial superpower. At the same time, Cottini expands on the fertile influence of the *Wild West* show on the work of authors as different as Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Emilio Salgari and the composer Giacomo Puccini.

With Guido Bonsaver's chapter on Turin in the early years of the century, the focus on the influence of US culture on Italy is maintained. However, in his analysis of the film and car industries in their early years, Bonsaver's chapter shows the extent to which, first of all, there was an early perception of the rising importance of the USA as a world-leading economy, and, secondly, that Italian entrepreneurs in both industries had no qualms in taking the fight to US soil. The rationale of pairing films and cars is carefully argued in the opening pages, and the parallel analysis produces a substantial study which proves the fruitfulness of comparing different ambits in order to understand dramatic shifts in national culture such as, in this case, the move from France to the USA as an influential foreign model.

Manuela di Franco's chapter focuses on the publishing industry in Italy and the case of *Omnibus*, a weekly cultural magazine founded by Leo Longanesi in 1937. Rather than departing from a stance of labelling *Omnibus* according to its alleged Fascist or anti-Fascist traits, di Franco instead analyses the ambivalent and contradictory nature of articles in *Omnibus* on the USA, and the heavy presence of US cultural products in the magazine. Di Franco highlights how Hollywood, in particular, is depicted both in its glitzy and aspirational appeal but also as a space of violence and greed which is used to ridicule US society. Despite this negative representation, di Franco argues that the sheer space dedicated to the USA in *Omnibus* responded to an undeniable fascination that the USA inspired in the minds of Italians.

Part III moves beyond the watershed marked by the Second World War. After Italy's liberation, the presence of US troops became an inevitable source of contact, which could and was interpreted in very different ways. Charles L. Leavitt IV's study examines one of the hot spots of these encounters, a US military encampment near Livorno in Tombolo. Drawing from Pratt, Leavitt argues that Tombolo serves as a 'cultural contact zone', as a space of enforced cross-cultural interaction between on the one hand the racial US and Italian regimes of Jim Crow and Fascism, and on the other the corresponding Civil Rights and Italian anti-Fascist movements. Leavitt furthers the discussion on the interactions between Italian and US cultures where he argues that the presence of African American soldiers at Tombolo had a profound impact on life in Italy and on the post-war African American experience in the USA, and which revises the *mito dell'America* for Italians as well as a *mito dell'Italia* for Blacks in the USA.

The second chapter of this section is the only one entering the territory of music history, folk music in this case. Rachel E. Love's study of the interaction between some leading figures in Italy's 'folk revival' of the 1960s argues that US popular

culture provided a rich yet problematic source of inspiration for leftist musicians and intellectuals. After a discussion of the friendship between two key figures, Alan Lomax and Roberto Leydi, the chapter examines how various artists of the Italian folk revival — and in particular Giovanna Marini — adapted styles borrowed from American folk traditions to critique US politics and culture. Particular focus is given to how Marini's experiences at the Folkstudio influenced her musical style and fostered her growing disillusionment with US politics.

The section continues with Federico Faloppa's richly documented chapter on the fortunes and misfortunes of political correctness and the related expression *politically correct* (or PC) in both English and Italian. This chapter traces the history of the notion of political correctness from its origins in the international communist movement during 1920s to its use as part of the struggle against ethnic, sexual and social discrimination in the USA, and finally to its rejection by the political Right in the 1980s and 1990s. With the help of substantial textual evidence, Faloppa reconstructs the history of *political(ly) correct(ness)* in US English, as well as its adoption and adaptation in Italian (where it has given rise to *politicamente corretto*) and its perception by Italian speakers especially since the 1990s. As in other chapters on language, the outcomes of linguistic and cultural contact are analysed by Faloppa in connection with the work of lexicographers and other specialists; in his chapter, however, they are also linked to more general debates on the notion of political correctness in contemporary Italian society.

The final four chapters comprising Part IV deal with phenomena which are traced through a chronological trajectory which spans the entire 'American' century. Unsurprisingly three out of four of them concern the world of language history. As already suggested at the beginning, linguistic changes are often slower than in other walks of cultural production. Equally interesting, however, is Mattia Lento's study of the geographical and symbolic journey of the expression used to define the areas of a city in which Italians settled in large quantities: 'Little Italy'. Lento retraces the history of the term, first in the USA and then its emergence in Europe, and argues that this movement across the Atlantic plays a significant role in the valorization of the historical experience of Italian migration of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Lento then explores in greater depth the case study of Little Italy in the Aussersihl quarter of Zurich, one of the most important European cities in the history of Italian migration. Through the medium of film, Lento analyses the interactions of Swiss and Italian cultures, and demonstrates the shift over time of the term 'Little Italy' from one with negative connotations to one with more positive associations, particularly stylishness.

In her chapter, Laura Pinnavaia describes the influence that the Italian language has had on the English language in Britain and in the USA. She does so by examining the number, type and semantic area of Italian borrowings attested in two important dictionaries, the *Oxford English Dictionary* for British English and the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary for US English. Pinnavaia's analysis shows that, since the 1900s, owing among other things to the strong presence of Italians in the USA, not only British English but also and possibly more so US English has become influenced by Italian,

with numerous borrowings that refer to matters regarding scientific and cultural life, including the world of food. Pinnavaia's chapter complements other linguistic chapters which look at influences going in the opposite direction (i.e. from English to Italian). At the same time, it mirrors Fanfani's chapter, which immediately follows it, in that they both gather new evidence by focusing on contact between Italian and a particular variety of English — namely US English.

Finally, both Fanfani's and Carlucci's chapters add to the existing scholarship on the influence of the English language on Italian, which has so far focused almost exclusively on lexical influence. In his chapter, Massimo Fanfani does not deal with Anglicisms in general, but with words and expressions which have appeared in Italian under the specific influence of US English. Although it is not always possible to separate completely the linguistic influence of the USA from that of Britain and other English-speaking countries, Fanfani's move in this direction enables him to provide fresh and original insights into the spread of lexical Anglicisms — or, as he calls them in his chapter, of 'Americanisms'. He reconstructs the history of a significant number of words of US provenance and shows how their adoption by Italian speakers was linked to historical phenomena and events affecting various semantic fields (from the economy and work relationships, as in the case of *boss*, *business*, *contractor*, *trust* and so on, to politics and society, as exemplified by *abolizionismo* 'abolitionism' and *piattaforma* 'programme of a political movement').

Alessandro Carlucci's chapter moves beyond the lexicon by exploring how and to what extent Italian grammar is also changing under the influence of English. Drawing on recent discussions of linguistic contact and change, the chapter offers a definition of contact-influenced change, whereby internal development and contact with other languages are not seen as mutually exclusive factors but can in fact combine to lead to change — including changes in the frequency and productivity of an existing feature in the affected language. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses, this conception of change is applied to two features of Italian grammar. Special attention is paid to the role of translation as a source of contact-influenced change, with the inclusion within the analysed texts of both literary and non-literary translations from English.

An Open Conclusion

The complex nature of this book no doubt requires some final considerations on the areas — theoretical, methodological and discipline-specific — which have been explored and on the directions of further research that they might be signalling towards. There is a popular saying that sometimes one should 'throw away the map' and proceed following one's own instincts. This is far from what we might want to argue, but at the same time it is a fact that a map, any map, is the result of particular choice, that is, the adoption of a number of conventions — to the exclusion of others — through which the subject matter under scrutiny is examined and signified in a particular fashion. Since childhood, we all have been mesmerized by the different results of mapping planet Earth according to one or other cartographer's system.

Does this make all maps useless and *de facto* ‘wrong’? Of course, the answer is not a simple yes or no. Similarly, in our case we have been trying to adhere to a number of conventions in order to suggest how the complexity of the question of cultural influence can be addressed in order to facilitate dialogue beyond disciplinary confines. Language, as we mentioned at the beginning of this introductory chapter, has been put at the centre for both conceptual and methodological reasons. It was one of many options; but we thought that, for our aim, it provided a solid ground and allowed us to build our working practice around it. The systematic use of data in linguistic studies has proved to be a sobering reminder of the need for a similar approach if our aim is to historicise and properly contextualize cultural events. At the same time, if language, narrative and history were our disciplinary points of reference, it is revealing to note the recurrence of two more areas of study which kept re-emerging and implicitly asking for an examination of their role in the process. We are referring to politics and economics. The relative role of the Italian American community in forging what we might want to call the collective cultural values of the USA — however imaginary and kaleidoscopic — is certainly linked to its political and economic weight in US public life. What links eleven unknown Sicilian immigrants lynched in Louisiana in 1891 to the rise of public Italian American figures such as those of Rudolph Valentino and Alphonse Capone in the 1920s and, later, the first generation of Italian American politicians spurred by the career of Fiorello La Guardia, and the first Italian American banker, Amadeo Giannini, whose Californian banking empire grew into the largest in the USA? It is the narrative of an immigrant community which generation after generation climbed up the social ladder of US society. Giannini founded his first bank in 1904 — called Bank of Italy — aiming to serve the local immigrant community. By 1930 he came to the conclusion that Bank of America was a better trading name, and his financial services helped the post-Depression recovery of the US film industry. If animation cinema was mentioned earlier, it is perhaps appropriate to remember that Giannini’s Bank of America was behind what in 1937 was considered Hollywood’s maddest film production to date: the creation of Walt Disney’s first long animation film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. The film simply made cultural history; and so, one should argue, did Amadeo Giannini.

Similar considerations can be made at the other end of the geographical span of this volume. The history of the reception and influence of US culture in Italy cannot be fully understood unless one addresses the political and economic issues which shaped the boundaries through which it developed. The mass-scale expansion of the culture industry in the twentieth century implied the escalation of the commercial revenues — and conflicts — attached to cultural production. This is easily shown if one thinks of specific markets such as the film industry. After the arrival of sound cinema, the European national industries could only rival US competition through protectionist policies and state funding. And this is equally true of more traditional, ‘nobler’ arts such as literature. Particularly during the Fascist period, the translation and diffusion of American literature was constrained by the regime’s cultural policies. Shrewd publishers such as Arnaldo Mondadori

were fully aware of the advantages linked to a close and friendly relationship with Benito Mussolini. Politics and economics were at the centre of Mondadori's considerations whenever he made a case for certain novels to be translated and published. He argued that translations should be published for two main reasons: in order prevent foreign publishers from benefitting from a ban (he would recurrently state that educated Italians would either read those novels in French translation, or some Swiss publishing house would enter the frame); and as a compensation for the nationalistic contribution of his publishing house to the publication of contemporary Italian authors (who, with rare exceptions, sold far fewer copies than the foreign authors he translated).

As for politics and economics in the post-Second World War years, it is simply impossible to reach an adequate understanding of the influence of US culture without taking into account the pervasive way in which the US administration took the initiative — and the US cultural industry followed suit — in shaping the new, republican Italy which rose from the ashes of the Fascist dictatorship. Cultural history, in other words, needs the help of experts in the political and economic fields. The multi-disciplinary boundaries of this volume do not extend as wide, but future initiatives of this kind should perhaps do so more systematically.

One other question to be addressed in this concluding section is the level of the overall contribution of this volume to the understanding of cultural change. As already said, the adoption of the USA/Italy case addresses two very different cases of cultural influence — that is, cultural change in the presence or absence of human mobility on a large scale. This in itself provides, we hope, a contribution to the debate, showing the complexity of the interaction and the many different factors at play. At the same time, no single chapter in this volume attempted a theorization of the differences between these two types of cultural influence. Linguistic studies are probably the most advanced in placing this distinction at the centre of their analyses and, indeed, the distinction is mentioned in some of the chapters penned by linguists. However, a fully-fledged theorization pertaining more widely to cultural history is still to come. It is not present here any more than it is present, to our knowledge, in the wider scholarly debate. This is another area in which we hope that this volume will provide useful case study material which, in the future, can be used as a source of inspiration for a theoretical discussion.

Finally, with reference to the position of this volume within the field of Italian American studies, our hope is that the clear parallel drawn here between the two sides of the USA/Italy cultural relations will alert all scholars in the field to the need of always keeping this perspective in the back of their mind. It goes without saying that in many instances, works on specific cases of cultural contact and change do not require this double-take to be methodologically present. This is what happens, after all, in many chapters in this volume too. However, we hope that readers will agree with the notion that the cultural history of Italians in the USA and that of Italian society during the long 'American' century are interconnected at so many different levels as to make their parallel study a welcome approach.

Notes to the Introduction

1. See Kate Crehan, *Gramsci, Culture and Anthropology* (London: Pluto Press, 2002) and Tullio de Mauro, 'Una certa concezione della cultura', in *Tornare a Gramsci. Una cultura per l'Italia*, ed. by Gaspare Polizzi (Rome: Avverbi, 2010), pp. 117–25.
2. Peter Burke, *What Is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004). See also Anne Showstack Sassoon, 'Raymond Williams, Stuart Hall, Gramsci e noi', in *Gramsci, le culture e il mondo*, ed. by Giancarlo Schirru (Rome: Viella, 2009), pp. 73–87.
3. The obvious reference here is to Marie-Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).
4. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005).
5. See Arturo Tosi, 'Languages in Contact with and without Speaker Interaction', in A. L. Lepschy and A. Tosi, eds, *Rethinking Languages in Contact* (Oxford: Legenda, 2006), pp. 160–72.
6. See for example Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World 1869–1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); David Ellwood, *The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
7. See the IMF World Economic Outlook Database, published in October 2014. <<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/02/weodata/index.aspx>> [last accessed 23 March 2018].
8. The expression, made famous by Henry Luce in his 1941 essay, has recently been adopted by historian Alfred McCoy in his book *In the Shadow of the American Century: The Rise and Decline of U.S. Global Power* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2017).
9. In literature on English as a global language, it is widely accepted that British English and US English are the two most prominent native varieties, because of their widely recognized role in political, economic and artistic life, as well as in language teaching. This role is confirmed — and at the same time further enhanced — by their prestigious tradition of grammatical and lexicographic codification.
10. See for example: Umberto Eco, Gian Paolo Ceserani and Beniamino Placido, *La riscoperta dell'America* (Bari: Laterza 1984); Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); David Ellwood, 'Containing Modernity, Domesticating America in Italy', in A. Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2006), pp. 253–76; Antonio Cardini, ed., *Il miracolo economico italiano: 1958–1963* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007); Stefano Cavazza, Emanuela Scarpellini, eds, *La rivoluzione dei consumi. Società di massa e benessere in Europa 1945–2000* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010).

