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HEROISM, VICE, AND THE RISORGIMENTO

Garibaldi: invention of a hero. By Lucy Riall. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007. Pp. 482. ISBN 978-0-300-11212-2. £19.99.

Garibaldi: citizen of the world. By Alfonso Scirocco, trans. by Allan Cameron. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Pp. 442. ISBN 978-0-691-11540-5. £19.95.

Giuseppe Mazzini and the globalization of democratic nationalism, 1830–1920. Ed. by C. A. Bayly and Eugenio F. Biagini. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 419. ISBN 978-0-19-726431-7. £45.00.

Risorgimento in exile: Italian émigrés and the Liberal International in the post-Napoleonic era. By Maurizio Isabella. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. 284. ISBN 978-0-19-957067-6. £55.00.

Italian vices: nation and character from the Risorgimento to the Republic. By Silvana Patriarca. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. ISBN 978-0-521-76101-7. £55.00.

Italy turns 150. This year, as the anniversary of the Unification of Italy is being celebrated throughout Italy with a number of public events, the inevitable controversies that accompany such a politically and emotionally charged occurrence are beginning to come to the forefront of Italian national discourse. Judging from the tenor and discursive temperaments of ongoing discussions among Italian politicians, public opinion, and intellectuals, an external observer would suppose that the Italian nation, if one actually exists, is more fragmented now than ever before. Nevertheless, what this raucous national dissension obscures is the fact that one of the definitive hallmarks of modern Italy's first century and a half of existence is the single-minded determination of its rulers to forge a national identity out of the considerable regional, cultural, and idiosyncratic diversity that constitutes the nation. Given the enduring discord and acrimony in the polity, it is obvious that efforts at national unification have succeeded only partially and require more work. In this context, historians seem willing to participate in the celebrations and, consequently, Italian bookstores have been flooded with both celebratory and cynical publications on the Risorgimento as well as other essays and books on the anniversary. Nonetheless, this review article offers a critical reading not of the recent wave of publications, but of a previous one, namely, the books that have appeared on the subject of the Risorgimento and of the Unification of Italy from 2007 to 2010 in the run up to this year's anniversary.

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Biographies of national heroes emerged as some of the most important books to grapple with the theme of the Risorgimento and Unification. Of all the heroes, martyrs, and intellectuals of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Garibaldi is undoubtedly the most celebrated. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that two important biographies have been published about him in one year. These two monographs, however, are so radically different in their conceptual and narrative temperaments that one would be forgiven for assuming that the authors were writing about two different people.

Lucy Riall's *Garibaldi* is perhaps the best-written biography of the Italian general. Unlike others, it does not merely mythologize and lionize Garibaldi; it also proffers powerful insights into why he captured the imagination of Italian society. Riall accounts for Garibaldi's immense fame by linking it with the still largely unexplored, but familiar, theme of masculinity, charm, and sexual appeal. To many, Garibaldi was a semi-God, the secular prophet of the liberation of Italy from foreign oppression. Men admired him for his heroic life, for his status as the 'ideal man', as an epitome of strength, for being seemingly invincible, and for his well-earned honours and awards that extended beyond Italy. Women, on the other hand, loved him for his disarming charm, his romantic and adventurous life, and for Mediterranean looks that evoked ideas of exotic, Oriental, erotic adventures.

Protestant men and women saw in him their hope that one day the temporal as well spiritual authority of the pope would end. What is missing in Riall's fascinating accounts, however, is a more complete exploration of the role and centrality of Garibaldi's participation in the events of the Roman Republic, a revolutionary experiment that was followed with great interest by Protestants of both Great Britain and the USA (the only country officially to recognize the Roman Republic). Garibaldi's staunch defence of the Roman Republic against the French troops led by General Oudinot deserves a deeper examination because it had two lasting consequences: it increased British antipathy and adversarial stance towards the French, seen as the reactionary protectors of Roman Catholicism; and it gave Garibaldi enduring fame as a Christian hero who fought for the good of his country against the tyrannical and corrupt power of the papacy. For many Britons and Americans, the Risorgimento was a protracted crusade against the papacy and against what they saw as the superstitious and un-Christian practices of the Roman Catholic Church. The support that countries with Protestant majorities rendered to the Unification of Italy was mainly due to internal pressures arising from the tide of public opinion in their polities which, in the nineteenth century, were shot through with anti-Catholic sentiments. Protestants all over the world hoped that Garibaldi was the man who would, once and for all, destroy the unjust, inefficient, and out-dated temporal power of the Roman pontiff. It is therefore fundamental that any writing on Garibaldi treat the religious dimension of his politics in sufficient length and depth. Indeed, Professor Riall offers a detailed

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and original analysis of the religious overtones that the Garibaldi cult had within Italy, where he was likened to Christ.

In spite of her limited treatment of foreign perspectives on the religious aspects of Garibaldi's life, Riall deserves credit for showing that Garibaldi's life, for all its epic heroism and eroticism, was all too human. A father of many sons and daughters, he lived with the remorse of not having spent enough time with them, and never recovered from the death of his beloved wife Anita. The general forlornly looked for consolation in the arms of many other women, and each romantic entanglement seemed to only deepen his loss. His romantic and sexual adventures were distractions and temporary refuges, which did little to attenuate his enduring melancholy. Reading through the pages of Riall's biography, one is struck by the frailty of a hero who, during his lifetime, was admired, revered, imitated, and celebrated. Not even the Unification of Italy brought him consolation, as he was soon to be disappointed by the exclusion of Rome from the kingdom of Italy.

Beyond its sensitive portrayal of Garibaldi's private sorrows though, Riall's biography also explains how Garibaldi became the embodiment of a popular and radical Risorgimento. She draws from the methods of the new Risorgimento cultural history, pioneered by Alberto Mario Banti and others, to depict Garibaldi not only as a military commander, but also as the figure that made the Risorgimento a mass movement. By the time of the Unification in 1861, he had come to be regarded as the secular leader of 'the religion of the Italian nation' (p. 269), a nation at once confident and modern. Although doubts remain as to whether the Risorgimento can credibly be seen as a 'mass movement', the thousands of professionals, artisans, and workers who participated in the Italian campaigns on the side of Garibaldi certainly saw him as the military commander who would lead them to victory. But victory for what? It is probable that the men who fought with Garibaldi sought limited victories, such as the conquest and liberation of Sicily, but did they really know what they were doing? Did they appreciate the bigger picture of events? Were they consciously participating in a movement for the Unification of the Italian peninsula? Were they also aware that their actions might have caused a major European conflagration? Some were surely enthusiastic believers in the idea of a united Italy, but one wonders how much of this assertion is valid. In any event, insofar as the Risorgimento was a popular revolution, Garibaldi was its leader, as Riall rightly argues.

While Riall's verve and care with detail makes her book a definitive biography of the general, it is certainly not a book for beginners. Despite the care with which she reconstructs Garibaldi's life, she is more interested in examining his role as the spiritual leader of the Italian revolution, in laying bare his great charisma as a communicator, and in calling attention to his physical allure. Anyone interested in a first glimpse of the life and works of the great commander would do well to start with Alfonso Scirocco's *Garibaldi*. Scirocco, an Emeritus Professor at the University of Naples, does not hide his profound

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admiration, even near veneration, of the man who made Italy. Reading Riall's book, we learn that Garibaldi was revered as a semi-God and as the new Christ during his lifetime. Indeed, it would not be too far from the truth to argue that, for some people even today, he is not only the last Cincinnatus, but also the leader of a secular religion: the idea of a united Italy.

Scirocco's biography was a bestseller in Italy, coinciding as it did with the two hundredth anniversary of Garibaldi's birth. To an academic reader, however, there would be little to learn from Scirocco's stories, for this is what his narrations of Garibaldi's adventures are. At times, the author is more adventurous and presents Garibaldi as the embodiment of pragmatic liberalism triumphing over secular ideologies and religions. However, even then, the reader's interest is curbed by the bewildering absence of footnotes. Scirocco's assertion that 'the most popular freedom fighter in the world' (p. 17) never let ideologies or, for that matter, ideas inform his actions is already known, but the Neapolitan historian makes his case even stronger than it had been made before and leads us to believe that, indeed, Garibaldi's immense popularity was mainly due to the carefully cultivated public perception that he led a simple, everyday life. Whereas Giuseppe Mazzini's ideas were largely inaccessible to the masses, Garibaldi's were understood even too well by a broader spectrum of Italian society. He was 'one of them', who was glorified and worshipped. We should be grateful to Professor Scirocco for the very clear and detailed account of a capitally important episode in the epic campaign of the Thousand which, albeit known, had always been recounted in a somewhat fragmented manner: when Garibaldi and the volunteers approached the shores of Marsala in Sicily, they were spotted by a steam-corvette of the Neapolitan navy. Garibaldi and his men were in range as they began unloading the boat. The corvette could have started a murderous bombardment had it not been for two British warships, HMS *Intrepid* and HMS *Argus*, which were sent to Marsala for the purpose of officially protecting property belonging to British nationals. The Bourbon captain feared that he would hurt the British and therefore only fired a few ineffectual shots when the revolutionaries were already safely inland. Garibaldi was to comment in his memoirs that 'the noble flag of Albion yet again contributed to the prevention of bloodletting, and I, the blue-eyed boy of these Lords of the Oceans, was protected by them for the hundredth time' (p. 249).

Garibaldi would always be drawn to Britain as the country of freedom, rule of law, and political liberalism, in his words, 'the country of independence and liberty' (p. 340). The British nation, in turn, went out of its way to accord honour to Garibaldi in an extraordinary celebration of a kind that had no parallel in the city of London: in 1864, Garibaldi visited the English capital and was greeted by more than half a million people, who made it difficult for Garibaldi's carriage to make even just a few hundred metres in the streets of London. Professor Scirocco gives a readable account of that experience in Garibaldi's life, although it has already been the object of many previous books

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and articles by, among others, Derek Beales and Riall. Unfortunately, however, Scirocco has no additional light to shed on the one part of Garibaldi's trip that still remains enigmatic: Why did he leave Britain so suddenly and so unexpectedly? He follows the prevailing explanation that mentions medical problems, but other historians are not convinced. There might have been sensitive political machinations at work. In any event, the queen was opposed to Garibaldi's invitation to visit England. So an adequate examination of the politics of Garibaldi's suspiciously hasty departure from Britain is yet to be made. On the whole, there are occasional slips in Scirocco's historical reconstruction, such as his claim that Lord John Russell was the home secretary in 1864 (p. 339). In 1864, Russell was foreign secretary, having served as home secretary only between 1835 and 1839 (in 1864, Sir George Grey was the home secretary).

Garibaldi was a humble man, but he was also a man of strong opinions. As would be expected, his humility and obduracy attracted him both staunch friends and virulent foes. But his relationship with Giuseppe Mazzini defied this binary: neither friend nor foe, Mazzini was repeatedly praised by Garibaldi. However, Garibaldi was eventually disappointed by Mazzini's refusal to come to any compromise with the Savoy monarchy. Garibaldi, a republican by choice but a pragmatist by vocation, decided that Italy's best hopes lay with the Piedmontese royal house. Therefore, he 'obeyed' Victor Emmanuel and put the south of Italy in the king's hands. Mazzini, on the other hand, was an unfaltering republican. He never conceded that a deal with the monarchy would be good for the future of Italy. He lived for a united and independent Italy, but one that was decidedly republican. A monarchic Italy was for Mazzini not Italy at all, but his uncompromising republicanism was not understandable to many, including Garibaldi.

An excellent collection of essays edited by Eugenio Biagini and Chris Bayly restores to Mazzini the international standing that had been somewhat overshadowed by Garibaldi's heroics. The editors ask why Mazzini was so influential around the world in the nineteenth as well as in the twentieth century, introducing a series of essays that explore the fascination that Mazzini exerted on very different groups of thinkers, politicians, and religious leaders. The volume opens with a piece by Nadia Urbinati, in which she persuasively argues that all of Mazzini's writings about the 'nation' should not be confused with nationalism in the vulgar sense of the word. Her contention is predicated on the fact that the Italian political theorist by nation meant a collective organization in which everybody felt a sense of duty towards the other members of that nation, as well as those of other, foreign nations. Nationalism or patriotism did not preclude cosmopolitanism or sympathetic concerns for other parts of the world. For Mazzini, it was everybody's duty to work towards equal treatment for the rest of humanity. Democracy was the only political system, in Mazzini's thought, which could make this possible. The internationalist impulses in Mazzini's politics are magisterially picked up by Maurizio Isabella

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who writes about Mazzini's global reach and his importance as one of the protagonists of the transition from proto-globalization to modern globalization. Despite the fame of *Giovine Europa*, Isabella's essay argues that Mazzini never intended or at least never wrote about establishing any international or supranational organization in the modern legal sense of the term. His was rather an 'ethical cosmopolitanism, one in which peace and international stability would result from the virtue inherent in the domestic political life of the European nations once they were blessed with democratic and republican institutions' (p. 58).

Mazzinianism was, in fact, a religion. It was a secular religious creed that emphasized the importance of the youth in European revolutions and that promoted action, progress, hostility to materialism and individualism, whilst expressing strong anti-communist views. The priest of this religious republicanism was Mazzini himself, who saw his life as a mission devoted to the independence of Italy and the erection and strengthening of its democratic institutions. To Mazzini, the collective always came before the individual, and duties unquestionably and invariably came before rights. Whilst we learn of Mazzini's political zeal in a fine essay with long quotations by Simon Levis Sullam, Colin Barr's excellent 'Giuseppe Mazzini and Irish nationalism, 1845–70' explores and uncovers new ground. We learn, for instance, that despite his internationalism, Mazzini knew little or nothing about Ireland – he simply was not interested in the place. One might be led to believe that the Irish, conversely, would not know anything about Mazzini. Barr, however, shows that this is not the case, as the Irish were indeed very interested in Mazzini's ideas and in consequence Mazzini left a lasting mark on Irish political life. Most of the Catholic clergy, naturally, despised him, but on several occasions the clergy betrayed the fact that their hostility was more a consequence of their insufficient familiarity with his philosophical and political thought than anything else. Cardinal Paul Cullen ferociously attacked Mazzini as an anti-clerical radical, which he was not and had never been. In fact, he regarded anti-clericalism as a dangerous and extreme fanaticism, at the opposite end of papal despotism, which he regarded as another kind of fanaticism. He thought that priests had a fundamental duty to restore the church to its true self, by which he meant the church of its origins.

It was thus inevitable that during his decades-long stay in England, he would come into contact with various religious groups. He was fascinated by Protestantism, especially with some of its nonconformist denominations. In an extremely well-researched essay, Eugenio Biagini argues that because of their very moderate Protestant views rational dissenters were of the utmost interest to Mazzini. In turn, rational dissenters experienced the greatest sense of affinity with Mazzini's thought because of the resemblances between their theology and his democratic religiosity. Mazzini made many friends among nonconformists, especially Quakers and Unitarians who put a similar emphasis on the ethical

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teaching of Christianity and shared his contempt for the pope as a relic of the middle ages – an intolerable autocratic ruler who sought universal spiritual domination. In another essay, Christopher Duggan argues that Mazzini's ideas were recommended to the British by the distinctive qualities of his own life. Indeed, Mazzini had many British supporters, who saw him as the antithesis of the conventional Italian: austere, dutiful, sober, moralistic, quiet, and erudite. They were happy to see in Mazzini the character and bearing of an exemplary evangelical Protestant.

The third part of the volume is concerned with the question of whether Mazzini and his thought were vehicles for the globalization of democratic nationalism. Guy Thomson, Klaus Gallo, Timothy Roberts, Jorge Myers, and Peter Burke deal with Mazzinianism in Spain, Argentina, the United States of America, Chile, and Brazil respectively. They show that Mazzini's ideas found a number of followers in all of these countries and that his ideas were domesticated and remodelled according to local needs, fashions and circumstances. Mazzinianism's influence around and outside Europe depended on a vast network of sympathizers, variously organized either in secret societies or in more open organizations. The last two essays are particularly important. Their authors, C. A. Bayly and Fabrizio De Donno, engage with the history of Mazzini's reception in India. Both in the nineteenth and in the twentieth centuries, Indian intellectuals critically absorbed Mazzini's thought and picked up on his nationalist rhetoric. On the whole, this is a scholarly and captivating volume. Based on the proceedings of a conference, it is a model for collections of conference papers.

The international reach of Mazzini's ideas is also masterly treated in Maurizio Isabella's *Risorgimento in exile*. This impressive first book was named *proxime accessit* to the Gladstone Prize, the award of the Royal Historical Society for the best first history book in non-British history. An expanded, revised, and corrected version of Isabella's Ph.D. dissertation, it involved many years of painstaking research in archives and libraries in Britain, Spain, Greece, Belgium, the USA, and, of course, Italy. The result is a convincing and passionate work of historiography. Isabella reminds us that between 1799 and 1860 exile was a significant phenomenon among the Italian elites or, at any rate, the Italian educated classes. The precise number of exiles is still uncertain, although it seems reasonable to make assumptions that from a purely numerical point of view we could dismiss this diaspora as one of little importance. What counts, however, and this emerges very clearly from Isabella's argument, is that these exiled intellectuals played a primary role in the construction of an Italian national identity. The Italian national movement would have been much weaker without their contribution. This contribution was not only direct, in the sense of active participation in the revolutions of 1820, 1848, and 1860. It was also not merely literary, in the sense of their prolific production of revolutionary pamphlets, articles, and other writings. It was, most importantly, an indirect contribution, in the sense of the influence that the émigrés exerted in the

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formation of public and educated opinion in the countries where they took residence.

Isabella writes that 'this book is about exile as an intellectual experience' (p. 1). One could not find a better phrase to summarize his monograph. Exile was, indeed, an intellectual experience for many Italian émigrés. While abroad, they found freedom, freedom to express their opinions in ways that were forbidden at home. They also benefited from an intellectual environment that was not only passively liberal, but that also actively welcomed their ideas for the liberation of Italy from foreign rule. Italy had exerted a special fascination in the European and North American mind throughout the nineteenth century: it was the country of art, music, beautiful landscapes, sun, sea, Roman ruins, and fascinating and 'exotic' people. Italy was, however, also the country of the Catholic Church, of the much abhorred papacy, and it was the country of many tiny states, of political difficulties, of idleness, vice, and cowardice. All of this contributed to making Italy one of the best-known countries in, for example, British intellectual circles. It became one of the countries that were most often the subject of intellectual debates over their arts, religion, and politics.

Thus, many of the Italian émigrés acquired instant recognition and popularity in their adoptive countries. Members of the political and intellectual establishments not only enjoyed conversing with them on any number of issues but also acquiring first-hand information on the state of affairs in Italy at the time. In this way, these Italian patriots managed to disseminate their revolutionary ideals throughout Europe, attract followers, and raise money for the Italian causes. Some of them never returned to Italy, others did so as soon as a flaring up of revolution called for their participation, and some became prominent members of their adoptive societies as university professors, men of letters, and professionals. For example, Sir Anthony Panizzi became the principal librarian of the British Library in London. Isabella persuasively writes about this in great detail. He argues that the Italian exiles, thanks to their high standards of education, created a Liberal International that was one of the first and finest examples of a functioning transnational civil society. Throughout the book, Isabella artfully combines the traditional methodological tools of historiography with an evidently superior knowledge of political science, political economy, and political thought.

Most of the Italian exiles of the nineteenth century were enthusiastic anglophiles. They admired almost everything about England. They looked at it as the country of freedom, liberal institutions, rule of law, free trade, freedom of the press, right of assembly; a country whose aristocracy governed for the good of the country, and not just for their own sectarian interests, and where the monarchy already played a largely representative and consultative role with elegant moderation. Not even Mazzini, possibly one of the staunchest republicans ever to set foot on British soil, had anything to say against the British monarchy, although he always had a lot to say against monarchy as an institution. Isabella's 'English institutions and Italian freedom' is therefore one

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of the most interesting chapters of the book. It touches upon many important themes, such as what the English could unquestionably teach the Italians, i.e. 'an appropriate education and good government' (p. 122), how the English could help keep Roman Catholicism at bay both in England and in the Italian revolutions, and how the Italians could best replicate English institutions at home. This triggered a question to which many would still like an answer, even more so today, but which, I fear, has not been answered with any reasonable degree of persuasion over the last 150 years: can freedom be exported? Giuseppe Pecchio's suggestion that England's institutions 'could not be slavishly imitated, but should be studied "as one studies Roman jurisprudence"' (p. 143), still sounds like the wisest answer thus far.

At a time when the cultural study of the Risorgimento, pioneered by Alberto Banti and Paul Ginsborg, is very fashionable, Maurizio Isabella deserves commendation for reminding us that our understanding of the Risorgimento should not be confined 'to its cultural dimension, or to the shared emotional, romanticized notion of the nation' (p. 5). Isabella's intention, instead, is 'to accord due weight to ideology, politics, and the different forms of freedom defining the nation, themes that are marginalized by the "new cultural history"' (p. 5). One should not, in fact, forget that the nineteenth-century idea of the nation involved complex considerations of national character, together with debates on constitutional issues and economic policies. It is thus essential to focus also on the political dimension of the Risorgimento, for the discourse of Italian nationalism was centred on how to adapt the best foreign political and economic models to the specific circumstances of the Italian nation, which was shaped by its own history and identity. One can only agree with Isabella's statement that 'the Risorgimento was conceived just as much in political as in cultural terms' (p. 5).

It was also in political and cultural terms that, immediately after the Unification, a number of Italian intellectuals began to emphasize innate defects in the Italian national character. These defects had to be eliminated if Italy was ever to become a truly modern, European, and civilized nation. Isabella's conviction that national characters are the product of a sophisticated process of construction, and are not just a given, is shared by Silvana Patriarca's *Italian vices: nation and character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*. The literature on the 'vices' of the Italians is vast but also very fragmented. Therefore, one had hoped that Patriarca's monograph would offer an exhaustive critical account of the literature that, since the nineteenth century, has attempted to explain the deficiencies of the Italian character and the difficulties that this has posed for the formation of a modern nation state. Instead, despite the ambitious scale of Patriarca's project (covering from the first half of the nineteenth century to practically the present day), the result is a book of less than 250 pages that limits its scope to 'a historical genealogy of some influential ideas about the defective character of the Italians' (p. 13). Patriarca clarifies that her study 'does not try to offer a comprehensive coverage of all that has been said about Italian

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character in modern Italy' (p. 13), but why not? The reader is puzzled by her choice, especially considering the author's impressive range of sources, from historical writing, through social science research papers, to journalistic pieces. It is evident that she focuses mainly on political texts, but even these texts alone should have armed her with the resources to offer a much wider and detailed discussion of the topic. Indeed, she admits that a comprehensive study of Italian vices 'would require a much longer treatment' (p. 13), but that is precisely what one expects from such a project and what would have greatly benefited the historical community as well as our knowledge of Italian political, economic, and cultural history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Patriarca is an expert on national character, about which she has already written a number of essays. Her knowledge of the subject evidently and positively influences her treatment of the problem of 'indolence and regeneration' in the character of the Italians, the topic of the first chapter of the book. As already mentioned, it is evident throughout the monograph that Patriarca has read and critically analysed a remarkable assortment of published sources, which makes for a very interesting read. It is not infrequent throughout the book, in fact, to come across published works on the topic of which little was previously known or that had never been seriously studied. We learn a great deal about how, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, indolence was thought to be the worst Italian vice, the one that most affected and hampered the development of Italy in contrast with other European powers. Indeed, when writing on the Italians' reputation in the nineteenth century, Patriarca states that 'a character morally corrupted by Catholic superstition and Jesuitism was aggravated by the laziness and effeminacy that was "typical" of peoples living in the southern climate' (p. 20).

The author spends a number of pages on the subject of effeminacy and *cicisbeismo* (the *cicisbei* were the male friends or lovers of Italian aristocratic ladies who were not allowed to appear in public on their own), although we already know a fair deal on the subject, thanks to the studies of, and on, Simonde de Sismondi. It would have been interesting, instead, to focus more on the widespread notion that the Catholic Church was to blame for the backwardness of the Italians. Patriarca seems to want to explore the topic of the absence of a Protestant Reformation as the origin of a state of servitude in the Italian psyche, made worse by the grip of an unscrupulous clergy, but she appears to lose her way in the equally important discussion of how some Italians were thought to be lazier than others: the notorious north–south contention that has persisted till today and that does not show any sign of abating. Aristide Gabelli is mentioned only very quickly, and more could be said about the religious views of Massimo d'Azeglio and Francesco De Sanctis as well as the more extreme ideas of radical anti-clericals.

The central argument of the book – that the construction of the Italian nation was accompanied by a critical discourse on the 'vices' of the Italians and that the 'vices' targeted by such discourse evolved over time – is well reasoned in

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the remaining chapters of the book. At different times, in fact, different vices were emphasized for different purposes: indolence and effeminacy first, then excessive individualism in the late nineteenth century, *furbizia* (cunning) and *trasformismo* (shifting alliances to suit political needs) in the age of Liberal Italy, and finally *mammismo* (excessive and pathological desire for maternal care and affection in adulthood). These are, however, only the 'vices' that appeared most often in discourses on the defects of the Italian character, but the author deals with a few more in her narration. Very interestingly, she observes that one of such defects is the notion of the machismo of Italian men. Although this stereotype is apparent to external observers, it is curiously absent in the self-denunciating discourses that Italians cherish about themselves.

As Patriarca notes, in a country where 'the very term "Italian" has become a kind of term of abuse hurled against the political opponent' (p. 243), it is not surprising that much of the severely self-deprecating discourse on character is well and alive in today's Italy, 150 years after its Unification. It is easy to agree with Silvana Patriarca on the point that ideas on national character are constructed in a relational fashion, in a complex dialectic with the Other, and that the presence of the discourse of character is stronger in Italy than elsewhere in Europe, although it is by no means an Italian peculiarity – as demonstrated by the excellent work on national character in England and France by, among others, Peter Mandler, Roberto Romani, and George Varouxakis. This discourse has been shaped, to an important degree, by the large numbers of non-Italians who have visited the country since the eighteenth century and who, in varying degrees and fashions, imagined an Italy of their own, an ideal Italy. Italian intellectuals, in turn, often referred to foreign models when debating on the national character of the country. Italians are still debating, 150 years after modern Italy came to existence, whether there is any sense in participating in the celebrations for a united Italy or whether, indeed, a celebration of regional differences may be more appropriate. There does not seem to be an end in sight of the discussion on Italian vices. Nor should there be. Self-criticism is healthy because, as Professor Patriarca points out, 'an unquestioning attachment to one's country, or an absolute and uncritical patriotism is the cradle of ignorance and authoritarianism' (p. 245). Rather, it appears that the most contemporary of Italian vices, *mammismo*, is being replaced by the increasing 'brain drain' caused by large numbers of educated young Italians leaving the country in the search of better and fairer opportunities abroad. Discussions on national character are thus being enriched with a new, and by no means less troubling, 'defect': the mediocrity and age bias of Italy's ruling class.

ROBINSON COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE DANILO RAPONI

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