

Historiographical Perspectives on the “American Myth” during Italy’s Great War

Jacopo Perazzoli

This article examines historiographical approaches to interpreting the United States’ influence in Italy from the Great War through the immediate post-war period. It advances a reinterpretation of existing scholarship by identifying a threefold interpretative framework: the perspective of diplomatic history and international relations, the ideological and cultural reception, and the impact of Wilsonianism on Italian politics.

Soft Power and Parallel Diplomacy: Italy–United States Relations between the Post-World War I Era, Fascism, and Ethnic Communities

Federico Chiariati

The article offers a historiographical reflection on relations between Italy and the United States during the interwar period, highlighting how studies on migrants, ethnic communities, and soft power strategies have shaped scholarly analysis since the 1960s. It shows how scholarship gradually moved beyond an initial diplomatic perspective to adopt a transnational approach that foregrounds networks, cultural institutions, political movements, and economic actors operating across the Atlantic. The article traces how historians have addressed key turning points – from U.S. immigration restrictions to the fascist reorganization of overseas institutions – and reconstructs major intellectual phases, from early diplomatic analyses to more recent research on consumption, race, gender, and business communities. It argues that parallel diplomacies and transnational networks were crucial in shaping political, cultural, and economic exchanges between the two countries.

Postwar Italy and the Protestant Presence: Between Cultural Challenge and Diplomatic Imperatives

Paolo Zanini

This article examines the Italian government’s attitude toward Protestant denominations and US missionary activity from the end

of the Second World War to the mid-1950s. It argues that the issue of religious freedom became a significant, though often overlooked, factor in Italian-American relations during the early Cold War. Drawing on Italian diplomatic, governmental, and ecclesiastical archives, the article highlights the contrasting positions within the Italian state, the different treatment accorded to established Protestant churches and newer evangelical groups, and the influence of American public opinion and diplomatic pressure on Italian policies. It also examines the Holy See's unsuccessful efforts to portray Protestant missionary activity as indirectly conducive to the spread of communism, with the aim of mobilizing American Catholic opinion against evangelical missions. By situating the controversy over Protestant proselytism within the broader context of Cold War diplomacy, the article sheds new light on the interplay between domestic religious policy, international relations, and competing conceptions of religious freedom.

The United States and the Communist Question: The Cold War, Global Scenarios, and the Transatlantic Space. New Historiographical Perspectives

Alice Ciulla

This article surveys recent historiography on Italy's "communist question" by linking the Italian Communist Party (PCI)'s trajectory in the 1970s to the reconfiguration of U.S. power, the emergence of globalization, and the transatlantic arena. Starting from the impact in Italy of *The Shock of the Global* (2011), it reconstructs how scholars have moved beyond a mainly East-West framework to examine the 1970s in light of issues such as interdependence after the end of Bretton Woods, the oil shocks, new venues of Western coordination (from the G7 onward), and the growing importance of human rights, environmental politics, feminism, and transnational social movements. It then maps how these approaches have reshaped studies of the PCI, in particular its European turn and Eurocommunism, its engagement with decolonization and North-South debates, and its encounter with expert networks and think tanks. The conclusion argues for holding together global processes and the enduring constraints of the Cold War.

Comparing Anti-nuclear Pacifism: Italy and the United States

Angela Santese

The article examines the Italian anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s in comparative perspective, situating it within the broader resurgence of antinuclear activism that accompanied the deterioration of East–West relations and NATO’s 1979 Dual-Track Decision. While sharing many features with contemporary movements in Western Europe and the United States, the Italian case followed a distinctive trajectory shaped by domestic political dynamics and national protest cultures. By analyzing protest campaigns, political debates, and the experience of the Comiso Peace Camp, the article shows how transnational antinuclear discourses were adapted to local circumstances. It concludes that the Italian movement combined participation in a wider transatlantic anti-nuclear mobilization with a strong process of national political reframing that distinguished it from other contemporary cases.

A Rap on Time(s) and Distance. James Baldwin and the Perilous Journey of Love

Paola Boi

This essay examines James Baldwin’s work as a framework for rethinking American history and national identity. Situating Baldwin within contemporary debates prompted by The 1619 Project, the article explores his critique of the myths of American origins and his understanding of Black experience as central to the nation’s cultural and political development. Through an analysis of Baldwin’s reflections on displacement, exile, language, and belonging, the essay highlights the ways in which his writing challenges hegemonic narratives and confronts the enduring legacy of slavery and racial exclusion. Engaging with the thought of Toni Morrison, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Michel Foucault, the article argues that Baldwin transforms marginality into a privileged site of critical insight. His work ultimately emerges as an exploration of the “unspeakable,” illuminating the complex intersections of memory, identity, justice, and freedom in modern America.

Hemingway, the Ospedale Maggiore and Milan: Experience and Mythopoiesis

Bruno Cartosio

Ernest Hemingway's war experience on the Italian front during the First World War is well known. He was seriously wounded in early July 1918 at Fossalta di Piave, while doing voluntary service in the American Red Cross. He was hospitalized in Milan, underwent a surgery in his right leg and knee and during his recovery – besides falling in love with his nurse – he did rehab exercises at the Ospedale Maggiore. Of his 227 wounds he wrote in a letter to his family on the day he turned nineteen, while laying in bed in the American Red Cross hospital. In this essay the author puts Hemingway's surgery in the context of the milanese health system of the period, deals with the major events of what the future novelist defined his "lovely summer" of 1918 in Milan, and—briefly—with how he would transfer mythopoetically in his novels and short stories parts of his own and other people's war experiences. As an example of Hemingway's budding narrative strategies, a final paragraph in the essay is devoted to his very first public, autobiographical narration—the speech he delivered in the high school of his hometown Oak Park, Illinois, in April 1919, less than three months after his return to America.

It Was 1936

Mario Maffi

This essay examines *Cotton Tenants* (1936), James Agee's reportage on Alabama sharecroppers produced in collaboration with photographer Walker Evans, as the ur-text of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941). Set against the backdrop of the Great Depression, the article reconstructs the social, economic, and cultural conditions that shaped both works, highlighting the widespread poverty, displacement, and social unrest of the 1930s. Through a close reading of *Cotton Tenants*, the essay shows how Agee and Evans combined documentary observation and artistic representation to portray the material and emotional realities of three tenant-farming families.

While originally conceived as a magazine report and never published in its intended form, *Cotton Tenants* contains the thematic concerns, ethical commitment, and descriptive strategies that Agee would later expand in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. The essay argues that this earlier text stands as an autonomous literary achievement and a key document in the tradition of Depression-era documentary culture.

From Nights Around the World to the Land of God: Mondo Movies and the United States between Emulation and Innovation in Sensationalist Reportage

Giuseppe Previtali

Italian mondo movies are a peculiar and marginalized phenomenon in film history. They are characterized by their sensationalistic depictions of extreme, erotic, and violent aspects of human life under the guise of documentary realism. This article examines an understudied aspect of their production history: how the United States is represented within the genre and how American directors subsequently adopted the mondo formula. American culture appears in Italian mondo movies as both a fragmented visual archive within globally oriented films and a central object of analysis in works portraying the United States as a site of modernity's contradictions. The article highlights how these films portray the U.S. as a paradoxical space shaped by cinema itself, oscillating between nostalgia, spectacle, and a critical examination of consumerism, racial conflict, and technological progress. The commercial success of mondo movies fostered their adoption within the American exploitation film industry in the early 1960s. American filmmakers initially turned their gaze outward before focusing on national subjects such as youth culture, social unrest, and countercultural movements, appropriating and reworking the Italian model. In this process, the genre underwent a significant transformation, aligning with the aesthetics and production logic of U.S. exploitation cinema. It gradually evolved toward more explicitly shocking forms, culminating in the rise of the shockumentary.