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## REVIEW ESSAYS

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### IMMIGRATION, SOCIETY, AND CULTURE IN MODERN ARGENTINA

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*IMMIGRANTS IN THE LANDS OF PROMISE: ITALIANS IN BUENOS AIRES AND NEW YORK CITY, 1870 TO 1914.* By Samuel L. Baily. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999. Pp. 308. \$45.00 cloth.)

*COUSINS AND STRANGERS: SPANISH IMMIGRANTS IN BUENOS AIRES, 1850–1930.* By José C. Moya. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998. Pp. 567. \$55.00 cloth.)

*MASSACRE IN THE PAMPAS, 1872: BRITAIN AND ARGENTINA IN THE AGE OF MIGRATION.* By John Lynch. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998. Pp. 237. \$28.95 cloth.)

*ITALIANI MALAGENTE: IMMIGRAZIONE, CRIMINALITÀ, RAZZISMO IN ARGENTINA, 1890–1940.* By Eugenia Scarzanella. (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1999. Pp. 207.)

For different reasons, the four books selected for this review essay all mark a new departure—or at least a renovation—in studies of Argentine immigration. They invite readers to focus on novel dimensions of the immigration process, present the results of careful investigation of new sources, and pose intriguing continuities over time. Samuel Baily's comparative work presents a transnational framework for studying migratory flows. Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires, when compared with their counterparts in New York, had advantages in a variety of fields. José Moya offers a fascinating account of the achievements of Spanish immigrants in Buenos

Aires, pointing to their success in building a rich institutional life and their long-term upward mobility. John Lynch's study examines the effect of "lawlessness" in the frontier in relation to the possibility of attracting British immigration to Argentina. And Eugenia Scarzanella places the subject of Italian immigrants in the context of the formation of Argentine scientific criminology, which owes much to the influence of Italian intellectuals.

By refocusing the decision context into small communities with continuing ties to their places of origin, Baily reminds readers of the social embeddedness of the migration process. Both Baily and Moya ponder the importance of the social and institutional capital that facilitated the insertion of Italians and Spaniards into Argentine society and culture. These institutions, which included mutual-aid societies, banks, and housing cooperatives, appear impressive in perspective. And so does the circulation of information across the Atlantic among peasants, laborers, and skilled workers. Three of the four books under review emphasize the importance of locality in shaping migratory flows. Localities serve as nodes of information gathering and pooling of resources, maintain connections among participants in the overseas diaspora, and provoke in certain situations major disruptions in international relations that can stop the flow of migrants. Also significant in these new studies is the extent to which they make available useful evidence that fosters understanding of the experience of migrants and migration. New sources of data (or new interest in reading these sources) appear to be the root of this renovation. Cadastral records from municipal offices, census manuscripts, registers of mutual-aid societies, criminological theses, and British Foreign Office papers reveal unsuspected facts about the experience of immigration.

*Immigrants in the Lands of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New York City, 1870 to 1914* is the long-awaited book by a scholar well known to Argentine historians, Samuel Baily. Based on years of patient collecting of information in archives in Italy, the United States, and Argentina, this comparative study promises a new synthesis of the experience of immigration when examined in a transnational perspective. Baily's book proposes to study Italian migration to two metropolitan cities, using a comparative, "village-outward" approach. He chose Buenos Aires and New York as the foci of the study. It starts with a reconceptualization of migration as a socially embedded, transnational, and collective process. By paying attention to the collective strategies of migratory groups, Baily attempts to reconstruct the major contours of Italian migration to these two cities and to compare them in order to understand better immigrants' adjustment to the host societies. *Immigrants in the Lands of Promise* follows the immigrants from their Italian villages to New York and Buenos Aires. Then the study focuses on the similarities and differences between the two immigrant groups. Italians in New York and Buenos Aires shared many similarities and remained connected through bonds of family, friendship, and local solidarity. But as Baily makes

clear, those who chose Buenos Aires as their destination were better received by the host society and generally achieved greater economic and social success than those who went to New York.

In Baily's opinion, "informal personal networks" were crucial in facilitating the migration process and "the adjustment" of Italian immigrants to the host society. The concept of networks—the constellation of family, kin, and "*paesani*" relations that united migratory communities—operates in the book as a necessary ingredient of each stage of migration. Through these networks circulated material aid, social connections, good advice, and information that cushioned the experience of emigration. Thanks partly to this assistance, migrants were able to endure the difficult journey from their villages to the nearest Italian port, cross the ocean, and finally settle in Buenos Aires or New York. Immigrants mined this social capital intensively to find housing and jobs and to move up the occupational ladder.

*Immigrants in the Lands of Promise* moves from local to regional, national, and global dimensions with ease. Baily occasionally reaffirms with local examples (such as the Agnonesi from the village of Agnone) what he previously asserted about the larger collective of "Italian immigration." In explaining the factors that motivated members of Italian communities to emigrate, Baily resorts to familiar push factors. An economy poor in land under the pressure of rapid demographic growth produced situations of poverty that led families and village communities to view emigration as a viable alternative. Here, a Ricardian argument (the expansion of production over lands of low fertility) combines with a modernization argument (the new facilities provided by railroads and steam navigation) to portray emigration as a necessity. On the destination chosen by emigrants, Baily suggests that the information provided by the transatlantic networks made villagers aware of international tendencies in aggregate production and employment. While their villages in Italy appeared closed and isolated, villagers were informed about the opportunities in the global economy. The Agnonesi emigrated to Buenos Aires until the mid-1890s and then massively favored New York, particularly after 1900. This shift in destination was in tune with the relative performance of the two host economies. Even in the Italian villages, potential emigrants knew that the recovery of the U.S. economy after the 1893 crisis was much stronger than that of Argentina after the 1890 crisis.

In comparing the two cities, Buenos Aires comes up as the winner. For a variety of reasons, the southern metropolis proved to be a more welcoming "land of promise." Porteños showed less antagonism toward Italians. The disillusionment of a literary and scientific elite in Argentina paled in comparison with the strong working-class "nativism" that emerged in the United States. In Buenos Aires, the reception and adjustment of Italian immigrants was facilitated by a more open employment structure that offered ample opportunities for skilled workers, white-collar workers, and

small merchants. New York offered mostly semiskilled jobs, as the upper layers of the occupational hierarchy were closed to Italians. Home ownership was within the reach of Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires, but not for most Italian immigrants in New York. As time progressed, both groups of immigrants moved from downtown outward (a move paralleling their entry into the middle class), but those residing in Buenos Aires were able to make the move earlier, before 1914. The availability of land and mortgages for home building made ownership a real possibility. New York Italians, in contrast, began to move out of Manhattan only after World War I.

Perceiving fewer possibilities for a permanent engagement with the host society, New York Italians sent their savings back home to help their families or to buy land. The majority expected to return to Italy after *fare l'America*. Baily regards this evidence as a clear indication of a short-term collective strategy. By contrast, Italian immigrants who went to Buenos Aires carried the expectation of residing permanently in the country. Although they saved as much as New York Italians, they did not send these savings home in remittances. As a result, Italians in Buenos Aires were better prepared to invest in the host community and their own future. They supported ethnic institutions (a way of supporting Italian schools), built their own houses, and invested in commerce and industry. Their long-term collective strategy paid off in the end in both upward social mobility and integration into the nation.

Formal and informal social institutions cushioned the adjustment of immigrants in the host societies. The family, the household, and the neighborhood were the key informal institutions, while mutual-aid societies, ethnic schools, and labor unions were the formal counterpart. The values of the Italian family, Baily argues, were transferred almost without change to the new environments: dominant male figures, wives in control of family relations and domestic affairs, and children who contributed to the family economy. A high degree of endogamous marriage facilitated this transfer. But the households also adapted to their new social milieus. Unlike the situation in Italy, nuclear families were the norm in New York and Buenos Aires. But they had to accept temporary boarders, relatives, and other conjugal units as part of the household. These "extended households" were thus the byproduct of adaptation. Where family incomes were more unstable (in Buenos Aires), more extended households were formed. In both New York and Buenos Aires, Italian immigrants clustered in certain neighborhoods according to their region of origin (Mulberry and East Harlem in New York, La Boca and San Nicolás in Buenos Aires). Close proximity and day-to-day interaction provided a comforting environment for the newcomers. The Agnonesi from Barrio del Carmen, Baily reports, attended the same church, patronized the same pharmacy, socialized at the same club, and sent money to Italy through the same agency.

The institutional setups that assisted Italian immigrants differed. In

New York, the Catholic Church and political parties played an important role in integrating Italians into public life. In Buenos Aires, however, the Catholic Church was not a central part of the lives of Italian communities, and most immigrants refused to participate in party politics. In compensation, Italians could achieve important positions in Argentine labor unions and build an impressive network of mutual-aid societies. The societies provided multiple services that included schooling, health care, and job placement. In New York, in contrast, Italian mutual-aid societies were small, poor, and regionally based. Italian immigrants failed to exert influence in any major American labor union. Thus Italian immigrants channeled their demands through different institutions: political parties and the church in New York; mutual-aid societies and labor unions in Buenos Aires. The richly dense institutional network built by Italians in Buenos Aires facilitated a rapid and more complete adjustment to the host society than occurred in New York.

*Immigrants in the Lands of Promise* is exceptional in various regards. The book is written in a clear, economical style. Statistics and narrative are combined in a balanced, articulated, and useful manner. Micro and macro data are used to examine the questions posed by the new wave of migration studies. Baily's stubborn loyalty to quantitative methods produces important insights into issues that needed to be addressed and quantified: immigrants' savings, long-term occupational mobility, residential patterns, rates of endogamy, and more. Baily is clearly committed to an analytical kind of social history, in which the comparative method marks the differences between a common origin and the subsequent migratory experience. While comparisons are not always fruitful (as when the discussion slips into the national terrain rather than the two cities), Baily shows a strong commitment to placing the nature of the findings in a comparative perspective.

*Immigrants in the Lands of Promise* takes as a given rather than a working hypothesis the idea that the Italian migration experience was mediated by informal social networks. Baily makes little effort to prove either the existence of such networks or their influence on other variables. Perhaps he thought that sufficient proof of these micro networks had already been provided in *One Family, Two Worlds*, a book edited by Baily and Franco Ramella, or that the Sola family (which is used to introduce the theme in the preface of the new book) constituted a microcosm representing Italian emigration. It is nonetheless necessary to keep in mind that the argument advanced by Baily (and other scholars working on "migration chains" or "informal networks") works against alternate economic explanations of transcontinental migration. Economic historians have presented alternative explanations of migration flows and immigrants' integration into labor markets by using regression analysis and economic theory. They have argued that migrants responded to wage differentials (rather than to family invitations); that employers paid them according to their marginal productivity, which in turn depended on skills; that immigrants obtained jobs



José Moya's *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850–1930* marks an auspicious turn in immigration studies. Moya based his study on a dual preoccupation with seeing the forest and the trees simultaneously in order to assess the interaction between global and local forces. He combines knowledge gained by students of migration chains with the accuracy provided by macro statistical measurements of migration flows, occupational patterns, and social mobility. An array of diverse sources (including censuses, ethnic associations, advertisements, newspaper articles) serves as a solid foundation for reconstructing the motivations and strategies of Spanish immigrants in Buenos Aires over an eighty-year period.

Moya begins by taking readers to the small villages in Spain where the idea of migrating to Argentina first emerged. This first contact, in his view, prepared villages for the era of mass migration. Moya follows the immigrants as they began to inject themselves into Porteño society. He examines the multiple obstacles and possibilities facing Spaniards in getting a job, finding lodging, and building the social connections needed to survive. Throughout *Cousins and Strangers*, Moya is concerned with not only the relative success of Spaniards vis-à-vis other immigrant groups but the question of regional fragmentation. How was it that Spaniards, coming from a fragmented nation, managed to overcome *campanilismo* (regional or local fragmentation) and build institutions that distributed benefits to all Spanish immigrants?

In analyzing migration flows in *Cousins and Strangers*, Moya underscores the centrality of information circulated through micro social networks across the Atlantic in maintaining migration flows in the long run. He argues that crucial information passed along by family members, friends, and generations maintains the initial connection between emigration and immigration areas, independently of economic crises, changes in political regimes, or the amount of official propaganda. Once the information flow was established (as between the village of Mataró and Buenos Aires), migration remained dormant for a while before being activated by new global conditions (technologies of transportation, changes in labor-market conditions, and the acceleration of the modernization process). Micro social networks thus played an essential role in preparing the terrain for mass migration—much more so than government propaganda. The experiences amassed by relatives, neighbors, and friends in distant Buenos Aires were what made the residents of small villages in Spain prefer Argentina as their destination. Moya applies the same theory of information to explain the spread of “emigration fever” in the Iberian Peninsula. In the 1840s and 1850s, “Spanish emigration” to Argentina came basically from two regions, La Coruña and Pontevedra. By the 1920s, the origins of emigrants were much more diverse. By then, a number of neighboring regions had caught the fever, chiefly because they had received the flow of information emanating from the pioneering areas. Emigration fever never spread to all of Spain, however,

in part because micro social networks circulated information slowly in piecemeal fashion.

Viewing emigration decisions from the perspective of the local community is central to Moya's argument in *Cousins and Strangers*. Employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, he manages to undermine the notion of a Spanish emigration. Rather than a national phenomenon, emigration was regional from the start. Each region (or even village) had a peculiar migration experience that conditioned the future emigration process. At first, emigrants sought areas where they could use their skills profitably. Some regions (such as Mataró and Bilbao) sent skilled workers with industrial experience; others (such as Navarre) sent sheep and cattle raisers to areas with similar landscapes and possibilities; still others (the coastal towns in La Coruña) sent sailors and fishermen overseas. It is therefore not surprising to find emigrants from La Coruña in La Boca and Barracas, those from Navarre on the farms and ranches of the pampas, and the Mataronese in the industrial districts of Buenos Aires. In time, this pattern changed as migration branched out into other families, regions, and occupational groups.

The story of Spanish immigrants in Buenos Aires is one of upward social mobility. Moya claims that Spanish immigrants transformed a dual society (of "haves" and "have-nots") into a more complex multilayered society. Opportunities for Spanish immigrants were ample, in part due to "the backwardness" of Buenos Aires labor markets, which were less affected by the processes of de-skilling, Taylorism, and proletarianization. Compared with native workers, Spaniards were more successful in securing skilled occupations and entering into commerce but less successful in securing white-collar jobs. Compared with their Italian competitors, Spaniards showed an advantage in language skills and literacy rates but were unable to translate it into a clear dominance of the labor market. They did better in commerce, where language skills and literacy were decisive. More than other immigrant groups, Spaniards accepted employment in domestic service, perhaps anticipating a long-term, intergenerational upward mobility. This long-term mobility, Moya argues, was real. If a first-generation Spanish immigrant worked as a maid, her daughters were likely to become teachers. This escape from menial labor constituted an important measure of the success of immigrant families. In addition, many expected to buy land in the old country, and they fulfilled their aspirations.

Another significant contribution of *Cousins and Strangers* is the analysis of Spanish immigrants' institutional life. Moya found that two types of institutions contributed differently to the insertion and adaptation of Spanish immigrants into the host society and culture. On the one hand were large and efficient all-Spanish institutions that provided basic welfare services to their members. The success of these institutions was based on their non-discriminatory membership policies, the low cost of their services (they in-















was not the most common current among positivist criminologists, at least not the preferred framework of José Ingenieros and his followers. Second, disagreements split the positivist camp regarding the connection between immigration and criminality. The work of Cornelio Moyano Gacitúa (1905) stressing the correlation between the two variables was contradicted by Mario Lancelotti in 1912. By and large, statistical data did not support the claims of Moyano Gacitúa. It is true that ideas about “Mediterranean atavism” circulated in the literary production of the period, but it seems unfair to locate the origins of these constructs in positivist criminology. As other studies have pointed out, positivist criminologists attributed as much importance to inherited traits as to the social and geographical environment in which most immigrants lived.

*Italiani malagente* provides some answers to a difficult question rarely raised by immigration studies: what happened to the social and scientific perceptions of immigrants after massive immigration tapered off? Apparently, with the decline of mass immigration, the cooperation between Italian and Argentine scientists intensified. Once it was clear that the new nation had to produce demographic growth by its own means, the social question was replaced by issues of motherhood, the health of infants, and the care of the nation’s “reproductive capital.” Thus it is not surprising that race turned into a central issue and Argentine social policy makers began to sympathize with the cultural ambassadors of Fascist Italy. Perhaps a more enduring legacy of the immigration era was the transatlantic cooperation between scientists on questions of crime, race, motherhood, and nation. The changing reception of Italian immigrants by the host society, Scarzanella suggests, was not just a product of elite disillusionment. It was the result of a parallel migration of ideas across the Atlantic.

In the near future, other studies now under way or about to be published will add other dimensions to the study of immigration. Themes such as political citizenship, male sociability, and the contribution of immigrants to the formation of rich commercial cultures in the pampas will continue the renovation of immigration studies. But it is likely that the four books reviewed in this essay will remain important references for researchers in this field. These books deserve a wide readership for their contributions in evidence and methodology and especially for opening up new avenues of research.

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world of crime from the world of work can be viewed as an “interpretive grid” for understanding better the cultural challenges of an export economy subjected to severe labor turnover and cyclical instability. See R. D. Salvatore, “Penitentiaries, Visions of Class, and Export Economies: Brazil and Argentina Compared,” in *The Birth of the Penitentiary in Latin America*, edited by Ricardo D. Salvatore and Carlos Aguirre (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 194–223.