The volume *Viaggi fantasmagorici: L'odeporica delle esposizioni universali (1851-1940)* developed from a session that Anna Pellegrino and Sergio Onger organized in 2017 for the eighth conference of the Associazione Italiana di Storia Urbana (AISU) devoted to the theme of “La città, il viaggio, il turismo. Percezione, produzione e trasformazione.” Pellegrino’s editorial initiative resulted in an eclectic and broad-ranging collection of essays covering the major cities that hosted international and universal exhibitions between 1851 and 1940: London, Paris, Philadelphia, Chicago, New York, Milan, and Turin.

In the rich corpus of scholarship devoted to the World’s Fairs phenomenon, Pellegrino’s volume displays a number of innovative elements, first and foremost the inclusion of the Italian experience within a wider analysis of key exhibitions in Europe and the United States. In addition, and from varied perspectives, the essays of *Viaggi fantasmagorici* engage with the ways in which the international and universal exhibitions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries transformed the cities that hosted them by contributing to the development of crucial aspects of modernity such as urbanization, middle-class tourism, and new means of urban mass transit and long-distance transportation. The discussion of new paraliterary forms such as exposition guides, catalogues, tour books, children guides, and illustrated exposition magazines; of ephemera such as postcards, photo albums, and short films; and of popular narratives such as novels and science fiction, also constitutes an original contribution to the robust scholarship on the Universal Expositions available today.

Luca Massidda’s “Il racconto di una fantasmagoria. L’esposizione universale nella letteratura dell’Ottocento” establishes the crucial connection between the development of the newspaper industry and the phenomenon of the expositions. By reminding his readers that the *Illustrated London News* opened a satellite location in the Crystal Palace for the duration of the 1851 exhibition, Massida shows how the production of news was staged as a spectacle within the spectacle of the very exhibition that this magazine was charged to portray, thus magnifying the self-referential aspect of the fairs’ phantasmagorias and sealing the pact of reciprocity between mass media and universal exhibitions. Massida goes on to demonstrate how, especially in the case of Paris, the metropolis and its exhibitions became thriving mirror images of each other, a pattern that Émile Zola eloquently rendered in *Nana* (1880) and *L’Argent* (1891). Massida juxtaposed these two novels with Charles Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1852/3), which he reads as...
the dark and dystopic rendition of the optimistic transparencies of the Crystal Palace.

In a highly informative piece, “Uno spazio offerto al turismo: I souvenir fotografici delle Esposizioni Universali parigine 1855-1900,” Raffaella Biscioni analyzes the role that photographs, photo albums, and postcards played in the construction of recurring sets of visual topoi that framed the collective perception of the universal expositions. Fair organizers often delegated the task of creating a visual narrative of the exposition to a select number of official photographers who typically structured their representations around the celebration of national identities, the illustration of technological and industrial progress, and the display of artworks. Biscioni’s study of the Paris Exposition in 1900 is especially enlightening, as she shows how the Neurdien Brothers created a repertoire of over three hundred images that became the photographic repository for the major publications devoted to the exposition, including the official tour guides, thus facilitating the mass diffusion of standard images of the fair. Just as the themes were recurring, so were the photographic techniques. Photographers favored panoramic shots and bird’s-eye views with an emphasis on crowds and technologies in motion, as well as night shots with enchanting plays of light and water. Together, themes and techniques elicited two contradictory yet coexisting experiences: one was empowering, in its ability to encompass the fairgrounds from above and in a single gaze, and the other was spellbinding, triggering a sense of awe and magic.

In the volume’s central essay, entitled “Itinerari fantasmagorici: A spasso per Parigi con l’allegro Colibrì,” Anna Pellegrino compares and contrasts a number of exposition guides, namely Exposition en poche guide pratique illustré par Uzès; Guide itinéraire du visiteur à l’exposition de 1878; Visite à l’exposition de Paris en 1855; and Guide illustré de l’exposition universelle de 1889. While paying attention to the differences in structure, tone, and scope among these guides, Pellegrino demonstrates that, in their variety, these guides strove to achieve two contrasting goals. The first was to evoke a phantasmagoria of consumption, estrangement, and amusement based on the effort to inspire feelings of surprise and wonder. The second was instead taxonomic, and predicated on the encyclopedic drive to order, catalogue, and classify the world according to shared codes and knowable criteria.

Simone Fagioli identifies the same dual inspiration, commingling taxonomic principles with the estranging codes of wonder in “Eyes Wide Shut. L’ingegner Celso Capacci da Firenze alla World’s Columbian Exposition di Chicago (1893).” Fagioli offers an original study of Italian engineer Celso Capacci’s journey to the United States in 1893. In his role as commissioner for the Machinery, Transportation, and Electricity exhibits and juror for the Mines and Metallurgy sectors of the Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition, Carpacci documented his visit with an official report written for the Collegio degli architetti ed ingegneri of Florence. In addition, Carpacci sent a number of letters to his mother and other family members. The tone varies from the technical to the mundane, corresponding to Carpacci’s roles as both juror/commissioner and “elite tourist.” The technical report includes detailed lists of wares according to the expositions’ cataloguing ethos. Carpacci combines these lists with more personal considerations triggering “picturesque,” “exotic,” and “wonder-inspired” feelings in direct yet unresolved contradiction with the parallel taxonomic drive.

In “Al di là di Fairmount Park: turismo a Philadelphia nel 1876. La metropoli tra storia, progresso, arte e natura” Manuel Viera de Miguel expands on the notion that world’s fairs inspired two types of travel: one real and the other imaginary. The latter was built on virtual experiences of travel across time and space (one can think about the Medieval Villages and Streets of Cairo at numer-
ous fairs). These experiences, de Miguel points out, were aimed at consolidating a geopolitical order where hegemonic power radiated out of the exposition’s hosting city. The city, Philadelphia in the case of de Miguel’s study, was the privileged place where all potential contradictions were resolved *a priori*, as demonstrated by the innumerable illustrations in travel guides and exposition magazines where the symbols of advancing progress (steam engines, smokestacks and factories, the locomotive) peacefully coexisted with pristine natural landscapes.


Italy is represented in three essays devoted to the fairs held in Milan and Turin in the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. In “Tra machine grandiose e vesti talari. Esposizioni, turismo e chiesa cattolica a Milano nella seconda meta’ dell’Ottocento,” Luciano Maffi and Martino Lorenzo Fagnani address the still unexplored role of the Roman Catholic Church in the expositions that took place in Milan in 1871 and 1874. Maffi and Fagnani demonstrate that the church did not speak with a single voice but rather according to differing agendas, depending on whether the authority behind the words was the Jesuit arm of the Roman Catholic Church (as represented by the periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica*) or the militant voice of individual priests. These included Don Davide Albertario in *L’Osservatore Cattolico*, interested in the ways the poor could benefit from the fairs’ experiences, and Don Luigi Marchelli, open to technological innovations as means to improve the conditions of the lower classes.

As suggested by the title of his essay, “L’immagine della modernità nell’esposizione internazionale di Milano 1906,” Davide Baviello describes the numerous ways in which modernity was illustrated in this exposition, and provides an especially illuminating reading of the role played by the supporters of workers’ unions and women rights in the planning and development of the International Exposition of Milan in 1906. Baviello helps us understand how Milan was not only the core of the Italian bourgeoisie but also the cradle of the Italian labor movement. Similarly, Michela Mancini explores the expositions in Turin in relation to the development of Arturo Labriola’s revolutionary trade unions and Filippo Turati’s Italian Socialist Party and through the prism of Emilio Salgari’s *Le meraviglie del Duemila* (1907). This science-fiction novel, Mancini claims, represented the tale of the generation that, in the first decade of the twentieth century in Italy, became increasingly disillusioned by the gospel of progress and technological advancement touted by the universal exhibitions on the eve of the first World War.

If the development of modern forms of middle-class tourism related to the mega-events of the fairs constitutes the *trait-d’union* among the eclectic pieces of Pellegrino’s ambitious collection, the volume also opens new vistas on areas that deserve further analysis. These areas involve the connections between the world’s fand mass events such as general strikes and suffragist demonstrations in light of the growth of workers’ unions and women’s rights movements. In the Italian context, and in counterpart to the advance of the Italian Socialist Party in Turin and Milan, an area that deserves further scrutiny regards the role of the Catholic Church within the framework of the universal expositions. Targeted studies of
Italy’s participation in world’s fairs abroad are also missing from existing scholarship. In addition, *Viaggi fantasmagorici* elicits further discussion of the function of the many ephemera circulated on the occasion of the world’s fairs and in connection with the development of a thriving industry devoted to the production of objects of mass consumption.

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