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Luca Codignola. *Blurred Nationalities across the North Atlantic: Traders, Priests, and Their Kin Travelling between North America and the Italian Peninsula, 1763-1846.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019. xxvii + 519 pp. $125.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4875-0456-4.

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Transatlantic Mobilities

Many years ago, I was in Riomaggiore, a picture-postcard town in the now very touristy Cinque Terre. After the local butcher asked me where I was from, he proceeded to tell me that he had been to Halifax as a young sailor traveling the world. I was stupefied! How could someone pursuing such a sedentary occupation in a town of no more than 1,500 inhabitants in the off-season be at all familiar with Nova Scotia's capital? As these lines suggest, our thoughts and impressions follow well-trodden paths; we tend to think in stereotypes. So, we might well ask: what is there to be said about relations between the Italian peninsula and North America in the period analyzed in *Blurred Nationalities*? After all, the age of mass migration, which cast a long shadow over this topic and has been so well covered by historians on both sides of the Atlantic, occurred some time later. Indeed, this was an era—at least until 1815 but even after—of major upheavals: the Seven Years' War leading to the Treaties of Paris and Versailles, the American Revolution and the failed Yankee invasion of Québec, the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna, and the uprisings and revolutions inspired by liberal nationalism. One would expect bilateral relations to develop in a time of relative stability. But this was clearly not the case here and hence the element of surprise is as great as that produced on me by Riomaggiore's sailor-butcher.

Codignola sets out to examine these relations through the lens of mobility studies, with its focus on the exchange of people, goods, and ideas. His book is not about formal diplomatic ties between the United States and various states comprising the Italian peninsula before Unification, although the attempts of various individuals, mostly merchants, to become accredited representatives of these governments is not ignored. Nor is it about political elites who helped shape and were shaped by the fast-changing world around them. Nor indeed is it about the great thinkers who made their mark in the age of Enlightenment or the age of Romanticism. Attention is instead centered on a category which by its social provenance or education still constituted an elite, although a subordinate one, in contrast to the illiterate Italian peasants who in their millions later crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life in the New World. Codignola's men, and they were almost entirely men, certainly had reactions to developments in the Italian peninsula or the American republic, doubtless comparing conditions there with those in British

North America. But, because of their professional responsibilities, they were not thinkers and thus, for lack of time or inclination, did not consign their thoughts to paper. Be that as it may, their attitudes were influential. A case in point is the Holy See's very favorable view of the American republic, shaped by the observations of people in the field.

Who then are the protagonists of *Blurred Nationalities*? Most of these individuals can either be categorized as merchants or ecclesiastics. By inserting them into transatlantic networks, Codignola gives a sense to their activities. Therein lies the originality of his study. US historians of the early period in the relations between their country and the Italian peninsula (and their few emulators north of the 49th parallel) were intent on either establishing a complete list of the early Italians who settled in North America or chronicling their achievements and contributions to American public life. They did so in the spirit of filiopietism, never once questioning the *Italianità* of these Tuscans, Genoese, Venetians, or Neapolitans. Codignola, for his part, shows how the networks built by merchants were based on family and often extended on both sides of the Atlantic to the United Kingdom, the United States, and British North America. Individuals crossed geographic, linguistic, and even religious frontiers. Some remained in the land of adoption; others returned to their place of origin. In any event, their sense of self was fluid, not fixed, shaped as it was by outside influences.

Concerning ecclesiastical networks, Codignola points to how they gravitated around Rome, the center of the Catholic world. Institutions of higher learning, such as the Urban College of Propaganda Fide or the Collegio romano, were crucial to these networks, training handpicked young ecclesiastics to become thoroughly Romanized future leaders of the North American church. So too were male religious communities, among them Jesuits, Vincentians, Passionists, who sent missionaries, some of whom became pioneer bishops. In this perspective, it seems more fruitful to depict Giuseppe Rosati not simply as the first Italian in the United States to become a bishop and the first to occupy the see of St. Louis, but as a Vincentian whose activities, such as the founding of his diocesan seminary, were guided by the training and missionary zeal acquired in Rome. Their success depended upon a Roman network of which he was a part. The first depiction of Rosati, therefore, appears as a cardboard cut-out lacking depth and perspective.

Blurred Nationalities is the mature work of an historian who has dedicated his whole professional life to archival research. It is thanks to this persistence, together with an element of luck, that he discovered the papers of the Filicchi brothers in Tuscany's port city of Livorno (which the glossally challenged English insist on calling Leghorn). The Filicchis were emblematic key players in these transatlantic exchanges for almost the entire period under study. As generous supporters of the early American church, they are also the lynchpin uniting the book's central themes of trade and religion. Ironically, it is as a historian of religion that Codignola went in search of the Filicchi archives, stumbling upon a trove of material on the family's mercantile activities. With little to go on in terms of secondary sources, he boldly proposed a new interpretative framework for these transatlantic ties that future research is sure to confirm and extend. At the same time, he challenged historians', and I dare say, my own obsession with completeness—that is, the idea that no statement can be made about the past without our having a complete picture to draw on. Like truth, completeness is Clio's illusory objective: we must try hard to achieve it, but we will never thoroughly grasp it. A well-written and captivating book (the chapter on the scoundrel priest Angelo Inglesi being worthy of a Netflix miniseries), it is also innovative and thought-provoking.

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