Elsewhere.
Italians in the Frontiers (United States, 19th – 20th centuries)

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Some time around August 1917, a young Italian woman received a picture of her boyfriend from California. Everything was normal, but the man was dressed as a cowboy and the assimilation was so deep that even his name had become American: from Achille Reali to Archie Royal. However, there was something strange in the picture: the man was dressed as a cowboy, had a name like a cowboy's, but his hat was all'italiana - following the Italian style. Looking at this picture, I wonder whether there was a peculiar way for Italians to live in the West, to adapt themselves to the new environment, to seem like a cowboy with a strange hat.

In few words, this research aims to investigate the history of migrations from an environmental perspective, trying to understand the reciprocal influences between environments and newcomers.

If there is something that "general" history might learn from environmental history, it is the ecological approach to the study of human migrations. A. Crosby's research, together with J. Diamond's and R. Grove's studies, has shown that ecology, culture and economy mix with each other when environments and people meet.

Some stories are more significant than others: the impact of the Europeans on the Americans and on their environment has been particularly dramatic, even if the ecological implications of the "discovery" are less obvious than we can suppose, since only with Crosby's book have historians started to think about that. The movement of people around the world has affected not only economy, societies, and cultures, but even nature itself, both in the places of departure and of arrival. Really, scholars like Crosby and Diamond, more than just talking about people, prefer to speak about the complex biota that each ethnic group has brought with itself: animals, plants, and germs. So, it seems quite obvious that the intensity, and therefore the interest, of these physical changes depended to a large degree on how much the new environment was different from the old one, or, in other words, how distant the two worlds were before they met. If Crosby's and Diamond's approach to people movement is particularly appropriate for the study of the great geographical explorations – that put in relationship people and environments segregated from each other for a long time – could it be an interpretive tool also in different contexts? The moment of discovery is particularly dramatic: the hugest ecological transformations have always happened in the very first phase of the meeting between discoverers/conquerors and discovered/conquered. Does this imply that after the initial phase the movement of people around the world never had ecological implications again? Surely not, if we think about the age of imperialism in the 19th – 20th centuries. The environmental historians of Africa have shown how much the natural environment of that continent both affected (for instance, in terms of resistance of white people to particular diseases) and was affected by European colonialism. Probably, in this case, it was more matter of policies than of biological expansion: today, Africa is not a Neo Europe - to use Crosby's expression – in terms of human, animal or plant populations, but

that does not mean that the colonial policies had had a little impact on the African environments.

Thinking "ecologically" about imperialism means: considering the biological power of the different groups, looking at the consequences of the invasion on the environment, and also considering the cultural implications on nature of this encounter. This latter part of the story has been, with some very important exceptions, less explored. Many scholars, beginning with Richard Grove, have worked on the construction of the environmental discourse in the peripheries of the colonial empires, analysing the impact of the exotic natures on the culture of the colonial elites. Big hunting and animal reserves, forestal agencies and policies have been strictly connected to the colonial environments (McKenzie); and also some powerful idea about nature, such as that of wilderness, can be considered as the result of the encounter between people from elsewhere and the nature they have found.

If the age of discovery had the power of pristine encounter and the age of imperialism had the power of big technology, policies and economic submission, what about the age of mass migrations? Could we look ecologically at this phenomenon? We find almost no devastating ecological invasions: migrants have not brought with them a whole biota, with its plants, animals or germs, never seen before in the places of arrival. This does not mean that there were no ecological implications in that huge movement of people which involved millions of women and men from Europe to the Americas and Australia. They might not have brought with them a whole ecosystem, but they moved around the world with their ideas about nature, with their capital of knowledge about ways of using natural resources, and sometimes they transplanted some of their home crops, adapting old practices to new environments. To be sure, they brought with them their bodies, their resistance or their vulnerability to the pathogenous agents they would have encountered in the New Worlds: too often, environmental history has forgotten that nature is not external to human beings. Working in the mines or in the malarial plantations of the South, building railroads, living in overcrowded urban ghettos were not without consequences on the nature of the migrants: an environmental history of emigration means also recognizing how much the bodies of the immigrants collected the traces of migrations in terms of illness.

Surprisingly, environmental historians do not seem to be interested in the history of migrations: it is very hard to find studies devoted to this topic. And this is particularly strange in American environmental history, if we think about the role of immigration in the history of this country. It might be interesting to try to understand the causes of this lack of interest (even if it is quite difficult to speak about absence).

I believe that the problem is related to the scarce relationship between environmental history and social history. Environmental historians have passed from the history of environmental policies and movements to the cultural representations of nature, more or less skipping the material experience of living and shaping nature. The debate on what we should consider "nature" – i.e. how much nature is shaped by human beings – has not helped: it has driven us to be looking for places more than for people and places together. The introduction of gender-class-race analysis in environmental history is changing

things; nevertheless, migrations are still quite absent in the historical studies on environment. The race issue regards, above all, the problem of distribution of risks, while there are very few studies on the ethnic differences in the use-interpretation of nature (except for the Native Americans). It might depend on the fact that, obviously, historians have always found it easier working on big divergences: if the ways of dealing with nature have been so different between Native Americans and whites, the differences among whites seem less clear and dramatic. Nevertheless, I think that historical migrations can be used as an extraordinary laboratory to verify the reciprocal interactions between people and nature. The accommodation of people and culture, the domestication of nature, the expectations, imagination, and exploration of landscape: through the migratory process, we can look at a very holistic history of nature.

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With Donna Gabaccia we could ask: Would Italy and the countries where the Italians arrived be the same if the emigrations had never happened? (Gabaccia, XXVI)

It may be quite obvious that this kind of question comes from a scholar of history of Italian emigration; as Foerster wrote in a historiographfical classic about Italian immigration: "this is that *imperialismo della povera gente* [in Italian in the text; in English imperialism of the poor"] which no well wisher of humanity can begrudge such a people as the Italian" (Foerster, 525).

The "expansion" of Italians around the world has essentially been a matter of emigration. And it could be strange to think about immigrants as people with the power of shaping nature. It should be different to speak about empires, conquerors and so on. Whereas the latter brought with them laws, institutions, policies and enough guns to enforce them, immigrants had to submit to the laws (institutions, policies, etc.) of the host country, generally in a condition of marked inferiority. However, there has always been a big emphasis on the creative power of the pioneers: at every latitude, there are so many stories about how a handful of men (and the masculine is, of course, the only genre of this kind of tale) who have changed the "wilderness" into a garden. How far from the "wilderness" these pioneers had to come is another problem, but, by definition, they must have been emigrants (otherwise, how could we speak about wilderness?). Some emigrants have seemed to be more "pioneers" than others: in the collective image inventory about the U.S. West we rarely find a Greek family, an Italian priest, or a Chinese miner (even if, in recent years, a strange mix of exotic martial art and native cowboys' violence have brought the Asiatic presence in the West, at least in the Hollywood representation). Racism, chronology, power of numbers, cultural behaviours: many might be, and have been, the causes of this perception. Those who arrived too late, or too few, or took too little interest in the new country, thinking of going back home soon, or, simply, those who were too little white have disappeared from the landscape of the pioneers' life.

Pioneers, frontiers, nature, and the West: in this research there is a large concentration of controversial concepts. It seems rather complicated to discuss all these.

In ecology the word "pioneer" used to indicate "a plant which establishes itself in an unoccupied area." From a historical point of view, even from an environmental one, I

think that it would be better to choose a wider definition. Each ethnic group has been a pioneer for itself: if William Cronon and Richard White are right when they say that wilderness is a cultural construction, the historical problem is not to establish who arrived first in the wilderness (in that case the answer is simple: the only pioneers were the Native Americans), rather how each group dealt with, manipulated, and reinvented both the concept of nature and the landscape. With this, I do not want to deny the reality of some priority in time and magnitude: when the Italians arrived in mass in the West, nature had already been tamed in large part by the work of Germans, Irish, Scottish, and Scandinavians (without counting the Native Americans' work). Nevertheless, more than looking around for another story about some Italian primacy, possibly forgotten due the scarce patriotism, I am more interested in understanding what was the place of Italians in this landscape, what traces they have left there, and what were their ideas about it.

The American West seems the natural place for attempting this kind of study. But it is not true. If there is a stricter meaning for this word, the Italians were pioneers more in Argentina or in Brazil than they were in the western areas of the United States. They arrived in South America during the Turnerian age of the western frontier, contributing in a decisive way to the huge transformation of the natural environment of Latin America. Furthermore, if we think about the impact that they had on the environment, we should consider the Italian colonies in Africa: among other things, the rinderpest of 1896-98 was one of the most evident consequences of the Italian presence in the area (Phoofolo, 113). Really, my first idea about this project included a comparative approach: Brazil or Argentina, East Africa, and the U.S. West were the three places that I would have liked to analyze. Maybe, this project was too much ambitious, more appropriate for a research group than for the effort of a single historian. Moreover, if for the African case the Italian archives and libraries collections assure a considerable amount of sources, the Latin American case seems to be more complicated for its achievement. In other words, at this point it is quite difficult for me to say whether I could pursuit the whole project: however, I am still convinced that a wider perspective would be better (I am thinking to collect essays by different scholars for each geographical area).

In any case, for the moment I am working on the American West. There are various reasons for this option, both scientific and, in some ways, casual; and the latter often have a big part in the historical work, even when they have been re-interpreted as aware choices.

First, thinking about pioneers and frontiers, it seems impossible to avoid the American West: it has always been the site of this kind of tale about taming and re-shaping nature. The power of the rhetoric about the West is, in my opinion, part of the story: nature has been shaped by the work of women and men, but also by the narratives that they, and others, have constructed about it. And the narrative of the American West has been a global one, involving millions of people around the world, not just those who came to the Trans Mississippi lands. Generations of children have grown up eating bread and West: the myth of the West was so precocious if we think about the dates of publication of the first classics of this genre (Fenimore Cooper, Karl May, Mayne Reid, Gustave Aimard, Emilio Salgari, to name only the more popular). The complex blending of history and

myth is particularly evident in the story of the icon of the American West: Buffalo Bill, hero and actor, was among the first who tried to construct a public discourse on the expansion of the white settlers across the Mississippi. Of course, we can say that Buffalo Bill was essentially a charlatan and his Wild West Show a strange circus fit only for a very naive audience. However, I agree with Richard White when he writes that Buffalo Bill and Turner were the two master narrators of American westering (White, 7): both followed separate but connected strands of a single mythic cloth (White, 45). The existence of a mythic West, the powerful narrative about its story and the relevance to it of a discourse on nature are all elements that have stimulated me to start from this area. It implies, as I will show below, that my West is, in some way, ubiquitous: it is somewhere across the Mississippi, but also in Italy, in the pages of novels, in the arenas where Buffalo Bill's show arrived, in the ideas - and dreams - about it.

The relevance of nature – or better of the discourse on nature – that we find in the Western narratives has always been present in the America historiography on the West. Starting from Turner, through Aldo Leopold, Carl Sauer, Prescott Webb and James Malin, the lands beyond the 98° meridian have always represented a laboratory in which to understand the relationships between society and nature. This historiographical stratification on the American West has been another factor to push me in this direction (even if now I am quite scared by the amount of things that I should read). In particular, in the last twenty years Western historiography has undergone a huge revisionism which offered so many suggestions for a project like mine. Many "new western historians" have started to complain of a vision of the American West as a place inhabited only by white Anglo-Saxon men: as Patricia Nelson Limerick writes, despite its wideness, "the west was not where we escaped each other, but where we all met" (Limerick, 1987: 291). The discovery of ethnic and cultural differences has meant the erosion of the Turnerian myth about the birth of democracy in the West: it would be hard to speak about a land of equals to an audience of Afro-Americans, Chinese, Japanese, or Mexicans (without quoting the too obvious Native Americans). "Race – quoting again Patricia Nelson Limerick – was the key factor in dividing the people of western America. Its meanings and distinctions fluctuated, but racial feeling evidently guided white Americans in their choice of groups to persecute or exclude" (Limerick, 1987: 280). This cultural and ethnic diversity, as well as the gender diversity, affected many aspects of the history of the West. What were, for instance, the relationships between nature and different ethnic groups? If now environmental historians focus more on garbage, as "evidence of human actions, relicts of culture," than on wilderness, as did the old western historians (Withe: 27), can they simply ignore the cultural differences among the groups, each of which had left its own traces in the landscape? Moreover, if nature is not a "real object," a geographical place somewhere outside of human societies, there is a need for an environmental history that takes into count the ethnic and cultural variables of the perceptions/constructions of nature.

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It is well known that the Italian immigration to the United States focused on the Eastern big cities. The reasons were various: for instance, the cost of internal travel (at the end of

19th cent. the cost of travel from Italy to California was $ 110-120 = one year of salary in Italy; from the East Coast, the price was $ 75-80), the difficulty of leaving the Little Italies, the hope of coming back to Italy soon, the demand for unskilled workers in the urban and industrial areas. The lager Italian emigration arrived in the United States when the age of colonization of the frontier was more or less closed, so the southern and eastern European farmers contributed to the industrialization of the country, while in the first half of the 19th century people from northern and central Europe had contributed to the big development of American agriculture. However, this does not mean that Italians were absent in the West. Moreover, as the new western history has shown, the West was not only matter of pioneers, and there was not a definite deadline for its history somewhere at the end of 19th century. As the historian of Italian immigrants Rudolph Vecoli points out, the big city did not exhaust the categories of environments in which Italians lived and worked: "We know that many families settled in small factory towns, others in mining villages, and not a few on farms in rural America." And, although they were a minority, in any case they represented a large part of the Italian emigration and hundred thousands of people (Vecoli, 1987: 1). There is a problem about the sources for the history of Italians in the West. We can find various histories, often written by Italian-Americans, focused on the presentation of the *prominenti*, the most important people, of the communities: the aim of these stories has been to show the success of some among the Italian emigrants, telling their exemplary lives. Probably, the life of the Italian banker Antonio Giannini furnished the most famous case of this kind of story. But what about the stories of the majority of the Italians, who had never become so famous (Joseph Veljkonja)? Maybe statistics are a good starting point: How many Italians came into the West?

Table: Italians distributed among the big geographical areas of the United States, 1910

New England	13.2
Middle Atlantic	58.6
East North Central	10.8
West North Central	2.6
South Atlantic	2.6
East South Atlantic	0.7
West South Atlantic	3.0
Mountain	2.4
Pacific	6.0

Counting together, in 1910 the Italians in the West and in the Southwest were about 14% of the whole Italian emigration in the United States. For the same year, we have the exact number of Italians distributed in each State.

Table: Italians in each State, 1910

State		State	
New York	472.201	Wisconsin	9.273
Pennsylvania	196.122	Texas	7.190
New Jersey	115.446	Maryland	6.969
Massachusetts	85.056	Indiana	6.911
Illinois	72.163	Montana	6.592
California	63.615	Iowa	5.846
Connecticut	56.954	Oregon	5,538
Ohio	41.620	Vermont	4594
Rhode Island	27.287	Florida	4538
Louisiana	20.233	Nebraska	3799
West Virginia	17.292	Kansas	3520
Michigan	16.861	Maine	3468
Colorado	14.375	Utah	3117
Washington	13.121	Delaware	2893
Missouri	12.084	District of Columbia	2761
Minnessota	9.669	Alabama	2696
		Oklahoma	2564

Table: Distribution of Italian-born immigrations by decade and state

State	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
Alabama	90	187	118	114	322	862	2,696	2,732	2,140	1,699	1,436	1,151
Arizona	-	-	T12	T104	T207	T699	1,531	1,261	822	715	1,600	2,450
Arkansas	15	17	30	132	187	576	1,699	1,314	952	791	670	525
California	228	2,805	4,660	7,537	15,495	22,777	63,615	88,504	107,249	100,911	104,215	102,366
Colorado	-	T6	T16	335	3,882	6,818	14,375	12,580	10,670	8,352	6,329	4,797
Connecticut	16	61	117	879	5,285	19,105	56,954	80,322	87,123	81,373	74,270	65,233
Delaware	-	4	5	43	459	1,122	2,893	4,136	3,769	3,464	3,031	2,914
Dist of Columbia	74	94	182	244	467	930	2,761	3,764	4,330	4,913	4,422	3,086
Florida	40	75	56	77	408	1,707	4,538	4,745	5,262	5,138	8,087	16,217
Georgia	33	47	50	82	159	218	545	700	712	536	638	750
Idaho	-	-	T11	T35	509	779	2,067	1,323	1,153	892	633	420
Illinois	43	219	761	1,764	8,035	23,523	72,163	94,407	110,449	98,244	83,556	72,139
Indiana	6	92	95	198	468	1,327	6,911	6,712	6,873	6,309	5,508	4,756
Iowa	1	26	54	122	399	1,198	5,846	4,956	3,834	3,461	2,908	2,254
Kansas	-	15	55	167	616	987	3,520	3,355	2,165	1,654	1,214	1,024
Kentucky	143	231	325	370	707370	679	1,316	1,932	1,589	1,302	1,067	911

Louisiana	915	1,134	1,889	2,527	8,437	17,431	20,233	16,264	13,526	9,849	7,678	5,470
Maine	20	49	48	90	258	1,334	3,468	2,797	2,359	2,268	2,008	1,568
Maryland	82	220	210	477	1,416	2,449	6,969	9,543	10,872	10,119	9,942	10,454
Massachusetts	196	371	454	2,116	8,066	28,785	85,056	117,007	126,103	114,362	101,458	86,921
Michigan	12	78	110	555	3,088	6,178	16,861	30,216	43,087	40,631	38,937	36,879
Minnesota	T1	45	40	124	828	2,222	9,669	7,432	6,401	5,628	4,496	3,541
Mississippi	121	114	147	260	425	845	2,137	1,841	1,613	1,294	1,023	923
Missouri	124	554	936	1,074	2,416	4,345	12,984	14,609	15,242	13,168	10,695	9,033
Montana	-	-	T34	T64	734	2,199	6,592	3842	2,840	2,265	1,767	1,055
Nebraska	-	T18	44	62	717	752	3,799	3,547	3,642	3,201	2,622	1,996
Nevada	-	T13	199	1,560	1,129	1,296	2,831	2,641	2,563	2,258	1,985	1,665
New Hampshire	-	18	9	32	312	947	2,071	2,074	1,938	1,687	1,416	1,138
New Jersey	30	105	277	1,547	12,989	41,865	115,446	157,285	190,858	169,063	150,680	137,356
New Mexico	T1	T11	T25	T73	T355	T661	1,959	1,678	1,259	1,148	934	809
New York	833	1,862	3,592	15,113	64,141	182,248	472,201	545,173	629,322	584,075	503,175	440,063
North Carolina	4	27	19	42	28	201	521	453	438	445	553	567
North Dakota	-	T1	T4	T71	21	700	1,262	176	102	80	96	73
Ohio	174	407	564	1,064	3,857	11,321	41,620	60,658	71,496	65,453	56,593	50,338
Oklahoma	-	-	-	-	T11	T28	2,564	2,122	1,157	893	805	710
Oregon	T5	33	31	167	589	1,014	5,538	4,324	4,728	4,083	3,581	3,024
Pennsylvanie	172	622	784	2,794	24,682	66,655	196,122	222,764	225,979	197,281	163,359	131,149
Rhode Island	24	32	58	313	2,468	8,972	27,287	32,241	32,493	28,851	24,380	18,438
South Carolina	59	59	63	84	106	180	316	344	188	175	228	260
South Dakota	-	-	-	-	269	360	1,158	413	305	238	202	174
Tennessee	59	373	483	443	788	1,222	2,034	2,079	1,946	1,734	1,552	1,383
Texas	41	67	186	539	2,107	3,942	7,190	8,024	6,550	5,451	5,059	4,568
Utah	T1	T40	T74	T138	T347	1,067	3,117	3,225	2,814	2,189	1,750	1,437
Vermont	7	13	17	30	445	2,154	4,594	4,067	2,082	2,339	1,766	1,208
Virginia	65	259	162	281	1,219	781	2,449	2,435	1,853	1,843	2,087	2,468
Washington	-	T11	T24	T71	1,408	2,124	13,121	10,813	10,274	8,853	7,566	6,072
West Virginia	-	-	34	48	632	2,921	17,292	14,147	12,088	10,601	8,557	5,882
Wisconsin	9	103	104	253	1,123	2,172	9,273	11,188	12,599	11,086	9,663	8,479
Wyoming	-	-	T9	T15	259	781	1,961	1,984	1,653	1,215	858	555
Alaska	-	-	-	-	-	T438						
Hawaii	-					T68						
Total	3,645	10,518	17,457	44,230	182,580	484,703	1,343,125	1,610,113	1,790,429	1,623,580	1,427,145	1,256,999

(Source: L. Iorizzo)

Considering the small percentage of Italians going to the West, it would be interesting to recognize the regional differences among them: in fact we usually speak about Italians, even if the emigrant rarely considered himself as an Italian. It is well known that the village or regional identities were much stronger than the national identity. And, it was not by chance that the records produced by the American office for immigration divided the Italians between northern and southern people. Among the various differences that we can find between northern and southern Italians, we should consider also the destinations chosen by the two groups. It seems that the Northern Italians were more willing to go the West:

	Northern Italians				Southern				Total			
	1901	1902	1903	1904	1901	1902	1903	1904	1901	1902	1903	1904
North Atlantic division	61	28	59	56	88	86	86	85	83	82	82	80
North central division	16	18	18	17	6	8	8	8	7	9	10	10
South Atlantic division	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	3	2	1	2	2
South central division	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Western division	20	21	20	20	2	2	1	1	5	5	4	5
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table: Distribution of Northern and Southern Italians in the United States, 1901-1904

To better understand the differences in the location of Italians in the United States, one can consider that, while in 1901 the percentage of Southern Italians in the West was only 2%, in the same year, emigrants from the Italian South represented 88% of the Italians who arrived to New York. In 1904, among the Italians present in the United States, 80% were from Southern Italy and 20% from the North, but this statistic was inverted in the West where 77% were Northerners and 23% Southerners.
The data on emigration in California, the preferred western destination for Italians, confirm this picture: in 1901 63% of the Italians present in the State came from the North of the country; in 1904 the Northerners came to be 73% of the whole Italian community. This larger number of Northern Italians could explain some peculiarities of the Italian emigration in the West, such as the lower percentage of illiterates, compared with the 60% of Italian illiterates in New York. And the diffusion of Italian newspapers and periodicals around the West seems to confirm this impression:
Table: Italian periodicals in the West 1850s-1930s

State	Year of foundation	Name
Iowa	1910	*La tribuna italiana*

Missouri	1920	*La lega italiana*
	1931	*Stampa italiana*
Arkansas	1907	*Il corriere italiano*
Kansas	1910	*Il lavoratore italiano*
Nebraska	1915	*Il progresso*
Colorado		*Il lavoratore italiano*
		La Stella
		La Nazione
		Il Risveglio
		La Capitale
		Il Roma
		La Frusta
		Il Vindice
		La Voce del Popolo
	1919	*Il corriere di Trinidad*
		L'Unione
Oregon	1895	*Lavoro e Progresso*
	1910	*La Stella*
		La Tribuna italiana
Texas	1906	*Il Messaggero italiano*
		La Tribuna italiana
Nevada	1930	*Il Bollettino del Nevada*
California	1859	*La voce del Popolo*
		L'Italia
		L'Eco d'Italia

(Source: A. Rolle).

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In what ways did the Italian emigrants deal with the environment of the American West? I have always been aware that it would have not been easy to work on this subject. If the subaltern people have left few written sources, it would be even more complicated to analyze their relationships with nature: maybe they could speak – or, better for historians, write - about job opportunities, accommodation, or travel suggestions, but hardly about landscape and other "natural subjects."

> A landowning-literati class is indeed the source of much of the Anglo-American literature of discovery of landscape; even the

> wilderness-loving John Muir married into a family of orchard-owing Californians. Without a margin of assured subsistence, without the opportunity for contemplation and introspection, without a way to enter one's memories into a permanent, written source, a group's response to a new geography can be close to impossible for posterity to hear (Patricia Nelson Limerick: 2000, 195).

To deal with this problem about sources, my strategy of research will include:

i) the study of the general ideas about the American West in Italian culture, even if it is complicated to say how much these ideas circulated among different social classes

ii) the study of some unconventional literary sources, such as the letters from immigrants

iii) the study of conventional literary sources, such as immigration and press literature

iv) the study of the action and behaviour of the immigrants towards the environment through an analysis of their work

In any case, whatever the sources might be, I think that preliminarily we should re-consider what we mean by "natural subjects": if we are looking for wilderness, natural beauty and environmental concern, we have chosen the wrong trail. We are following the traces of immigrants: they spoke the language of work, of money, of settlement, of racial conflicts. If nature is involved with work, money, settlement and racial conflicts, then immigrants, too, have their own environmental stories that can be told. Up to now, ethnicity in environmental history has meant addressing the issue of the unequal distribution of environmental risks on a racial basis, while migrations have been studied essentially as big biological invasions (and, consequently, in a very long durée perspective). Rather, I am trying to study migrations and ethnicity within environmental history, considering both the cultural and the material path of the interactions between migrants and environments, also on the middle and short temporal scale. Furthermore, an immigration point of view implies a wider idea of nature itself, which meets the new trends of environmental history, more open to other subjects besides the traditional ones of forests, rivers, or soil.

Although too much rhetoric for our taste, some lines written at the beginning of the 20th century by Amy Bernardy, an Italian journalist and author of some of the most acute inquiries on Italian emigration, can help:

> Rather, heard all of us, Americans and Italians (...) the voice of the work which, assembling wood, opening canals, digging ditches, putting railroads, building dikes, bridges, and dams, preparing the way for electricity networks, for cars, for trains, for telegraph and telephone, populating fields and mine camps, cultivating gardens, laying the foundations of houses that are going to become cities, the Little Italy is doing around all America (Bernardy: 1913, 309).

Putting aside the aims of Ms. Bernardy, I found these lines were interesting because they synthesize the relationships between Italians and the American nature in an ample perspective: usually we do not consider dams, highways or railroads, the networks of electricity, telecommunications, water systems as part of nature, but they are and, through their work, the immigrants' experiences have been sedimented within it. Thinking about this research project, I was looking for Italians whose work connected them strongly with the agroecosystem, like farmers, fishermen or, at least, miners, and only later did I realize that for understanding the place of Italians in the West environment I should consider their labor in the railroads or in public works, or their ways of living in the Western cities: not only the Italian winemakers or fishermen of California, but also the scavengers of San Francisco would have their environmental history that could be told; maybe collecting garbage in a big city is less glamourous than collecting grapes on the hills but not less interesting from an ecological point of view. And, as I will try to show, the two things might be more connected than we think.

The first step might be to understand whether nature had any role in the choice of a particular place by emigrants. We already know many things about the migratory chains: we know that immigrants wrote to their relatives, speaking to them about the opportunities of the new lands; we know that immigration was also encouraged by local agencies (states, railroad companies and other entrepreneurs) which tried to convince people to come where they needed to have workers. Was there any room in these discourses for nature? Good climate and fertile soil were the two ingredients necessary for all efforts to have immigrants in rural areas. In his study on the images of America in immigrant cultures, Hoerder writes that there were no swamps or mosquitoes in the new lands (Hoerder, 8). Ray Allen Billington studied the representations of the American West in the European imagination: the American Frontier, land of savagery, land of promise, was a place of contradictions for the Europeans of 19th century. In the guidebooks for immigrants, in the "American letters," in the immigration newspapers, in the pamphlets of states and railroad companies, the West was full of tillable fields, which were if not free, at least affordable for every one. The Wisconsin pamphlet for immigrants included information on the topography, climate, mines, forests, agriculture, besides the land policies, while the Missouri government put out hundreds of copies of a geological report on the mines in the state (Merle & Kendall, 207). Nature played a big role also in the illustrations presented in this literature for immigrants: the pamphlets of the railroad companies often "pictured photographically the evolutions of a prairie homestead from the sod house to comfortable dwelling, goodly barn, and neat surroundings" (Merle & Kendall, 215).

Trying to attract immigrants, the Southern states produced a lot of promotional materials. For instance, at the international exposition in St. Louis, Florida sent out lists of state lands, maps of the attractive portions of the state, and beautifully illustrated pamphlets relating to cattle raising, lumbering, fruit and truck growing, fish and game, and winter resorts; Louisiana published free information concerning the climate, soil, resources, industries, schools and churches, and sent out lists, with descriptions and prices, of 6,000,000 acres of land for sale (Fleming, 282). Furthermore, the South showed the

relevance of the discourses about nature also on the opposite side: for Fleming, who wrote in 1905, it attracted few immigrants because of the bad image of its environment – besides that of its inhabitants: its climate was considered too hot for white men, its water bad, and malarial fever common (Fleming, 277).

Were the Italians reached by these efforts – even by the negative reputations? How did they react to this kind of promotion? In general, it seems that immigrants were quite receptive to this kind of literature: in Minnesota, each farm house had its Bible and its book of propaganda for immigrants (Merle & Kendall, 207). Although generally these materials were produced for other cultural markets than Italy – and in fact they were often written in German or in Scandinavian languages-- I think they merit more investigation in the Italian case.

In 1900 the Commission for Immigration counted about forty Italian agricultural communities in the United States. Luciano Jorizzo found at least more than fifty in the first decade of 20th century.

Table: List of Italian rural communities in the United States, 1900-1910

State	City or town
Alabama	Daphne; Lambert
Arkansas	Gracie; Sunnyside; Lambert
California	Asti; Madeira; and scattered groups in the Sacramento and Visitation Valley
Colorado	Denver, Pueblo
Connecticut	South Glastonbury
Delaware	Wilmington
Louisiana	Independence; Kenner; Millikens Bend; Shreveport
Maryland	Baltimore
Mississippi	Delta region; Gulfport; Long Beach; Bay st. Louis
Missouri	Knobview; Marshfield
New York	Canastota; Lyons; Clyde; Albion; Port Byron; Geneva; Oneida
New Jersey	Hammonton and vicinity; Veneland and vicinity
North Carolina	St. Helena; Valdese
Rhode Island	Olneyville
Tennessee	Memphis; Paradise Ridge;
Utah	Salt Lake City

Texas	Arcadia; Alta Loma; Beaumont; Bryan; Dickinsen; Hitchcock; Lamarque; League City; Little York; Montague; San Antonio; Victoria; Dallas; Galveston; Houston
Virginia	Norfolk
Wisconsin	Genoa; Cumberland
Wyoming	Cheyenne

Aside from California, the main concentration of Italian farmers was in the states of the South (35 Italian agricultural communities according to Berthoff). About the penetration of Italians in the South, we have to consider that in 1920, while they were only the 11.6% of all the foreign born population in the United States, they were 35% in Louisiana, 22% in Mississippi, 15% in Alabama, and 13% in Tennessee (Iorizzo, 48). In 1904, it was estimated that more than 100,000 Italian farm laborers were working in the southern states of the Mississippi Valley. At the beginning of the 20th century, Alberto Pecorini estimated that of 30,000 Italians in Louisiana, half worked in the cotton and sugar fields, while 15,000 Italians contributed to Texas agriculture, not counting the Italian cultivation of vegetables and tobacco in Alabama (Pecorini, 163-4).

> Between New Orleans and Baton Rouge - wrote Fleming in 1905 - the Italian laborer has largely displaced the Negro, and the same is true of many other localities. In Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas and Mississippi there are numbers of Italian farmers and truckers also, notably in the vicinity of Bryan, Houston, Dallas, Galveston, San Antonio, Memphis, Greenville, and Friars Point (Fleming, 291-2).

Among all experiences of Italian immigration, probably that in the South was the most organized and planned. Generally, after the Civil War, the Southern states had to deal with a big problem of shortage of laborers and there was a pressure to replace the African American workers with immigrants. In the Italian case, this need for agricultural laborers met a discourse about relocating the immigrants from the big cities of the East Coast to the West and the South: many Italian officials and writers were complaining of the dangerous concentration of their compatriots in the urban ghettos, where their agricultural skills remained useless. The Italians had to leave the East and spread around the continent: this was the prescription that many experts suggested, after having visited the Little Italies.

In 1905 the railroad companies operating in the South asked for the cooperation of the Italian government in bringing immigrants to those areas: for this reason, they invited the Italian ambassador in Washington for a tour of the agricultural colonies of his countrymen in the south (E. Mayor de Planches; Berthoff, 334). And in the same years, a line of steamers was put in operation between New Orleans and Italy, while an agent of the White Star Line was sent to Naples, Italy, to arrange for the colonization of 10,000 families along a new railroad line controlled by the Rock Island System, between Corpus

Christi and Brownsville (Fleming, 292). Maybe bringing 10,000 families from Naples would have been quite difficult, but in 1904 planters' agents and public-works contractors came to the New Orleans harbor competing with each other to take in the 1,500 Italians who had disembarked (Berthoff, 331).

The Italians seemed particularly adapted to the Southern environment: a long acquaintance with malaria and marshes made them less frightened by those natural enemies which disappointingly existed also in the New World. Cotton and rice were the staple products of the Italians all around the South where they cultivated other crops as well.

To get an idea of how much the Italians contributed to shaping the Southern environment, we can consider some particular cases. We can start with three little examples from Texas: in its constant effort to relocate Italians from the cities to rural areas, the Italian officials described Texas as the new California, particularly adapted to the Southern Europeans by its natural and cultural characteristics (Mangione & Morreale, 187). In the Brazos Valley, the first Italians began to arrive in the 1870s from the sugar plantations of Louisiana. The price of land was cheap on account of the hydrogeological problems of that area: continuous floods kept farmers far from there, at least until the Italians' arrival (Texas, 13). Was it a hazard, a myopic choice? How did they deal with the over-abundance of water? Was it only a matter of habit, because the Italians were resigned to having this kind of problem, or did they do something to dry the land? At this point of my research, I am still looking for answers. We know that Italians, like other groups of immigrants, should have deforested large portion of the land: this was the condition imposed by the state to have free access to land for two years, and then a good price to buy it. Did the Brazos Valley agricultural experience work? I am not sure yet, but it seems that it did: in the 1890s Brazos County had one of the largest concentrations of Italian farmers in the United States and in 1905 the population of Bryan, its main center, was 5000 inhabitants, 3000 of them from Sicily. In the middle, between the 1890s and 1905, the Italian community experienced the worst floods ever to happen in the area: maybe the Italian approach to the hydrological problems was not a solution, but the story seems to demonstrate their resilience to this environmental stress. According to Mangione and Morreale, the tools were more social and cultural than technological: to face floods and a situation of permanent risk the Italians had to cooperate each other (even if the cooperation was generally on village scale), putting together work, animals, resources, and skills (Mangione & Morreale, 186). Less contradictory seems the contribution of Italians in Texas's Montague County: from the 1880s to the 1900s, those sand lands were covered by vineyards, orchards, and vegetable farms. To confirm the role of Italians in the wine making industry in Texas, consider that the only licensed winery in the state was operated by an Italian family (the Qualia winery). Two hundred Italians introduced the culture of figs on an industrial scale to the Dickinson area: the figs were the base of the economy of that area by the 1930s, when the discovery of oil changed the life of all the county and, obviously, also that of the little Italian community (Texas, 24).

Another important rural settlement of Italians was in Independence in Louisiana: Rolle stresses how much they transformed the lands, building canals, drying marshes, and

cultivating vegetables, fruits, and, above all, strawberries. All the social and economic life of Independence was centered on the strawberry culture: at harvest time, all the adults and children were involved in picking, packing, loading, and delivering the strawberries to town for marketing and even the school system adjusted its schedule to the community's farming operations (http://www.louisianafolklife.org). To have an idea of the success of this Italian agricultural enterprise, consider that in 1904 265 wagons of strawberries were sent to the markets of St. Louis, Chicago, and Cincinnati, making $700,000 of profit (Rolle: 2003, 56).

However, the most famous case of Italian agricultural settlement in the South was the Sunny Side colony in Arkansas. Today, it would be hard even to recognize the site of this colony: it seems that nothing of that story has remained in the landscape. Nevertheless, I think that Patricia Nelson Limerick is right when she writes that all the American landscape – and, truly, not only the American one - is full of ghosts:

> The landscapes of North America are heavily invested with human memories, and the tangle of those memories provided both common and contested ground for the people of various origins whose descendents now populate this nation (Nelson Limerick: 2000, 213).

The vanished Italian colony of Sunny Side is one of these traces in the soil, one piece of this memory of relationship between different ethnic and social groups and landscape.

The Italian immigration to Sunny Side was carefully planned: in 1887 a large cotton plantation of 10,000 acres, supplied by a railroad to send the cotton to Greenville, started to look for cheap laborers. One of the owners, Austin Corbin, thought to apply to the Italian Bureau of Labor in New York. Moving Italians from urban environments to more rural activities was one of the goals of the Italian officials, and the Sunny Side plantation seemed to be a concrete opportunity for this kind of policy. Emanuele Ruspoli, mayor of Rome, visited the area and, although with no competence in agriculture and after a very brief trip, he reported the excellent condition of the colony, sponsoring Italian immigration in that area. 139 families from Central Italy came to Sunny Side, but the environment they found was very different from the descriptions by Ruspoli and by the agents of the plantation company. In particular, the impact of fevers, endemic to that area, was traumatic: the health of the immigrants was strongly affected by those diseases, which were quite different from the Italian malaria (and, furthermore, the immigrants came from a part of the countryside where the malaria has never been so virulent). Even working very hard in the cotton fields, the Italians had never been able to reclaim all the marshes that were a constant breeding ground of fevers. The mortality rate among Italians always was very high: 1896 was particularly tragic with 130 deaths in two months. This bad year came after the fall in the cotton price of 1895 and before Mr. Corbin’s death in 1897. With the passage of ownership from Corbin to O.B. Crittenden & Co. things for Italians started to be even worse: they lost many benefits, such as priest, doctor, teacher, mules, and the water filters Corbin had given them (Milani, 27). In 1897-98 many Italians left Sunny Side, although the numbers are not precise Rolle says that only 40 families decided to stay, but, despite the failure of Sunny Side, this number would have grown to

52 families in 1903 (Rolle, 79) and 127 in 1909 (Milani, 29); nevertheless, by the 1920s no Italian lived in Sunny Side (Milani, 29). Rolle wrote that there are two versions of the end of this story: the O. B. Crittenden & Co. tried to demonstrate the success of the colony and the good conditions of the workers but the failure and the overexploitation of the Italians seems much more probable. As a matter of fact, Crittenden was arrested for ill-treatment and peonage of the Italian cotton workers (Preziosi, 96-99), while in the same years, the Italian Bulletin of Emigration spoke about Sunny Side as a case of slavery (On Sunny Side see the *Reports of the Industrial Commission on immigration,* 505).

If Sunny Side was a failure both in economic and ecological terms, it was a success story in terms of cultural representation of Italians: many observers started to commend the good attitude of Italians towards labor and their ability to improve all kind of land with hard work and sacrifice. J. L. Coulter, one of the fans of Italian immigration in the South, expressed this opinion clearly: on the basis of environmental conditions, failure had to be the obvious result in Sunny Side, so the fact that Italians did not escape before such difficulties was a success per se (Coulter, 154). Generally, the good evaluation of Italians implied a racist judgment on the African Americans and their attitude to work. From this point of view, the relationships between different ethnic groups and their environment was within the ethnic relationships among these groups: in the South it implied using the Italians against the African American workers, constructing a rhetoric about the good abilities of Italian farmers, while in the West, above all in California, we can find this kind of discourse about the different attitudes of Italians and Chinese towards fishing activities with a strong focus on the sustainability of respective techniques (McEvoy; Ricci Lathop, pp. 236-9).

For instance, Alfred Stone, a big landowner who sponsored the substitution of the African American workers with Italians, wrote in 1905:

> The Italian is so jealous of the use of every foot for which he plays rent that he will cultivate with a hoe places too small to be worked with a plough, to derive revenue from spots to which a Negro would not give a moment's thought. I have seen them cultivate right down to the water's edge the banks of bayous that had never before been touched by the plough. I have seen them walk through their fields and search out every skipped place in every row and carefully put in seed, to secure a perfect strand. I have seen them make more cotton per acre than the negro on the adjoining cut, gather it from two to four weeks earlier, and then put in the extra time by picking in the negro's field (Stone, 54)

Many observers stressed the Italian ability to cultivate every corner of their land, dealing with any kind of environmental condition such as swamps, fevers, floods.

The end of Sunny Side, or, at least, one of the ends of this story, contributed to building a positive image of Italians as hard working farmers. Two rural communities were born from Sunny Side: Tontitown in Arkansas and Knobview in Missouri. In both cases, the priest of the community, Father Bandini, played an important role, persuading the

immigrants to move elsewhere. Bandini obtained 900 acres from the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad, for $1 an acre; the Italians deforested the area, using the wood for their houses, and built a church and a school. They radically reshaped the landscape from a dry and sterile land to a place for vineyards and pastures. I find it very interesting that the Italians of Tontitown blended things from the old and the new world in their relationship with the environment. In fact, if on one hand Father Bandini provided them with the Italian translations of the reports of the US Agricultural Department to improve their skills and their knowledge of the local environment, on the other hand he obtained from Italy seeds, plants, tools, even some insects to fight the local parasites. Again, the problem is to evaluate how much this effort worked: we know that the Italian fig and chestnut trees planted in the very first years died soon, leaving space for the native apple trees. Then, in 1904 the American apple trees developed trouble: since the traditional remedies, such as brushing lye soap onto the trunk and branches, were not able to fix the ecological crisis of the apple trees, Father Bandini suggested that they expand their back-door grape arbors into commercial vineyards. Finally, the choice of grapes should have worked: by 1911, the Tontitown Grape Growers Association was founded, and by 1925 the town had begun holding its Grape Festivals. Father Bandini was very interested in the image of his community: he attracted to Tontitown the interest of the king of Italy (really of his bride, who donated all the furniture for the church), of the Italian prime minister (who promised to do all he could to convince the Italian emigrants to go to the West more than to the big cities of the east coast), and even of the pope. In the United States, Tontitown was famous above all for its agricultural products: the onions, the beans, the apples, the peas cultivated by Italians were very well known all around the country. Tontitown, like Sunny Side but with a much more uncertain result, showed that Italians, too, could be pioneers: and what could be more “pioneer” than the image of an Italian priest with a gun who went around to inform the neighbourhoods that the Italians had organized a regular vigilance corps to defend themselves and their properties. This was Bandini’s “masculine” reaction to the destruction of the school operated by the groups of nativist southerns (Rolle, 80. In general on Tontitown see *Reports of the Industrial Commission on immigration*, 647).

The Tontitown case, or all the stories about Sunny Side and Italian heroism, very well presented in Rolle’s work, might generate some misunderstanding: not only in regard to the Italians, but also to every pioneer group, the history was generally less heroic and successful than has often been told. It might be enough to remember two inquiries made in the first decade of 1900 by a journalist, Giuseppe Prezioso, and an official of the Italian Bureau of Emigration, Adolfo Rossi. Prezioso revealed the inhuman conditions of the Italians in the South: they lived in barracks, without any hygienic provision, exposed to the difficulties of the climate and to the harsh treatment of the padrone’s system. In 1905 Rossi investigated the strange case of New Palermo, in Alabama: there, about one hundred Italians were brought in to a desolate land with the illusion that they would find good work in a model colony built for them. Obviously, the Italians found nothing but forest, and the agent who had persuaded them to go there escaped with all money they gave him to buy the land. Rossi’s main point was to demonstrate that the Italian

authorities had no duty to recover either the tangles of Pampinella, the agent, or the imprudence of the immigrants. So, if the immigrants solved the problem in a very Western way, killing Pampinella (Magione & Morreale, 188), I am still wondering whether the Italians deforested the area of New Palermo, as Pampinella told them, to have the promised land.
However, any thinking about the frontier, Italians, and agriculture, neither Louisiana nor Texas quite compares with the California experience.
According to the biologist Niles Eldredge, moving around, every species seeks familiar living conditions (Clark, 847). And it is quite well known how much California seemed like Italy. As an immigrant declared: "I thought that California should have been like Italy, except for the poverty" (Brooklyn interview, 1983, quoted in Mangione & Morreale, 197). Rolle was particularly clear on this point:

> The scenery and mildness of California's seasons had proved especially attractive to Italians. Even the rainfall pattern resembled Italy's, with the heaviest in the north. Italians found that almost anything grown back home could be raised here. All were invariably struck by the similarities between California and ancient Tuscany or Campania. The terraced bluffs around Santa Barbara and headlands near Carmel reminded newcomers of the Riviera's Santa Margherita, San Remo, and Rapallo. Blue skies, olive trees, and craggy cliffs took immigrants back mentally to Posillipo on the Bay of Naples (Rolle: 2000, 15-6).

Indeed, arriving in California the Italians might have found a very familiar landscape, but I wonder what they already knew about it. If the dispersion of information among immigrants is always complicated to analyze, it is equally complicated to evaluate the real importance of the general ideas about California, America or West, diffused in the Italian culture. Really, a part of this research is devoted to study the construction of the collective image inventory about America and, precisely, about the West in Italian culture. Here, there is no room to illustrate this part of the story. I can only give some idea about this: Italy shared the European passion for the American Frontier, which was inundating the continent with books on pioneers and Indians. Fenimore Cooper, translated quickly into many of the European languages, was available in Italian by 1868, as were, in the same years, Italian translations of Karl May's, Mayne Reid's, and Gustave Aimard's Western novels. The original West made in Italy was the product of the fertile fantasy of Emilio Salgari, the most popular Italian novelist at the turn of 19th century: at least ten of his one hundred books were set in the American West (his most famous Western novel was set in California, with the eloquent title *The Princess of the Gold Field*). If Salgari should be considered as the image-maker of the Italian version of the West, he was not alone. Between 1843 and 1899, 62 treatises, diaries, and travel books on the United States, and 47 novels on the West, were published in Italy. With the new century, the interest in America in general and especially in the West would have risen more and more: I counted about 200 titles among treatises and novels printed in Italy in the first two decade of 20th century. Readers, but also spectators: like many other

Europeans, the Italians could view Frontier tales from the bleachers of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show which was in Naples, Rome, Milan, Bologna, and Verona (where Buffalo Bill met Salgari, who would use him as a hero in some of his novels). I would like to work on the reception of this canonical representation of the American West, hoping that the newspapers and other magazines could be a good source for this. Of course, I do not think that immigrants choose their destination on the basis of Salgari's, or anyone's, novels; there were other networks of communication between the two sides of the ocean. In his book on *contadini* in Lucania, Carlo Levi wrote: "The mail always brings something coming from America. Scissors, knives, razors, agricultural tools, sickles and hammers (…). Regarding the working tools, the life here is all American". It is very well known how powerful the American letters were, and, more in general, the many things immigrants sent to their relatives at home, proving their own success and the wealthy of the New Word. However, I still believe that it would be interesting to understand the Italian version of the narratives about the Frontier: it might say something about the idea of nature and its domestication in Italian culture and I am sure that, in some way, it affected as well the culture of emigration. Furthermore, we should consider the specialist literature for emigrants, i.e., the handbooks for those who wanted to emigrate and the American efforts to encourage immigration.

About California, it seems quite clear that, while the novels spoke of gold and Indians, other sources focused more on the green gold, the rich opportunities offered by Californian agriculture. In 1883, for instance, an association of California industrialists and capitalists were looking for European immigrants "skilled in a great variety of agricultural pursuits, the culture and manufacture of silk, vine growers and wine makers" (Dondero, 19). The interest in California agriculture was evident in many publications printed in Italy in the first years of the 20th century: probably the most famous was the huge study of the winemaking industry in North America by Guido Rossati, the result of a long field study commissioned by the Italian Ministry of Agriculture, but I found, at least nine other books on specific aspects of California agricultural productions (on wine, citrus, almond, and other fruits).

This does not mean that no Italian was involved as a prospector in the Gold Rush: sure, if we were looking for them, we could find Italians everywhere. And in fact, there is a "historical" genre devoted to finding Italians in the most significant pages of the American history (the Italians at Little Bighorn, or at the Alamo, or in the Civil War, for instance). Rather, I am more interested in the general experience of Italians in the American West and their relationships with the environment. Furthermore, the Italian farmers of California were more linked to the gold rush, and in general to the mining experience, than it might seem. First, many Italians came to California from the nearby mining districts of Nevada or Colorado: the collapse of the silver industry in the Carson and Truckee valleys, for instance, drove many of the 4 to 5 thousand Italians who lived there to California. Secondly, the stories of several Italian immigrants show that farming was a second choice in respect to the mining option (miners meant a market for food and other supplies). An instance is the case of Nicola Marini, told by his son to Dondero in an interview made in 1974. Following the news about gold, Nicola had come from

Argentina to California, but after a series of setbacks the glamour and lure of gold became less and less attractive. So, Nicola and his three partners decided to focus on the only skill they knew something about: vegetable farming. The rest of the story presents the typical narrative about pioneers and the frontier: they cleared the scrub oak from the unclaimed land where they settled, built roads and living quarters, and finally planted vegetables and raised ducks and geese (Dondero, 37). After Nicola, other Ligurians came from the disappointing mining experiences in Mother Lodge: by the middle of the sixties, every fertile valley from Market Street south to the San Bruno Mountains was under truck crop cultivation. The environmental transformations of that area were huge and implied an interesting connection between city and country, in which the work of the Italian immigrants played a decisive role of mediation. In the soil we can recognize the double identity of the Italians: gardeners and scavengers, they built their environment with wells and rakes. If as farmers they had the right skills to cope with a scarce water supply (wells), as scavengers they used garbage as a free resource for shaping the soil, both in the external face (leveling it) and in the internal chemical composition (fertilizing it). How much the Italian efforts shaped the landscape around San Francisco Bay is evident in the early descriptions of the region which spoke about acres and acres of cabbages, artichokes, lettuce, and strawberries planted in every piece of arable land available (Dondero, 42). As for other ethnic groups, Italian immigrants capitalized on their ingenuity and their ability to make profitable what others considered useless (see, for instance, how mustard plants and willows became useful resources for the Chinese immigrants; Nelson Limerick: 2000, 196). It was not only the case of garbage, but also the use of every little portion of land for producing food, or, for instance, the story of the Italian charcoal production in Occidental. Italians, especially those from Tuscany, were deeply specialized as charcoal burners and accustomed to dealing with the limited forest resources of the internal Apennine, so they were capable of using the smaller trees and other wood that the big logging industry usually wasted (Sensi-Isolani, 92). In the 1920s, in their book on Italian economic activities in California, Tuoni and Borgelli mentioned Occidental as one of the most important area of charcoal production, a result of the Italian effort in this field (Tuoni & Borgelli).

The most famous Italian agricultural enterprise in California was the Italian-Swiss colony founded by Andrea Sbarboro. It was founded in 1881 with capital of $ 300,000, with a utopian idea that never worked among the Italian immigrants (they never accepted Sbarboro's cooperative approach, preferring to be essentially wage earning laborers rather than partners in the enterprise). In his inquiry on the making wine industry, Rossati described the area of the Italian-Swiss colony:

> It lies in a wavy valley on the Russian River, protected by high mountains from winds and weather beaten, with a volcanic soil where vineyards, olive and orange trees grow as in the best Italian regions. Actually, this area looks like the best parts of Italy for the climate and the beautiful landscape (Rossati, 189).

However, the landscape described by Rossati was less natural than he imagined; originally, the whole area (1,800 acres) was covered by woods (above all oak trees)

which were cleared by the Italians. At the beginning of the 20th century, the vineyard covered 1,200 acres, while the rest of the land was cultivated with fruits and other vegetables. In the first years of its life, the colony had many troubles, some related to the market (above all, it had to fight against the monopoly of winemaking companies) and others directly connected to ecological issues. The Russian River, which was so important for the irrigation of crops, was also a source of problems, with its continuous floods which could very well have been caused by the environmental transformations occurred in the area (deforestation, terraces on the hills and so on). Furthermore, in the first years of the colony, the Italian grapes were attacked by *Phylloxera* (Erik Amfitheatrof, 195): this was not only a problem for Italians but for all California winemakers. Rossati mentions that starting from the end of the 1880s the whole Napa valley was devastated by phylloxera and Anaheim disease (Rossati, 149). Just the introduction of Italian grape understocks left the Sbarboro's colony more exposed to the disease: only the hybridization with the native plants would have solved the problem. And, in fact by the 1890s the situation of the colony was improved notably: the Italian vineyards produced 2.5-3 tons of grapes each hill acre and 3-4 tons each flat acre. About the quality, the Italian-Californian wine received awards in many international competitions, the most important in Turin in 1898. With a production of 5,000,000 gallons of wine and about 22,000 acres of land cultivated with vineyards, it is quite easy to understand the role played by the Italians in shaping the landscape of the Sonoma Valley: a large mechanization of the agricultural work, the construction of a railway to connect the colony with the North Pacific Railroad, even the building of the village, with a school, church, postal office, and telegraph marked the environment of the whole area (On Italian-Swiss Colony see: *Reports of the Industrial Commission on immigration*, 641).
And the Italian Swiss Colony was only one, maybe the most famous, of the Italian agricultural enterprises in California. Here, I can only mention the Italian Vineyard Company, founded by Secondo Guasti in Cucamonga Valley: a very important experience from an environmental point of view since there the Italians changed the original grazing use of the area to the agricultural one, applying the principles of dry land agriculture to grape cultivation (Ricci Lathrop: 2000, 244). Not so different was the situation in Gilroy, Santa Clara County, where in 1926 Anselmo Conrotto founded a winery. Here is the way Anselmo's son described the transformation made by the Italians in Gilroy:

> When my father came to Gilroy, most of this was oats and wheat. There were a lot of cattle in those days. Then, when the Italians came in, they all started digging holes and planting trees and vineyards and all that. It changed the whole thing. In about eight or ten years it was a different country (D. A. Taylor, 132).

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Unfortunately, this research is still at its beginnings. There are too many questions and too few answers; but I would like to choose the right questions to continue working on this project.

1) Ethnicity and environment: is it possible to recognize an Italian attitude towards nature, particularly the frontier nature? How much was it related to the cultural myth about the West or to the "professional" knowledges of the immigrants?
2) What are the traces of the ethnic presence in the soil? Is it possible to find them or is nature the place of an inextricable melting pot?
3) What were the traces of the environment in the immigrants' nature, i.e., in their bodies, in their cultures, and in their ways of organizing communities and life?

When we think about the Italian miners, farmers, scavengers, or fishermen, it seems easy to link their stories to the story of the environments in which they worked and lived, but when we move to think about the sources for studying this, everything becomes more complicated. Certainly the environmental history of migrations might be a new frontier of the discipline, and, as in every story about frontiers, it needs of imprudent pioneers who make a lot of mistakes trying to understand the new places. Maybe this research can be part of this story.

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In the United States the frontier moved in stages, beginning with the Eastern settlements, the original 13 colonies. After the American Revolution, the pioneers gradually crossed the Appalachians and went into the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys, then, in the mid-19th century, across the Mississippi. Settlement did not proceed directly across the continent, however. Most of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain regions were temporarily bypassed in the rush to get to California.Â By the end of the 19th century the frontier had passed. Manifest Destiny. EncyclopÃ¦dia Britannica, Inc.Â In the mid-20th century, two more statesâ€"Hawaii and Alaskaâ€"were added. Jefferson buys Louisiana. Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming/The Art Archive. In this manner, you can see the slow evolution of nineteenth century menswear, from the Regency dandyism of Beau Brummell to the matched three-piece suits of the late Victorian era. Changes were subtle, but significant, each of them moving menâ€™s fashion one step closer to the elegant silhouettes still evidenced in fashionable menswear of today. *Please note: This is a brief, primarily visual, overview of menâ€™s fashion in the nineteenth century. For in-depth information on individual decades, please consult the recommended links. 1800. Entering the nineteenth century, men were no longer wearing the fancy fabrics and trimmings that characterized their clothing in the 1700s. But in the late 19th century, the full-blown Columbus myth was yet to come. The New Orleans lynching solidified a defamatory view of Italians generally, and Sicilians in particular, as irredeemable criminals who represented a danger to the nation. The influential anti-immigrant racist Representative Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, soon to join the United States Senate, quickly appropriated the event. He argued that a lack of confidence in juries, not mob violence, had been the real problem in New Orleans. â€œLawlessness and lynching are evil things,â€ he wrote, â€œbut a popular belief that juries cannot be trusted is even worse.â€