

Patrizia Guarnieri. *Italian Psychology and Jewish Emigration under Fascism: From Florence to Jerusalem and New York.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. xv + 275 pp. \$100.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-137-30655-5.



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This fascinating and carefully researched volume is a revised and much enlarged version of a previous Italian-language monograph by Patrizia Guarnieri about the rise and the troubled survival of the Institute of Psychology at Florence's Istituto di Studi Superiori Pratici e di Perfezionamento (the predecessor of the University of Florence) between 1903 and 1938.[1] In particular, the current book is a case study of the impact of fascism on Italian culture in the interwar years. Specifically, drawing upon an impressive amount of primary sources—which include coeval psychology journals and publications as well as manuscripts from private papers and archival repositories in Italy, the United States, England, and Israel—Guarnieri investigates how Benito Mussolini's regime affected the field of psychology in Italy. To this purpose, she focuses on scholars who were active at the Institute of Psychology in Florence and analyzes how fascism antagonized and silenced most of them even before discharging and forcing into exile a few of these intellectuals, who were Jews, in

the wake of the enforcement of its own 1938 anti-Semitic legislation.

These issues are aptly placed within the broader perspective of Italian psychologists' struggle to establish their branch of knowledge into an academic discipline after the turn of the twentieth century. In this respect, Guarnieri masterly delves into the details of academic politics and the complex dynamics of the recruitment for university chairs as these two elements eventually made a leading contribution to shaping the theoretical foundations of psychology in Italy. She shows the pioneering role that Florence's Institute of Psychology, created in 1903, and its first director, Francesco De Sarlo, played in the legitimization of psychology in Italy, thanks in part to the commitment of Pasquale Villari, a senator and former minister of education who was the dean of the Istituto di Studi Superiori Pratici e di Perfezionamento. She also examines the uncertain status of the discipline, which initially experienced some blurring of lines between psychology and experimental psychology and held a sort of

middle ground between the schools of medicine and those of philosophy before its practitioners ended up with being affiliated with the latter when the first three positions of full professor were awarded in 1906.

Against this backdrop, the author highlights that the antiscientific bias of neo-idealistic philosophers added to fascist ideology and political reasons in order to marginalize psychology within Italy's university system in the early 1920s. De Sarlo was an opponent of dictator Mussolini. As fascist activists and fellow travelers gained influence within the University of Florence, he had to confine himself to teaching theoretical philosophy and to step down as director of the Institute of Psychology in 1923. He was replaced by his assistant, Enzo Bonaventura, who lacked clout to promote the discipline because he did not have tenure. De Sarlo's nemesis in the Italian university system was Giovanni Gentile, Mussolini's minister of education, who was instrumental in preventing the professor from teaching psychology. Nonetheless, Benedetto Croce, Gentile's fellow neo-idealistic philosopher and a former minister of education himself but also a prominent antifascist, had come out against De Sarlo as early as 1907, when he wrote in a private letter that he had "decided to give him no quarter and to write three, four, ten articles until he keeps quiet. I know I am right; and that De Sarlo, for the post he holds in Florence, has an influence and aspires to assume an authority, that may prove very damaging" (p. 53). As a result, contrary to conventional scholarly wisdom, Guarnieri helps demonstrate that, although neo-idealism may have restrained its criticism of hard sciences, it turned out to be highly prejudicial toward human sciences and psychology was among its academic casualties.

Since Guarnieri's preceding book has already disclosed, at least in part, this conclusion, the most original and engaging chapters of *Italian Psychology and Jewish Emigration* are those that reconstruct the plight of two Jewish psychologists

who left Italy after the enactment of Mussolini's anti-Semitic measures in 1938, their strategies for expatriation, and their career after the fall of the fascist regime. The anti-Jewish provisions caused the discharge of Bonaventura and the expulsion of promising young scholars such as Renata Calabresi, another pupil of De Sarlo's who held an untenured teaching position at the University of Rome, from the Italian Academia. Their experiences are representative of two different trajectories for Italian Jewish intellectuals who sought sanctuary from fascist anti-Semitism in foreign countries. Both Bonaventura and Calabresi exploited their international connections in their professional field and resorted to organizations that assisted displaced scholars from their headquarters in London and New York City in order to move abroad. Bonaventura also relied on the Zionist network to emigrate to Palestine in 1939 with an appointment as professor of psychology at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the same year, Calabresi arrived in the United States, where her brother had already resettled, thanks in part to the help of the antifascist circles in which her family was involved. A woman, she faced greater hardships than Bonaventura. She found a few temporary and low-paid jobs as instructor and researcher, but she managed to supplement her initially meager wages with a grant from the Emergency Committee in Aid to of Displaced Foreign Scholars before moving from educational to clinical psychology.

The collapse of the fascist regime resulted in the repeal of its anti-Semitic legislation and the reintegration of the Jewish academicians who had been "exonerated from service" (p. 116), according to the fascist bureaucratic jargon, namely fired on racial grounds. However, neither Bonaventura nor Calabresi seized this opportunity to return to Italy. Their reinstatement would have been rather troublesome because they had been untenured instructors before expatriation. Furthermore, Guarnieri suggests that, in the specific case of Bonaventura, lingering postwar anti-

Semitism might have persuaded him to remain in Palestine and not to participate in a 1947 *concorso* (public competition) that awarded a chair in psychology at the University of Milan. In particular, the author points the finger at Father Agostino Gemelli, a pre-1943 outspoken fascist and anti-Semite who was a full professor of psychology and the president of the Milan-based Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. Guarnieri offers at least circumstantial evidence that, far from helping Bonaventura find a job abroad in 1939, as the prevailing interpretation goes,[2] Gemelli failed to facilitate Bonaventura's expatriation and even maneuvered against him on the occasion of the 1947 *concorso*.

Overall, Bonaventura's and Calabresi's vicissitudes cast further light on the lot of both the exiles fleeing dictatorships and the Jews who had been the victims of fascist anti-Semitism. On the one hand, as the two scholars struggled to make a living in Italy in the wake of the racial laws, their experiences provide additional proofs that political and economic reasons for migration are usually intertwined and can be hardly separated.[3] On the other, they revealed the difficulties of the Italian university system to make amends for the pre-war torts that its Jewish personnel had suffered. [4]

Specialists of Italian history might find some pages outlining the context of the main events--for instance, the passages about Gaetano Salvemini's antifascist activities or the remarks about Zionism in Italy--a bit too didactic. *Italian Psychology and Jewish Emigration under Fascism* also lacks a proper conclusion and is not always reader-friendly because the narrative does not follow a chronological order. In addition, a study of such relevance and importance deserved better editing to eliminate several typos and to rephrase clumsy expressions that sometimes mar the text. Furthermore, a less astronomical cover price would have given this volume a larger readership than patrons of lavishly funded libraries. One can

only hope to see this valuable and illuminating book in a cheaper paperback edition soon.

Notes

[1]. Patrizia Guarnieri, *Senza cattedra: L'Istituto di Psicologia dell'Università di Firenze tra idealismo e fascismo* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2012).

[2]. See, e.g., Maria Bocci, *Agostino Gemelli rettore e francescano: Chiesa, regime, democrazia* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003), 517-18.

[3]. See, e.g., Mathias Czaika, *The Political Economy of Refugee Migration and Foreign Aid* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 14.

[4]. See, e.g., Roberto Finzi, "Da perseguitati a 'usurpatori': Per una storia della reintegrazione dei docenti ebrei nelle università italiane," in *Il ritorno alla vita: Vicende e diritti degli ebrei in Italia dopo la seconda guerra mondiale*, ed. Michele Sarfatti (Florence: Giuntina 1998), 95-114. For the more general problems and delays in the restoration of Italian Jews' violated rights, see Giovanna D'Amico, *Quando l'eccezione diventa norma: La reintegrazione degli ebrei nell'Italia post-fascista* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 2006).

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