Preface

Americanism is a slippery concept. From the eighteenth century to the present it has referred to a wide variety of ideologies and political agendas. It identified at one time or another with puritanism, republicanism, nativism, imperialism, industrialism, and modernism. It bolstered, on the left, multiculturalism, internationalism, and social reform, and, on the right, the primacy of national community, religious traditions, and local customs. It also embodied a value *in se* or a "creed" above ideologies, as echoed in the common expression "I believe in America" or as summed up in Richard Hofstadter's understanding that "it has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies but to be one" (qtd. in Kazin and McCartin 1).[1]

In the collection of essays *Americanism: New Perspectives on the History of an Ideal* (2008), scholars Michael Kazin and Joseph McCartin proposed a minimalistic definition of this polyvalent corpus of ideas, reducing it to two core components: first, a descriptive drive to identify what is distinctive about the United States; and second, a political intention to buoy loyalty to the nation's ideals. In their view, these aspects diachronically apply to the diverse set of American self-representations as well as to the historical framework of external opinions about the United States.

The description of America's unique character often paired with the quest for foundational myths. The "quasi-religious ideal" of the nation as a land of mission, dream, and opportunity found legitimation in archetypal figures (e.g., the pilgrims, the Founding Fathers, Christopher Columbus, or the Western pioneers) and overarching visions. From colonial times to the republic, America embodied a "city upon the hill" (in John Winthrop's idea of the settlement as a promised land for a new Christendom), the outcome of a providential design (in John Adams's theorization of the nation's manifest destiny), "an asylum for

mankind" (in the words of Thomas Paine), and a new frontier (Kazin and McCartin 2–3). These frameworks shaped a coherent narrative of Americanism, which created an "imagined community" of Americans (in Benedict Anderson's terms) and legitimized America's expansion.

In political terms, Americanism also indicated loyalty to the United States. The term acquired this connotation during the Revolutionary War when it signified support for the settlers' pursuit of independence. In the 1840s, in response to Irish and German Catholic immigration, the concept acquired a more restrictive meaning, designating loyalty to the "native" roots of the nation, identified in white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism. With mass emigration at the turn of the twentieth century, Americanism turned into the object of a lively public debate aimed at defining new forms of allegiance to the United States (since the 1891 introduction of Francis Bellamy's pledge in schools) and informing the integration of immigrants into American society – a process addressed as Americanization.

From an external viewpoint, Americanism concomitantly grew as a European set of projections and reactions to the American experiment. In the eighteenth century, America exemplified a synthesis of Rousseau's ideas on tolerance and natural freedom, a realization of the civil reforms theorized by the Enlightenment, and a utopic anticipation of changes to come,[2] yet also represented an appalling mix of political youthfulness, intellectual immaturity, and natural unpredictability to contemporary French philosophers and scientists (Roger 5–16). The cultural and commercial expansion of the United States throughout the nineteenth century elicited a renewed curiosity towards the nation, confirmed by the publication of Alexis de Tocqueville's report *De la démocratie en Amérique* (*Democracy in America*, 1835–40) and the upsurge of derogatory tropes, stemming from the "cultural snobbery" (Friedman 29) of travellers or the dystopic view of emigrants, and ranging from critique of American industrialism to fear over US global leadership.

The Rise of Americanism in Italy (1888–1919) explores the Italian reactions to the military, cultural, and industrial expansion of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Against the backdrop of mass emigration, early industrialization, and the clash with the Holy See (*questione romana*), the Italian view of Americans – in the United States and in Italy – sheds light on Americanism as a global project and documents its unique evolution in the peninsula as a two-way cultural, social, and economic exchange.

The Italian imagination of Americans in the United States illuminates the deep link between emigration and the Americanist debate, transforming the migratory phenomenon from exclusively negative

to a strategic, political method of growing Italy's economic influence in America. Following this logic, a comparison of Italian and Vatican sources reveals not just a significant instance of collaboration between the secular state and the Catholic Church, at a time of radical clash, but also their common attempt to empower migrants, their shared endeavour to understand the new US dominance, and their mutual claim of primacy over America (in association with the expansionist ideology of Columbianism).

The Italian view of Americans in Italy documents the early (and often overlooked) phases of Americanization in the peninsula. The varied reactions to American imports (in finance, industry, and culture), their incorporation into the national milieu, and their creative re-elaboration into an endogenous subculture highlight Italy's excited and frightened negotiation of industrial modernity and display the first steps of American penetration in the country, decades before the setting of boots on the ground in 1917. In this sense, the study of Italian Americanism certifies an earlier start of the "American century" and locates its incubation years in the early 1900s.

The Italian outlook on America's new global dominance and penetration in the peninsula aims then to restitute a complex, bilateral view of Americanism in the years between Italy's first emigration law in 1888 and Woodrow Wilson's peace negotiations at Versailles in 1919. Such an inquiry into the diversified meanings of Americanism touches upon a wide variety of materials, sources, and methods and necessarily follows an episodic narration, which, rather than claiming to exhaust research on the selected topics,[3] aims to reconsider this heterogeneous "cloud" of phenomena as a coherent, transnational, and multifocal constellation of factors.

In terms of method, the examination of America's first involvement in Italy's affairs stems from the comparative analysis of Italian, Vatican, and American sources, and the integrated reading of journal debates and their literary or visual counterparts. In examining emigration, I relate fictions to press articles (mainly from the liberal newspaper *Corriere della sera*), and secular reports of Italian travellers to missionary accounts. In considering the evolution of Columbianism into Americanism, from the Columbian centenary celebrations to the Spanish-American War, I observe American and Italian secular texts in dialogue with Pope Leo XIII's documents addressing the US church (as both an Italian and a universal pastor). In surveying US imports in Italy and their Italian re-elaborations, I isolate the most impactful American figures and events in the Italian public opinion, as well as the most relevant American influences in contemporary literature, photography,

cinema, and theatre. Lastly, in dealing with Wilsonianism, I investigate Italian and American First World War sources related to common military, sanitary, and entrepreneurial projects.

The chapters are ordered chronologically, even though phenomena often overlap.

In the introductory chapter I offer an overview of the historical meanings of Americanism and Americanization in the United States and consider their implications in Italy at the time of the great emigration.

In chapter 1, I explore the debates surrounding the passing of Italy's first emigration law in 1888 and the diplomatic crisis with the United States following the lynching of "Italians" in New Orleans in 1891. In this context I consider Americanism as a confusing mix of negative and positive reactions towards America (intended then more as a continent than a country) and relate the alternate views of the United States as a land of opportunities or doom to contemporary debates. Such opposition takes form in the secular division of pro- and anti-migration parties (*migrazionisti* versus *anti-migrazionisti*), as well as in the ecclesial contrast between conciliatory and intransigent bishops (*conciliatoristi* versus *intransigentisti*), respectively embracing or rejecting collaboration with the national state.

In chapter 2, focusing on the spreading of Columbianism between 1892 and 1899, I explore the making of Christopher Columbus as an Italian, Vatican, and American hero prior to and following the centenary expositions of Genoa (1892) and Chicago (1893), and I document the transformation of the Columbian myth from a self-legitimizing ideal to an expansionist ideology. With regards to the United States, I observe the reconfiguration of Columbus from a proto-American entrepreneur to a "civilizing conqueror," legitimizing US imperial ambitions over Cuba and the Philippines. With regards to Italy and the Holy See, I consider the reframing of Columbus from a model of faith or primary hero for immigrants into a "betrayed father" in the wake of Spanish defeat in 1898.

In chapter 3, ranging from the ascent of Theodore Roosevelt to the presidency (after the assassination of William McKinley in 1901) to the death in Rome of US financier John Pierpont Morgan in 1913, I explore the early stages of American industrial and cultural expansion in Italian society. I reconstruct the formation of American influence in Italy through mediatic events (e.g., Buffalo Bill's 1906 Italian tour or Wilbur Wright's 1909 first demonstration of flight), the economic impact of American tourists and investors (e.g., Thomas Alva Edison, Theodore Roosevelt, and John Pierpont Morgan), as well as the influence of such artists and intellectuals as the writer Henry James, the painter John

Sargent, the collector Isabella Stewart Gardner, the professor Bernard Berenson, the philosopher William James, and the theosopher Helena Blavatsky. In these experiences I detect the first steps of Italy's Americanization, from the early legitimization process aimed at dislodging Americanism from its negative connection to emigration, to the proactive promotion of the American model as a valid alternative to the pervasive influence of French and German cultures upon the Italian milieu.

In chapter 4, spanning from the 1900 killing of Umberto I to the 1915 Italian entrance into the Great War, I investigate Italian Americanism as a creative re-elaboration of US inputs, as an anti-positivistic philosophy of life, and as an independent ideology of modernization. I trace these perceptions in the development of pictorialism in photography (in dialogue with American master Alfred Stieglitz); the evolution of Italian cinema into an industry (in parallel with the diffusion of American movie theatres); the impact of Buffalo Bill on Italian Western narrations; the spreading of American pragmatism (in the cultural translation of Giovanni Papini's *Leonardo*); the emergence of spiritism and theosophy (in the work of Luigi Pirandello and Antonio Fogazzaro); and the appearance of a new emigration literature, proposing a positive view of America through the eyes of returnees.

In chapter 5, dedicated to the pre-war years and the First World War, I investigate Wilson's transformation of Americanism into a transatlantic platform of international cooperation and reconstruct the first projects of Italian and American exchange, as expressed by Carolina Amari and Maria Montessori in the fields of female entrepreneurship and education, and by Gino Speranza and Fiorello La Guardia in the field of immigrant services. I also explore the role of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the American Red Cross (ARC) in reframing the First World War era's Americanism from a logic of expansion and ownership to a paradigm of international leadership and mutual aid. In considering American war propaganda, I reconstruct the phases of Wilson's rise and fall in Italy between 1918 and 1919 and follow the reconfiguration of US Americanism into an isolationist movement and of Italian anti-Wilsonianism into national revanchism.

In the epilogue I trace the evolution of Americanism into nativism in the prohibition era, examine Fascist ambivalence towards America from the countercultural Italianism of the 1920s to the pro-American movements of the 1930s, and observe the war-time formation of anti-Americanism and its legacies from 1945 to the present.

In our age of anti-Americanism, this study of Americanism (seen from Italy and by Italians) aspires to offer a non-English-speaking perspective

on the concept and elicit a renewed reflection on the original meanings of the "American creed." May the exploration of this complex bundle of values and beliefs defining American identity or loyalty also provide ground to rethink anti-Americanism and criticism of the United States in less instinctive or partisan terms.

A note on translations: Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Italian to English are my own.