

RUSHING FROM AND HASTENING TO: NATIONHOOD, WHITENESS,  
AND ITALIAN-CANADIANS

A Thesis Submitted to the College of  
Graduate Studies and Research  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Education  
In the Department of Educational Foundations  
University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon  
By  
Krysta Pandolfi

© Krysta Pandolfi, June 2009. All rights reserved.

## PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Postgraduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the Libraries of this University may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work or, in their absence, by the Head of the Department of the Dean of the College in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis. Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or part should be addressed to:

Department Head

Educational Foundations

College of Education

University of Saskatchewan

28 Campus Drive

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

S7N 0X1

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of both Italian and Canadian nationhood and its effect on and contribution of racialization in Canada. It analyzes the manner in which scholarship on Whiteness tends to dehistoricize and decontextualize immigration in the creation of White subjects, and how this practice denies the conditions under which most individuals have become immigrants. The study challenged the discursive claims made by Italian-Canadian scholarship by applying a critical race analysis, and highlights how Italian-Canadians achieved Whiteness in Canada and its implications.

**My thesis is dedicated in loving memory of my Nonno  
– Ettore Pandolfi –  
for having endured many new beginnings.**

My Nonno and I often could not express what we thought and felt in a common language. Yet, we communicated on the central qualities that matter most in one's life – love, family, companionship, and generosity– rendering our experiences ever more precious and beautiful as a result. I sorely miss the palpable joy my Nonno displayed when welcoming his grandchildren, and the sweet little ways he would sing out our names when greeting us. He taught me not only the value of work; more importantly, the conviction that there lies no indignity in work.

"Where there's love nothing is too much trouble, and there's always time."  
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Bahá'í Faith.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my committee members for their time and feedback. To my supervisor, Dr. Dianne Miller, for serving as a saving grace. I thank you wholeheartedly for taking on this thesis, and for your time, patience, kindness, and astute observations. To my second reader, Dr. Maggie Kovach, and to my external reader, Dr. Despina Iliopoulou, thank you kindly for your time and support. Lastly, Dr. Verna St. Denis had served as my supervisor during both the proposal writing and early thesis draft. The thesis could never have taken place without her initial guidance, enthusiasm, and time. Thank you.

To my family, particularly my parents, Nicole and Umberto, whose love and constant support means the world. Although, I often find myself miles away from my most loved ones, they have always remained a phone call away. To my sisters, Dana and Jana, for always providing delightful hours of entertainment. I thank you all for allowing laughter to serve as the melody of our household.

To my classmates, particularly Jodie Fraser, Lisette Denis, and Yvonne Hanson, thank you kindly for your friendship.

The underlying themes of my thesis could never have materialized without the ongoing loving support, dialogue, and inquiry of friends. Particularly, I wish to thank Bianca La Neve who is the first person I ever spoke to about these questions that began to emerge regarding the Italian-Canadian community while we were both undergraduate students. Her initial and continued support, humour, and friendship are beyond measure. To Dr. Maria Anna Calamia, who not only shared as my professor the beauty of the Italian language and culture, but also with the utmost kindness overlooked my inability to memorize Italian irregular verbs. Yet more importantly, her friendship and knowledge over the years has been invaluable, and the kindheartedness and hospitality of her family has been unmatched. To both Ana Martinez and Sherri (Shabnam) Mehrafzoon who I had the bounty and blessing of meeting and working alongside at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel. Their embodiment of the principles of the Faith, their ability to recognize the underlying ontological purpose of this study, and their loving support, encouragement, and prayers makes all the difference.

My acknowledgments would be incomplete without extending kindhearted and loving gratitude to Golnar Gutmanas, Peter Laywine, Lara Martin, Shiva Mazidi, Ladan Naraqi and Ashk Farhoumand, and Shyla Tibando, who make themselves available year after year and remind me of home. Thank you would never be enough.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER 1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK .....	6
CHAPTER 2 ITALY'S FORMATION AS A NATION-STATE .....	14
Italy's unification .....	16
The development of "Southern Italy" .....	19
Southern Italy as Europe's "Indies" .....	22
Picturesque vs. barbaric .....	24
Further pathologization of Southern Italian culture .....	27
The "scientific" racialization of the south .....	30
CHAPTER 3 CANADIAN RACIALIZATION: IMMIGRATION POLICY AND ITALIAN IMMIGRATION .....	37
Historical overview of Canada's immigration policy .....	38
Italy's Diaspora .....	41
Italian emigration to Canada .....	42
CHAPTER 4 THE MAKING OF ITALIANS AS RACIALLY WHITE .....	53
The search for the North American Adam .....	58
Living in the past tense .....	60
Being Italian is in one's "blood" .....	61
The myth of meritocracy .....	63
Reorienting Italian-Canadian scholarship and discourse .....	65
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION .....	71
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	76

## INTRODUCTION

In 1997, Italian-Canadians celebrated the quincentenary anniversary of Venetian born Giovanni Caboto's voyage to Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland. To mark this occasion, a commemorative stamp of Caboto's voyage was issued simultaneously in Canada and Italy. In Montréal, the Italian parish Madonna della Difesa commemorated Caboto as "*scopritore del Canada*" (discoverer of Canada) in the booklet printed for its annual procession. The booklet provides the following biographical note:

Giovanni Caboto  
1497-1997

On June 24 1497, The Matthew under the command of Giovanni Caboto, arrived to Cape Breton from Bristol. From this day, this land was no longer neglected but discovered, explored, inhabited and today is part of Canada.

There is no doubt that Giovanni Caboto was the first true discoverer of Canada. For these reasons, we of Italian origin proudly celebrate the quincentenary of the arrival on Canadian land of the first great navigator Giovanni Caboto and we do not feel strangers in this big and beautiful country: Canada. (cited in Fortier 1998, 34)

Italian-Canadian immigration to Canada is a relatively contemporary phenomenon, with the majority of influx coming from 1948 to 1972. (Ramirez 1989; Iacovetta 2004) Yet, what would have motivated this contemporary community to become preoccupied with securing claims as an "auxiliary founding people" (Fortier 1998, 34) by means of declaring Giovanni Caboto's 1497 expedition to Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland as "discoverer" of Canada? Such a claim predates the development of the Italian nation, and Caboto's "discovery" did not result in a transplant of his native population or culture. (Harney 1992; Fortier 1998) In other words, what does the Caboto story essentially do? I will highlight that the Caboto story structures Italians as the founders of the Canadian nation, and how such mythic origins further serve to neutralize processes of colonialization and cultural genocide into re-imagined narratives of Western sacrificial stewardship and the peaceful settlement of an "empty land." By emphasizing that a racialized project exists in Italian-Canadian narratives, I will further argue that Italian-Canadian scholars ought to acknowledge pre-existing systems of domination within Canada, and that they ought to be

vigilant in analyzing how racialized terms of membership allowed their “making it in Canada” narrative to take form.

Whiteness as a discursive practice is really a discussion on the perceived limits of belonging. I will contend throughout the thesis that Whiteness is negotiated, and that Italian-Canadians negotiated their way into Whiteness. Like Ruth Frankenberg, I believe that Whiteness has content as it “generates” ways of understanding history, self and others, normativity, and notions of culture itself. (1993, 231) As Frankenberg suggests, the processes of racialization and that of Whiteness involve engendering an erroneous belief in the innate superiority of Western society. As many racial theorists have pointed out, Whiteness is a “process of historically situated *projects*.” (Omi and Winant 2002, 124) Colonialism is one such project and the main strategic tools of colonialism is based on racism, terror, and the establishment of the “subhumanity” of the colonized for the economic privilege of the colonizers. (Memmi 1991) Further, Memmi believes that three factors typify any European in any colony: profit, privilege, and usurpation. (1991, 9) Yet, my primary focus will be on Italian emigrants in Canada and how the emergence of the “Story of Canada” (i.e. claims of Caboto as a founding father) is another such project as it promulgates a settler-centered discourse and denies the subsequent practices of material and cultural genocide that these processes and practices engendered. As a result, founding nation narratives are closely linked to ideas about the legitimate ownership and entitlement to the North American lands and its resources. (Fortier 1998; Harney 1992; Di-Scosiasti-Andrews-Andrews 2008; Razack 2002; Harris 1993)

In this thesis, I examine the process of racialization for Italians and how Italian-Canadian narratives rely on the concept of “Whiteness,” “nation-building,” and “belonging” to frame this encounter. While Italian-Canadian writing and discourse has not been widely regarded as an important body of work within Canadian critical race theories, I will illustrate that Italian-Canadian writing, such as historical anthologies or first-person migrant narratives, frequently engage with pre-existing concepts on the nature of race, and ideas about collective identity. As a cautionary note, we cannot assume that the engagement of individual members within the Italian-Canadian community is uniform or equals automatic loyalty or even knowledge of a particular brand of Italian-Canadian



collective vision. To do so, is certainly to deny Italian-Canadians the capacity to think for themselves. Yet, Settlers and immigrants must accord each other legitimacy, as each group must believe the other has a legitimate right to be in Canada. A migrant's quest of "legitimacy," and the discursive concepts employed to achieve that aim, parallels my wish to answer why certain groups assert their Whiteness as an identity and how and why groups become accepted as White within a Canadian context.

Canadian race theories, particularly studies emphasizing Whiteness, remain far too abstract and essentialized. Unlike their American counterparts such as Ignatiev's *How the Irish Became White* (1998) or Jacobson's *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (1998), very little Canadian scholarship has attempted to produce a direct study on any European immigrant groups' racialization. For that reason I will challenge the kind of thinking that reproduces the "West" and therefore "White citizens" as a stable, ahistorical, and homogenous political and discursive entity. In the Canadian context, we are often told "Europeanness" equals "Whiteness." Yet, the markers of Whiteness migrate and to assume that all "Europeans" are or have been considered "White" is incorrect. The racial status of Italian-Canadians has not always been acknowledged as White, but rather their Whiteness has resulted from choices made by both the immigrant group and those receiving them. My primary aim will be to analyze the formation of Italian-Canadian belonging in Canada by examining the racialized identity narratives by which they are stabilized and legitimized within Italian-Canadian scholarship. What can the arrival and integration of the Italian-Canadian community into Whiteness tell us about the practices and processes of colonization, racialization, White supremacy, and nationalism in Canada?

Specifically, the purpose of this study is twofold. The first is to investigate the politics of exit. Green and Weil have argued, "the migration process cannot be fully understood without questioning the administrative, political, and ideological forces surrounding that move." (2007, 8) Therefore, the development of Italy as a modern nation state will illustrate how concepts of race and "othering" within Italy contributed to its Diaspora, and central to theoretical definitions of Diaspora is forced dispersal or displacement. (Clifford, 1994) The second is to examine the politics of entry. How have

Italian-Canadians conceived of Canada as home? To what extent do pre-existing processes of racialization engender attitudes and behaviours in line with those of a dominant culture (i.e. Anglo-Canadian culture)? Hence, I will highlight how the development of Whiteness served as a regulatory ideal in the pursuit of Italian-Canadian becoming and belonging.

I argue that examining the relationship between these concepts (exit and entry) demonstrates that Italian-Canadian's racial subjectivity has evolved. Readers will see throughout the thesis the reshaping of racial identities, particularly how Italian-Canadians went from being racially suspect and often regarded as racially inferior to claiming founding nation status, and how such depictions impact nation-building within Canada. Specifically, I analyze how race and nation-building as social constructions undergo processes of renegotiation by classifying some individuals with a sense of peoplehood; and hence nationhood, and others as less desirables based on presumably inherited biological or cultural differences.

On a personal note, as a French-Canadian and second-generation Italian-Canadian raised in a household by a father born in Southern Italy, I have been particularly interested in how concepts of race have manifested themselves within the Italian community. Mainly, my years living and studying in Toronto, with the largest Italian-Canadian population in the country, began to change my perceptions of what it means to be Italian-Canadian. I felt that the community was both visible (with our Little Italies, the proliferation of our food, and the stereotypical ways we could be visibly marked as being "Italian") and invisible. How was it possible for one of the largest contemporary ethnic groups to have immigrated to Canada, to remain unnoticed and undertheorized in Canadian works of critical race analysis?

While an Italian presence in North America can be traced to the 1880s, the transplant of Italian culture developed primarily after WW2. (Perin and Sturino, 1992) The late 1940s marked Italian emigration to Canada as a major *movement*. From 1948 to 1972, Italy would be the second only to Great Britain as the source of Canadian immigration. (Ramirez 1989, 6) From 1941 until 1978, Italian emigrants totaled 499,341. (Ramirez 1989, 7) At present, 1,445,335 million Canadians (4.6% of the total population) consider themselves to be of Italian origin, and of those 1.4 million Canadians, 366,205 are

first-generation, 439,275 are second generation and 311,210 are third generation. (2006 census of Canada) Further demographic studies shows that Italian-Canadians are the fifth largest ethnic group in Canada, the fourth largest ethnic group in Ontario and the fifth largest ethnic group in Québec. (2006 census of Canada) What the census illustrates is the relatively contemporary presence of Italian-Canadians in Canada. In other words, the Italian-Canadian community is still, on an ongoing basis mapping out what it means to be “Canadian” given that the majority of Italian-Canadians were either born in Italy or raised by immigrant parents. Or, as Gardaphe remarks “Far more significant, however, that the choice between the old and the new is the choice between two identities which are both new to them: white and American [in this case Canadian].” (1999, x) Consequently, the thesis will illustrate the process in which modern nation states not only perpetuate systemic racial classification, and hence White supremacy, but also how Italian-Canadians became willing participants and agents of precisely this system.

The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 outlines my analytical framework and introduces and elaborates four interrelated theoretical concepts that are important in understanding how Italian-Canadians achieved Whiteness. Chapter 2 provides a socio-historical context for the unification of Italy, and how the formation of Italy embraced growing ideologies of racialization and how this impacted concepts of citizenship and contributed to the politics of exit. Chapter 3 examines Canada’s immigration policies and how they came to impact the politics of entry for Italians. Chapter 4 addresses the making of Italians as racially White by means of Italian-Canadian scholarship and other discursive claims. Chapter 5 summarizes and draws conclusions.

## CHAPTER 1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The challenge of conducting a study that encompasses divergent disciplines and fields is to attempt to provide both a broad and nuanced understanding of the construction of Whiteness in Canada with reference to an identifiable group. My understanding of Whiteness is developed through a critical race analysis, which argues that while race is a social construct, race serves as a major site of institutional power and impacts how certain subjects are privileged and others not. In order to achieve this aim, my analysis will draw on and connect the areas of scholarship to the following four interrelated concepts in order to illustrate how Italian-Canadians became White. The four broad concepts are 1) nationhood, 2) history, 3) citizenship / identity and 4) migration. These four concepts, with nationhood serving as an ideological and conceptual “umbrella,” I believe are the most salient, interconnected and often used markers in terms of both identity production and boundary construction in multi-ethnic states, and have considerable influence on our identities. How nationhood has been conceptualized in terms of history, patterns of migration, and citizenship will guide my analysis of how individuals have not only been produced as citizens, but also bound by race. While colonialism is a fundamental marker in the development of Canada, my analytical framework will focus largely on the development of the Italian-Canadian community.

Naturalized perceptions of nationhood and migration are grounded in racialized hierarchies. In this way, I will examine and critique how Italian-Canadian scholarship has attempted to imagine not only a “community,” but also a collective vision. I will share the idea of nationhood and citizenship as an imagined community. Both Benedict Anderson (2006) and Etienne Balibar’s (1991, 1994) work have significantly influenced my interpretation of the development of modern nations and racialized communities, and how both concepts came to eventually inflect the formation of Italian nationalism and Diaspora.

Anderson's seminal work, *Imagined Communities*, defines nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" whose members "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (2006, 6) Anderson purports that the amplification of primordial traits or distinguishing national symbols and territory intersect in order to distribute meaning within a community. Hence, the emergence of the Italian or Canadian state is then perceived as an obvious and objective reality. The aim of this section is to analyze the passage to nation-states in a number of structural processes, with particular emphasis placed on the emergence of national culture as discourse.

Grosby states "the nation is a social relation of collective self-consciousness,"<sup>1</sup> (2005, 10) but the processes by which a particular nation is formed, and the identities that are subsequently produced, serve as the basis for my investigation. As noted by Balibar "how can it [the nation] be produced in a way that it does not appear as fiction, but as the most natural of origins?" (1991, 96) According to Balibar there are two complementary routes to this process: language and race. (1991, 99) For the purpose of my thesis, this study will examine the investments made by Italian-Canadians into White supremacist ideals, privileges, and entitlements within Canada.

In order to develop these ideas, I believe it is helpful to provide a brief overview on the rise of the "West," and how the development of Western Europe as an idea or ideology as opposed to geography impacted Italian concepts of nationalism based on notions of superiority, progress and civilization, which eventually contributed to Italy's mass migration. Prior to the sixteenth century, "Europe" did not exist as either a geographical or ideological concept. (Held 1996, 58) Yet, Held warns against applying a "mono-causal explanation" for the rise of the modern state. (1996, 73) Rather, the creation of "Europe" or "the West" was the result of "a cluster of interconnected ideas which were influential in the ways people thought about the social world and human relationships." (Hamilton 1996,

---

<sup>1</sup> Grosby defines the term "collective self-consciousness" as "refer[ing] to a social relation of each of a number of individuals as a consequence of those individuals participating in the same evolving tradition." (2005, 9)

52) How people began to think about the social world and human relationships was greatly influenced by the emergence of the Enlightenment, which originated in France in the eighteenth century. Hamilton defines the Enlightenment as “the creation of a new framework of ideas about man, society, and nature, which challenged existing conceptions rooted in a traditional world view, dominated by Christianity.” (1996, 24) The Enlightenment offered more than mere ideas about critical rationalism or the beginning of the secularization of Europe; it provided the means and norms for discussing progress and human evolution.

The emergence of the “West” not only provided an internal framework for social, economical, and political organization, but also provided an external standard against to judge and compare. Hall states that the “rise of the West is also a *global* story.” (1996, 187) This particular mode of thought, “the West” is at its heart defined by what it claims not to be, “the Rest.” (Hall 1996) Hence, the basis by which national membership is stratified is influenced by specific conceptions of human nature. A brief discussion on the role of human nature shows how it influenced a number of important ideological pursuits, such as colonialism and imperialism (or acted as its catalyst to these enterprises).

A prime assumption of modernity, and therefore beliefs of nationhood, rests on the theory of Western diffusionism. Diffusionism regards “a world divided into two categories, one of which (greater Europe, ‘inside’) is historical, inventive, and makes progress; the other (non-Europe, ‘outside’) is ahistorical, stagnant, and unchanging and receives progressive innovations by diffusion from Europe.” (Henderson 2000, 60) While modernity resulted in a growing rise of republicanism and processes of unification across Europe, this practice also manifested a race-based valuation of life and shaped human difference by ascribing an “alterity” against which to judge and compare. Cornel West delineates three processes that he views as fundamental to the development of racial classification. The first is the revival of classical antiquity, which later served as a “normative gaze” for aesthetic standards of beauty and human form. The second is the development of the natural sciences and its subsequent contributions to the rise of positivist anthropology. The third is the advancement of the scientific revolution and how

it attributed observation as evidence by means of the development of empirically-based scientific methods. (2002, 94, 97-98)

According to Balibar, every universalism is forced to undertake “a definition of the human species, or simply the human, that results in an “infinite process of demarcation between the human, the more than human and the less than human (or *Supermen* and *Untermenschen*) and the reflection of these two limits within the imaginary boundaries of the human ‘species.’” (1994, 195, 197) As explained in my introduction, Whiteness is negotiated. As we will see in later chapters, Italy post-1750 was politically subaltern and economically subordinate to imperialistic nations. Common perceptions began to emerge that the social, cultural, and economic life of Western Europe (which later came to be regarded as central to the development of presumably universal norms) was moving at a different pace than that of Italy. The significance attributed to Italy was structured by a recognition of this difference. (Moe, 2006) Italy eventually contested this presumably inferior recognition by distancing itself from its impoverished southern provinces, and by othering Southern Italians as less desirable based on presumed inherited biological and racial differences. These conceptual shifts of modernity and the development of Western nations had an impact on Italian life and the development of its national community, as will be outlined in Chapter 2.

I will now focus on the role of history as a strategy of national identity. The social and historical narratives to which we are exposed helps shape the identities we create and imagine for others and ourselves. As I will argue in later chapters, identification with a national history, such as the “Story of Canada,” helps to construct cultural identity for the present. The retelling of history and selection of historical evidence informs national ideology in specific ways as “history continues to determine both the institutional conditions of knowledge as well as the terms of contemporary institutional practices.” (Young 1990, vii) In other words, historical narratives are in no way inseparable from the cultural perspectives that created them. Rather, the analytical tools historians use to produce knowledge of the past mirror the assumptions and values of a specific belief system, and the stories of the dominant are thus privileged and widely circulated. (Mackey

2002, 17) Moreover, the role of formal education also reinforces specific historical narratives where certain ideas become both normative and “factual.”

The emergence of the “Story of Canada” amalgamated Eurocentric concepts of universality, time, progress, and civilization and denied the subsequent practices of material and cultural genocide that they engendered. National cultures are composed of grand narratives or what Hall would define as *a foundational myth*. (1996) North American history focuses primarily on the beginnings of a nation and, in the case of Canada, presumably involved only the French and English as founding nations. For Edward Said, beginnings are meaning-making processes: “A beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning.” (1975, 5) For the most part, historical origins are meaning-making processes that provide a set of rules and assumptions that guide how truths about the past and by extension the present, are to be created and understood. For that reason, “grand narratives” are the “the stuff of the most widely circulated, ‘commonsense’ representations. . . . [Which in turn], supplies historical accounts that make it seem both normal and natural that certain things are associated with Canada.” (Stanley 2006, 34) As a result, we will see how Italian-Canadians attempt to imagine a Caboto as a “founding father” served to deny processes of colonialization and cultural genocide into re-imagined narratives of Western sacrificial stewardship and the peaceful settlement of an “empty land.” The question of land use and land ownership continues to play a pivotal role in the creation of Canada, as innocent. Yet, these representations also provide a quintessential image of Canada’s “nation-builders,” as White and European.

In order to fully develop these ideas, I believe it is helpful to expand on my ontological understanding of Whiteness. In the Canadian context, Himani Bannerji states that “Europeanness as ‘whiteness’ thus translates into ‘Canada’ and provides it with its imagined community.” (2000, 64) Yet, these markers of Whiteness migrate and to assume that all “Europeans” are or have been considered “White” is incorrect. Rather, we will see throughout this study, that Whiteness is negotiated. While race is a social construct, racialization and Whiteness becomes a social reality by way of social practices. The idea of who is part of any “race,” particularly the “White race” becomes integrated into social



knowledge and structural racism. Due to these processes, I am primarily interested in how countries consolidate or deal with inherent contradictions within a specific vision; for example, how the flow of immigrants to Canada, beyond France and England as sending countries, complicated not only the historical narratives, but also Canada's notions of citizenship and Canada's ideas of the "original" people. Or, how the unification of Italy, after centuries of foreign occupation, complicated the discourse of citizenship by delimiting who was foreign and who was Italian?

I will question the representation of citizenship / identity formation as an objective, static, and simple condition. Rather, identity formation particularly within the experiences of White racial formation, must be located within the processes of historically situated projects. (Omi and Winant 2002, 14) White racial identity does not solely emerge from a monolithic attachment to one's primordial traits; rather, Whiteness is "established only after the phenomena that it came to define as inadequate or abnormal." (Montag 1997, 291) Indigenous culture is the absolute "other" within Canadian national identity. Yet, for the sake of my thesis it is just as important to analyze how both the racialized perspectives that accompanied emigrants and the formation of emigrants as the racialized "others" from their respective countries, were set against the ultimate othering of the original Peoples. How did immigrants prior to their arrival conceive of Canada, and by what processes was their ideas of "Canada" ascertained? In other words, to what extent do pre-existing processes of racialization (both in Italy and encountered in Canada) engender attitudes and ideologies in line with those of a dominant culture? I will argue that there is a need to recognize that immigrants are not empty vessels without history, struggles, ideologies, or motivations. Rather their ideas of "Canada" often coincided with ready-made beliefs regarding Canada as White and European. We will see in Chapter 2 how Southern Italy was imagined as on the margins of Europe and came to constitute a troubling border zone, which eventually contributed to Italy's Diaspora and subsequently influenced their claims to Whiteness. (Moe 2006)

My analytical framework, then, includes the role that migration plays in the racialization of nation-states. The emergence of "the West" as a global story continues to play a significant role in how nations define themselves. Yet, such an assumed

“naturalized” or “normative” discourse must be framed within the historical, cultural, and political context that created it. What causes people to leave? What reasons do people stay? Green and Weil have argued, “the migration process cannot be fully understood without questioning the administrative, political, and ideological forces surrounding that move.” (2007, 8) To think otherwise may very well support a normative position or positioning of immigration that both denies the conditions to which most individuals have become immigrants, and secondly, how that misinformation is built into the ideological foundation of a colonizing country and the stories they tell of themselves and their history. In other words, migration is linked to racialization as we shall see in Chapter 3.

Settlement narratives typically document the impact that migrants have on local host cultures and the processes through which local cultures reshape or are shaped by the emergence of multi-ethnic populations. However, what has been consistently lacking in scholarship is how emigration contributed to defining citizenship and belonging in both homelands and host lands. Leave-taking tells us what settlement cannot. The integration of Italians in Canada may possibly force us to ask how Canada’s connections to the wider world contributed to the country’s national history and, its composition, and to the national histories of sending countries. (Gabaccia 2000, 9)

Novelist Nino Ricci’s forward in Vincenzo Pietropaolo’s *Not Paved with Gold: Italian-Canadian Immigrants in the 1970s* adeptly states that:

in immigrant communities the chasm between public and private can be particularly treacherous to negotiate, given the injunctions against exposing the group to any sort of shame before outsiders. As a result, the identities of such communities usually get defined by the safest, most stereotypical images, not only because these are the easiest to get access to, but because the communities often begin to perpetuate self-stereotypes as a way of packaging themselves for outsiders. (2006, viii)

It should not be surprising that when a nation denies its own complicity in projects of national racial formations, that migrant groups who have benefited from these practices, will more or less avert, deny, or overlook discussions involving their participation in racism in Canada. Yet, like George Yancy, I will argue that “Whites must come to see how they have become seduced by whiteness, and how they make choices based upon that

seduction.” (2004, 90) Therefore, I believe it is time for Italian-Canadian scholars to move away from the invention of historical national cultural heroes, from articles purporting modern-day Italian culture as synonymous with a presumed Golden Age found either in Roman times or the Renaissance, and from dominant images and stereotypes of familism involving their Nonna’s<sup>2</sup> or concerning pizza in order to critically understand and contest the existence of a hegemonic racialized rubric within Canada.

To conclude, what the analysis enables is an exploration of how the development of modern states, both abroad and at home, created and invested in the conditions for racialized subjugation. In other words, the thesis will take up in the following chapters the question of how a country like Italy, which was invaded and dominated by an assortment of foreign powers, came to the conclusion about who was foreign and who was Italian. The thesis will also question how European settlers and their formation of a country like Canada, came to the conclusion about who and for whom the national “body” was to represent and subsequently deny and why? To forgo a direct analysis on the creation of White subjects, is to suggest that anyone presently considered White has always been White, will forever remain White, and that Whiteness at its core static and ahistorical. I hope the thesis will prove otherwise.

---

<sup>2</sup> Grand-mother

## CHAPTER 2

### ITALY'S FORMATION AS NATION-STATE THROUGH INTERNAL DOMINATION AND GROWING EVOLVING IDEOLOGIES OF RACIALIZATION

When we speak of Italian culture or the Italian nation, we are really speaking of a relatively modern and unstable invention. This chapter, then, explores the growing evolving ideologies of racialization that came to mark Italy's unification. As explained in Chapter 1, the emergence of the idea of "the West" was a historical process of interconnected ideas conditioned by the growth of a capitalist economy, global expansion, industrialization, and a new ideological concept of humanity's destiny. This chapter relies on secondary literature tracing the unification of Italy and analyses how nationhood was premised on racial formation.

Throughout the centuries before the unification of present-day Italy, the Mediterranean peninsula, was in a perpetual state of change. What is now known as Italy was once a Roman Republic, part of the Holy Roman Empire, and home of the Renaissance. Beginning in 1000, Italy's influence rose as the economic, political, and cultural centres of the east began to shift to the west. (Gabaccia 2000, 16) The Mediterranean peninsula held primacy over Europe's shipping and trade, its artistic expression, economy, and served as the centre of Christendom itself. Moreover, the thirteenth century was also marked by the emergence of cities of great economic and political importance such as Venice, Genoa, Milan, and Florence. As a word of caution, Italy, unlike France or England, did not generate a national dynasty or dynastic state with one ruling family. Rather, cities like Rome or Venice were regarded and governed as regional republics. (Gabaccia 2000) As the peninsula began to be frequently invaded, beginning in the 1490s, Italy's influence began to diminish. (Absalom 1995) Once the centre of Europe, Italy's geopolitical power shifted away to new and imperial nations of Western Europe, and by the 1700s, Italy's second "Renaissance," the Baroque Period, was influential only in matters of artistry. (Gabaccia 2000, 2)

Italy's economic and political decline during the 1700s was further influenced by its subordination to and foreign dominance by Spain, Austria, and France. The rise of countries to the north was another shift away from the Mediterranean world as a whole (with the exception of Spain). (Moe 2006, 14) While Spain and France began to build mercantilist empires with the intention of global extraction and dominance, Italy became further subsumed by their foreign occupation and defined by its dependency on those economies. (Gabaccia 2000, 22) Northern cities like Amsterdam, Vienna, Dresden, London, and Paris had in fact replaced Florence, Rome, and Venice as the cultural capitals of Europe. Italy's resources were steadily in decline, or rather they were exploited for the needs of the Spanish empire. Italy's economic downturn during this time is often referred to as a period of "*Spagna spugna*" ("Spain the sponge"), as Italy's main economic resource, agriculture, was taken for the coffers of their Spanish landlords. With the exception of Venice, Absalom describes Italy post-Renaissance (seventeenth century) as "a poverty-stricken backwater dominated by religious obscurantism and the Holy Inquisitions." (1995, 7)

Generally speaking and by the 1800s, the Italian peninsula was made up of several states ruled either by foreign powers or local sovereigns. The northern Kingdom of Piedmont, which included Sardinia and Liguria was ruled by Vittorio Emmanuele II of the House of Savoy. Italy's northeastern part was under the direct control of the Austrian Empire and the Habsburgs, and its indirect control of the duchies of Parma, Modena, and Tuscany. Italy's central part, which included Rome and the Papal states, was defended by French troops. The southern "Kingdom of Two Sicilies" (Naples and Sicily) were ruled by the Spanish branch of the Bourbon family. (Doyle 2002, 30) Italian elites seeking to establish a unified Italian nation-state were confronted with these various regions ruled by either native or foreign powers.

While a more destitute, foreign occupied, and starving population came to define the Mediterranean peninsula, this process did not go unnoticed, especially by the elite. Generally speaking, the elite were middle-class nationalists, urban, educated and bourgeois. While consisting no more than 10 percent of the population, this group as explained by Gabaccia (2002) identified mainly with pride in the accomplishments of

medieval merchants and Renaissance artists, or what later came to be known as *civilta italiana*, a distinguished culture that had spread from Italy to Europe between 1000 and 1600. (2000, 8) To feel “Italian,” according to the elites, was to identify culturally with *civilta italiana*, and that Italy needed to reawaken the presumed civilizing mission of *civilta italiana*. Yet, in the nineteenth century, Italy, for all intent and purposes, began to be regarded as Europe’s periphery. (Gabaccia 2000, 22) Italy’s place (or lack thereof) in the construction of modern Europe had an impact on how the Mediterranean peninsula came to be unified.

### **The Unification of Italy**

Italy was among the last of the major Western European nations to emerge in the age of nationalism. The elite’s construction of modern Italy in the nineteenth century accentuated the divide between Europe and its Others. We will see in the following sections, that the south was imagined as on the margins of Europe and came to constitute a troubling border zone. (Moe 2006) As Italy post-1750 was politically subaltern and economically subordinate to imperialistic nations, common perceptions began to emerge that the social, cultural, and economic life of Western Europe was moving at a different pace than that of Italy. The diminished significance attributed to Italy was structured by a recognition of this difference. (Moe 2006)

As previously explained in Chapter 1, modernity beginning with the Enlightenment and beyond, influenced the way individuals thought about the social world and human relationships. Human progress and social development was presumably linear. Progress was marked by a belief in a series of fixed evolutionary stages (from hunter-gatherer, to agrarian, to civilizations). Italy, it was believed by the elites, was steadily going in the wrong direction from Europe’s “master” (hence “civilizers”) to a “poverty-stricken backwater.” (Absalom 1995, 7) In order to challenge Italy’s status as a backwater state, by the mid-nineteenth century “Italian intellectuals shared a strong sense of rejoining the intellectual community in Europe, after a period of isolation.” (Moe 2006, 21) In an attempt to achieve legitimacy through establishing nation-state status, Italy endeavoured to rise to the same economical and political levels attained by Western Europe. Italy’s goal

