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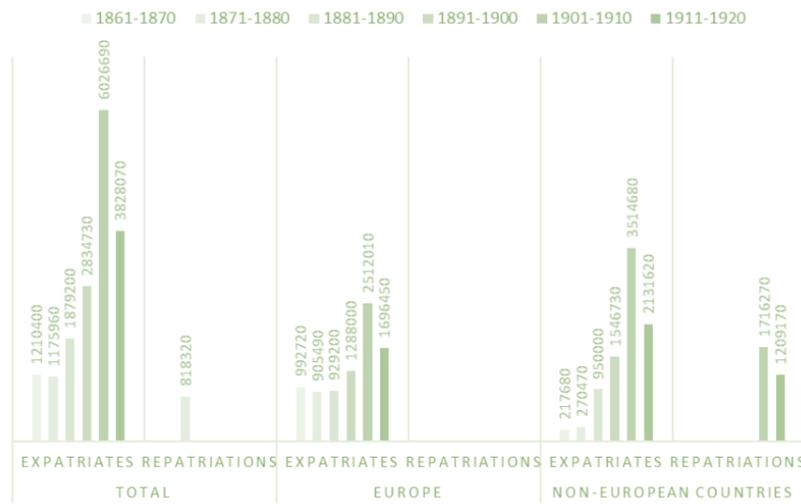
# Child labour and emigration between autobiographies and children's literature: from the Unification of Italy to the Great War

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## Introduction

Historical research has identified the dynamics of transformation imposed by the economic, social and cultural conditions that pushed men, women and children to migrate, the migratory flows that redesigned the Italian demographic structure, but also the health and living conditions of those who reached the USA. The wide period examined is marked by significant changes even at the legislative level that concerns the protection of the work of minors and the educational system of the country. Despite the fact that after the unification of Italy child labour seems to be more socially controlled and protected, thanks also to the promulgation of ad hoc laws (1866, 1873, 1901), its spread not only persists but remains in the sense of exploitation.

### ITALIAN MIGRATION - 1861-1920



Data from the Central Institute of Statistics - Summary of historical statistics of Italy (1861-1965) Roma 1968

## Method

We propose the analysis of targeted historical sources, those universal meta-historical sources of puerile reality that Egle Becchi indicates as plural, constant and, above all, essential to the study of childhood. Documents such as traces, signs, authentic and uninterpreted symbols are sought to provide a portrait of a childhood denied in an incredibly complex cross-section such as that of the migrations of the late nineteenth century. The various facets of childhood can certainly not be underestimated, nor can they be separated from the complexity of the social dynamics that contributed to generate them.

## Tools

The research is strongly oriented towards sources of both children's literature and autobiographical works. There will be comparisons with the productions of international authors who have experienced the arrival of immigrants on Ellis Island, think of Hest, Bierman, McGaw. The documents and various Bulletins on the emigration of women and children produced by Amy Bernardy, an Italian-American journalist and historian who focused her studies on the migratory phenomena of the early twentieth century, will also be taken into consideration.



## Objective

The main objective of this research is to retrace, in a complete and detached way, those stages now widely shared by official historiography. The archival sources of the Paolo Cresci Foundation for the History of Italian Emigration in Lucca are precious to retrieve testimonies that contribute to the comparison and interweaving of different but synoptic profiles of working childhood models generated in a society in continuous evolution.

## Conclusions

From the analysis of literary sources and autobiographies, it is possible to observe, in reflection, the ideological changes that have occurred in these fifty years, both concerning the migratory phenomenon and concerning childhood and children's book concepts. This interweaving of the various stories, through the focus of specific narrative passages, reveals some practices and situations still little known, that offer new interpretative cues for the history of childhood.

## Short Bibliography

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