

Patrizia Guarnieri. *Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista. Migranti, esuli e rifugiati per motivi politici e razziali*. Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2019.

*Intellettuali in fuga dall'Italia fascista. Migranti, esuli e rifugiati per motivi politici e razziali*, a digital project developed under the direction of Università degli Studi di Firenze historian Patrizia Guarnieri, collects the biographies of intellectuals who fled Italy in the wake of the racial laws of 1938. The objective of the project, which is available both in Italian and English, is to “richiamare l’attenzione sull’emigrazione intellettuale dal fascismo, tuttora non conosciuta sia nei numeri sia nelle vicende biografiche, nei percorsi e negli esiti accademici e professionali.” Most, though not all, of the approximately 380 intellectuals included in the project were Jewish. Some of these figures like Enrico Fermi, Rita Levi-Montalcini, and Leo Olschki are well-known, while many more are obscure. Though *Intellettuali in fuga* is a work in progress, the vast amount of information already compiled on this online platform is impressive. It is therefore all the more remarkable that the website is seamless and user-friendly, effectively presenting many complex and interconnected stories without overwhelming the reader.

*Intellettuali in fuga* opens with a short introduction and three brief articles that outline the objectives and content of the project and provide historical context to the individual biographies documented therein. Users are able to easily navigate the site by following the links at the top of the page that guide them through the introduction, the three accompanying articles, and the catalogue of biographies. The latter is followed by four more pages, including “Avvertenze per la ricerca,” a list of and information on the *leggi razziali* enacted from 1938 to 1942, and finally by two pages dedicated to the legal attempts made between 1944 and 2000 to redress these grievous injustices. In the site’s introductory texts, Guarnieri and her fellow researchers note that while the flight of intellectuals from fascist Italy has been analyzed “con studi su singoli casi più famosi,” their project is the first to investigate this phenomenon in its entirety. This aim is made only more ambitious by the fact that in many cases the biographies collected on the site are stories of fraught and “complicati percorsi di mobilità.” They are, as Guarnieri aptly calls them, “vite in movimento.”

The story of Ernst Abrahamson, the very first name to appear in *Intellettuali in fuga*’s catalogue of biographies, is paradigmatic of these complex journeys and lives in movement. German by birth, Abrahamson completed a doctoral thesis on Sappho in Prague before accepting a position at the University of Heidelberg in 1934. In 1935, he left Nazi Germany for Florence, and in turn left Italy in 1937 for France. While in France, Abrahamson began preparations to immigrate to the United States; he sought out numerous contacts for assistance including the eminent art historian Erwin Panofsky, who himself had

fled Germany in 1933. Abrahamson arrived in New York in 1939 and proceeded to move six more times over the next decade as he sought stable work to support his family: first to Washington, D.C., then to Havana, Cuba (1939), to Oklahoma (1940), back to Washington (1941), to Annapolis (1942), and finally to St. Louis (1949). Despite Abrahamson's continuous relocation, his profile – one of the many already completed on the site – is extraordinarily clear and easy to follow. Completed profiles like Abrahamson's comprise a biographical narrative, a map and timeline of movements, a list of aid organizations that provided support, a gallery of photographs, and lists of professional references and personal contacts. A profile like that of Abrahamson thus provides not only a record of his life and mobility, but also a record of the individuals who assisted those fleeing Italy. This is perhaps one of the most noteworthy aspects of *Intellettuali in fuga* as the site reconstructs, profile by profile, the network of people and organizations involved in efforts to help those persecuted by the fascist regime. Guarnieri and her team of researchers effectively synthesize vast amounts of information, uncovered in archival research both in Italy and abroad, into a highly accessible and readable digital resource.

In the “Avvertenze per la ricerca” section that follows the catalogue of biographical profiles, Guarnieri and her colleagues warn that “si deve tener conto che i dati raccolti riguardano un elenco e una documentazione *in progress*,” and that “c'è sempre il rischio di semplificazioni, riduttivismi e generalizzazioni.” Yet the nature of this project and the careful design of the website ensure neither of these issues poses a problem. On the contrary, the site's status as a work in progress is a feature and not a flaw for it reminds us that the history that it seeks to preserve cannot be contained in a predetermined set of schemas; it is a history that will continue to grow in breadth and depth with the completion of further research over time. Furthermore, though the site aims to investigate its subject as broadly as possible, the history that *Intellettuali in fuga* recounts emerges from the individual biographies at the center of the project; it is, in other words, a history that resists reductionism, however inevitable, by rooting itself in detail.

*Intellettuali in fuga* is a valuable resource that will be of interest to Italianists, historians, scholars of Jewish Studies, and scholars of Italian diaspora studies. Moreover, it holds potential as a pedagogical tool, whether in an Italian language classroom as a means to introduce students to this history in the target language, or simply as a resource to learn about the heroic figures-famous or not-whose stories this project documents. Perhaps the site's most striking contribution, however, is

the way in which it reminds us of Italy's "molte perdite produttive e culturali" that were the tragic result of the persecution and flight of so much intellectual talent.

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