Gibson, Mary – *Italian Prisons in the Age of Positivism 1861–1914*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. 336 p.

Mary Gibson's *Italian Prisons in the Age of Positivism 1861–1914* aims to emphasize the connections between the Italian experience and the broader cultural trends of that era. Such contextualization marks the first important challenge in the book: that of rethinking, through the Italian case study, some general assumptions in the history of modern prison. By going beyond the study of those countries (France, the United Kingdom, and the United States) that led the "first wave of reform" at the end of the eighteenth-century, new perspectives emerge in the analysis of the relation between prisons and modern society. The wider perspective generates two notable methodological choices: that of treating gender and age as important factors in the study of systems of punishment and that of combining small-scale, local realities with large-scale national and global ones.

Gibson's first contribution is to start a discussion about the chronology and geographical mapping of the accepted narrative concerning "the birth of the prison," starting from an apparently peripheral viewpoint, that of late nineteenth-century Italy. Her introduction includes some short but pointed remarks on prison historiography (pp. 4–7), beginning with the so-called revisionist historians David Rothman, Michel Foucault, and Michael Ignatieff. Though fundamental, the work of these pioneers has been later criticized as presenting an oversimplified evolution from corporal punishment to penal incarceration based on the average adult-male prisoner. Gibson underlines the positive effect of Gender Studies in turning the attention towards prisons for women, as well as the usefulness of a broader approach to confinement practices during the *Ancien Régime*.

From this perspective, the history of prisons in Italy appears much less isolated from the international landscape than could be thought at first. The book's persuasive argument revolves around presenting the convergence on the Italian scene of three cultural currents that are crucial to understanding the success of the prison in modern penal systems. These aspects include the following: the traditional forms of confinement imposed by Catholics during the counterreformation; the revolutionary influence of Cesare Beccaria's penal Enlightenment; and the interpretation of Positivism transpiring from the works on criminal anthropology by Cesare Lombroso. Following the Unification of Italy in 1861, such complex inheritance influenced the development of a "second wave of reform," a phase that has been less intensely researched in previous scholarship, but that comes to the fore as central in Gibson's book.

During such a process of nation-building, Rome provides a case study within the larger Italian case study. Rome, being capital first of the Papal States and then of the Kingdom of Italy, is taken as a "laboratory" (p. 11) wherein the author retraces the politics of the liberal ruling class and party. The first chapter, "Punishment before Italian Unification," deals with the Roman models of "proto-prison," among which are the well-known examples of the *Carceri nuove* (1658) and of the Houses of Correction of San Michele a Ripa for children (1703) and women (1735) respectively. These new solutions supported by the popes received attention

from many contemporary observers and have been studied as early examples of cellular structures reflecting the internal activities of work and religious practice. Keeping in mind these significant beginnings, Gibson considers that the process of national unification marks a pivotal point in the passage from Rome's leading role to that of other Italian regions that were more deeply imbued with the spirit of the Enlightenment. During the *Risorgimento*, in fact, experts, reformers, and Italian philanthropists participated in a European debate concerning the Auburnian and Philadelphian models of confinement, while both the Roman and the Neapolitan models were fiercely opposed. William Gladstone's letters are one example of such open criticism (p. 43). Italian patriots considered prisons as an emblem of oppression by the Restauration's rulers, while Liberals inherited the role of Enlightenment thinkers from the previous century in leading the fight for reform.

Nonetheless, these nationalist movements met with failure soon after Italian Independence. Gibson explains this outcome by resorting to Gramsci's category of "Failed Revolution," although perhaps applying this interpretative key in an overly precise, mechanical manner. The intention of making earlier penal codes cohere in a uniform way stalled before the variety of traditions in the various Italian States. For example, Tuscany was proud to maintain its 1786 code that was famous for the abolition of the death penalty, a first-time achievement by Pietro Leopoldo. The situation of the penal institutes in Italy thus remained fragmented for a further three decades, and even debate in Parliament was stagnant. This political outcome is analyzed in the most original chapter of the book, "Prison Consolidation and Reform" (chapter 3), while the following chapters (4 to 6) deal with its repercussions by bestowing particular attention on the fate of women, men, and children. Gibson points to the 1891 Prison Ordinance as the turning point when the social legislation promoted by the *sinistra storica* under the leadership of Francesco Crispi's government met the directives of Lombroso's criminological analysis. The political leanings of the directors general of the national prison administration (Martino Beltrani Scalia and Alessandro Doria) and the lively debate published in the *Rivista delle discipline carcerarie* (Journal of Prison Sciences) constitute the principal documentary sources in Gibson's research. Beyond these, statistical data drawn from local Roman institutional archives enriches the analysis of the impact of prison reforms on all categories of inmates considered in this central section of the book. The careful consideration of the variables due to gender and age overlap with a broader analysis on a local, national, and global scale, strengthening the book's original thesis. This strong theoretical framework does, however, cause some inevitable imbalance in the internal structure of the book.

The outcomes of the Italian prison reform are well integrated within the global context, privileging a scientific approach to the study of the causes and penal consequences of criminal actions. Positivist ideas were embraced by new nations in Latin America, Asia, or Africa, as well as on the European "periphery," in countries such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal (p. 67). The multiform nature of these experiences and exchanges definitively demonstrates the inadequacy of an account that limits discussion of the origins of modern prisons to the hegemonic role of northern European, "Western" countries. Through this broadening of horizons, the chapter

devoted to "Prisons on the Margins" offers insights for a new interpretation of repressive instruments so far considered peculiar to the Italian penal system. On the contrary, the development of *domicilio coatto* (Police camps) is here compared with the systems of deportation and of overseas penal colonies adopted by other European superpowers, ideologically promoted as a "civilizing mission." The relevance of these interconnections and exchanges is highlighted in a particularly brilliant final chapter that focuses on the Italian school of criminal anthropology and its lasting effects along Foucauldian parameters such as "knowledge" and "power." Gibson's previous work was already at home in these themes, to which she has made a significant contribution.

The global spread of Lombroso's ideas marks the last example of the circulation of theories and punitive models at the origins of the worldwide success of penal incarceration. By focusing on the Italian case, Gibson shows the plurality of the cultural matrices converging upon detention as the "best" punishment method, even if periodically disputed down to the contemporary period. Although the book plausibly reconstructs the forces at work, it nevertheless underestimates the role that the Catholic world played in nineteenth-century public debates and in the practices of prison treatment and rehabilitation, both in Italy and elsewhere. For example, the beginnings of the involvement of religious congregations in the management of penal institutes, especially those for women, cannot be merely evaluated as continuous with the ancient "convent prison" (p. 121). Rather, these congregations sought to find a way of presenting a "Catholic version" of the modern prison. From this point of view, it is perhaps the national framework considered by Gibson that limits the transnational horizon in which a "Catholic model" for prison actually takes shape. Precisely thanks to the research results forwarded in the book and to its advocating an anti-diffusionist approach that pays due attention to the internal differentiation in the incarceration systems, it is now possible to consider the Italian contribution to a process of "polygenesis" of the modern prison in a new light.

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Vann, Michael G. et Liz Clarke – *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt: Empire, Disease, and Modernity in French Colonial Vietnam*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2019, 288 p.

D'une facture classique, *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt* se compose d'un récit documentaire d'une longueur de 123 pages sous forme de bande dessinée, suivi d'explications textuelles et de cartes géographiques s'étalant sur 140 pages. Le récit graphique porte sur la microhistoire de la chasse aux rats à Hanoi au début du XX^{e} siècle. Partant de la prémisse que « the Rat campaign was part of a much larger world history of disease, colonial Hanoi can't be understood in isolation, it was enmeshed in centuries-old networks of trade and labor migration » (p. 7, case 3),