CHICAGO JOURNALS

The Politics of Exit: Reversing the Immigration Paradigm*

Nancy L. Green
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales

> L'émigrant est un type d'humanité qui plaît peu à la masse, considéré qu'il est souvent, au départ, comme un déserteur, ou du moins un égoïste; à l'arrivée, comme un concurrent, encombrant, ou un paria à exploiter. (RENÉ GONNARD)[1]

In 1813, a "Gentleman of the City of New York" argued that it should be "no crime for a man to leave that country, where, by chance, he commenced his existence."[2] He argued strenuously that emigration devolved from a natural right of departure and that all laws to prevent it were unjust and highly tyrannical. Yet, in the imaginary dialogue he constructed between a king and a subject, the king saw things from another perspective. The prosperity of a kingdom depends upon its manufacture and commerce. Emigration would interfere with this process, entailing the loss of skill to foreign nations. Above all, argued the king, allegiance, based on birthplace, is inalienable; departure must be considered not a natural right but a permission, subject to recall. Worst of all, if a subject took up arms against his home country, that would be "the heighth [*sic*] of enormity, and deserving death." In a *cri de coeur,* the king protested: "Does not every good man love his country?"[3]

The king and subject dialogue raises important issues that have most often been ignored in the historical literature on migration. Even for our mostly

---

[1] René Gonnard, *Essai sur l'histoire de l'émigration* (Paris, 1928), 16–17.

[2] A Gentleman of the City of New York, *An Inquiry into the natural rights of man, as regards the exercise of expatriation, Dedicated to all the adopted citizens of the United States* (New York, 1813), 5.

[3] Ibid., 10, 11.

postmonarchical times, the king's concerns have been no less real for the Western nation-states that came into being in the century following the French Revolution. How has citizenship been defined not just with regard to those who seek to enter the body politic—the immigration question—but also with regard to those who leave? How has exit, like entry, redefined citizenship and belonging at home?

REVERSING THE PERSPECTIVE

Migration is a multifaceted subject that has been treated by as many perspectives as there are disciplines and theories.[4] But one thing has characterized most of the historical and sociological literature in the major countries of immigration in the past few decades: it has been resolutely, if understandably, a literature mirroring itself, a history of immigration. The social sciences have paralleled public debate in their interest in the matter ever since the Chicago school of sociology began studying immigration in the context of debates surrounding the 1920s quota legislation; John Higham wrote his important *Strangers in the Land* during the deliberations leading up to the 1952 Mc-Carren-Walter Act;[5] the upsurge of immigrant community studies took off alongside the "ethnic renaissance" of the 1970s and 1980s. Similarly, in France the arrival of foreigners has repeatedly prompted social scientists to study the problem, from demographers worried about depopulation since the late nineteenth century and the numerous legal theses published at the turn of the twentieth century to the economists, sociologists, and historians of the 1970s.[6] The highly public politics of immigration, the places from which we write (the countries of immigration), the sources most readily available, and the languages we know have fostered the rich development of the new social history of immigration of the past three decades.

Two interrelated paradigm shifts have marked this literature. First of all, the assimilation studies that largely characterized understanding of the migration experience from the Chicago school of sociology onward were largely discredited with the "ethnic renaissance" of the 1970s. Although the ethnic paradigm is in turn criticized today, it was the context that encouraged the multitude of monographs that have charted immigration to the United States and

[4] Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, eds., *Migration Theory: Talking across Disciplines* (New York, 2000).

[5] John Higham, *Strangers in the Land* (1955; New York, 1985), and "The Strange Career of Strangers in the Land," *American Jewish History* 76 (December 1986): 214–26.

[6] See, e.g., Gérard Noiriel, *Le creuset français: Histoire de l'immigration XIXe–XXe siècles* (Paris, 1988).

elsewhere over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It bears noting, however, that both approaches—assimilation and ethnicity—have emphasized questions relating essentially to arrival and settlement.

Second, and concomitantly, the more general epistemological shift in the social sciences from an emphasis on structures to a focus on agency has had an ironic impact on immigration historiography. Poststructuralism and structuralism are still at odds in the migration literature, representing two approaches that rarely speak to one another. The turn to individual agency and fine-tuned anthropological and cultural studies of multiple and changing identities have captured the attention of many, while analyses of the state and its relationship to its immigrants have become a powerful focus of a new look at citizenship. Thus, while some social historians have forcefully "brought the state back in," others have turned their backs on its relevance in order to study the anthropological subject.

The new citizenship studies and recent writings on transnationalism reflect these divergent approaches.[7] The former focus on the state and its immigrants; the latter argue forcefully that the state is as irrelevant as the literal and metaphoric borders that are porous and easily crossable, allowing immigrants to stay in touch with their home folk and folkways. One set of studies thus points to the continued salience of the state, the other to its withering. One could argue that these two approaches represent (important) variants on the old assimilation versus ethnicity debate: the state and its citizenship concerns are distant relatives of the former, and transnationalism has for some become an explanation of cultural retention, now aided by modern forms of tele- and other communications. While the assimilation paradigm postulated a rupture between past and present, the ethnicity paradigm and transnationalism theorists have argued for increasing levels of continuity in the migration experience.

These contrasting approaches (structure vs. agency, citizenship vs. transnationalism) have nonetheless one thing in common. All of them focus primarily on immigration and questions of identity, whether one or divisible: that of the individual, that of the nation-state.

Reversing the immigration perspective has several advantages beyond pro-

[7] For example, Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven, CT, 1997); Dominique Schnapper, *La communauté des citoyens* (Paris, 1994); Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Cristina Blanc-Szanton, eds., *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration: Race, Class, Ethnicity and Nationalism Reconsidered* (New York, 1992). For two historically based critiques of the newness of transnationalism, see David A. Gerber, "Theories and Lives: Transnationalism and the Conceptualization of International Migrations to the United States," *IMIS-Beiträge* 15 (December 2000): 31–53; Ewa Morawska, "Immigrants, Transnationalism, and Ethnicization: A Comparison of This Great Wave and the Last," in *E Pluribus Unum?* ed. John Mollenkopf and Gary Gerstle (New York, 2002), 175–212.

viding an important mirror image to the approaches mentioned above. For the migrants themselves, the attitudes and constraints surrounding departure are an important framework for understanding subsequent arrival and settlement; later relations to "home" will in part be grounded in how "home" conceives of its emigrants. For the state, looking at emigration is another way of understanding the expectations of nation building and its fears of loss; emigration even more than immigration defines the outer boundaries of the state. Finally, the view from the other side helps lay the groundwork for a better integration of emigration and immigration as an interconnected process, both for individuals and the state; em/immigration is of a piece for those who move, but emigration and immigration policies are also interrelated aspects of international relations.

We can begin such a research agenda by looking at the state, at free emigration from it, and at the consequences of free emigration for an understanding of the nation. If immigration has become a litmus test for how nations define themselves, attitudes toward those who leave have also helped conceptualize citizenship—not just through entry but also through exit. Nevertheless, surprisingly little attention has been given to the history of policies and attitudes of states and societies with regard to departure.[8] Some countries have formally forbidden their citizens to leave; others have forced some of their citizens into exile.[9] The focus here will be on free movement—neither forced nor forbidden—which defines most of the "unsettling" of Europe during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. I propose to reexamine the classic historiography of migration in order to explore the parameters of the European emigration debates from an international and comparative perspective.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF DEPARTURE

To argue for a new focus on leave-taking is not to suggest that the question has been entirely invisible. Irish ballads are powerful testimony (and an im-

---

[8] Even in the field of political science, as Jim Hollifield has noted, there is a lack of literature on the rules of exit ("The Politics of International Migration," in Brettell and Hollifield, eds., *Migration Theory,* 173). Aristide Zolberg, for one, has long urged historians to integrate the state into the history of migration ("International Migration Policies in a Changing World System," in *Human Migration,* ed. William H. McNeill and Ruth S. Adams [Bloomington, IN, 1978], 241–86). Compare, more recently, Gérard Noiriel, *La tyrannie du national, le droit d'asile en Europe, 1793–1993* (Paris, 1991), and *Etat, nation, et immigration: Vers une histoire du pouvoir* (Paris, 2001).

[9] For a brief overview of different types of contemporary emigration, see Myron Weiner, *The Global Migration Crisis: Challenge to States and to Human Rights* (New York, 1995), 29–44.

portant source) for the heart-wrenching experience of departure. Community or religious rituals involved in marking exit are perhaps the most obvious entrée into the subject of departure. Irish wakes for emigrants were community send-offs for those undergoing a virtual death by going into exile. Italian priests provided benediction ceremonies for those undertaking the long voyage. Visions of America have been explored as part of the predeparture imagination, although "the destination question"—the comparative representations of possible sites of emigration before leaving—merits greater exploration.[10]

Three different disciplinary approaches have called for a more thorough analysis of the conditions of origins in order better to understand the migration process. The sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad, himself a border crosser, argued forcefully throughout his life for a more thorough analysis of home and the perspective from the place of origin in order to comprehend the "double absence" of the migration experience. Sayad emphasized how emigration and immigration are two dimensions of the same phenomenon, linked in a dialectical relationship.[11] Sayad has, however, perhaps been more often invoked than emulated on this point.

Economists have furnished the most important body of literature on the effects of emigration on the home country. Indeed, some of the earliest economic treatments of the late twentieth-century migrations were done by economists anxious to quantify the impact of the "push" as well as the "pull." In France, for example, the political economist Georges Tapinos set up an elaborate table on the costs and benefits of contemporary migration for the countries of immigration and emigration, only to conclude with a question mark, underlining the impossibility of determining an exact balance sheet of migration for either country.[12] Remittances and the economic impact of eventual return have framed many contemporary studies in which consumption versus investment have been debated.[13] However, this developmental literature has

[10] Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York, 1985); Nancy L. Green, "The Modern Jewish Diaspora: East European Jews in New York, London, and Paris," in *European Migrants: Global and Local Perspectives,* ed. Dirk Hoerder and Leslie Page Moch (Boston, 1996), 263–81. Many studies have however focused on the image of America as a particular destination. See, e.g., Dirk Hoerder and Horst Rössler, eds., *Distant Magnets: Expectations and Realities in the Immigrant Experience, 1840–1930* (New York, 1993).

[11] Abdelmalek Sayad, "Les trois âges de l'émigration algérienne," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 15 (June 1977): 59–79, and *La double absence, des illusions de l'émigré aux souffrances de l'immigré* (Paris, 1999). While Sayad argued that every immigrant is or was an emigrant, René Gonnard postulated the reverse in 1928: "Every emigrant is inevitably an immigrant, except the legendary wandering Jew, who perpetually leaves without ever arriving" (*Essai,* 18).

[12] Georges Tapinos, *L'immigration étrangère en France, 1946–1973* (Paris, 1975).

[13] See, e.g., the different interpretations of Henry Rempel and Richard A. Lobdell,

engaged the ex post facto consequences of emigration more than the attitudes and policies that may encourage or discourage leaving in the first place.[14]

But it is the historical literature concerning the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that interests me here. The conditions and causes of departure have been a staple of the immigration literature for the past two decades, following earlier admonishments by Frank Thistlethwaite, Brinley Thomas, and, more recently, Dirk Hoerder to integrate the countries of origin into the migration story.[15] Most contemporary scholars of immigration indeed begin with a chapter on the "old country." Demographic, economic, and political transformations have long been recognized as the causes of the great nineteenth- and twentieth-century migrations. And, not surprisingly, those works written from the perspective of the countries of mass emigration have been more attentive to the structural reasons for departure, the questions of its control and surveillance, and some of the economic effects.[16]

My aim here is to go beyond identifying the structural components of departure in order to problematize the political and cultural attitudes about them. We need to confront the ways in which the states and societies of origin aided and abetted or fretted about and even obstructed the emigration movement.[17] Furthermore, a better understanding of the history of the politics of emigration is necessary because, as Sayad said, emigration is intimately related to im-

---

"The Role of Urban-Rural Remittances in Rural Development," *Journal of Development Studies* 14 (1978): 324–41; and P. Collier and D. Lal, "How Poor People Get Rich: Kenya (1960–1979)," *World Development* 12 (1984): 1007–18. See also Panos Hatzipanayotou,"Transnationalism: A New Analytic Framework for Understanding Migrations," in *Migration, Diasporas, and Transnationalism,* ed. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen (Cheltenham, 1999), 50–63; Charles B. Keely and Bao Nga Tran, "International Migration and Remittances in a Two-Country Temporary Equilibrium Model," in ibid., 64–89; and Charles W. Stahl and Fred Arnold, "Sending Countries and the Politics of Emigration and Destination," in ibid., 170–96.

[14] See, however, Johanna Lessinger, "Nonresident-Indian Investment and India's Drive for Industrial Modernization," in Vertovec and Cohen, eds., *Migration,* 90–111; and Binod Khadria, *The Migration of Knowledge Workers: Second-Generation Effects of India's Brain Drain* (New Delhi, 1999).

[15] Frank Thistlethwaite, "Migration from Europe Overseas in the 19th and 20th Centuries," in *Population Movements in Modern European History,* ed. Herbert Moller (New York, 1964), 73–92; Brinley Thomas, ed., *The Economics of International Migration* (London, 1958); Dirk Hoerder, ed., *Labor Migration in the Atlantic Economies* (Westport, CT, 1985), 321–52. See also Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham, NC, 2002).

[16] See discussion of Germany, Italy, and Hungary below.

[17] For a look at Europe and beyond, see Nancy L. Green and François Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave: The Politics of Emigration and Expatriation* (forthcoming, Urbana, IL, 2006, and, in French, *Citoyenneté et émigration: La Politique du départ,* Paris, 2006).

migration. This is clearly the case for the migrants and for migration under-stood as a process, but it is also true for the state. States are often both im-migration and emigration countries or may shift from being one to the other over time. (And they may indeed make invidious comparisons about the im-migrants coming their way in relation to upstanding citizens who leave.)[18] But too little attention has been drawn to the way in which policing ingress has often simultaneously meant dealing with someone else's egress. At the turn of the twentieth century, United States immigration officials went to Europe to study emigration policies in the hope of thwarting emigration before it became immigration.[19] The domestic politics of immigration have never been a mono-logue: population transfers affect international relations as they do individ-uals.[20]

A history of emigration thus needs to range from the laws governing de-parture and the formal ties that bind (such as passports, consulates, and military service) to research into attitudes on the part of those who stay home.[21] A social history of emigration needs to reexamine the letters from home rather than to home, the newspapers and the literature of emigration. Even within the context of free movement alone, emigration may be encouraged or discour-aged, seen as adventure or folly, as the spread of civilization or feared as treason. The following analysis of the arguments for and against emigration begin such a project by reexamining the public policy debates.

The Importance of Vantage Point

The interrelationship of emigration and immigration does not mean that send-ing and receiving countries see eye to eye on movement. On the contrary. One country's attitude toward emigration may collide with another's politics of immigration; one country's *jus soli* (right of the soil or birthplace as the basis

---

[18] See e.g., David Feldman, *Englishmen and Jews, 1840–1914* (New Haven, CT, 1992), on British emigration versus Polish Jewish immigration; Julianna Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States (1880–1914)* (Budapest, 1982), 111, on juxtaposing "racially pure Magyars" with the influx of Galicians.

[19] Dorothee Schneider, "The United States Government and the Investigation of Eu-ropean Emigration in the Open Door Era," in Green and Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave.* Or, as Aristide Zolberg has called it, "remote control," in his "The Archaeology of 'Remote Control,'" in *Migration Control in the Northern Atlantic World: The Evolution of State Practices in Europe and the United States from the French Revolution to the Inter-war Period,* ed. Andreas Fahrmeir, Olivier Faron, and Patrick Weil (New York, 2003), 195–222.

[20] See, e.g., Pierre Milza, *Français et Italiens à la fin du XIXᵉ siècle* (Rome, 1981).

[21] John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance. Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge, 2000).

for citizenship) can conflict with another's *jus sanguinis* (right of blood). Attitudes often depend upon "location" in space and time.[22] Sending and receiving countries can have distinct perspectives depending on their positioning at either end of the migration route.[23] Two examples from opposite ends of the nineteenth century can illustrate the point.

The Gentleman of New York's brochure above, which can be taken as a general exposition of some of the intellectual arguments for and against emigration, must be understood within the context of its publication. In the aftermath of the War of 1812—a war that broke out, among other things, over different notions of citizenship—Great Britain and the United States, as sending and receiving nations, had different ways of looking at the same individuals. When the British royal navy took to impressing American sailors on their ships during the Napoleonic Wars, it did so under the common-law precept that those born under the crown still owed perpetual allegiance to it—in spite of colonial birth, residence, and the colonies' declaration of independence. To counter this impressment, the United States argued strongly in favor of the right to expatriation, especially insofar as new American citizens were the ones breaking off ties from their British allegiance. The defense of expatriation was clearly constructed by the United States as the right of British subjects to become American citizens.

A vigorous pamphlet debate over this issue lasted through 1817–18. The British contended, with a full panoply of family metaphors, that one could not alienate oneself from one's mother country by moving away. Americans countered with just as principled a notion of consent, arguing that nationality based on the feudal concept of personal allegiance rooted in birthplace had been replaced by the notion of voluntary choice of removal and allegiance. Perceptions of expatriation on both sides of the Atlantic drew on theoretical precepts,

---

[22] For a contrast to this idea of shifting attitudes about the right to leave over time, see a United Nations study which (during the cold war) argued that the right to emigrate is a natural right, with references ranging from Socrates, Grotius, and the Great Charter of 1215 (admitting that the pertinent article was eliminated the following year) to article 13 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. See José D. Inglés, *Etude des mesures discriminatoires dans le domaine du droit qu'a toute personne de quitter tout pays, y compris le sien, et de revenir dans son pays* (New York, 1963), 1–4. Frederick C. Whelan, however, argues that the right to leave is a new concept dating to 1948 ("Citizenship and the Right to Leave," *American Political Science Review* 75 [September 1981]: 636–53). Torpey, *Passport,* dates it to the French Revolution.

[23] Barbara Schmitter-Heisler, "Sending Countries and the Politics of Emigration and Destination," *International Migration Review* 19 (Fall 1985): 469–84. See also Ewa Morawska, "East European Migrations 1880s–1914: Contexts and Actors" (paper presented at the conference on "Migration Controls in 19th-Century Europe and America," Sorbonne, Paris, June 25–26, 1999).

but they also had to do with specific interests and with positioning with regard to ingress or egress.[24]

In 1889, an international conference on the Intervention of Public Powers in Emigration and Immigration took place in Paris.[25] Two things are striking about this conference. First of all, emigration and immigration were linked from its very conceptualization. Second, the possibility of state intervention was postulated from the outset. However, the international gathering showed the tensions generated on both of these issues and how attitudes toward migration and its free or constrained flow could depend upon vantage point.

There were of course constellations of interests that cut across national lines, and the rhetoric of argumentation revealed a variety of positions not solely dependent upon place. Humanitarian concerns about protecting migrants conflicted with the business interests of those speaking for port towns and steamship companies. Debate focused on the importance and inevitability of international migrations and what action if any the governments should take. Above all, the discussions reflected the larger political economy debate over laissez-faire, still at issue a century after the French Revolution. Once the free movement of goods had been postulated, that of men had been (grudgingly) accepted as its correlate.[26] Yet, throughout the nineteenth century, in the face of repeated abuses by shipping companies and emigration agents, even the most dogmatic proponents of unfettered movement accepted the idea that some limits had to be enforced. Indeed, from the beginning of the nineteenth century, passenger laws had been passed (Britain's was the earliest in 1803) to protect the migrant. Emigration agents were increasingly regulated from midcentury on. But the 1889 conference brought together the nations involved on both sides of the Atlantic to discuss what further, in the face of increased migration and worsening conditions, could or should be done.

What is apparent in these debates is that there were also different perspectives—East and West, countries of emigration and of immigration—depending on geographical position along the migration routes. By and large, the delegates from the New World—where demographic and economic growth proceeded apace—were the most fervent partisans of complete freedom of movement. Those from the countries of emigration, loath to see their citizens

[24] This persisted into midcentury as potential American soldiers did the reverse, trying to avoid embroilment in the Civil War by (re)-claiming their British ancestry-citizenship. See Peter Schuck and Rogers M. Smith, *Citizenship without Consent: The Illegal Alien in the American Polity* (New Haven, CT, 1985).

[25] Prince de Cassano, *Procès-verbaux sommaires du Congrès international de l'intervention des pouvoirs publics dans l'émigration et l'immigration, tenu à Paris du 12 au 14 août 1889* (Paris, 1890).

[26] Nancy L. Green, *Repenser les migrations* (Paris, 2002), chap. 4.

leave, were the more avid proponents of intervention, couching their argument in terms of humanitarian concerns. Untrammeled movement was thus perceived as favorable to the former; it represented a literally and figuratively unsettling concern for the older countries of Europe.

The conference conclusions show the difficulties that states had, both theoretically and practically, with a movement that went beyond their borders, their laws, and their nineteenth-century liberal beliefs. The final resolutions (like individual national legislation before them) explicitly reaffirmed the theoretical notion of nonintervention while at the same time calling for the practical establishment of a nongovernmental organization to regulate the anarchy of the migration flows. It was necessary to interfere with the freedom of movement in order to maintain it. But this intervention could only be conceptualized as a special dispensation from the principle of freedom of activity ("dérogation au principe de la liberté d'industrie").[27]

The debate over spontaneous versus organized emigration lasted well into the twentieth century, with some proponents of the latter arguing that it was necessary to ensure a more even gender balance among those departing.[28] But even within the context of a free-market language of the right of movement, principles and attitudes toward emigration-immigration were often situationally located. Like the United States or Britain earlier in the century, late nineteenth-century authors often viewed migration in relation to their own countries' demographic or economic concerns.

THE EUROPE-WIDE DEBATES

Emigration can thus represent a spatial conflict of interest between countries. Yet, within any one country, attitudes about leave-taking may be varied at any given moment and/or may change over time. Concerns about a lack or an excess of population have led to a variety of negative and positive attitudes toward emigration. Governments torn between wanting to retain their citizenry and seeing departures as a safety valve or a source of remittances can display contradictory discourse and practice. We can briefly survey what we do know

[27] Gustave Chandèze, *Surveillance des agences d'émigration* (Paris, 1890), 3; and *L'émigration: Intervention des pouvoirs publics au XIXᵉ siècle* (Paris, 1898); Nancy L. Green, "'Filling the Void': Immigration to France before World War I," in Hoerder, ed., *Labor Migration,* 143–61; François Weil, "Quitter la France, XIX–XXe siècle: Essai de synthèse" (paper presented at conference, "Les Français aux Amériques," EHESS, December 11–14, 2002.

[28] S. Baghdasarian, *L'émigration européenne au XIXe siècle: Italie, Autriche-Hongrie, Russie, Grande-Bretagne, Allemagne* (Basel, 1910), esp. 134–36.

about the emigration debates and how they expressed concerns over the health, welfare, and identity of individual nations.

Great Britain

In 1803, Great Britain passed the first Passenger Act (to be followed by those of 1828 and 1842), whose stated purpose was to protect emigrants from the hardships and abuses of overseas travel. But it was also intended to limit the growing outflow of Scottish Highlanders.[29] At the same time, artisans were in principle prohibited from emigrating altogether, for fear of losing valuable workers to the New World. In general, as we have seen, the British government sought to deny expatriation to those who had removed themselves to the United States. Time and again, the moral value of remaining on one's home turf was repeated.

However, as fears of overpopulation grew, the strictures against leaving were eased, and even in the early part of the century some departures to the colonies were assisted. The prohibition on the emigration of artisans was removed in 1824. And beyond the early dispute with the upstart American nation over who belonged to whom, political and popular debate over emigration in Britain was largely couched in the context of the social question, itself largely seen as the "Irish question."

In many ways the British debate frames the way in which nineteenth-century emigration has been conceptualized in general, thanks to that infelicitous phrase, "shoveling out paupers."[30] Two reports (1826 and 1827) of the House of Commons Select Committee on Emigration, spearheaded by Robert Wilmot Horton, argued in favor of emigration as a solution to misery. Of course, if there should be emigration, most of its proponents argued, it should be organized and directed toward the empire. A Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was set up in 1840. While naysayers objected that subsidizing emigration was too costly, and radicals criticized emigration plans as a conspiracy against the poor, imperial enthusiasts formed a tacit alliance with those who thought removal would solve the problems of poverty and unrest. A gradual reconceptualization of exit postulated a link between domestic policy, over-

---

[29] See, e.g., George Hay, *A Treatise on Expatriation* (Washington, DC, 1813), 22; and Aristide Zolberg, "Exit Revolution," in Green and Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave.*

[30] The phrase was used by Charles Buller to describe Robert Wilmot Horton's emigration scheme. H. J. M. Johnston, *British Emigration Policy, 1815–1830, "Shovelling [sic] out Paupers"* (Oxford, 1972), 168. See also Kristian Hvidt, *Flight to America: The Social Background of 300,000 Danish Emigrants* (New York, 1975), 21–23, on Danish parishes providing financing for paupers (and convicts) to go to America; it was cheaper than providing poor relief. Hvidt adds that such exports were not a Danish or British specialty and cites examples ranging from Westphalia to Norway to France.

population, poverty, and the encouragement of emigration. The latter could be viewed all the more positively insofar as it was imagined as an extension of the nation's self spreading throughout the empire.

There is debate as to whether the "shoveling out" was ever truly implemented; levels of direct government aid remained low because of fiscal constraints.[31] While the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act helped pay for a small portion of those who left for the British dominions, in the end Australia was too far away and too expensive; more people opted to leave for a former colony, the United States, than for a current, less-developed one. Over the nineteenth century the terms of the debate shifted dramatically, from perceptions of expatriation as treason to an understanding of emigration as an economic necessity. Emigration came to be seen as a social fact if not indeed as social policy, with the citizenship issue implicity if not explicitly downplayed. And with the Nationality Act of 1870 Great Britain severed the feudal notion of personal allegiance to one's birthplace, legalizing expatriation (loss of citizenship), in itself a recognition that most departees were heading to the United States and not to the empire. The Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was dissolved in 1878.

France

France, as most accounts have it, could barely conceive of emigration, so convinced were state and society that there was no better place to be than the Hexagon.[32] The word "emigration" does not even appear until the fifth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* in 1798.[33] Emigration was imagined as only temporary before 1789—or only enacted with an "esprit de retour"—and even after that the term "émigré" was and still is largely reserved for a specific historical category, that of the nobility who fled during the Revolution.

Yet even the French, notoriously disinclined to leave home, did so in greater numbers in the nineteenth century than has been previously understood, especially if certain regional areas of high out-migration are examined.[34] As prefects from various parts of France noticed increased levels of departures

---

[31] David Feldman and M. Page Baldwin, "Emigration and the British State, c. 1815–1925," in Green and Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave.*

[32] Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, MA, 1992); Peter Sahlins, *Unnaturally French: Foreign Citizens in the Old Regime and After* (Ithaca, NY, 2004). The major exception is the Huguenot exodus.

[33] The previous, fourth, edition dated to 1762. The word "immigration" is in neither.

[34] See François Weil, "French Migration to the Americas in the 19th and 20th Centuries as a Historical Problem," *Studi Emigrazione* 33 (September 1996): 443–60; Gonnard, *Essai,* 17, 271–74. He adds: "In fact, instead of exporting people, France exports ideas" (165).

toward North and South America in the 1820s and 1830s, they alerted the minister of interior, who in turn became concerned about the loss of potential soldiers. Public debate took up the matter in other terms. Statisticians and economists, like policy makers, worried about emigration as a demographic issue. For some, it was seen as weakening the population; for others it signified and stimulated a healthy state. In addition, transmigration, like the emigration of French subjects, was recognized as good business for French port towns. In 1854, a government commission published a lengthy report comparing port statistics and emigration legislation throughout Europe.[35] A year later, the first French legislation in this regard was passed, aimed at protecting departees by regulating emigration agents.

In France, too, emigration was seen as positive or desirable mostly in connection with the imagining of empire. But the latter was never construed as a peopling project to the same extent as in Great Britain. On the contrary, French worries about depopulation rather than overpopulation characterized the national dilemma, reigning in too great an encouragement of departure, without, however, contravening the principle that emigration is a fundamental right. Emigration without intent of return implied forsaking citizenship until the nationality law of 1889 redefined citizens abroad as part of the nation.[36]

Germany[37]

While the older nation-states of Europe grappled with the meaning of movement and departure in relation to their long-held and yet changing understandings of identity, two states of more recent vintage, Germany and Italy, con-

---

[35] Nicolas Heurtier, *Rapport à Son Excellence le Ministre de l'Agriculture, du Commerce et des Travaux Publics fait au nom de la Commission chargée d'étudier les différentes questions qui se rattachent à l'émigration européenne* (Paris, 1854); see also Camille Maire, *En route pour l'Amerique: L'odyssée des émigrants en France au XIXe siècle* (Nancy, 1993).

[36] Patrick Weil, *Qu'est-ce qu'un Français? Histoire de la nationalité française depuis la Révolution* (Paris, 2002).

[37] Klaus Bade, *Vom Auswanderungsland zum Einwanderungsd?* (Berlin, 1983); Klaus Bade, ed., *Deutsche im Ausland—Fremde in Deutschland: Migration in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Munich, 1992); Agnes Bretting and Hartmut Bickelmann, *Auswanderungsagenturen und Auswanderungsvereine im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1991); Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood;* Andreas Fahrmeir, *Citizens and Aliens: Foreigners and the Law in Britain and the German States, 1789–1870* (New York, 2000); Christiane Harzig and Dirk Hoerder, eds., *The Press of Labor Migrants in Europe and North America, 1880s to 1930s* (Bremen, 1985); Joachim Heinz, *"Bleibe im Lande, und nähre dich redlich!" Zum Geschichte der pfälzischen Auswanderung Vom Ende des 17. bis zum Ausgang des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Kaiserslautern, 1989); Dirk Hoerder, Horst Rössler, and Inge Blank, eds., *Roots of the Transplanted,* 2 vols. (Boulder, CO, 1994); Günter Moltmann, ed., *Deutsche Amerikaauswanderung im 19. Jahrhundert: Socialgeschichtliche Beiträge* (Stuttgart, 1976).

fronted the contradictory aim of inventing themselves just as large numbers of their subjects were leaving.[38] Not surprisingly, the nineteenth-century German states viewed emigration as a source of loss and more generally distrusted movement for the instability it implied. Their constitutions allowed for emigration under certain legal conditions, but dowry and inheritance laws were serious impediments to leaving, and the necessary exit permits cost time and money.[39]

The 1848 National Assembly (like the 1791 French Constitution) included the right to emigrate without restrictions as one of its basic tenets, but it (like the 1791 Constitution) was short-lived. Even after unification, "emigration policy still steered an uncertain course between paternalistic advice and bureaucratic hindrance."[40] Nonetheless, here as elsewhere, opinion slowly shifted from a mercantilist opposition to emigration to a more opportunist approval of it with the hope of relieving resource scarcity (or ridding the Reich of unwanted social democrats). Like Le Havre, German port towns such as Bremen were amenable to municipal legislation to regulate the emigration trade in order to reassure the local population while encouraging the business that it brought. The first emigration law at the federal level, passed in 1897, was meant to organize and control emigration and, it was hoped, to steer emigrants toward the German colonies. (Indeed, the scant success of the latter was sometimes attributed to a weakness in the emigration law itself.)

If emigration could thus come to be understood as a positive means of relieving poverty or building empire, it still, however, meant loss of citizenship. Throughout the nineteenth century and until the 1897 law, leaving Germany without intent of return meant disenfranchisement, as it did in most of the nineteenth-century countries; emigrants had to reapply for citizenship if they did return. However, at the same time the development of a strongly cultural notion of the nation was almost contradictory in this respect, for the state also sought to maintain close ties with those who had moved abroad. The 1913 citizenship law would formally bind overseas citizens to the homeland through the codification of *jus sanguinis.* Seen from the perspective of the emigration question, then, *jus sanguinis* is not simply an ethnicizing concept of citizenship but also a powerful way of constructing the nation even across space.[41]

[38] Donna Gabaccia, Dirk Hoerder, and Adam Walaszek, "Emigration and Nation-Building during the Mass Migrations from Europe," in Green and Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave.*

[39] See, e.g., Christiane Harzig, ed., *Peasant Maids, City Women: From the European Countryside to Urban America* (Ithaca, NY, 1997).

[40] Andreas Fahrmeir, "From Economics to Ethnicity and Back: Reflections on Emigration Control in Germany, 1800–2000," in Green and Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave.*

[41] Ibid.

Italy[42]

Emigration can thus be seen as a way of spreading not only empire but also nation. But this position was perceived by the new nations in particular only after an initial period of indifference gave way to anxiety, which then translated into attempts to control the movement while hanging onto those who left. If emigration from Italy was both limited in number and seen as a marginal phenomenon before the 1870s, the emigration question moved to center stage in the public debate as the outflow became a tidal wave by the end of the century. A first emigration law of 1888, which reiterated the principle of free emigration, was in effect partially restrictive. More to the point, it was by and large ineffective in its larger purpose of preventing abuses. In 1901 another law was passed that has been called "the most important of [Italy's] social laws."[43] It sought again, somewhat more effectively, to aid and protect the credulous from fraud. At the same time a Commissariato dell'Emigrazione was set up in order to investigate the best means of doing so.

Two important issues were at stake. On the one hand, while investigating and debating emigration was a way of delineating the contours of the nation, such discussions also implied imagining the emigrants themselves. And the latter were invariably seen as vulnerable individuals needing protection from unscrupulous predators: "These great currents of our workers who go abroad resemble the currents of birds and fishes; the fishes are pursued by sharks seeking to devour them, the birds by falcons."[44] On the other hand, the question then was: Who should protect them? The Italian state sought to take over functions previously managed by private (Catholic or socialist) societies. Bilateral labor treaties were signed with other countries in order to replace private labor *padroni* and better regulate recruitment. Ultimately, it was in part due to the mass emigration that the Italian protective welfare state even came into being; the government sought first to count and then to aid the emigrants as a way of maintaining ties.[45]

In 1912, a new Italian citizenship law was passed (similar to the German

---

[42] Dino Cinel, *The National Integration of Italian Return Migration, 1870–1929* (New York, 1991), chap. 4; Caroline Douki, "The Liberal Italian State and Mass Emigration, 1860–1914," in Green and Weil, eds., *Citizenship and Those Who Leave;* Robert F. Foerster, *The Italian Emigration of Our Times,* 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA, 1924), chap. 23; Donna Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas* (London, 2000), 136–41; Fernando Manzotti, *La polemica sull'emigrazione nell'Italia unita,* 2nd ed. (Milan, 1969); Ercole Sori, *L'emigrazione italiana dall'Unita alla seconda guerra mondiale* (Bologna, 1979); Sam L. Baily, "The Village Outward Approach to the Study of Social Networks: A Case Study of the Agnonesi Diaspora Abroad, 1885–1989," *Studi emigrazione* 29 (March 1992): 43–68.

[43] Foerster, *The Italian Emigration,* 477.

[44] Senator Tittoni, cited in ibid.

[45] Douki, "The Liberal Italian State."

law a year later) that codified *jus sanguinis* as well as *jus soli* as a way of defining belonging, again reinforcing the ties of emigrants to their homeland. If in Great Britain emigration was in part conceived as a solution to the Irish question, in Italy mass departures were seen both as a southern problem and as its solution. Here, as elsewhere, the discussion of emigration was integral to internal debates about political economy and contributed to imagining a solution to the problems of uneven development. Only in this way could the "outpouring of human tragedies," seen by some as God's will, be interpreted as helpful to the nation and its consolidation.[46]

Hungary[47]

While the Slovak bourgeoisie argued against emigration, maintaining that it weakened the Slovak nation, Hungarian debates, not surprisingly, interpreted emigration differently depending on who was leaving the empire. In Hungary, the discussion of emigration was a debate about the state of local agriculture and developmental policies, but it was also (like the meaning of Irish emigration to the British or southern Italian emigration to the northerners) a debate about the social and ethnic composition of the monarchy.

County authorities in Hungary, like local prefects in France, wrote to the central government with their worries about mass emigration. They spoke of "bloodletting" and of military weakening as a result of the departures; many hoped that the parliament would simply bar emigration as a remedy. As elsewhere, smooth-talking emigration agents received the brunt of the blame, but the emigration question also revealed clear distinctions between political parties and differing (agricultural and industrial) economic interests.

An 1881 bill took up the issue in order to reiterate that emigration was free, all the while beginning to put into place certain restrictions. The emigration business was to be regulated, and here, as elsewhere, an ideology of free movement went hand in hand with attempts to organize it. The relative ineffectiveness of the 1881 bill was apparent here, as in other countries, from its repetition in subsequent laws (1903, 1909) that attempted to strengthen the measures of control.

On the one hand, many were happy to see at least the non-Magyars go, with emigration thus defining the contours of the nation's identity. On the other

---

[46] The poet Edmondo De Amicis, quoted in Cinel, *The National Integration,* 74.

[47] Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States,* 92–115, provides a particularly interesting analysis of emigration. See also Puskás, ed., *Overseas Migration from East-Central and Southeastern Europe, 1880–1940* (Budapest, 1990); Ladislav Tajták, "Slovak Emigration: Its Causes and Consequences," in ibid., 74–88; and Monika Glettler, "The Hungarian Government Position on Slovak Emigration, 1885–1914," in ibid., 107–18.

hand, emigrants could be lamented as lost soldiers, misled by "resourceful peddlers of human beings, who annually deplete Hungary's armed forces by as much as two battles of Mohács would."[48] As in Germany, men of military age were particularly suspect and allowed to emigrate only if they left behind a substantial deposit. In general, as Julianna Puskás has so well shown, the issue was closely linked to debates about the necessity of social and economic reform at home.

Politicians, poets, and pamphleteers across Europe all joined the emigration debates in the nineteenth century. The representations of departure ranged from tragedy to opportunity, from moral decay and economic loss to spreading riches and civilization. The arguments for and against were many and, as we have just seen, varied over time. More in-depth country-by-country studies are necessary in order to understand the way in which emigration, like immigration, is part of the nation-state story. At the same time, the literally international character of the movement calls for another approach in order to analyze the negative and positive arguments in turn before suggesting how the emigration perspective provides a new view of migration history in general.

Fear of Flight: The Negative View of Emigration

> Emigration is, after death from starvation, the worst of necessities.[49]

> Emigration is a form of suicide because it separates a person from all that life gives except the material wants of simple animal existence.[50]

> [We must try to stop this exodus], this moral evil, this desertion, which robs the country of arms and productive capital, which terminates rural leases and leaves behind only laziness and insubordination.[51]

As we have seen, not just kings were worried about losing subjects. The nineteenth-century republics were similarly troubled about potential losses of population, soldiers, and economic resources. "Depopulation anxiety" was not just

---

[48] Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States,* 107.

[49] The novelist and nationalist Enrico Corradini, cited in Foerster, *The Italian Emigration,* 494.

[50] *Allgemeine Zeitung* (Augsburg), December 9, 1816, cited in Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607–1806* (Cambridge, MA, 1941), 3.

[51] Bishop Scalibrini, cited in Judith Rainhorn, "Des rives, des continents: Les migrants italiens à la Villette (Paris) et à East Harlem (New York) de 1880 aux années 1930," (Doctoral diss., Université de Tours, 2001).

a French obsession.⁵² It was an early modern concern that continued to frame much of Europe's apprehension as subjects and citizens increasingly took flight to the New World in the nineteenth century. Two images—one political, the other economic—were closely linked in this fear of manpower depletion. The idea of a weakened military force, not to mention the even scarier thought of former citizens taking up arms against their country of birth, haunted some writers. At the worst, emigration was considered a national emergency, equated with war.⁵³ Desertion became the more general metaphor for emigration; abandoning one's polity was strongly associated with the moral and physical abandonment of home, family, and ancestral tombs.⁵⁴

But if emigration was a political, demographic, and military issue for the state, it was also, and perhaps above all, an economic one. While the state was afraid of losing citizens, it was just as concerned that citizen workers were going to enrich other lands. Jean Bodin (1530–96) has often been quoted for his pithy statement to the effect that neither the strength nor wealth of a nation could exist without an abundant population: "Il n'est force ni richesse que d'hommes."⁵⁵ Mercantilism continued to undergird concerns that it was in the state's best interest to harbor a large, economically active populace.

Yet post-Malthusian nineteenth-century authors understood that it was not population alone but also the relationship between the number of inhabitants and available resources that determined the wealth of a nation. The nineteenth-century French political economist Jean-Baptiste Say (1767–1832), who is also often quoted as being hostile to emigration (a dead loss for the country [*perte sèche pour le pays*], comparing it with a whole army leaving, with weapons and baggage), was in fact more measured in his evaluation.⁵⁶ While

---

⁵² Carol Blum, *Strength in Numbers: Population, Reproduction and Power in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore, 2002). Blum concludes with the observation that France turned to Malthusianism (like other European countries) during the nineteenth century, only to return to natalism at the end of that century. For the later period, see Yves Charbit, *Du Malthusianisme au populationnisme, les économistes français et la population, 1840–1870* (Paris, 1981); Alisa Klaus, *Every Child a Lion: The Origins of Infant Health Policy in the United States and France, 1890–1920* (Ithaca, NY, 1993); Hervé Le Bras, *Marianne et les lapins: L'obsession démographique* (Paris, 1991).

⁵³ Marchese di Cosentino, cited in Cinel, *The National Integration,* 75.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., [L'abbé] P. Labrune, *L'émigration* (Aubusson, 1869).

⁵⁵ [*Sic,* in French] Roger Mols S.J., "Population in Europe 1500–1700," in *The Fontana Economic History of Europe,* vol. 2, *The 16th and 17th Centuries,* ed. Carlo M. Cipolla (London, 1973), 32.

⁵⁶ Cited by Louis Chevalier, "L'émigration française au XIXe siècle," *Etudes d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 1 (1947): 166 (in quotation marks but with no reference). Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes,* 3rd ed. (1874; Paris, 1886), 607, cites Say via Wilhelm Roscher. More generally, see Gonnard, *Essai,* 281–86; and Charles Emil Stangeland, *Pre-Malthusian Doctrines of Population:*

he taught that "no loss is more unfortunate for the abandoned homeland," he also believed that citizens cannot be restrained by force.[57] But to the extent that population loss was seen as a potential drain of both capital and (especially) labor, the economics of emigration continued to be a concern beyond a purely mercantilist understanding. The king in the dialogue above was explicit (and could have spoken for nonmonarchical regimes): "Were we to permit mechanics and sailors to depart, our manufactories would be deserted, and our ships unnavigated; because, as some other nations might offer greater prices for their skill and labour, they would resort to that nation; and the consequences would, to us, be fatal."[58] Discussions about emigration also turned on considerations of who was leaving. The export of capital was worrisome, but it was the loss of hardworking peasants and skilled laborers that was uppermost in the emigration imagery. It was a specific form of economic treason that most landowners, industrialists, and deputies had in mind.

While the negative representations of emigration were largely conceived of in relation to the good of the state, the arguments used against it were also often couched in terms of the good of the individual. Pamphlets and parliamentary debates stressed the necessity of protecting the migrants from duplicity and harm. Thus, for one of Robert Wilmot Horton's critics, who described leaving home as "frightful and impracticable," moral dangers lurked.[59] The deserter was not just a lost soldier but also a lost soul. The imagined pathos of leaving was seconded by the practical difficulties involved. And since an ideology of natural bonding with home and hearth had difficulty conceptualizing a voluntary leave-taking, it emphasized instead the "push" of material misery and the "pull" exerted by outside forces, incarnated in the widespread stereotype of unsavory emigration recruiters.

A Study in the History of Economy Theory (New York, 1904). Vauban, instigator of the first French population census of 1694, wrote: "The greatness of kings is measured by the number of their subjects" (cited in Blum, *Strength in Numbers,* 8).

[57] "Nulle perte n'est plus fâcheuse pour la patrie abandonnée," Jean-Baptiste Say, *Traité d'économie politique,* 6th ed. (Paris, 1841); bk. 1, chap. 20, 239. "When the laws against emigration are iniquitous . . . when you prevent an overabundant people from leaving by crossing the country's borders, then they will exit by the grave" (Say, *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique,* 3rd ed. [1852; repr., Osnabrück, 1996], pt. 6, chap. 6, 151). Here as elsewhere Say argues that it is good laws and good institutions that create prosperity, not the number of individuals in and of itself.

[58] Gentleman of New York, *An Inquiry,* 6.

[59] Robert Wilmot Horton, *Causes and Remedies of Pauperism, Containing correspondence with M. Duchatel* (Paris, 1830), 8, 13. In their correspondence, Tanneguy Duchatel admitted that, given the choice between emigration and extreme misery, "it must be considered as a happier lot, to live in comfort in one's native country, than in a distant colony; but better to live in comfort in a distant colony, than to endure in one's native country the bitter condition of pauperism" (14).

The emigration agents and ship companies thus became a frequent focus of opprobrium in much of the negative discourse on emigration. As Julianna Puskás has argued, it was undoubtedly easier to control the intermediaries through legislation than to outlaw emigration itself.[60] After the Passenger Laws, legislation aimed at regulating the emigration business became one of the major ways in which states intervened to regulate emigration in the nineteenth century. Thus when Georges de Pardonnet—a special emigration agent appointed first by the state of Kansas and subsequently by the state of Oregon as well and a member of the Société de Géographie Commerciale de Paris, with undoubtedly close relations to the Agence Générale Maritime, which printed one of his brochures—published his practical guides aimed at Frenchmen thinking of moving to the Far West, he prefaced his remarks by distancing himself from the more dubious members of his profession. While reassuring his readers about Indians and the desert, he warned them against the even greater threat of unscrupulous compatriots.[61]

While emigrants were thus often depicted as hapless victims or voluntary traitors, those same individuals could also be described as the vanguard of the spread of national glory. Thus, while many anxious commentators depicted separation from home and country as fraught with danger and contrary to the well-being of the individual and the state, others could conceive of emigration in a more favorable light, as a way of letting their people go.

GOOD RIDDANCE: ENCOURAGING DEPARTURES

Dissidence has always been one powerful motive for states to allow departures. Dissent may be expressed through voice or exit, as Albert Hirschman has cogently observed.[62] It may be in the state's own interest to shovel out protesters along with paupers. The positive view on emigration can also, like its obverse, be the result of a combination of demographic, economic, or cultural concerns.

The safety valve has been perhaps the most prevalent metaphor in envisaging emigration as a happy solution to the problem of excess population.

---

[60] Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States,* 92–115; see also Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation,* 626–27.

[61] Georges de Pardonnet, *Emigration au Kansas, Etats-Unis d'Amérique du Nord. Le Kansas, ses ressources et produits, ses concessions gratuites de terres. Conseils pratiques aux émigrants* (Montbéliard, n.d. [ca. 1873]), 3–4, 35–37, and *Amérique du Nord et du Sud, Renseignements généraux sur les diverses contrées où se dirige l'émigration européenne: Conseils pratiques aux émigrants* (Paris, n.d. [ca. 1878]), 40–42. Compare Philip Taylor, *The Distant Magnet: European Emigration to the United States* (New York, 1972), on the publicity efforts of individual American states.

[62] Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Cambridge, MA, 1970).

Insofar as fears of underpopulation had given way to worries about its opposite, emigration was seen as one way to solve both overpopulation and pauperism. In Great Britain, Horton and other neo-Malthusians argued in this vein, while in France, Frederick Le Play and his followers understood emigration as a demographic stimulus, not a drain—good for the emigrants but also good for the state, motivating those left behind.[63]

While landowners and manufacturers worried about the loss of peasant or factory workers, economic actors in other sectors of the economy, notably the shipping industry and port towns, saw the movement of migrants with glee. And one author considered that this reasoned solution to unemployment would benefit all classes, since, alas, the increase in "proletarian intellectuals" showed that the problem had spread to all strata of society.[64]

Emigration was also recognized early on as a veritable source of income. Remittances were certainly seen by individuals as part of a transnational family economy; as one Slovak pithily summarized the economics of emigration as seen from home, "We could pay off our debts."[65] Parliamentary debates show that government officials and politicians understood that emigration carried with it the seeds of economic development at home at the least, and a spread of customers and civilization abroad at best.

EMIGRATION AND EMPIRE

In one specific way, emigration was seen not just as a domestic issue—a mechanism for letting off demographic, political, and/or economic steam— but also as a way of aggrandizing the nation itself. Many theorists, skeptical if not hostile to emigration per se, agreed that in fact its effect depended upon the direction it took. Emigration to one's own outpost was acceptable and even desirable, insofar as it could solve several problems at once (including the evil of birth control!): "Too large a population in too small a country. And when it is so, either men must conquer colonies or emigrate or must become neo-malthusians. But the last course is vile, emigration is servile, and only the conquest of colonies is worthy of a free and noble people."[66]

The terms "emigration" and "colonization" were sometimes opposed, the

---

[63] Gonnard, *Essai,* 285–86. Malthus himself was in fact uncertain that emigration would provide any relief; T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population,* ed. Patricia James (1803; Cambridge, 1989), vol. 1, bk. 3, chap. 4, "Of Emigration."

[64] Baghdasarian, *L'émigration européenne,* 134.

[65] František Bielik, Horst Hogh, and Anna Štvrteckà, "Slovak Images of the New World: 'We Could Pay off Our Debts,'" in Hoerder and Blank, eds., *Roots of the Transplanted,* 1:377–90; Mary Eleanor Cygan, "Polish Women and Emigrant Husbands," in ibid., 1:359–74.

[66] Foerster, *The Italian Emigration,* 495, citing Enrico Corradini.

former encapsulating the negative, the latter the positive, image of leave-taking. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu specified the difference: "Emigration is a matter of instinct that occurs at all periods in all societies; colonization is a thought-out act that has certain rules and can only occur in well-advanced societies. Savages and barbarians may emigrate sometimes, often even . . . but only civilized peoples colonize."[67] Yet insofar as empire was seen as combining a civilizing mission with the prospect of greater economic and political strength, it proposed a solution for the "emigration problem." The empire could channel the emigration fever, just as emigration could aid the colonial project.

More often, the two terms were used interchangeably as functional equivalents. Go forth and multiply, enjoin the scriptures, and this image was taken up by various proponents of colonization. Calling upon an "esprit de fraternité" that should "fulfill a lofty, sublime mission, that of civilization," colonial enthusiasts combined economic and moral language in their imagining of imperial emigration.[68] For the abolitionist S. Linstant, European emigration was the logical and necessary conclusion to the ending of the slave trade and slavery.[69] Francesco Crispi, one of the earliest proponents of Italian expansion, wrote that emigrants "must be like arms which a country extends far away into foreign places to draw them into its orbit of labor and exchange relations; they must be like an enlargement of the boundaries of its actions and its economic power."[70] The most enthusiastic and optimistic saw emigration as draining off excess population and creating consumers abroad while spreading civilization and even furthering world peace. As Jules Duval, secretary to the Consul General of Oran (whom one author calls the "herald of Algerian colonialists"), wrote in his prize-winning 1861 essay for the Académie des sciences morales et politiques:

Via emigration, humankind explores all of the unknown parts of the earth and probes the mysteries of its most distant regions. Through colonization, which is its counterpart, families—the vigorous offspring of old stock—are transplanted. As a result, industrious hands, full of fervor, combine past experience with the search for the unknown and extract new products from the ground. By transporting them over the seas and distributing them across the continents, commerce brings the solidarity of exchange to nations, races, climates, and lands. Thus develops the basis of human activity, and the capital

[67] Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation,* xv (intro. to 1st ed.). The term "colonizers" was often used to refer to the spreading of culture, wealth, or power, while implying the maintenance of greater ties with the homeland, while the term "emigrants" designated those who left permanently to go overseas, maintaining few links to home (Gabaccia, Hoerder, and Walaszek, "Emigration and Nation-Building").

[68] See, e.g., S. Linstant, *De l'émigration européenne dans ses rapports avec la prospérité future des colonies* (Paris, 1850), 45.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Cited in Gabaccia, *Italy's Many Diasporas,* 139.

of human societies increases through activities that lead all mortal souls to prefer peaceful emulation to warlike strife.[71]

DEPARTURE AS THEORY AND PRACTICE

"The debate over emigration addressed almost every problem of the times."[72] And a history of emigration encompasses every issue from the relationship of the individual with the state to domestic policies, national identity, and imperial hopes.

Both the chronology and the interpretation of the emigration story can be "unstable" in the postmodern sense. Depending on when they start (beginning, mid-, or late nineteenth century) and how they are interpreted, tales of emigration may emphasize closure, openness, or constraint. The French Revolutionary Constitution of 1791 is often hailed as the first proclamation of an Enlightenment principle of the freedom to leave. But the Constitution was short-lived, and its declaration may be situated between Louis XIV's confiscation of property and imprisonment for those who left the realm and the Revolution's own laws against the noble émigrés.[73] The 1803 British Passenger Law has been acclaimed as the first law to embody humanitarian concern for emigrants, but it has also been described as a cynical move to slow emigration by making the process itself more difficult.[74] Are emigration laws humanitarian or self-interested, for the good of the emigrant or that of the state? Regulation constrains anarchy, but it hinders free movement. Should we emphasize that Prussian law increasingly accepted emigration in the 1840s or that at the same time it restricted men of military age from leaving?[75]

We can even ask, What is an "emigration law"? Rules about emigration and citizenship are found in nationality law, military service rules, and property laws. How do we interpret them? Laws could be passed to defuse criticism rather than actually to implement barriers to emigration, as Julianna Puskás

---

[71] Jules Duval, *Histoire de l'émigration européenne, asiatique et africaine au XIXe siècle: Ses causes, ses caractères, ses effets* (Paris, 1862), vi. Duval, like other colonial enthusiasts, cites Gen. 1:28: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it." Duval considered that emigration had always existed; the only thing new was the increase in its proportions. He argued that the French should follow suit: "La grandeur durable de la France est à ce prix" (x). On Duval, see Charbit, *Du Malthusianisme au populationnisme,* chap. 8.

[72] Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States,* 110.

[73] Torpey, *Passport;* James Davenport Whelpley, *The Problem of the Immigrant* (London, 1905), 194–95.

[74] Hvidt, *Flight to America,* 23–25; Zolberg, "The Exit Revolution."

[75] Compare Torpey, *Passport,* pointing out the former; and Fahrmeir, "From Economics to Ethnicity," emphasizing the latter.

has suggested for the Hungarian case.[76] Furthermore, leaving and losing one's citizenship are not coterminous. The right to emigrate is not the same as the right to expatriate. Losing one's citizenship in the process may or may not be a deterrent to leaving. The question of intent (of return) looms large in determining both the individual's and the state's attitude with regard to departures. Finally, it is more difficult to count those who leave than those who arrive; it is difficult to write a history of absence.[77]

In my treatment above, I am suggesting that there are at least three ways of writing a new political history of emigration: analytically, focusing on the general (structural) arguments for and against; country by country, as part of each sending area's national (and diachronic) history; and internationally and comparatively, as part of the larger story of migration. The positive and negative logics of emigration may be distinguished more easily analytically than historically. That is, the discrete positions of the king versus the subject may be clearly drawn as setting up the general terms of a timeless debate over the conflict between what is good for the state versus what is good for the individual. But at the same time, as we have seen, the Gentleman of New York's pamphlet is also very much a period piece, one more sign of the separation of the United States and Britain into two sovereign entities.

Beyond a structural analysis of the pros and the cons, therefore, the understanding of emigration must always be contextualized as well. Each country's debates about leave-taking tell their own story about demographic, social, economic, and political concerns as nineteenth-century nation-states sought to define the outer boundaries of belonging. The national stories reveal how proponents and detractors of emigration existed in every country and undoubtedly within every family. The same act could be seen differently from the departing and receiving ends or from the point of departure depending on the intended destination. And attitudes could and did change over time.

At the international level, we can discern a general shift over time in the European discourse about departure, moving from the negative to the positive. Aristide Zolberg has described nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic migration patterns as a "Revolution in Exit." As feudal ties to the land were released, as structural changes in the European population created a surplus, as the United States created a place of massive recruitment, and as the transportation revo-

---

[76] Puskás, *From Hungary to the United States.*

[77] Fahrmeir, "From Economics to Ethnicity"; Eagle Glassheim, commenting at the conference "Unsettling Europe," Davis Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, May 3, 2002. As Thomas Kleven cogently points out, the paradox of the liberal state today is that international law favors emigration on the basis of individual rights but argues for barriers to immigration on the grounds of collective self-determination ("Why International Law Favors Emigration over Immigration," *Inter-American Law Review* 33 [Spring 2002]: 69–100).

lution measured in railway tracks and shipping companies eased the way, controls on exit declined while the burden of control shifted to places of entry.[78]

As mercantilism gave way to Malthusianism, so the general European history of emigration corresponds to a general shift from wanting to hoard bodies to wanting to shovel them out.[79] Political economic theory evolved from an initial belief in population (like precious metals) as constituting the wealth of the nation (taxing bachelors, encouraging marriages, and rewarding large families) to a later worry about overpopulation. Suspicions about emigration gave way to its reconceptualization as favoring trade, commerce, and even colonial empire. As "depopulation anxiety" thus gave way to fears of excess population and as migration fever took hold, even the most skeptical theorists realized it could not be prevented. Explicit arguments in favor of emigration came increasingly to the fore. The positive assessment of emigration combined two major tenets of nineteenth-century liberalism—freedom of trade and freedom of movement—and was described both as a new concept (and an increasingly common practice) in contrast to feudal notions of being bound to the soil *and* as an age-old natural right that could not be contravened.

One of the most striking features of a focus on the politics of emigration, then, is the way in which it turns migration history on its head. This Europe-wide story of a progressive march toward an expanded right to leave reverses some long-held generalizations about nineteenth- and twentieth-century migrations. The history of immigration has long drawn a dichotomy between a nineteenth century of unhindered movement and a twentieth century replete with passports, visas, and border controls. In contrast, the history of emigration tells a countertale, from land-bound servitude based on a people-rich mercantilism to an increasingly open nineteenth-century ideology of the right to departure. The two versions are complementary, of course, but the story of progressive closure—the existing history of immigration—has become the dominant narrative for all migration history of the past two centuries, whereas the story of emigration—if taken as the generic narrative—would replace it with one of ever-expanding openness. The emigration perspective reverses the directionality of the open-shut dichotomy.

Yet, just as recent research has questioned any absolute divide on the immigration history time line, so the notion of a unidirectional development from mercantilism to Malthusianism, from refusal of emigration to its acceptance, needs to be qualified.[80] As we have seen, the shifts in attitudes toward emi-

[78] Zolberg, "The Exit Revolution," and "The Archaeology of 'Remote Control.'"

[79] Compare Alan Dowty, *Closed Borders: The Contemporary Assault on Freedom of Movement* (New Haven, CT, 1987), esp. 26, and, more generally, chap. 2.

[80] Fahrmeir, Faron, and Weil, eds., *Migration Control;* Gerald L. Newman, *Strangers to the Constitution: Immigrants, Borders, and Fundamental Law* (Princeton, NJ, 1996). On false dichotomies in migration history, see Green, *Repenser,* chap. 4.

gration, like the more general immigration theory of movement, were far from a smooth or linear process. The language of emigration ranged (at times simultaneously) from cries of treason to counsels of benign neglect to calls for active aid. Over the nineteenth century hostility most often gave way to indifference before emigration was fully accepted as a "natural" right. Policy and theory often seem to have followed social reality, while shaping it in turn; states have more often followed where emigrants have trodden. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu in 1874 considered emigration to be no more than a nosebleed with regard to the health of the nation, inconsequential as a cure for overpopulation. But by 1882, in the preface to the second edition of his book, he admitted that emigration could be a useful demographic remedy for Germany, Belgium, and Italy; he had also become a frank enthusiast of French colonization.[81]

As people voted with their feet, the right to leave was reiterated sporadically throughout the nineteenth century and ultimately came to be regarded as a new natural law within the Western democratic tradition (while its counterpart, immigration, has never been construed as such). However, this did not mean that administrative and legal hindrances to exit disappeared. A history of emigration thus needs to look at the complex nature of laws delimiting departure. As we have seen, regulations on everything from transportation to emigration agents grew with the movement itself. The language of protection that surrounded the new passenger laws emphasized humanitarian help but also created hindrances to free movement. As abuses, anarchy, and desolation over mass departures confronted the limits of theory, regulating emigration was surely easier than regulating emigrants per se. Perhaps this was inadvertent or a secondary effect of the imagining of the hapless emigrant. At other times the interference with exit was purposeful, as states began to contemplate the massive loss of soldiers or workers. "Free" emigration was not without its own limitations. Ultimately we need to understand how the intent and effect of the laws and regulations surrounding departure, like those concerning arrival, hinder or abet movement, how they are enforced or ignored, and thus how they reflect the inherent tensions of nation-states' attitudes with regard to those who leave.

In the end, however, a focus on emigration is just a first step. Reversing the immigration paradigm addresses both individual and state identities. For the individual, integrating the perspective (and not just the causes) of departure into the immigration story helps further conceptualize migration as a process, not just as a question of individual choice but also as embedded within a series of constraints and regulations that the individual must comply with or—will-

---

[81] Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation,* 3rd ed., xi–xiv (intro. to 2nd ed.), 611, 626, n. 1. Indeed, he suggested that those turbulent elements ill-suited to the Old World could find good use for their energies in the New (624–25).

fully—ignore or escape. For the state, the politics of emigration need to be confronted with the state's own policies of immigration to achieve a broader understanding of the contours of citizenship and belonging. Finally, the emigration story is also one of international relations. One country's immigrants are another's emigrants.