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The *Italian American Review (IAR)*, a bi-annual, peer-reviewed journal of the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, publishes scholarly articles about the history and culture of Italian Americans, as well as other aspects of the Italian diaspora. The journal embraces a wide range of professional concerns and theoretical orientations in the social sciences and in cultural studies.

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ARTICLES

- 127 “We Only Done What Any Red-Blooded American Boys Would Do:”
The Making of Italian Americans in East New York, 1966
MARIA C. LIZZI
- 147 The Pitfalls of the “Italian Diaspora”
STEFANO LUCONI

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

- 177 Giuseppe De Franco (1933–2010): A Remembrance of an Immigrant
Folk Musician
ANNA L. WOOD

BOOK REVIEWS

- 185 *Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia* (Jordan Stanger-Ross)
RONALD H. BAYOR
- 187 *Dances with Spiders: Crisis, Celebrity and Celebration in Southern Italy*
(Karen Lüdtke)
LAURA BIAGI
- 189 *Religious Festive Practices in Boston’s North End* (Augusto Ferraiuolo)
CIRCE STURM
- 191 *The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924* (Ilaria Serra)
JOSEPH P. COSCO
- 194 *The Sopranos* (Dana Polan)
MICHAEL R. FRONTANI
- 196 *Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans*
(Luisa Del Giudice, ed.)
RONALD GRELE

FILM REVIEWS

- 199 *And They Came to Chicago: The Italian American Legacy* (Gia M. Amella)
MARK NAISON
- 201 *Chippers* (Nino Tropiano)
SIMONE CINOTTO
- 203 *Our Story: Italian-Americans in Utah* (Sam Prigg, Joanne R. Milner,
and Alan Lucchetti)
Famiglia Italiana in Corning, NY (Richard La Vere and
Constance R. Sullivan-Blum)
CHRISTINE F. ZINNI
- 206 *Monongah Remembered* (Peter Argentine)
WILLIAM MELLO
- 207 *Watch the Pallino* (Stephanie Foerster)
MICHAEL BUONANNO AND COURTNEY RUFFNER

DIGITAL MEDIA REVIEWS

- 210 Triangle Factory Fire Online Exhibit
<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire>
MARY ANNE TRASCIATTI
- 211 A Blog from WWII. Diary of an Italian Deportee
<http://anitaliandeportee.org>
ILARIA SERRA

“We Only Done What Any Red-Blooded American Boys Would Do:” The Making of Italian Americans in East New York, 1966

MARIA C. LIZZI

The phone rang at Frank Fauci’s East New York restaurant as New York City Mayor John V. Lindsay and his staff arrived at the Brooklyn neighborhood’s Livonia Avenue. The caller growled a simple message before hanging up: “You and your guinea friends will get it in the end.” Outside, Fauci could hear the crowd that had gathered to confront the mayor growing increasingly louder as Lindsay approached. “Go back to Africa, Lindsay! And take your niggers with you!” yelled one angry young man. In response, an African-American youth hollered back, “We’ll get you, whitey!” At the same time, members of SPONGE, the Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything, took up the chant, “Two-four-six-eight! We don’t want to integrate!” The mayor and his aides, on their way to a meeting with local community leaders, made their way down the street, lined with both the screaming protesters and the furniture of families who had abruptly decided to move out of the neighborhood (“Too Many with Nothing to Do – But Trouble” 1966, 3; Montgomery 1966, 1).¹

Lindsay’s visit came as a response to weeks of low-level violence between three groups of teens, which had escalated following the firebombing of a white-owned “gypsy cab” company, or car service. Following the firebombing, the neighborhood erupted; armed gangs of residents roamed the streets looking for a fight, while firemen navigated their way through the broken glass from shattered storefronts as they attempted to quench burning vacant buildings that had fallen victim to arson. Lindsay’s pacifying visit had little effect as the violence continued even in the presence of New York City policemen; in fact, the police became the target of the residents’ rage. A young African-American man, aiming at a policeman, missed his intended victim and instead fatally shot an eleven-year-old African-American boy who had been allowed out in the hopes of meeting the mayor. Rather than classify these events as a *riot*, the press and the Lindsay administration shied away from the term, choosing instead to refer to the events in East New York as “more along the lines of old time gang fights,” instead of a riot directed at authority or property (Rosenfeld and Seely 1966).

Problems with terminology plagued the Lindsay administration and the press as they attempted to describe and then cope with the events in East New York in July of 1966. In addition to avoiding the use of the term

riot, identifying the disorders' participants proved equally problematic. The majority of observers agreed on the identity of two of the groups of youths—one group was African American and the other Puerto Rican. The African-American and Puerto Rican groups clashed with each other and had also joined together to fight the third group, whose identity varied depending on who was describing them. The rhetoric used by the third group implied that they were angry whites, as did the response they received from some of the neighborhood's African-American and Puerto Rican residents. However, the administration and the press highlighted the ethnic identity, rather than the race, of the third group, choosing to refer to them not as whites, but as Italians. In doing so, they ignored the third group's self-identification as white Americans and referenced the ethnic signifier ("the guineas") applied to the group by both minority residents who employed readily available ethnic stereotypes and assumptions and other neighborhood whites who condemned the group's violent behavior and sought to distance themselves from it (Kempton 1966; "Koota Weighs Probe of Paid Racial Agents" 1966; Hofmann 1966c).

The identification of the white rioters as Italian Americans dictated not only how the mayor's office responded to events in East New York but also the treatment the situation has received by both historians and sociologists in the decades that followed. In his 2008 book, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America*, historian Rick Perlstein wrote of the rioters: "'We don't want you here, nigger-lover!' the *Italian* kids organized into a gang called SPONGE shouted" (emphasis added) (Perlstein 2008, 109). If what happened was nothing more than gang warfare, it was warfare between Italian Americans, African Americans, and Puerto Ricans. No "whites" were involved.

On the one hand, the Lindsay administration and the New York media identified the disorder in East New York as more along the lines of an "old time gang fight" than an expressive riot of the type that rocked the nation during the long, hot summers of the late 1960s.² Yet this assessment ignores the fact that the third group of disorder participants acted as neighborhood "defenders," defending "their" territory from racial "threats" and residential incursion in much the same way white Americans of mixed ethnic backgrounds had throughout the post-World War II period. At its onset, it was a "gang fight" with more in common with earlier anti-integration riots that pitted white residents against minorities who were new to the neighborhood (Gottelher 2007, 5). In this sense, the East York disorder was yet another example of the white backlash against minorities, which scholars, such as historians David Freund and David Roediger, have demonstrated began well before the 1960s.³

On the other hand, what happened in East New York did resemble the riots that occurred that same month in Cleveland (Michney 2006). While the third group of disorder participants "defended" what was once a white neighborhood, the "new" East New Yorkers, African Americans and Puerto Ricans, fought for what the Kerner Commission on Civil Disorders would identify as "fuller participation in the social order and the material benefits enjoyed by the majority of American citizens." "Rather than rejecting the American system," these East New Yorkers "were anxious to obtain a place for themselves in it," a place already attained by the third group of rioters, whether they recognized it or not (United States 1968, 4). It may have been difficult for this group to retain its sense of privilege because its members were joined, regardless of their race or ethnic background, with other East New Yorkers by their anger at a system that they felt had abandoned them. Through their violence, which was directed both at each other and at the larger social system, all residents voiced dissatisfaction with the state of their neighborhood and the quality of city services, their growing sense of frustration because their pleas for help were being ignored, and the sense of futility that accompanied attempting to solve problems far beyond their control.⁴ Although the disorder in East New York may have begun as one type of riot or disorder, it quickly transformed into an easily recognizable riot against the existing power structure.

Whether it had more in common with the other anti-integration riots of the post-World War II period or it was a riot directed at white authority, the persistent identification of the third group of rioters as Italian American clearly illustrates the difficulty many white ethnics faced in the mid-1960s. As they attempted to define the nature of their American identity, they faced a new and different definition of Americanism than the one to which earlier generations had grown accustomed, one that no longer hinged upon the whiteness accorded by homeownership. This changing definition of Americanism helps explain why two politically potent phenomena appeared to emerge in the 1960s: the white backlash and the New Ethnic Movement, the movement in which white ethnics used their ethnic identities for political purposes. The careful avoidance of such terms as *riot* and *white* to describe the third group of rioters denied the motivations of all groups involved. By avoiding these terms, the Lindsay administration and others in political power could project their own ideals of what it meant to be both white and an American on to the participants in East New York's violent disorder.

When the *New York Times* asked, "How could East New York happen in America?" the question was not in reference to the rioting but to the block-busting and resulting devastation that turned a wholly livable working-class

neighborhood into what urban planner Walter Thabit described as one of the city's worst ghettos ("City Hearing on Block Busting" 1962, 1; Thabit 2003). From the turn of the twentieth century until the late 1950s, East New York had been a mixed white ethnic neighborhood, made up largely of Italians, Jews, Lithuanians, and Poles (Thabit 1966). The neighborhood "gave form to their escape" from the overcrowded tenements and ethnic ghettos of Manhattan, wrote columnist Pete Hamill. The neat two-family brick homes with small gardens, therefore, meant more than just housing to these residents (Hamill 1966, 3).

For many working-class white ethnics across the urban North, the neighborhoods filled with small homes signified what historian Thomas J. Sugrue called a "tenuous" hold on affluence and participation in the "American system" mentioned in the Kerner Commission report (Sugrue 1995, 555, 564). In fact, the promise of homeownership, argues cultural historian Jim Cullen in *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation*, shapes a central portion of that oft-referred to, but seldom defined, "American Dream." For millions of Americans, both white and minority, homeownership became not only a mark of relative affluence but also the path to further promise – the promise of a higher standard of living, better educational opportunities for their children, and a way in which they could form and maintain important social and cultural networks (Cullen 2003, 133–58). Although the analysis of homeownership and its extended meanings has, in works such as Kenneth Jackson's *Crabgrass Frontiers*, Andrew Weise's *A Place of Their Own*, and Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound*, focused mainly on life in the quickly growing suburbs, city-dwellers dreamed the same dream in their urban neighborhoods.

Although the dream was shared by people of all races, the same color boundaries that pervaded American society until the Civil Rights Movement affected access to the American Dream of homeownership. Many East New Yorkers of European descent had either saved their homes from foreclosure or purchased them by taking advantage of the New Deal and post-World War II housing programs opened only to white Americans, a fact of which they either had never been aware or later seemed to conveniently forget. The sheer access to these programs also solidified their identity as worthy members of the American system, a system into which they believed they had been contributing all along. In applying for Federal Housing Administration (FHA) or Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) loans, applicants in the 1930s couched their claims in terms of their new rights as Americans. One Italian-American resident of Chicago wrote to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt: "I am an American citizen for the past thirty years and my children were born in America, and as such

I believe I am entitled to some consideration. Your Excellency made these loans possible for destitute cases just like mine" (Cohen 1990, 276). By 1935, the HOLC alone refinanced 20 percent of urban homes, homes that were in areas that the HOLC and FHA rated as not "unstable" or "declining." The presence of a single non-white-owned home was enough for the HOLC and FHA to declare an entire neighborhood in "decline" and redline it, preventing those living there from obtaining financing, regardless of their color (Cohen 1990, 274). Therefore, a government-financed home, as Roediger and Freund illustrate, defined its owner's whiteness in concrete form (Roediger 2005; Freund 2007).

One of the cornerstones of Roosevelt's 1944 "Second Bill of Rights" was the "right to a decent home" (Roosevelt 1944). Administered by the Veteran's Administration, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the GI Bill) alone granted 2.4 million home loans between 1945 and 1952 (Cohen 2004, 141). Yet, post-World War II programs designed to help all returning veterans purchase homes routinely discriminated against African-American buyers. The postwar promise of universal homeownership applied only to white Americans, Americans who had "won" their homes and identity through "sacrifice" for their country. As one Italian American told Studs Terkel, "Suddenly, we looked up, we owned property. Italians could buy. The GI Bill, the American Dream. Guys my age had really become Americanized. . . . They feel they have achieved" (Terkel 1984, 142). That these white Americans would come to define their *Americanism* in terms of their homes and neighborhoods should come as no surprise. They, writes Sugrue, viewed a decent home and neighborhood as both a "prerequisite of citizenship" and one of their fundamental "rights" as white citizens. In fact, many of the homeowners' organizations and neighborhood associations that sprung up throughout the urban North opposed integration in terms of their "American rights" (Sugrue 1995). For those in July 1966 East New York, these "rights" would collide with deadly force with another strand of the American Dream, that of racial and social equality.

In the late 1950s, as the minority population of neighboring Brownsville began redefining the western boundaries of East New York, real estate agents began what the city's Human Rights Commission would later call one of the most aggressive and vicious forms of blockbusting in the city. They took advantage of a number of residents' fears—those of dropping home values, racial violence, and also the threat to their own identity as whites. The effects were seen almost immediately as many of the area's younger and more financially secure residents left the neighborhood for Queens or Long Island. For example, in a single year, real estate speculators

bought twenty-five out of fifty-seven homes on one street ("City Hearing on Block Busting" 1962). The neighborhood that witnesses described in the 1962 hearings on blockbusting as "comfortable and well-kept" with "old trees [lining] the wide streets" was only four years later designated a "disaster area" by Deputy Mayor Robert Price (Burks 1966, 41). The effects of blockbusting had left East New York what one reporter called a "declining neighborhood of broken homes, vacant stores and high crime rates" (Burks 1966, 44). Barry Gottehrer, one of Lindsay's aides, described the East New York he discovered in the summer of 1966 as:

an abandoned neighborhood, with one of the highest rates of infant mortality, drug abuse, abandoned buildings and welfare, and the lowest employment in the city. Many poor people, mostly black and Puerto Rican, who had been moved out of condemned buildings and out of welfare hotels, were finally dumped here, as were the "problem families" who had been evicted from public housing. It was symptomatic not only of the failure of city government but of the disorganization of the community that here were 300,000 people, a community the size of St. Paul, and City Hall hardly knew of its existence. (Gottehrer 2007, 5)

What was once the geographical location of the American Dream changed almost overnight into the land of urban crisis, a forgotten neighborhood of concentrated poverty and physical decay ("Too Many with Nothing to Do – But Trouble" 1966). Undoubtedly, the remaining whites, who now owned only 40 percent of the East New York's homes, cast the neighborhood's problems in racial terms. "[Real estate speculators] ran all the good people out," said one white store owner, "now anything might happen" (Terrell 1966, 2). Those whites who stayed were either "left behind," unable to move for financial reasons or age, or individuals who had decided "to stay put." Consequently, those who had chosen to remain adopted something of a siege mentality. As a local minister, Reverend Malcolm Evans, told the *Village Voice*, "The remnants can't make enough money selling today to buy decent homes anywhere else. In desperation, they're digging in" (Kempton 1966, 1).⁵

In 1960, the population of East New York was 85 percent white; by 1965, it was 80 percent African American and Puerto Rican (Thabit 2003, 11). Of the remaining whites, 40 percent were Italian Americans, 40 percent were Jewish, and the last 20 percent was a mix of other white ethnic groups (Thabit 1967). It is difficult to imagine, in a neighborhood where over half of the whites were non-Italian, that only Italian Americans were involved in the rioting. In fact, several accounts dispute the characterization of the rioters as simply Italian. As Rabbi Samuel Schrage told the *New York Post*,

"There were Irish among them, Italians, Poles and even some of my own landsmen. And we knew, unfortunately, others were coming into the area" ("The Rabbi and Gallo: Strange Alliance" 1966, 2). In addition to investigating the ethnic mix of rioters, the Brooklyn District Attorney Aaron Koota also looked into the role played by outsiders. Reportedly, James Madole, leader of the neo-Nazi National Renaissance Party, had been spotted in the neighborhood (as had African nationalists). In Koota's mind, this raised the question as to whether or not the "racial disturbances were 'spontaneous protests by local residents or inflamed by professional agitators'" (Ross and Abelman 1966, 2; Lieberman 1966; Kirkman 1966).

Even East New York's supposedly homegrown organized agitators, the members of SPONGE, were of mixed ethnicity. Representing the group in a City Hall meeting with the mayor was "red-haired James (Sandy) McMenemon." Why was McMenemon speaking for the group?, a *New York Times* reporter asked a young Italian-American SPONGE member. "Because Irish, Jewish, and Polish guys are on our side, that's why," he responded (Hofmann 1966a, 48). Although SPONGE members may have been conscious of their ethnic differences and maintained individual cultural ethnic identities, they did not think of their group in ethnic terms. They thought of themselves as a group of *whites* joined together in opposition to a nonwhite "enemy" ("SPONGE: A Society Keyed to Secrecy" 1965; "Mayor's Pleas to 'Cool It' Off Nets Results" 1966).

Despite the third group of rioters' self-definition as whites, their obvious alliance based on their race rather than their ethnicity, and the observations of knowledgeable witnesses on their ethnic composition, the press and the Lindsay administration continued to characterize the individuals as Italians. Most often, they referred to the third group as "young Italians" or "Italian youths" and repeatedly called the neighborhood a "Negro-Puerto Rican-Italian ghetto." A small number of papers described the rioters as either "Italian Americans" or "American Italians." Most, however, implied that the rioters' actions and identities had very little to do with being white Americans (Cotter 1966; "City Hires a Brooklyn Rioter" 1966; Rosenfeld and Seely 1966; Cook 1966; Berry 1966).

Why were the East New York rioters classified as simply Italian? In part, the Lindsay administration used this as a distancing technique to separate Lindsay's liberal version of white Americanism from the conservative and racially reactionary one of these East New Yorkers. From the beginning of his administration, Lindsay set forth a vision of New York and a goal for his administration that was directly at odds with the message being proclaimed on the streets of East New York. In his 1965 Inaugural Address,

Lindsay proclaimed that he would dedicate himself to selflessly building a “brotherhood” of all New Yorkers, devoid of ignorance and prejudice:

The New York for which we are fighting is as old as the vision of brotherhood. It is a city in which there will be new light in tired eyes, and the sound of laughter in homes. Our enemies in this battle are greed, ignorance, bureaucracy, prejudices, and defeatism—in high places and low. . . . We shall go forth with the selfless perspective—with the knowledge that what we do here may gain us neither gratitude nor glory except in the judgment of a later age. (Roberts 2010, 39–41)

According to Lindsay’s perspective, the rioters in the third group were not victims of ignorance or prejudice; instead, they were the main perpetrators of both.⁶

The nonuse of the term *white* also points to the then-unacknowledged or unrecognized existence of differing definitions of what whiteness meant. As historian and whiteness scholar Matthew Frye Jacobson points out in *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*, two differing types of whiteness, white Anglo-Saxon Protestant “Plymouth Rock whiteness” and the “Ellis Island whiteness” of descendents of largely southern and eastern Europe, came into conflict in the 1960s. The difference in background between the liberal, patrician “Plymouth Rock” white, Lindsay, and the increasingly conservative, middle and working-class “Ellis Island” whites of New York played itself out both in the streets and at the polls (Jacobson 2006, 7).

Lindsay, one of the nation’s most liberal mayors, appeared to believe that whiteness, in any form, accorded New Yorkers of all classes certain privileges that were not shared by African Americans and other minorities. Consequently, the mayor pushed for white New Yorkers to use their privileged position to help the classically underprivileged. Pete Hamill, summing up Lindsay’s attitude in a 2010 essay, wrote, “Lindsay moved ahead, determined to push hard to bring blacks and Latinos into the mainstream (social and political) of New York life” (Hamill 2010, 64). Lindsay’s goal of racial integration in all aspects of city life pushed hardest against the working and middle-class Ellis Island whites who still remembered the not-so-distant days when they had fought the ethnic and racialized discrimination of entitled Plymouth Rock whites.

Why would the mayor choose to emphasize the “Italian” identity of the rioters if he truly wished to remind them of their “white privilege”? In doing so, he was reminding other New Yorkers, particularly minorities, that the actions taken by the third group of rioters were not representative of his version of whiteness. This also served to remind the descendants

of southern and eastern European immigrants that Plymouth Rock whites still retained the power to both convey and deny whiteness and its accompanying privileges, based on whether or not those groups embraced the "proper" behaviors. Emphasizing the group's otherness reinforced the message that it was engaging in behaviors that were not acceptable to *real* whites, and other whites should not model their actions on those of the "Italians." For Italian Americans, whose whiteness had long been questioned, this was a not-so-subtle way of reminding them that their status was still, as both Roediger and historian Stefano Luconi's work illustrates, open to debate (Roediger 2005; Luconi 2001).

If the Lindsay administration and the press displayed an undisclosed racial bias against a class of whites in labeling the white rioters as Italian, they employed a not-so-subtle use of ethnic stereotypes as well. Based on stereotypes perpetuated by movies and television, the youthful rioters supposedly "looked and acted Italian." As one writer reported, "The Italians insisted on acting like stereotypes: they played the tough guy role learned from 1,000 George Raft pictures, and did a lot of muscle-flexing, side-of-the-mouth-talking and hair combing" (Hamill 1966, 37). It is ironic that the writer seems to have based his identification of these youths on his acceptance of the same Italian-American gangster stereotypes.

While its presence dates back to the earliest days of mass Italian immigration to the United States, the Mafia stereotype flourished in the 1950s and 1960s, beginning with Senator Estes Kefauver's Special Committee to Investigate Crime in Interstate Commerce. The 1950–1951 hearings, which were televised nationally, brought alleged racketeers with Italian-sounding names and expressive hands into American living rooms. Yet, as historian Michael Woodwiss writes in *Organized Crime and American Power*, "all significant gangsters had been born or at least nurtured in the United States." The committee found, despite all witnesses' denial of its existence and the discovery that people of all ethnicities ran rackets, that there was a nationwide organized crime syndicate of foreign origins, the Sicilian Mafia, operating within the United States (Woodwiss 2001, 245–7).

The November 1957 police and FBI raid of Joseph Barbara's home in Apalachin, New York, furthered the popular connection between Italian Americans and organized crime. While police rightly believed they had interrupted an important mob meeting, those detained—some after fleeing through the bucolic countryside disposing of guns and cash as they ran—claimed that they had gathered to visit the ailing Barbara and enjoy nothing more than a wholesome American barbecue. Half of those arrested at Apalachin had been born in Italy; the other half were American by birth (Bernstein 2002, 3).

With the 1963 testimony of mobster Joseph Valachi before a Senate subcommittee, the government finally got the confirmation that the Kefauver Commission failed to obtain: The *Cosa Nostra*, or Mafia, did exist. Several Italian-American organizations, such as the American Italian Anti-Defamation League, emerged to fight the association of Italian Americans with organized crime, but what they failed to emphasize was the very American nature of the Mafia Valachi exposed. It should be noted that members of the Anti-Defamation League did not point to flaws within the American system that made the existence of the Mafia possible, but rather concentrated on defending their own ethnic identity and further associating themselves with an idealized version of Americanism. As sociologist Richard Gambino writes in *Blood of My Blood: The Dilemma of Italian Americans*, “the ideals of honesty, trust, a fair deal, etc., are much professed [by Americans] but have never been practiced” (Gambino 1974, 302). Gambino goes on to state that, in contrast to these ideals, almost every area of American life is rife with corruption and deceitful, devious practices. The average American dreamer who tuned into television’s *The Untouchables* (or “*Cops and Wops*,” as it became known in popular parlance) would have had a difficult time embracing Gambino’s argument or finding validity in historian Gus Tyler’s claim that “organized crime (was) a product and reflection of our national culture” (Maas 1968, xviii).

Reporters and the Lindsay administration identified not only the rioters as stereotypical Italian-American Mafia wannabes but also claimed that the incident that began the riot was a particularly “Italian” event. As restaurant owner Frank Fauci described the situation: “There was no real trouble until last week when [African Americans] bombed a cab service where the white kids hang out” (“Too Many with Nothing to Do—But Trouble” 1966, 3). This gypsy cab company was referred to by many papers and Lindsay aides as “Italian owned”; therefore, they treated the riot as the result of Italians retaliating to “defend” their own. There was only one problem: The cab company, Shapiro’s, was not owned by an Italian American (Hamill 1966; “Too Many with Nothing to Do—But Trouble” 1966; Kempton 1966).

As the misidentification of Shapiro’s business suggests, existing stereotypes of Jewish Americans also apparently came into play. A survey of the ethnic stereotypes held by Princeton University undergraduates found that those students saw Italian Americans as passionate, impulsive, and quick-tempered. The same undergraduates associated Jewish Americans with intelligence, industriousness, and ambition rather than the habits of “Murder Incorporated,” based in neighboring Brownsville (Karlins 1969, 4–5). When coupled with existing Mafia stereotypes, the stereotype of

Italian Americans as a people who were prone to unthinking, violent action emerged in direct opposition to the stereotype of cerebral, passive Jewish Americans. Additionally, as political scientists Mark R. Levy and Michael S. Kramer (1972) show in *The Ethnic Factor: How America's Minorities Decide Elections* and historian Joshua Zeitz (2007) argues in *White Ethnic New York: Jews, Catholics, and the Shaping of Postwar Politics*, Jewish Americans, as opposed to a majority of Italian Americans, supported more liberal racial policies. In 1966, the popular perception of Jewish Americans, backed by voting analysis, maintained that they were not prone to rioting.

Yet, in his study of reactions to integration in another Brooklyn neighborhood in the following decade, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn Against Liberalism*, sociologist Jonathan Rieder discovered that reactions to neighborhood change broke down, not solely along ethnic lines but along the lines of education and class (Rieder 1987). In East New York, Italian Americans and Jewish Americans united based on their working-class status and their self-identification as "threatened" white Americans and, along with other whites, resorted to physical violence. That race combined with social class, rather than ethnic identity, to determine responses to integration can be seen in sociologists Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon's thorough examination of Jewish-American reactions to neighborhood racial change in Boston (1992), *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*. While the Lindsay administration and the press may have disregarded this fact, neither could ignore the emergence of working-class Jewish-American self-protection societies, like the Maccabees, and the 1968 formation of the Jewish Defense League (JDL), under the leadership of Rabbi Meir Kahane. Groups such as these, which were willing to physically fight for their "rights" as Jewish Americans, upended existing stereotypes of passivity and liberalism. A 1969 advertisement placed by the JDL showed a photo of tough-looking young men wielding pipes with a caption that read: "Is this any way for a nice Jewish boy to behave?" (Kahane 1979, 134). Kahane answered yes, and in him, an advocate of "defense," ethnic stereotypes combined to produce, as one Italian-American woman said, "Just what we need: A Jewish Italian" (Levy and Kramer 1972, 183).

Using such stereotypes to identify the rioters served one of the Lindsay administration's goals: Defining the rioters as "Italians" cast their behavior as foreign and, therefore, "Un-American." In doing so, the Lindsay administration revealed its commitment to the cause of civil rights, which had broadened access to basic rights and the chance to claim the American Dream. Participants evidently saw events in East New York as a conflict between an older definition of Americanism, which did not necessarily

include the rights of African Americans, and a new definition of what it meant to be an American. Many East New Yorkers recognized this distinction; one white store owner summed up the chaos by saying, "What this is all about is whether a Negro has a right to walk on New Lots Avenue" (Hamill 1966, 3). African Americans saw it in the same light. When New York City's African-American Human Rights Commissioner William Booth addressed a crowd of African-American rioters, he spoke of their rights as Americans. When one young man shouted out to him, "Why can't we go to New Lots Avenue?" Booth responded, "I'm an American and you're an American and we can go wherever we want!" ("Cops Pour into Tense East New York after Riots" 1966, 16). In this way, preventing individuals from freely walking the city streets was marked as un-American behavior. However, it was also un-American and a violation of basic civil rights to stop any sort of protest, including those by the "Ku Kluxers," as one African-American man referred to the white protestors. Stopping them, Assistant Chief Inspector Lloyd Sealy told members of the Council for a Better East New York, would "infringe on their Constitutional right to assemble" (McCarthy and Price 1966, 2; Editorial 1966; Ross and Abelman 1966; Hamill 1966; Kempton 1966).

White East New Yorkers also viewed their behavior in terms of their "rights" as Americans. In their eyes, they had a right to "defend" their property and their neighborhood. As one man told a reporter, "The Negroes are breaking us up and trying to throw us out of our neighborhood. We're standing our ground and we're not leaving" ("Too Many with Nothing to Do—But Trouble" 1966, 3). Certainly, they were not wrong in believing that they were acting like "typical" white Americans. White Americans of all ethnic backgrounds throughout the urban North had "defended" their neighborhoods from African-American "incursion" in the post-World War II period with a combination of restrictive covenants and violence. Violent neighborhood defense occurred in white working-class neighborhoods from Philadelphia to Chicago. Chicago alone experienced violence in the wake of integration from the 1940s through the 1960s, culminating in Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1966 walk through the streets of Gage Park. King said of attacks that he and his fellow marchers encountered there: "I have never seen such hostility and hatred anywhere in my life, even in Selma" (Meyer 2000, 186). Conditions were equally bad in neighboring Cicero, Illinois, where Governor Adlai Stevenson called in the National Guard to confront a rioting crowd of second-generation Americans of Polish, Czech, Italian, and Dutch descent. As in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Detroit, those rioters put aside their ethnic identities to form a violent *white* mob (Luconi 2001, 127).

In addition to their shared sense of whiteness, these "defenders" united in the belief that they fought to protect their fundamental American rights. The rhetoric of the white rioters echoes that of those ethnic residents who saw their homeownership as inseparable from the American Dream and membership in the "American system." As historian Arnold Hirsch describes, those participating in massive resistance in Chicago's Trumbull Park spoke of the right to "defend" their homes, which represented not only their savings but also social and familial ties (Hirsch 1995, 531). Detroit's white rioters quoted the homeownership passage of Roosevelt's "Second Bill of Rights" speech in venomous, anti-integration rants at neighborhood meetings (Sugrue 1995, 564). White East New Yorkers, like thousands of other neighborhood "defenders," cast off their ethnic cultural identities when it came to claiming and protecting these rights.

When East New Yorkers spoke of the confrontations in their neighborhood, they spoke in terms of protecting their rights as property owners: "We built our homes. We took care of them. We furnished them, we grew up in them," said one young "Italian" man ("Too Many with Nothing to Do—But Trouble" 1966, 3). Therefore, he had a right to "defend" his property. Pete Hamill summed up the view of most reporters and the Lindsay administration when he interpreted this defense not as an American right but as nothing more than un-American racism. "The Italians," he wrote, "insisted that breaking a Negro's skull was really part of a crusade for God, country, honor, and mother" (Hamill 1966, 37).

On the other hand, the Lindsay administration and the City Youth Board considered the Mafia's Gallo brothers central to its own crusade for God, country, honor, and an end to racial violence.⁷ The Gallo brothers, Al (also known as "Kid Blast") and Larry, were members of the soon-to-be created Gambino crime family, who, with their brother "Crazy Joe," had carried out the most infamous mob hit in New York City history: the gunning down of Albert Anastasia in the barbershop at the Park Sheraton Hotel in Manhattan. The Gallos, with Joe behind bars, had volunteered their services to the Lindsay administration, possibly as a way to keep under the legal radar by providing extra-legal services throughout Brooklyn's neighborhoods in times of racial unrest. It is also likely that they sought to expand their own power base in transitional Italian neighborhoods, which had lost both their Mafia protection as well as their traditional social and political structures, such as fraternal organizations, national churches (which were echoing the area's population shift, and also quickly transitioning), and Italian-American political representation. In an effort to stop the violence in East New York, the City Youth Board formally deputized the Gallo brothers to act on its behalf among the community's Italian-American youths.

Not only did this reinforce the idea of the conflict as a purely Italian-American matter, it also clearly demonstrated exactly how the Lindsay administration defined Italian Americans and what stereotypes it adopted in doing so (Hofmann 1966b; "Koota to See If Gallos Got a Deal in Soothing of Racial Tensions" 1966; Folsom 2008, 160).

As reported in the *New York Post*, the Lindsay administration, the Gallo brothers, and their attorney portrayed the brothers as calling upon their shared ethnicity with the rioters to "spread the word around among youths of Italian descent" to tell their friends to "cool it" (Ellenberg 1966, 5). Shockingly, the Gallos' Italianness played only a small part in their effectiveness as "peacekeepers." Reports abound of their use of physical force: When one youth began to describe the problem he had with the "niggers," Kid Blast reportedly slapped him across the face, picked him up, and slammed him up against a wall. Then, turning to leave the packed room, he told the unconscious boy lying on the floor, "Don't ever say nigger in front of me. I said they are colored people" (Gross 1966b, 3). The promise of serious physical violence lurked silently behind the Gallos' message of peace and brotherly love (Clark 1966; Ellenberg 1966; Gottehrer 2007, 27).

Using the Gallos in this capacity, the Lindsay administration unintentionally reinforced the exact messages it attempted to fight: Taking the law into one's own hands was acceptable as was the use of violent force, and gangs of any type were more powerful than the police. The Youth Board believed that "the embattled 'youngsters in the neighborhood did not look up to policemen,'" wrote a journalist with the *Post* (Ellenberg 1966, 5). While the Mafia may have played a role in some "Italian" neighborhoods, the Lindsay administration had now given a crime family the legal and legitimate means of policing neighborhoods. In one letter to the editor of the *New York Daily News*, the author wondered, "Why do we tax payers have a police department when all we have to do is pay a little tribute to the hoods each month?" (Letter to the Editor 1966, 51).

When Aaron Koota, the Brooklyn District Attorney, and members of the Police Benevolent Association criticized the Lindsay administration for hiring the Gallos, the mayor's aides responded with indignation. When Koota convened a grand jury to examine the Gallos' role in peacemaking, the administration rushed to their defense. Human Rights Commissioner Booth claimed that Koota was violating the Gallos' "human rights" because they, even as members of the Mafia, "have a right to do good." The mayor himself was less assertive with his response; he reminded reporters that, for whatever reason, violence in East New York had not spread, and that, "You can't always deal with people who are leaders in the Boy Scout Movement" (Gross 1966a, 2; Kifner 1966, 16; Pelleck 1966; Schlegel 1966).

Yet, in addition to meeting with members of the gangs involved, including SPONGE, the mayor's office had carefully cultivated a number of African-American and Puerto Rican community groups, ministers and priests; however, the Lindsay administration made the Mafia the representative of the Italian-American community. The Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission for 1966 claimed that in tense situations with racial overtones, "the staff either works with established community groups . . . or it helps interested local residents organize community groups to solve the local problem" (Gross 1966a; Kifner 1966; Pelleck 1966; Schlegel 1966; City of New York Commission on Human Rights 1966, n.p.).

While the Brooklyn DA and Italian-American politicians in later elections took issue with the Gallos' role and Lindsay's use of the Mafia to quash tensions, the existing evidence reveals that Italian-American East New Yorkers did not, at least publically, take issue. They did not for a number of possible reasons. First, and perhaps most obviously, to whom could they complain? Certainly complaining to the Lindsay administration was out of the question. That, coupled with the very real threat of physical violence at the hands of the Gallo brothers, appears to be the simplest interpretation. However, a more nuanced explanation exists, one that takes into account the rejection and acceptance of ethnic stereotypes. In *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia*, Luconi asserts that not all of Philadelphia's Italian Americans were worried about the defamation of their ethnic group by mob-related stereotypes. To support this claim, Luconi cites a letter to the *New York Times* by professor and novelist Jerre Mangione, in which Mangione writes, "the majority of Americans are bright enough to realize that criminal elements represent only a tiny fraction of the Italian American population." In Luconi and Mangione's analyses, most Americans reject the stereotype of Italian Americans as *mafiosi*; it bothers only politicized Italian Americans. There is little cause to believe that the Americans of Italian descent in East New York associated themselves with either the Mafia or with a unified sense of Italian-American identity; in fact, they did not use or claim their ethnic identity politically at all. As first and foremost white Americans, the whites of Italian descent may have rejected the stereotype as one that was not applicable to them, regardless of what the press or the Lindsay administration thought (Luconi 2001, 120).

On the other hand, if East New Yorkers accepted and identified with the Mafia stereotype, they would have also had little reason to protest against its application. If they accepted the stereotype, they did so as Americans who happened to be Italian. Rather than view the Mafia stereotype as a negative one, many Italian Americans have instead refashioned the image

to bring them a sense of power and a path to affluence (Gardaphé 2006, 21-44). Certainly, the Gallo brothers, the mobsters rounded up at Apalachin, and even fictional characters, such as Larry in Mario Puzo's 1964 novel, *The Fortune Pilgrim*, appeared to have acquired a portion of the American Dream. To those "stuck" in East New York, both physically and intellectually, mob membership or even identification with the Mafia offered a direct and tangible empowerment, a way out of poverty, and a way to active participation in the "American system." This view explains the birth and wild success of the short-lived Italian American Civil Rights League, which infused Italian Americans with a sense of political ethnic pride and Mafia power (Pileggi 1979, 117-32).

Rather than their power being usurped by the presence of the Gallo brothers, it is possible that the young Italian-American men did, as the Lindsay administration hoped, see them as role models and learn an important lesson from them in what it meant to be a "good" American neighbor. In many incidents of racial violence well into the 1990s, New York's Italian-American youths often identified with the Mafia and sought to both impress and emulate the mob through acts of neighborhood "defense," believing themselves to be "protecting" their neighborhoods. The presence of the Mafia in these situations became a behavioral touchstone, one that deserves further examination (Lizzi 2010, 110-111).

What is clear is that many city residents and members of the Lindsay administration thought of the Gallos as "American heroes." After earlier heroics, Kid Blast dismissed the praises of the public, stating, "We only done what any red-blooded American boys would do" (Cook 1966, 132). This was, of course, the same sentiment East New York's rioters of all races could have used to explain why they were either "defending" their neighborhood or fighting to be accepted into the American system.

Judging by events in East New York in 1966, the roots of that politicized identification as Italian Americans began not with self-identification but with ascription. Instead of thinking of them as nothing more than white Americans and treating them as such, the media and the Lindsay administration had treated the young rioters as Italians, defining them as the main perpetrators of racial violence. In these terms, the new ethnic or ethnically political identity of Italian Americans appears to be one that was projected onto them, rather than one that they initially used or even claimed. Additionally, it also appears clear that the incidents in East New York in July of 1966 should be classified as yet another example of the anti-integration riots that occurred throughout the urban North in the post-World War II period, which culminated in the political movement that became known as the white backlash. However, this backlash flourished politically in the

late 1960s not as a response to integration or the Civil Rights Movement but as a reaction to the projection of the ideals of white privilege onto groups of whites who felt neither privileged nor racially empowered. Without even realizing it, the "red-blooded American boys" who "defended" their mixed ethnic neighborhood after the torching of a Jewish-owned cab company became Italian Americans, leaders of the white backlash.

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Notes

1. Lawrence R. Samuel (2007, 76–77) asserts that the members of East New York's iteration of SPONGE were the same as those who clashed with the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) picketers protesting unfair hiring practices in the building trades at the 1965 World's Fair.
2. Political scientist James Q. Wilson divides riots into two categories: instrumental and expressive. In instrumental riots, there is an effort to achieve an objective. In expressive riots, such as those seen in the late 1960s, the actions of rioters "are either intrinsically satisfying or satisfying because they give expression to a state of mind" (Wilson 1970, 58).
3. For more on the changing definitions of whiteness and the beginnings of the white backlash, see Roediger (2005) and Freund (2007).
4. The John V. Lindsay Papers (Yale University) are filled with letters to the mayor from East New Yorkers of all ethnicities and presumably races, complaining about the neighborhood's lack of services, the growing crime rate, the crumbling infrastructure, and the inability to financially "escape."
5. Italian Americans *appear* to be more attached to their neighborhoods and, thus, more prone to "defense" than other groups. This is due, in part, to a relative lack of social and economic mobility when compared to other white ethnics. Consequently, Italian Americans often stayed in racially transitional neighborhoods, which were, as Nathan Kantrowitz (1973) illustrates, already in closer proximity to minority neighborhoods. In addition, John T. McGreevy (1996) argues that Italian Americans (and other Catholics) often felt deep attachment to a parish or national church, which limited their physical mobility. Finally, Italian neighborhoods were more easily identified as "Italian," even when they had shifted, because they retained widely recognized signifiers of ethnicity, for example, Italian restaurants, businesses bearing Italian names, yard shrines, etc. All of these factors combine to create the appearance of "attachment," even when a neighborhood had already transitioned.
6. Unfortunately, as Vincent J. Cannato notes, Lindsay's legacy is not a pretty one: "A recent survey of American urban historians ranked Lindsay the sixteenth worst big-city mayor between 1820 and 1993" (2001, xi).

7. The City Youth Board was established in 1947 in accordance with the New York State Commission Act. Its principal purpose was to coordinate and supplement the activities of public and private agencies devoted to serving youth. In 1966, it became part of the Human Resources Administration.

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The Pitfalls of the “Italian Diaspora”

STEFANO LUCONI

This work investigates whether the notion of *diaspora* offers a feasible paradigm to define the migration of the Italian people outside their native land that has occurred since the flight of the exiles of the Risorgimento in the early and mid-nineteenth century, which preceded the beginning of mass departures from the peninsula a few decades later following the political unification of the country. It is now well acknowledged that, like other western Europeans, Italians have been migrant people since premodern times (Pizzorusso 2001; Incisa di Camerana 2003; Barbero 2009).¹ Research has, however, focused primarily on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.² So will the present study. To this end, this essay first provides a survey of the most recent developments and re-elaborations the idea of *diaspora* has undergone in scholarship and then analyzes whether such a category can be properly used to define the Italians’ outflow abroad.

After checking the main features of the model against the actual experience of Italian migrants, this article eventually suggests that the nature of the push factors and the contents of the expatriates’ orientation toward their homeland make *diaspora* a concept that is hardly appropriate for an understanding of the exodus from Italy and the dispersion of that country’s population in foreign lands. Therefore, rather than conceptualizing what *diaspora* is or should be, the goal of this study is to outline the existing and sometimes inconsistent or conflicting typologies for such a term and to show that, in spite of their broad articulations and variety, none of them is fully applicable as a heuristic device to the case of Italian migrants. Finally, alternative expressions valorizing the specificities of the Italian experience will be considered.

The Theoretical Debate about Diasporas

Though relatively recent in its applications to social sciences, the notion of *diaspora* is nowadays one of the most used – if not even one of the most fashionable and trendy – categories in migration studies along with *transnationalism* (Portes 1999; Brubaker 2005; Gabaccia 2005a).³ For example, an empirical estimate has concluded that almost two-thirds of the more than 1,200 titles containing the word *diaspora* in Harvard University’s online catalogue in 2005 had been published since 1990 and 15 percent

in the previous five years (Gabaccia 2005b, 143–4). Moreover, a specific scholarly journal, *Diaspora*, was established in 1991 to circulate articles on peoples' global scattering, and the Taylor and Francis publishing group launched a book series by the name of "Global Diasporas" to the same end six years later.

In the face of the present-day upsurge in international migration against the backdrop of globalization, concepts that go beyond the nation-state as the central element of inquiry seem particularly attractive and appropriate as analytical tools to investigate people's worldwide mobility in the eyes of scholars whose research and theorizations are inevitably affected by the transformations of the world in which they live (Gabaccia 1999). Both *transnationalism* and *diaspora* refer to the overlapping of the "here" and the "there" to the effect that communities are no longer defined in terms of members residing within a delimited and bordered space in a single geographical area but are characterized by people sharing the same identity while inhabiting different and often faraway physical places (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1994, 8). If *transnationalism* means that migrants and their offspring live in at least two societies—the native one and the adoptive one—at the same time, *diaspora* implies that individuals remain part of their homeland even if they—or their parents and ancestors—have moved somewhere else. However, while *diaspora* is not tantamount to *transnationalism* (Sheffer 2006; Braziel and Mannur 2006, 8), these two notions are strictly connected. As Khachig Tölölyan has pointed out, diasporas represent "the exemplary community of the transnational movement" (Tölölyan 1991, 5).

However, the popularity of diaspora with scholars of migration studies has also involved a loosening of its meaning. The word *diaspora* derives from ancient Greek and initially designated the people who colonized the Aegean archipelago and the adjoining coasts with specific reference to the expatriates who had to leave their homeland during the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE). The same term was then used to identify the Jews who lived outside the "Promised Land" after they had been forced into exile following the destruction of the Second Temple of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE (Hovanessian 1998; Baumann 2000). An additional extension of its semantic field has led the expression *diaspora* to include also the Armenians, who fled the Ottoman Empire in different waves between 1894 and 1916 to seek sanctuary from genocide (Ritter 2007). Moreover, since the mid-1960s Africans brought to the Americas as slaves and their offspring have been considered as being diasporic peoples (Irele 1965; Shepperson 1966; Harris 1982).

Notwithstanding the progressive broadening of the definition, until a couple of decades ago applying the notion of *diaspora* for cases other than

the Jewish experience was rather limited. As Daniel J. Elazar argued before the typology of this category began to undergo a significant growth, Jews were generally regarded as being the quintessence of a diasporic people because dispersion and separation from their homeland on the grounds of persecution were the main features of their historical experience between Assyrian King Nebuchadnezzar's demolition of the First Temple of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. In such a view, a further and specific diasporic characteristic of Jews was that they had succeeded in maintaining their ethnoreligious distinctiveness from the homogenizing influences of their adoptive societies over the centuries wherever they had settled (Elazar 1986). In this respect, the founding of Israel did not mark the end of the Jewish diaspora per se, as a few scholars have continued to use this term for the Jews residing elsewhere after 1948 (Della Pergola, Rebhun, and Tolts 2005).

The first stage in the theoretical re-elaboration of the term *diaspora*—involving its use for the Armenians or the African slaves—has hardly gone beyond the use of this expression as a paradigm to explore only refugee and deported populations outside their homelands. In subsequent scholarship, however, this interpretative category has no longer been confined to describing peoples who experience forced relocation from their native places. By now, *diaspora* has been used to refer to such disparate migrant peoples as the Irish, Cape Verdeans, Mexicans, and Poles regardless of the existence of a traumatic push factor in their relocation across their respective national borders (Bathala 2004; Jacobson 1995; Smith 2003). According to this perspective, for instance, twentieth-century diasporic Ukrainians include both economic migrants, who pursued job opportunities abroad, and political exiles, who fled the Soviet regime (Satzewich 2002). As a step forward in the broadening of this category, even Chinese merchants abroad—whether opium traders or present-day businessmen—and the British settlers who established a worldwide colonial empire have been considered as diasporas (McKeown 2000; Bridge and Fedorovich 2003). Studies have identified so many diasporas in modern and contemporary history other than the classical Greek and Jewish experiences that Gabriel Sheffer has felt compelled to remind his readers that “ethno-national diasporism is not a modern phenomenon, but rather an ancient and enduring phenomenon” (Sheffer 2003, 257).

Some scholars have stuck to the idea of persecution as the crucially significant feature of diasporas. For example, in Darshan Singh Tatla's view, Sikhs abroad, who had already left their homeland voluntarily, became a diaspora only in the wake of the 1984 assault on their most important shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, on the part of Indian troops.

In other words, the awareness of exile resulting from the attack turned a number of pre-existing emigrant communities scattered worldwide into a diaspora (Tatla 1999).

Yet a commonly shared national, ethnic, or religious identity does not seem to be necessary any longer in order to define a group crossing some kind of border as a diaspora. Class consciousness—in the footsteps of John A. Armstrong—and sexual orientation have also been included within such a category, although it has been assumed that they need not be specific causes for the migrants' relocation from their homelands. Indeed, scholars have pointed to diasporas of the proletariat, on the one hand, and of lesbian, gay, bisexual, as well as transgender people, on the other (Armstrong 1976; Gabaccia and Ottanelli 1997; Ramirez 2006; La Fountain-Stokes 2009). Technology has sometimes enabled the dispersed segments of any given community to communicate across space and has affected their self-perception. In particular, the Internet has provided a forum to elaborate and consolidate identities. For instance, the news website Tamilnet contributed to strengthening the Tamil expatriates' ethnic consciousness and sense of belonging during the civil war in Sri Lanka (Ranganathan 2002). The Internet also helped the construction of a global community among Eritreans in the world (Bernal 2005). Nonetheless a casual reader might come to think that, in the present-day digital era, the existence of media maintaining connections among people outside their native or ancestral lands is more important than the dispersal of individuals itself to identify a diaspora (Karim 2003).

Additional features have slowly replaced forced or traumatic migration as the main characteristics that define diasporas. In Robin Cohen's opinion, a scattering of people outside their own native territory or the homeland of their ancestors makes per se a diaspora. In his view, such a concept cannot remain confined to the victim tradition. He has, therefore, elaborated five models of diasporas on the basis of the different factors originating the spreading of any given population: traumatic diasporas, trade diasporas, imperial diasporas, labor diasporas, and cultural diasporas (Cohen 1997). Conversely, according to Michel Bruneau, the possible types of diasporas are only four: entrepreneurial diasporas, religious diasporas, political diasporas, and cultural diasporas (Bruneau 2004).

Regardless of the quantification of the potential varieties of diasporas, it is clear that a single catastrophic event such as political or religious persecution is no longer considered as being a prerequisite of diasporas, providing that border crossing occurs (Ember, Ember, and Skoggard 2004). Geographical dispersion, orientation toward an imagined or real homeland, and the preservation of a distinctive identity of the immigrant communities

abroad, as opposed to the single broader adoptive societies, are the core elements that describe diasporas in present-day scholarship (Brubaker 2005, 5–7; Dufoix 2008, 4–34). As a result, for instance, the Greek diaspora extended beyond the Mediterranean, spreading in ancient times to include the grain traders who set up merchant houses in southern Russian cities along the coast of the Black Sea between the late eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century as well as the global expatriates of the twentieth century (Kardadis 2001; Clogg 1999). In the case of present-day Jews, to Henry Goldschmidt, even relocation from Brooklyn to the suburbs of New York City's metropolitan area makes a diaspora, on the condition that the movers share their recollections of their previous neighborhoods and miss their former places of residence (Goldschmidt 2000). As a result, Titus's infamous destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem yields to the decidedly less wicked march of Robert Moses's urban renewal and development, as well as social and residential mobility (Caro 1974; Diner 2004, 259–304).

In any case, however short the distance, traveling a few miles from Brooklyn to New York City's suburbs still implies some kind of resettlement and separation from a previous milieu. Nonetheless the concept of *diaspora* has eventually extended beyond the notion of migration itself. People's mobility is no longer a prerequisite of such a model when the relocation of political frontiers and their redrawing replace the dispersal of individuals. Actually, scholars have also identified as diasporas the separation across borders of ethnonational communities living in different states as in the case of a few eastern European minorities (Mandelbaum 2000). Furthermore, *diaspora* has become the privileged term to designate minorities in present-day multiethnic postcolonial societies, especially in the face of the significant influx of newcomers from former colonies into western Europe and North America that has gained momentum in the age of globalization (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1998, 68–70; Mellino 2005, 77; Giri 2005).

Yet, after the abandonment of border crossing as a theoretical requirement for diasporas, even the idea of minority has undergone a radical reassessment. Specifically, the divide between minority and majority in any given society has collapsed. To Avtar Brah, for instance, in any diasporic discourse belonging and otherness are not distinct concepts because their existence stems from their dialectical exchange and interaction so that the resulting identities are a matter of reciprocal interpenetration. She has, therefore, envisioned a diaspora space "where the native is as much the diasporian as the diasporian is the native" (Brah 1996, 196).

Consequently, from a concept involving people's dispersion from their native into a number of receiving countries, *diaspora* has progressively

turned into an analytical tool for understanding the elaboration of cultural identities (Clifford 1994). For example, according to Paul Gilroy, the black diaspora stemmed from the hybridization of African, Caribbean, American, and European cultures (Gilroy 1993). Similarly, according to Christine Chivallon, cultural hybridity per se makes the French Caribbean into a diaspora (Chivallon 1997).

The Diaspora Model and Scholarship about Italian Emigration

The diaspora paradigm currently enjoys great popularity with studies on Italian emigration as well. To Reinhard Strohm, for example, the eighteenth-century musicians who crossed the Alps to get work with various European sovereigns and aristocrats constituted a diaspora (Strohm 2001). Notwithstanding such an early case, this concept has primarily characterized the literature addressing mass emigration between the late 1870s and the mid-1920s and, again, in the post-World War II years (Pozzetta and Ramirez 1992; Vecoli 1995; Verdicchio 1997; Gabaccia 2000; Hagan and Rando 2007). For instance, in Aliza S. Wong's opinion, Italy's attempts at exploiting emigration to extend its influence in South America before World War I, after the country's failure as an imperial power in the late nineteenth century, made up a diaspora (Wong 2006).

Not even Italian academia has been impervious to the new and inclusive use of *diaspora* as an analytical frame for the study of the peninsula's people abroad. For instance, to Maria Rosaria Ostuni, political exiles from the area of Biella were construed as a diaspora (Ostuni 1995). Luciano Trincia has used the same category to describe Italian immigrant workers in Switzerland and Germany before World War I, and Anna Maria Minutilli has used the word *diaspora* to define the Italian exodus to Argentina (Trincia 1997; Minutilli 2003). So has Simona Frasca with specific reference to Neapolitan musicians in New York City in the interwar years (Frasca 2010). Likewise, Maddalena Tirabassi has concluded that the U.S. ethnic revival of the 1970s and the web revolution of the late 1990s have made Italian Americans aware of their diasporic condition as these phenomena have allegedly strengthened the sense of a cosmopolitan community sharing Italianness (Tirabassi 2003).

The notion of *diaspora* has also made inroads into literary criticism. In the view of Claudio Gorlier, for example, the English tongue that Italian-American writers used in the United States was the "second language of the diaspora," whereas authors of Calabrian or Italian ancestry were the voices of their ancestral region's or country's diaspora in Australia, according to Gaetano Rando and Antonio Casella (Gorlier 2005; Rando 2007; Casella 2008).

Similarly, newspapers as well as radio and television programs for Italians abroad have been labeled as "the media of the diaspora" (d'Aquino 1995; Sergi 2010). Scholars of econometrics, too, have resorted to the diaspora model to interpret the network of financial and economic transactions with the native land by Italians living permanently in foreign countries and their offspring (Murat, Pistoresi, and Rinaldi 2009). With reference to Italian foodways abroad, Simone Cinotto has even conceived the idea of a "diasporic cuisine" as a source for the cultural identity of the emigrants' progeny worldwide (Cinotto 2009).

Italy's political unification in 1861 has not affected scholars' resort to the diaspora paradigm to define the experience of Italian migrants. Actually, it seems that, as in the case of Jews before and after the establishment of the state of Israel, Gabriel Sheffer's distinction between "stateless" and "state-linked" diasporas can be aptly applied to the experience of Italians (Sheffer 2003, 148–79). In other words, they were a diaspora without a state of origin before 1861 and became a diaspora with a state of origin following the 1861 birth of the Kingdom of Italy. Indeed, Donna R. Gabaccia has identified Italian diasporas both prior to and after the unification of the peninsula (Gabaccia 2000). Moreover, although historian Zeffiro Ciuffoletti has contended that the Kingdom of Italy was "a state without a nation" because of the survival of localistic identities among its citizens in the postunification decades (Ciuffoletti 1993),⁴ it could be more reasonably suggested that Italian emigrants continued to be "stateless" people even after 1861 on the grounds of the alleged neglect of their government for the expatriates (Tirabassi 2003, 70). As one of the latter complained, the *patria*—namely the native country—"has never done anything for us" because it "belongs to the masters! The poor people's *patria* does not exist" (Margariti 1994, 40, 55).

While the concept of *diaspora* widely referred to the Italian expatriates in the decades of mass migration, when an Italian state had already been established and the great bulk of the émigrés belonged to the working class, the use of this term has been extended to other stages of the Italian people's experience abroad. Most notably, the Italian entrepreneurs struggling for a share of the worldwide market in the present-day age of globalization are allegedly part of a diasporic business community network even if few of these individuals have left their homeland to relocate somewhere else for good, while a large majority of them have confined themselves to spending most of their time in countries other than their native one on business trips (Corradi and Pozzi 1995). To some historians, the Italian entrepreneurs' diasporic experiences would date back at least to the Renaissance (Caglioti 2009). According to Piero Bassetti, not a trained

scholar but a businessperson and former politician, diaspora is a pivotal component of the Italian identity that had characterized the inhabitants of the peninsula even before they achieved the political unification of their country. In addition, in his opinion, diaspora has involved the transborder mobility not only of the Italian people but also of the nation's values and culture over the centuries (Bassetti 2002).

To many scholars, the concept of *diaspora* is a viable notion for understanding the Italian experience, especially in the case of the emigration to the United States with the demise of the melting-pot model, the collapse of the concept of the United States as a nation-state, and the ensuing emergence of interpretations of U.S. ethnic history emphasizing cultural pluralism rather than either Anglo-conformity or acculturation (Gjerde 1999). Specifically, the rejection of assimilation and the emphasis on ethnic persistence in historical and sociological scholarship since the mid-1960s have highlighted Italian Americans' maintenance of a national identity of their own, which is a component of a diaspora (Sanfilippo 2005; Mellino 2005, 80–83). Indeed, Italian Americans do seem to comply with the three paramount criteria—dispersion, homeland orientation, and connection to the motherland—in order to fully qualify for a diasporic status. On the one hand, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, about 16 million U.S. residents claimed Italian ancestry in 2000, which marked a 7 percent increase over the number that had listed the same ethnic background ten years earlier (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2002, table QT-02). On the other hand, the proliferation of Italy-related websites, the broadcast of Rai International in the United States, and the introduction of low airfares to Italy potentially let Americans of Italian background feed their interest in Italy and keep in touch with their ancestral land around the clock (Tirabassi 2003, 81–86).

The Diaspora Paradigm and the Italian Migrants' Experiences

Notwithstanding sporadic challenges to this approach (Franzina 2005; Tintori 2005), the existence of a single or multiple diasporic Italian migrations seems to be a *fait accompli* in present-day literature, especially in studies by U.S. historians about newcomers from the Italian peninsula to the United States. Yet other elements point to the contrary.

Scholars, especially those prone to the diaspora paradigm, have overstressed the political dimension of Italian emigration. They have envisaged a global community of anarchists, Communists, Socialists, and Left-wing radicals who nourished a transnational exchange of radical ideas among Italy, Argentina, Brazil, France, the United States, and other countries where these subversive exiles sought sanctuary from the authoritarianism of the

postunification liberal governments in the late nineteenth century and the totalitarianism of the Fascist regime during the interwar years (Gabaccia and Ottanelli 2001; Guglielmo 2010, 4, 63, 67, 141, 145, 158–9). To them, one might add a bunch of nationalistic conspirators and patriots who fled the Italian peninsula in the wake of the failed struggles for its political unification during the *Risorgimento* decades (Pellegrino 1975; Durante 2001, 201–37). These latter émigrés, however, were a minority. For instance, one of them, Giovanni Battista Cuneo, complained that most Italians living in Argentina and Uruguay in the early 1840s were not interested in politics and devoted all their efforts to their business activities.⁵ Furthermore, Fascism was quite popular within Italian communities abroad, from Australia and Great Britain to the Americas, even among working-class members, with the possible exception of settlements in France, until the outbreak of World War II (Cresciani 1979; Lombardi 1980; Cannistraro 1999; Bertonha 2001, 2003; Franzina and Sanfilippo 2003; Baldoli 2003; Pretelli 2005, 2010; Scarzanella 2005). A few Italian Fascists even fled to Argentina and Brazil in the early postwar years in the wake of the collapse of Benito Mussolini's regime and, consequently, became part of the nation's displacement abroad (Trento 1989; Bertagna and Sanfilippo 2004, 540–7). Nonetheless, as a result, the alleged diaspora of the Italian political exiles ended up including people positioned at the opposite sides of the ideological spectrum. For both factions, real or perceived threats to personal safety under a hostile government contributed to the decision to leave the native land. Even if they may have considered their expatriation as a violent loss in terms of the definition offered by James Clifford (1994), their experience lacked the second critical aspect of this latter scholar's re-elaboration of the diasporic paradigm, namely the awareness that assimilation within a new national community could not compensate for their displacement. On the one hand, Left-wing radicals nourished an internationalist worldview and did not place attachment to the homeland at the core of their identity (Topp 2001). On the other hand, Fascist immigrants to Argentina in the early postwar years considered this country as a second motherland because of the supposed political affinities between Mussolini's dictatorship and the authoritarian government of Juan Domingo Perón (Bertagna 2006).

Notwithstanding political émigrés' fears, in modern times forceful emigration in the manner of African slaves was confined almost exclusively to the deportation of Italian workers to Germany by the Nazi regime after Italy's armistice with the Allies during World War II (Klinkhammer 1993; Danese, Del Rossi, and Montali 2005). In general, most Italian emigrants were not forced into exile for political reasons—let alone for religious persecution, at least in modern times, with the possible exception

of Jews following the 1938 Fascist anti-Semitic turn⁶—but left their native land voluntarily to flee poverty and improve their economic conditions in such alleged countries of opportunity as the United States and, though to a lesser extent, Canada and Australia. In addition, Italian emigration did not occur in a relatively brief period of time under the pressure of irresistible forces causing traumas (Rosoli 1978; Audenino and Tirabassi 2008). Rather, most Italians staggered their departures over a number of decades within carefully planned family strategies in the hope of making money abroad that they expected to spend after repatriation or planned to send to their relatives in Italy not only to enable the latter to leave the country but also to purchase plots of land and other real estate there. Overpopulation, unemployment, land hunger, high taxation, and conscription were the leading push factors for a large majority of Italian emigrants. Great expectations, rather than catastrophe, marked these people's outflow from the peninsula (Griboaudi 1990; Gibelli 1994; De Clementi 1999).

Voluntary departure under economic pressures rules out an Italian diaspora according to the paradigm of traumatic dispersion. But it does not prevent the use of such a category in terms of subsequent reinterpretations. Gabriel Sheffer, for instance, has maintained that "the highly motivated Koreans and Vietnamese toiling hard to become prosperous in bustling Los Angeles [...] are members of ethno-national diasporas" (Sheffer 2003, 1).

Nonetheless, as Mark I. Choate has recently pointed out, at the time of mass emigration after the political unification of the peninsula following the wars of the Risorgimento, "Italians were never stateless," contrary to paradigmatic diasporic peoples such as the Jews (Choate 2008, 7). Indeed, although emigrants usually complained that the Italian government did not care about their plight, especially during the pre-Fascist liberal regime, the Commissariato Generale dell'Emigrazione (CGE) until its demise in 1927 and subsequently the consular network assisted Italian citizens abroad—even if discontinuously and inconsistently—as it regulated their journeys, subsidized charities and hospitals, promoted Italian-language education, supported mutual aid societies, and funded repatriations (Ostuni 1983; Grispo 1985). The CGE was only one component of the administrative structure that Italy's liberal governments built at the turn of the twentieth century in order to manage emigration both economically and socially (Douki 2007). The Fascist regime also made a point of protecting the rights of Italians abroad and fighting ethnic stereotypes and prejudice (Bianchi 1992; Pretelli 2004). Mussolini even endeavored, though in vain, to prevent the electrocution of anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (Cannistraro 1996). In addition, in 1937, the *Duce* signed an agreement with the Nazi regime to send roughly 490,000 unemployed

Italian workers to Germany between 1938 and 1942 in exchange for coal and raw materials (Mantelli 1992). Drawing upon this precedent (Sala 2004, 122–3), after World War II, the Italian government tried to promote emigration by negotiating bilateral treaties with other western European countries and attempted to exploit its adherence to the European Economic Community to secure the free circulation of its own workers in the member states, although its policies were generally ill-conceived and poorly carried out (Spire 2002; Tosi 2002, 450–56; Morandi 2006; Colucci 2008; Romero 1992; Giaquinto 2008; De Clementi 2010). Italy further reached out to its emigrants' descendants at the turn of the twenty-first century when legislation was enacted to let them reclaim their Italian citizenship and vote in the Italian parliamentary elections by mail (Zincone 2006, 4–10; Battiston and Mascitelli 2008a).⁷

On the other hand, the troubled relationship between the emigrants and their native country hardly allows the revised model of diaspora to be applied to the case of Italian expatriates. Robin Cohen has argued that "all diasporic communities [. . .] acknowledge that the 'old country' [. . .] always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions" (Cohen 1997, ix). Yet Italy's belated achievement of political unification and ensuing delay in state building long delayed the development of a national consciousness among the people of the Italian peninsula including those who eventually left it. In addition, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the perception of the recently established Italian state as a hostile entity that confined itself primarily to levying taxes and drafting young men into the army – both major causes of expatriation – further curbed the identification with the native country on the part of many Italian emigrants (Martellone 1984, 173). To most of them, therefore, Italy was not the homeland inspiring affiliation, values, and loyalty they regretted leaving, according to the diaspora model. Rather, upon arrival in their host countries, the newcomers' allegiance rested on their respective native regions, provinces, or even villages. Italians' *campanilismo* – namely the attitude by which the sense of attachment does not extend beyond the earshot of the bell tower of one's hometown (Manconi 2003)⁸ – was initially replicated abroad. As an immigrant from Campania who had settled in the United States pointed out, "for me, as for the others, Italy is the little village where I was raised" (Williams 1938, 17). If anything, therefore, the worldwide community that people of Italian origins established across borders was less a single nation-oriented network than a series of different regional, provincial, and localistic communities that usually remained divided along subnational lines in social activities, residential areas, and even religious life (Malpezzi and Clements 1992, 27–35).

In countries that experienced more recent waves of mass immigration from Italy, localistic allegiances were still alive in the post-World War II decades. For instance, a number of regional associations were established in Canada in the 1960s before they underwent consolidation along national lines in the 1970s in response to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's policy of multiculturalism that contributed to galvanizing Italianness as opposed to subnational identities (Poggi 2009, 163–4; Fielding 2010, 193–203; Cameron 2004). Similarly, in Australia Italians' transnational relations with their ancestral land long rested—and, in part, still rest—mainly on networks based on their home villages and regions, although this country, too, has embraced multiculturalism since the mid-1970s (Baldassar 2001; Jayasuriya 1997). The re-elaboration of the Italian immigrants' ethnic identity caused the revitalization of localistic senses of attachment in Brazil as well (de Constantino 2002, 85–86). A similar phenomenon has also occurred in Argentina, where the number of the associations grouping the progeny of the immigrants from Piedmont alone has increased from four in 1974 to as many as seventy-three today (Tirabassi 2010, 52–53; Canovi 2009, 203). For this reason, it seems easier to identify a plethora of localistic diasporas rather than a single national diaspora. For instance, with reference to a little Sicilian village by the name of Sortino, whose emigrants settled primarily in Australia, John Gatt-Rutter has called attention to the existence of a Sortinese diaspora as opposed to both a Sicilian and an Italian diaspora (Gatt-Rutter 2007). *Campanilismo*, however, hardly resulted in village-oriented diasporas because members of the same families—let alone fellow villagers—living in different countries outside Italy seldom had contacts with one another and retained relations almost exclusively with kinsfolk in their native land (Baily and Ramella 1987; Templeton 2003).

When emigrants or their offspring eventually developed an Italian consciousness, they did it mainly in response to the xenophobic attitudes they experienced in their adoptive countries. Bloody anti-Italian riots and even lynchings occurred almost worldwide. At least nine Italian immigrants were killed in Aigues-Mortes, France, in 1893; thirty-nine in the United States from 1879 to 1910; and three in Kalgoorlie, Australia, in 1934 (Sanna 2006; Barnabà 2008; Salvetti 2003; Boncompagni 2001, 196–7). Other Italian newcomers were murdered in Tandil, Argentina, in 1872 and became targets of ethnic hatred in São Paulo, Brazil, in 1892, 1896, and 1928 (Lida 1998; Bertonha 2005, 98). Italian miners who pursued job opportunities in Great Britain in compliance with the Collective Recruiting Plan agreement between London and Rome still endured hostility in the early 1950s (Colucci 2009, 91–109). Such animosities did not manage to fade away half a century later as British laborers in Lindsay went on strike to

oppose the hiring of Italian workers in a local Total oil refinery between January and February 2009 (Cavalera 2009; Maisano 2009). Likewise, the *frontalieri*—Italians who reside in northern Italy but commute daily across the border to their jobs in Switzerland—were portrayed as vicious, threatening mice eating Swiss cheese in a poster campaign in the canton of Ticino, where most of them work, as late as the fall of 2010 (Longo 2010; Stella 2010). Furthermore, the stereotypical representation of Italian emigrants as *mafiosi* tenaciously persists. This bias, for instance, surfaced again and spread once more in Germany as late as 2007, in the wake of the murder of six Calabrian immigrants who were shot dead outside an Italian restaurant in the city of Duisburg on August 15 in an execution-style ambush that was immediately linked to a feud among criminal organizations (Prinzing 2008).

The almost daily experience of anti-Italian prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance made people of Italian descent from diverse local backgrounds aware of their common national ancestry and helped them develop a sense of Italianness that they or their parents had lacked when they settled abroad (Harney 1985; Carelli 1985; Scarzanella 1999; Deschamps 2000; Salvetti 2008). In this view, the adoptive lands helped shape the sense of affiliation of first- or subsequent-generation Italian emigrants. Conversely, the diasporic models tend to postulate that immigrant communities are impervious to cultural influences on the part of their respective host societies and preserve their original identities and sense of collectiveness (Shuval 2002).

As a matter of fact, in the end, the Italian emigrants' progeny even yielded to assimilation. This process was particularly manifest in the United States. Herbert J. Gans has pointed out that in this country Italianness retains almost exclusively a symbolic meaning and is confined to fruition in personal and family terms, primarily in spare time activities spanning from wearing Italian-style clothes and eating in Italian restaurants to vacationing in Italy (Gans 1979). On the other hand, social mobility and suburbanization have spelled the demise of the Italian urban districts as their residents have left the inner-city immigrant ghettos for such residential melting pots as the suburbs (Alba, Logan, and Crowder 1997). The few Italian neighborhoods that have managed to survive have also shrunk to facades of restaurants and stores that operate less for Italian Americans than for urban consumers from diverse national backgrounds looking for ethnic flavors and thrills (Krase 2006).

However, the progressive disappearance of an Italian-American identity in the United States is not only physical but cultural as well. Defensiveness against the alleged encroachments of African Americans under the pressures of racial tensions in the 1960s and 1970s made Italian

Americans join forces with other immigrant groups of European ancestry (Rieder 1985; Formisano 1991). Consequently, they have come to lose a distinctive ethnic identity of their own and to think of themselves as white Europeans (Alba 1985). At the beginning of their mass immigration to the United States in the late nineteenth century, Italian Americans usually held a sort of racial middle ground in the eyes of their receiving society (Orsi 1992; Barrett and Roediger 1997). But, after they were initially perceived as social outcasts because the generally dark color of their skin prevented newcomers from southern Italy from fitting WASP standards of whiteness, Italian Americans eventually reproduced the racially motivated attitudes and behavior of the U.S. white establishment (Richards 1999). This form of accommodation within the host society has sometimes led the progeny of the immigrants to commit hate crimes against African Americans. One of the most infamous of these episodes was the 1989 murder of black teenager Yusuf Hawkins by an Italian-American gang (Desantis 1991). The achievement of a white self-image was a sort of rite of passage that Italian Americans shared with other ethnic minorities, such as the Irish and Jews, on their mutual way to full inclusion within U.S. society (Ignatiev 1995; Brodtkin 1998; Roediger 2005).

Coming from a colonial country with possessions in Africa, Italian immigrants to the United States were definitely aware of race differences (Gabaccia 2003). Some of them had even served in the Italian army in Eritrea or Somaliland before settling on the other shore of the Atlantic. Nevertheless racialism as part of an imperialist worldview characterized primarily the upper and middle classes in the native country. Conversely, race was not a source of self-identification for the working class, which provided the great bulk of the Italian immigrants to the United States (Vecoli 2006, 98–99). The latter's "in-between" status contributed to curb race as a component of the newcomers' identity (Fasce 2002). It was only circa World War II that Italian Americans turned whiteness into their self-perception. But, by doing so, they lost their national specificity and merged into the much larger group of white Europeans, disappearing within the Caucasian cohort of U.S. society. One of them has recalled that, when fellows of Anglo-Saxon ancestry invited him and other Italian Americans to "beat up some niggers" during the 1943 race riot in Harlem, he realized that his own ethnic minority had become assimilated: "the Italo-Americans stopped being Italo and started becoming Americans. We joined the group. Now we're like you guys, right?" (Terkel 1984, 141–2).

The increase in exogamy further demonstrates that Italian Americans have ultimately attained the status of insiders in the United States. While endogamy prevailed in the Little Italies in the interwar years even in

multiethnic New York City (Rainhorn 2005, 56–60), Italian Americans' rate of marriages to people from other ethnic backgrounds rose to between two-thirds and three-quarters, according to different estimates, in the 1980s. Remarkably, Italian-American exogamy is no longer confined to other Catholic minorities, but it has significantly extended to Protestants and Jews (Alba 1996, 179).

The demise of an Italian identity obviously undermined the orientation of the immigrants' offspring toward their ancestral country. The outbreak of civil wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s revived and consolidated the ethnic identity of the diasporic Croats in Canada to such an extent that, although they had been born and raised abroad, a few made their way to the Balkans to join the fight (Winland 2007). Conversely, Italian Americans turned a deaf ear even to the nonhazardous appeals of their own motherland. For instance, in 1997, no more than 50,000 Italian Americans throughout the United States signed a petition urging the Clinton administration not to deny their ancestral country a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council within a short-lived reform proposal for the expansion of this body (Tirabassi 1998, 52–53; Franzina 1999, 653–4).

The assimilation of Italian immigrants and their offspring within their respective host societies occurred even faster in Latin America. For instance, in Argentina, it took place in the interwar years, as revealed not only by a growth in exogamy but also by political accommodation (Devoto 2006, 384–91). In Uruguay, too, the Italian newcomers and their children began to make inroads into politics in the 1920s (Oddone 1992, 81–82). In Chile, where males made up a disproportionate number of newcomers from Italy in the late nineteenth century, marriages with native women prevailed over endogamy as early as the 1890s (Meza 1993, 82–85). Likewise, Italian professionals who have moved to London in the last few decades as part of the brain drain pursued assimilation within British society. When they established a website of their own—*Italianialondra.com*—they conceived it primarily as a means to promote their business activities and social relations in the London area. Actually, this virtual community was so self-referential that *Italianialondra.com* was not used to keep in touch with relatives and acquaintances in the mother country nor did it include links to other Italy-related websites (Seganti 2007, 125–48). Even in Venezuela, where the great bulk of Italian immigrants arrived only after World War II and integration was rather difficult, nostalgia for the native land came to an early demise. As a first-generation immigrant has recalled, "Homesickness is just fantasy. The real *patria* is the country that gave you a future and welfare and enabled you to make a decent living" (Grau 1996; D'Angelo 2010, 144).

Notwithstanding attempts at saving the concept of *diaspora* in terms of hybridity and creolization (Hall 1990, 235), the reformulations of this notion cannot make it broad enough to include also the entry into the mainstream of the emigrants' progeny in the adoptive country. The growth of an Italy-oriented national identity out of pre-existing subnational affiliations by the people of Italian extraction in the United States might fall within the context of a syncretic approach emphasizing the tension between the preservation and erosion of boundaries as a feature of diasporas. This, however, is definitely not the case of Italian Americans' whitening since the 1960s. Regardless of whether migration was forced, self-segregation, endogamy, and resistance to assimilation in the host society are the foundations of diasporas. These three characteristics must also persist over the generations because diasporas are long-term phenomena (Armstrong 1982, 206–13). Therefore, Italian emigration has failed the litmus test to qualify for diasporic connotations because of the fading away of the distinctiveness of Italian communities abroad over time.

In any case, the dynamics of Italian emigrants' attachment to their homeland make the notion of an Italian diaspora problematic even in the heyday of a national identity arising from allegiance to Italy. During the era of mass migration across the Atlantic Ocean—before the United States enforced laws restricting immigration from eastern and southern Europe in the 1920s—and to western European destinations in the late 1950s and the 1960s, many emigrants did not regard the separation from their native land as being irreversible. Instead, they planned to go back to their mother country and to enjoy there the money they anticipated making abroad. Contrary to the thesis that return migration was a doomed dream for most expatriates who left their native countries prior to the 1990s (Portes 1999, 225), many Italians did eventually resettle in the peninsula before the late twentieth century (Cinel 1999). Actually, repatriation accounted for 52 percent of Italy's worldwide emigration between 1916 and 1942 and for even 58 percent between 1946 and 1976 (Cerase 2001, 116). In particular, while 4,660,000 Italians settled in the United States between 1880 and 1950, 2,322,000 people—namely about 50 percent of the newcomers—moved back to their native country (Livi Bacci 1961, 32). Likewise, the ratio of Italian repatriation from European destinations rose from 58 percent between 1952 and 1957 to 65 percent between 1958 and 1963, reaching 88 percent in the remaining years of the 1960s (Romero 2001, 412). The returnees usually remained in Italy until they ran out of their savings and then left again to earn additional money abroad. Actually, roughly 10 percent of the Italian immigrants to the United States in 1904 had previously been there in search of job opportunities (Daniels 2002, 25).

Seasonal migration did not occur only to European countries but even to locations beyond the Atlantic. During the decades of the mass exodus across the ocean, many Italians either sailed to Argentina in winter in order to find agricultural jobs in the *fazendas* and then returned to Italy for the harvest in summer or went to the United States in the spring in order to get work in road and railway construction and came back home in winter at least until the U.S. restrictive legislation on immigration put an end to the era of the birds of passage (Martellone 1984, 408–9). Indeed, it has been calculated that roughly half of the Genoese immigrants to Argentina in the late nineteenth century actually traveled several times back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean (Devoto 1994, 684). Similarly, *golondrinas* – migrants who spent six months in Italy and six months in Argentina – were at least 20,000 per year in the decade that preceded World War I (Baily 1999, 60).

In addition, repatriation was not confined to the decades of mass migration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Repatriation from European countries surpassed emigration to European destinations in the 1970s. During the following decade, the time the average Italian expatriate spent abroad was less than twelve months for many European destinations and exceeded five years only in the cases of France and the United States (Corti 2006, 929). Furthermore, a few Italian Argentineans exploited their double citizenship to seek sanctuary in Italy after the 1976 military coup in Buenos Aires (Incisa di Camerana 1998, 368). In addition, the descendants of many Italian emigrants went back to Friuli and Piedmont from South America in the early 1990s and numerous Argentineans of Italian origin tried to return to their ancestral country after the 2001 economic crisis by exploiting loopholes in Italy's legislation that let the offspring of its expatriates reclaim their ancestors' Italian citizenship. To many of them, however, Italy was only a way station from which they moved to Spain and even the United States, thus reclaiming their ancestors' citizenship was merely an attempt to gain legal status that made entry into those countries much easier (Rhi Sausi and Garcia 1992; Grossutti 1997; Bramuglia and Santillo 2002; Bertagna 2005; Tintori 2009).

Drawing upon the principle of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood), Italy's liberal policy in granting citizenship to the emigrants' descendants, while making it almost impossible for immigrants to the Italian peninsula to acquire it (Zincone 2006, 4–10), highlights another shortcoming of the efforts to define the spreading of the Italian population abroad as a diaspora. Actually, although the notion of *diaspora* has been elaborated against the backdrop of the decline of nation-states as a source of people's sense of affiliation, the case of Italy points to an experience in which a nation-state did play a significant role in shaping identity. The relatively successful contribution of the

campaign of the Fascist regime to stimulate and strengthen the allegiance of the Italian emigrants and their children to their native land—especially in the United States—before the outbreak of World War II, overcoming their previously well-entrenched *campanilismo* offers a further example of the nation-state as an effective creator and promoter of identity (Luconi 2000; Pretelli 2008).

Conclusion

Italian migration has been less a worldwide diasporic dispersal of people than a continuous inflow and outflow of individuals—often the same persons at different times in their lives—across the country's borders. Confining the concept of *diaspora* to the Jewish experience of forced exile alone seems a rather narrow application of this notion, although the case of Jews does aptly fall within the various ranges of the paradigm (Foa 2009). Consequently, the few Italians who succeeded in seeking sanctuary abroad—especially in the United States—after the passage of the 1938 Fascist anti-Semitic legislation can be properly identified as part of a broader diaspora, that of Jews (Foa Yona 1978; Segrè 1993; Ginzburg Migliorino 2004). But defining *diaspora* as a mere scattering of an originally homogeneous group sounds too broad a use because it fails to highlight differences in emigration mechanics and characteristics among single nationality groups. Mainly a pursuit of economic opportunities abroad by people who felt rejected by their native country and long retained subnational identities before assimilation within their host societies, Italian global migration has had specific features of its own that are both at odds with the classic definition of *diaspora* and unable to stand out in scholarship within the framework of the unbound reformulations of such a category.

Donna R. Gabaccia has pointed to terminologies that Italian historians in particular have used as alternatives to diaspora (Gabaccia 2005b, 145). Few are hardly viable in supposedly neutral scholarship, namely in uses that do not reflect political agendas. For instance, *italiani all'estero* has political implications. Actually, this very expression became a replacement for *emigranti* in 1927 when the Fascist regime made an attempt at emphasizing the dignity of Italians in the world, in contrast to the often disparaging connotations of the former word, as undersecretary for foreign affairs Dino Grandi stated that year and the first secretary of the Fascist clubs abroad, Giuseppe Bastianini, reiterated in 1939 (Grandi 1985, 131–2; Bastianini 1939). Within the same conservative section of Italy's political spectrum, in 1909, a prominent nationalist and a future Fascist fellow traveler, who had been an emigrant to South America himself, Enrico Corradini, explicitly

denied the existence of an Italian diaspora. He contrasted this latter notion, as a cause for sadness and sorrow to Jews, with the relocation of Italians abroad, as an opportunity for individual economic and social improvement (Corradini 1923, 73).

Further alternatives to diaspora, which Gabaccia has not listed, are barely suitable either. Among them are *Italici* and *Italicity*, notwithstanding their growing popularity inside and outside the academia in the last few years. These somehow overlapping expressions have been elaborated by Piero Bassetti to define all the people who share a common interest in and passion for Italy regardless of their cultural, ethnolinguistic, and national belonging. Therefore, besides reflecting a postethnic concept of self-perception à la Werner Sollors, by which membership in a minority group and identity are not matters of descent but of consent, *Italici* and *Italicity* have eventually turned out to be more eye-catching words to support the marketing of Italian products worldwide than scholarly notions (Bassetti 2003; Accolla and d'Aquino 2008; Sollors 1986).

Yet terms other than *diaspora* can be more aptly used to define Italian emigration so as to stress the peculiarities of this phenomenon and its worldwide spread. All of them suggest the scattering of the Italian population abroad without yielding to the homogenizing effect of the word *diaspora*, which does not take the specificity of the Italian experience into full account.

For example, Robert Viscusi — not Piero Bassetti, as Paolino Accolla and Niccolò d'Aquino have erroneously contended — has devised the expression "Italian Commonwealth" and the Turin-based Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli has elaborated the concept of *altreitalie*, while author Luigi Meneghello has coined the neologism *dispatrio*, with particular reference to his own experience in Great Britain (Viscusi 1993; Accolla and d'Aquino 2008, 45; Meneghello 1993).⁹ Moreover scholars Loretta Baldassar and Ros Pesman have referred to emigrants from Veneto and their offspring in Australia as a cohort of the "global Italians," a definition that can be easily and reasonably applied to the experience of first- and subsequent-generation Italians in other countries as well (Baldassar and Pesman 2005). Drawing upon a case study of the worldwide displacement of people from Biella (in Piedmont), Dionigi Albera, Patrizia Audenino, and Paola Corti have also suggested the term *plurilocalismo* to stress the establishment of transnational networks made up by the specific and circumscribed places where the migrants were born, got jobs after leaving their native land, and retained relatives. Indeed, the *Biellesi* outside Biella revealed a sense of allegiance at least to both their hometown and the place where they had settled. But such loyalties could also include the places other than Biella

where kinsfolk lived (Albera, Audenino, and Corti, 2005). Similar attitudes have also been identified for other Italian communities such as Casalvieri, a town in the province of Frosinone in the Lazio region (Miranda 1996).

In any case, discarding the use of *diaspora* as an interpretative concept will definitely benefit the field of Italian American studies. On the one hand, going beyond this somehow homogenizing paradigm will prevent scholarship from failing to take into account the specific features of the exodus from the Italian peninsula as opposed to other peoples' outflow from different areas. Specifically, tending to stress the crossing of borders with few extremist exceptions in the manner of Goldschmidt, the notion of *diaspora* does not incorporate the attempts at superseding the distinction between the domestic and international mobility of the Italian people that recent scholarship has conversely endeavored to highlight (Corti 2007; Arru, Caglioti, and Ramella 2008). On the other hand, placing aside the idea of *diaspora* will help focus on both the emigrants' individual or family agency and the circularity of an experience that was often characterized by repatriations and temporary sojourns rather than by a definitive physical separation from the homeland.

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Notes

1. For mobility in western Europe, see, among others, Moch (1992).
2. A detailed overview of the scholarship about Italian emigration is offered by Sanfilippo (2005).
3. For the specific case of Italian emigration, see Fasce (2006), Vezzosi (2006), and Bertoni (2010).
4. Ciuffoletti's conventional interpretation has recently been criticized by Silvana Patriarca, who has argued that the existence of both Italians and Italy's national character predates the political unification of the country (Patriarca 2010).
5. Giovanni Battista Cuneo to Giuseppe Mazzini, Montevideo, April 24, 1841, in Mazzini (1914, 275).
6. Actually, the Fascist persecution was not confined to the practitioners of Judaism, but it was extended to all the members of what Mussolini's regime improperly defined as the "Jewish race," regardless of their religion (Sarfatti 2006).

7. For specific case studies, see Mignone (2008) for the United States as well as Battiston and Mascitelli (2008b) for Australia.
8. For a case study, see Carle (1996). For an in-depth theoretical examination of the loyalty to the hometown as opposed to the attachment to the native country among Italians, see Viroli (1995).
9. For the scholarship promoted by the Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, see Gorlier (2000). For Meneghello, cf. Franzina (2009).

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Giuseppe De Franco (1933–2010): A Remembrance of an Immigrant Folk Musician

ANNA L. WOOD

Giuseppe De Franco was born in Serricella, a hamlet of Acri (Cosenza province), Calabria, on October 31, 1933. Blown to earth by the restless spirits of autumn, this talented and temperamental artist was raised in an isolated hillside village during a time when hunger and privation were the common lot of southern Italian workers, both rural and urban. Like most of their neighbors, Giuseppe's father performed agricultural labor for a large landowning family.

The oldest of seven children, little Giuseppe tended his family's and a neighbor's goats and sheep, taking them up to the violet-carpeted alpine pastures of the Sila in spring and summer. He made small whistle flutes out of cane and burned decorative patterns into them; this kind of flute is called a *friscalettu*, from the Calabro-Sicilian *friscare*, to whistle. It has four to six holes on the upper side, two on the bottom, a wooden mouthpiece, and is pitched in C. Bringing to life the Arcadian imagery in paintings and poetry of earlier centuries, Giuseppe told me how he taught his pet goat Sisina to dance and frolic to the *tarantelle* he played for her on his flute.

The bagpipe was then widely used by Italian shepherds, and it may have been during his time as a herdsman that Giuseppe learned to play, though he was not able to acquire a bagpipe of his own until many years later. And while he always enjoyed playing it, it did not become one of his primary instruments. In south-central Italy the bagpipe is accompanied by a wooden oboe called the *ciaramella*, and this Giuseppe also could play.

Giuseppe's memories of childhood were not happy ones. He got into trouble, and his punishments made him defiant; he plunged into musical pursuits. As an adolescent he taught himself the *chitarra battente*, literally the "beating guitar" because it was used primarily as a rhythm instrument to accompany dancing or strummed to chord changes for singing lyric songs. The folk version of the instrument, which appeared in southern and central Italy in the fifteenth century, is smaller and deeper bodied than the modern "French" guitar that entered the peninsula later. It is five stringed, often with a mobile bridge, and made of some combination of fir,

chestnut, walnut, or maple. An intricately cut, painted, and gilded rosette covers the sound hole. *Chitarra battente* luthiers are often fine artisans who produce both folk guitars and the elegant period instruments sought by conservatory musicians and collectors; two of them are still in business in Bisignano, near Acri. When he began performing regularly in the United States, Giuseppe had one made in Bisignano and brought to his home in Belleville, New Jersey.

Roaming the countryside as a free-spirited and rebellious young man living adventures and sowing his wild oats, Giuseppe serenaded girls and courted his future wife with his *chitarra*. With his leonine head thrown back, he delivered love songs of his own making, with unusual passages of vibrato and extended held notes delivered in a pronouncedly high nasal tone, alternating between sobbing, soft whining, yodeling, and howling – mannerisms that seemed to mock his listeners by hurling back at them a parody of the vocal style they knew. This would remind American listeners of the plaintive “high lonesome” sound of the great bluegrass singers such as Bill Monroe. Giuseppe’s talent still burned when he began performing in the United States in his forties, but he could rarely be persuaded to sing solo in public, perhaps because it bared too much of his soul. Yet if he had wanted to, Giuseppe had the makings of an outstanding southern Italian vocalist.

Giuseppe came of age in an Italy filled with music and song, not unlike the musical landscape of the southern United States in the first decades of the twentieth century. Musicologist Alan Lomax called Italy “a museum of musical antiquities” and wrote a series of radio programs based on his collecting experiences there, which he aptly called *Listen, the Hills Are Singing* (Lomax 1960). That they did. The hills, fields, and streets echoed with the songs and cries of people sowing, harvesting, threshing, shucking corn, picking olives, harvesting grapes, threading tobacco leaves, hauling nets, hunting swordfish, herding sheep, quarrying marble and breaking rocks, driving piles and driving mules, and hawking wares. Songs courted and spurned lovers, shamed wayward girls, ridiculed the clergy, lulled babies, supplicated the saints, and mourned the dead. Hymns, chants, and *taran-telle* accompanied pilgrimages to shrines and alms seeking at Christmas and Easter. The full spectrum of music and dance was an integral part of ritual, storytelling, Carnival farces, and fantastical religious and folk tableaux.

In Acri and its environs, a favorite evening pastime was to gather outside a neighbor’s house to drink, sing, and dance accompanied by any instrument at hand, including clapping, whistling, and percussive mouth music. (Mouth music was another of Giuseppe’s specialties, though he would rarely perform it publicly.) There would also be *villanelle*, eight-line poems lined out in polyphony by a mixed group with a leader and a high drone

part called *lo sguillo*. The poetry of these songs is quite literary, full of charm and vivid and startling imagery as mysterious as dreams. People found pleasure in reciting as well as singing them. Town-based musicians who would play and sing with Giuseppe said they believed these verses were originally composed by Virgil; as artisans living in the town of Acri, they would have heard of the poet and would have been acquainted with the long literary tradition. Be that as it may, I never heard an end to the stock of lyrics for *villanelle* and *canzuni* still circulating in the Acrese immigrant community in the 1970s and 1980s. The richness of the poetic landscape in the Calabria of Giuseppe's youth can only be imagined.

In this climate, Giuseppe also learned the *organetto*, a small free reed diatonic button accordion, from his father and became a virtuoso, playing with complete engagement of body, mind, and soul. The *organetto* was introduced into Italian folk music in the nineteenth century and imported diatonism into the South, as did the many popular, military, school, and religious compositions that began to enter the folk repertoire and could be accompanied by the accordion with ease. However, folk musicians adapted the instrument to their own repertoire as well, making it accord with the minor melodic modes that prevailed in the music of the region. The instrument assumed an important rhythmic role in the dance and could function as a harmonizing voice for group or solo singing, as well as adding dramatic flourishes at the end of a line. The *pièce de resistance* of southern Italian *organetto* music is the compelling "tarantella montemaranese," the fast, staccato set piece still very much alive and played during Carnival in Montemarano (Avellino province), Campania. Giuseppe was also a first-rate *tamburello* (tambourine) player, with the endurance essential for any musician playing for extended *tarantelle*. But because of its versatility and general recognition factor, the *organetto* would become his signature instrument.

In the late 1940s Giuseppe fell in love with Raffaella Montagna, a petite, dark-haired beauty with large flashing black eyes and a compassionate heart, two years his junior. She was to become the center and stabilizing force of his life for the next fifty-five years. Raffaella was one of ten children in a poor but well-regarded family from Carello, a hamlet in Acri just below Serricella. He had seen her as a child as their families were related by marriage. She had been doing day labor (for about seventy-five cents a day) from childhood and had never attended school—there were no schools (or clinics) for miles—but she was determined to accumulate a dowry of handmade furniture and linens. Bread and onions in their pockets, the women and young girls went to work in groups, hod carrying, clearing the fields, gathering chestnuts, washing in the river, and

carrying burdens of more than fifty kilos on their heads. They sang all the time, Raffaella “throwing” (*iettannu*) her strong high voice in the drone part. Once a stranger appeared with a recorder and asked them to sing for him, but they refused, taking his machine for an instrument of magic. In the heights of the Sila they planted potatoes, and in the coastal plains they sowed, weeded, cut, and threshed wheat and picked olives and fruit. Giuseppe perched on stone walls playing the *organetto* and eyeing Raffaella as she walked along with her companions.

Finally the two came to an understanding and married in 1955, moving into a one-room house with a small kitchen. One after the other, the children came until there were six in twelve years: Anna, Antonio, Fausto, Salvatore, Paola, and Francesco. At age two, Fausto contracted polio and was given the vaccine, but the clinic neglected to administer the final dose and in a year or two his legs were entirely wasted. The De Francos were persuaded that he would be best off in a children’s “hospital” near Naples, run by the clergy. Meanwhile, industrial work was opening up in Germany, and Giuseppe tried a stint or two there but was unable to stay away from his home for very long, although he was still restless when back with his family. Once home, he made the journey to visit Fausto, now five, and found him unattended, unwashed, and overcome with hunger and thirst. Horrified, Giuseppe carried him off then and there against the protests and threats of the nuns, saying he would rather his son died than stay in such a hell.

In 1968, the family immigrated to Nutley, New Jersey, following Giuseppe’s father, sisters, and two brothers. It was hard going at first, with Giuseppe taking a factory job and adapting himself to any job he could find, including bricklaying, plumbing, and barbering, at which he became quite expert. Raffaella cleaned a factory and a bank at night, and two more children were born: Giuseppe and Maria. Many people from Acri immigrated to the United States in the 1960s, settling in older family destinations in Westerly, Rhode Island, Brooklyn and Nyack, New York, and Belleville, Nutley, and Lyndhurst, New Jersey. Every family grew tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini, and hot peppers even in the city and canned and pickled them. They made wine, hot and mild *soppressata* and sausage, and *cavatelli* and obtained their favorite cheeses from Calabria. They feasted and partied as frequently as possible, in social clubs, church basements, and the kitchens of one another’s homes, keeping their customs to a high degree and creating their own merry, effervescent world. Besides the cash that circulated at weddings, birthdays, and funerals, the main currency between families was hospitality and food. The wine flowed. There was constant joking, allusive teasing, and rhyming repartee, as well as the occasional fight, and at the drop of the hat there was singing, music, and dancing, which could

last until everyone collapsed. Good *organetto* players were in demand, and Giuseppe made the rounds. He played at home and at local bars, and the organetto and the bagpipe accompanied family excursions to the Jersey shore, to the mixed mortification and delight of the children.

In the 1970s, the Smithsonian Institution began to internationalize its annual Festival of American Folklife on the Mall. Alan Lomax, my father, was one of the principal advisors for the Smithsonian's ambitious plan to highlight each year several ethnic groups living in the United States together with counterparts that would be recruited from the originating countries. Twenty-five Italian and twenty-five Italian-American musicians were featured and toured in 1975. I was recruited to do the American fieldwork and present the entire program, purely on the strength that at the time there were few American folklorists who were familiar with the gamut of Italian folk music, which I had absorbed as a child while helping my father edit his recordings. With few leads to go on and being an outsider wherever I went, I kept running into brick walls: "No, no one around here knows these old things anymore. No one is interested," was the refrain. There were those who opposed what they believed was an ill-advised quest: "It would shame our community to be represented by the music of backward peasants—we have famous songwriters and composers." For the most part there was indifference, perhaps concealing the deep sensitivities built up by Italian working people during generations of slights and scorn for their language and culture, which they had encountered in both Italy and the United States.

With a cassette of representative musical examples in hand, I haunted parish halls, senior centers, social clubs, followed mostly cold trails from Carla Bianco's fieldwork of 1963–1964 (Lomax and Bianco 1965), and even advertised on radio and in the Italian language newspapers. At last an old priest who officiated at the St. Rosalia Roman Catholic Church in Brooklyn suggested that I speak with his sacristan, Giulio Gencarelli, who might know of something along the required lines. After listening to a recording of Calabrian polyphony on the cassette, this red-faced, beak-nosed gentleman shyly invited me to come by the church the following Saturday to see "a few little things," apologizing in advance for what he said would be an offering unworthy to bear the name of "music." But his mischievous eyes told a different story, and that Saturday night I entered a vision of a Calabrian mountain house party transposed to St. Rosalia's basement, Americanized only by the much greater abundance of food. About twenty people of all ages were present, there were *tarantelle*, *villanelle*, *canzuni*, and *barzelette* (jokes) lasting late into the night, and there was Giuseppe De Franco and his *organetto*.

After several visits and much explanation, seven members of the Acrese community, including Giuseppe (who would not go without Raffaella) agreed to participate in the 1975 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which would be the first known occasion at which such down-home Italian music would be presented to the American public. Joining them were four Sicilians, a friction drummer and singer from Basilicata, a bagpiper and a *ciaramella* player from Molise, a Neapolitan street singer and former vaudeville queen, and an Alpine chorus from the Trentino-Alto Adige from Brooklyn, Queens, and New Jersey. From Italy came a large company of Campanian *tammurriata* musicians dedicated to the Madonna del Castello, Calabrian shepherd pipers, and a group from Liguria who sang ballads in polyphonic chorus.

This was the first time Italian folk singers from different Italian regions and representing very diverse local cultures and musical styles had been brought together, had been introduced as contributors to American and world culture, and had experienced the interest and appreciation of a large and unfamiliar public. Together over the course of two weeks, they developed an unusual *esprit de corps*. They not only encountered one another, but they danced and made music with their counterparts from Mexico, Lebanon, the Mississippi Delta, and California, as well as with Native Americans from the Northern Plains. Later some would say that sharing their full cultural identity with one another and with Americans was an experience that surpassed any other successes they had had. It was a turning point for Giuseppe who, like others in the group, came away more knowing, confident, and determined.

Giuseppe made a second career of his music. He and Raffaella appeared at concerts in church halls, Manhattan performance spaces, and at all kinds of Italian and mainstream folk festivals, with colleagues from their hometown and elsewhere. They were leading artists on a Folkways record of Calabrian immigrant folk music that I curated (Chairetakakis 1979); were featured in a 1981 concert series of Italian folk music in New York City and three national Italian Music Tours (1983–1985) produced by the Center for Traditional Music and Dance and me, with major funding by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Italian Foreign Ministry; and they appeared at the Scampagnata Italiana at Artpark in western New York in 1984. Fausto, who had taught himself the *organetto* and *triccaballacca* (three-pronged clapper) and spoons, began performing with his parents in the 1980s, as did longtime family friend, Francesco Cofone, a wicked improvisatory singer and tambourine player with a sly and roguish air.

After I moved to Florida in 1990, these four, sometimes joined by *paesani* from Rhode Island, formed the group Calabria Bella and booked



Giuseppe De Franco at the giglio feast, Williamsburg, Brooklyn, 1984. Photo: Martin Koenig, Center for Traditional Music and Dance.

their own shows with the aid of brochures and other self-management materials made for them by me and the Center for Traditional Music and Dance. In 1990, Raffaella and Giuseppe won a National Heritage Fellowship and, escorted by Fausto De Franco and Franco Cofone, were honored in Washington, D.C. When I asked if they would one day like to return to Italy, Giuseppe and Raffaella said, “No, Never. You don’t understand. We were abandoned there.”

As time went on, the De Francos became seriously dedicated to disseminating and preserving Calabrian musical traditions for their own sake and regarded their folklorist “managers” as their allies in this endeavor. They understood that the monetary rewards for their music would probably remain modest. At first Raffaella was unkindly criticized by some Acresi, who said she was “prancing around like a goat,” showing herself to the public immodestly. She cried and refused to go to any more shows, “but then I decided that it was more important to stand up for our traditions than to listen to them.” Raffaella wept when she came to the realization that the *villanella*, the soulful, haunting song form that supports a world of delicate poetry, would never be sung by the next generation.

Giuseppe and Raffaella were entrancing storytellers. They spun endless yarns about their lives in Calabria, funny, grotesque, or tragic. Sometimes their stories bordered on the fabulous: There were the black snakes that lulled new mothers to sleep and stole their milk; the stranger with “the gift of

St. Donato" who cleared snake-infested fields by luring the reptiles into his sack with low whistling, then carried them into the wild and set them free. Giuseppe and Franco Cofone told scandalous tales of lecherous priests and monks who came to ludicrous but horrible ends; of female private parts that ran away from home; of trickster husbands and simple wives, and vice versa; of amazing feats of seduction in the countryside—truly a rustic *Decameron*. Raffaella knew her share of these but wisely chose to listen and laugh; her own specialty was fairy tales—variants of the Giambattista Basile tales and others unknown to us.

Giuseppe and Raffaella's biggest success was their family. Under economically and emotionally harrowing circumstances, they raised eight children all of whom turned out well. They gave Fausto the best of care so that he grew up normally, worked, married, and had five daughters of his own. For years Raffaella provided daycare and careful nurture for most of her sixteen grandchildren as babies and toddlers. At the time of Giuseppe's death the couple had eight great grandchildren.

For many years until his retirement, Giuseppe worked in indoor maintenance for the pharmaceutical company Hoffman La Roche. His final years were plagued by illness—diabetes, heart arrhythmia, and asthma. His children attended him with great devotion and were heartbroken when he died on November 3, 2010, just three days past the date of his birth. This stormy little man, single-minded, unfathomable, lovable, whose circumstances always remained humble, was attended in death by family members and fellow countrymen in the hundreds. His music was played continuously throughout two crowded viewings at the funeral home and represented him at Holy Family Roman Catholic Church in Nutley where the funeral mass was celebrated. A police escort rode with the long procession that accompanied him to his burial ground, East Ridgeland Cemetery in nearby Clifton. Their presence was an unspoken tribute to what he had done for their musical traditions.

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Book Reviews

Staying Italian: Urban Change and Ethnic Life in Postwar Toronto and Philadelphia.

By Jordan Stanger-Ross.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009.

208 pages.

Jordan Stanger-Ross has written a very useful study that focuses on what community means and how it is created for an ethnic group. Using a comparative approach for the cities of Toronto and Philadelphia in the postwar 1950s to 1980s period, he analyzes the impact of various factors on the development of two Italian-American urban communities. This nuanced approach, which considers real estate markets, church attendance, marriage patterns, and employment, indicates that ethnicity did not fade as some “whiteness” historians have claimed but existed alongside a sense of whiteness. Did all those whose ancestry was European become European Americans in the mid- to late-twentieth century with little distinction between them? As the author shows, this transformation did not occur for many Italian Americans.

However, the way in which ethnicity continued, as illustrated in these two cities, shows the impact of place in shaping Italian ethnicity. Ethnic persistence is only one of the issues the author explores. More important for understanding ethnicity is how it was lived in diverse cities. Italians in Philadelphia and Toronto would recognize each other as having the same ancestry but would not recognize how that ancestral tie took distinct forms based on locale. Ethnicity developed in different ways according to each neighborhood’s and each city’s historical path. For example, in south Philadelphia the inability to sell homes for a profit tied Italian Americans to their neighborhood and led to a protection of turf against incoming African Americans. Ethnicity in Philadelphia was based on maintaining an ethnic enclave and preserving the parish against racial incursion. This observation is not new and actually formed the basis for some historians’ claims that the 1970s white ethnic revival was based on a reaction to the Civil Rights Movement and black residential entrance into white neighborhoods. Yet, in Toronto, Italians were not tied to their particular Little Italy area and did not react to an outsider presence to maintain their ethnic cohesion. Real estate prices encouraged house selling and dispersed the ethnic group throughout the city and into the suburbs. However, Toronto’s Italians still had a community, although it was citywide, that came together in Little Italy for religious and other events and in regard to business connections. Ethnic ties were strong in both cities but different based on particular regional/urban variations. The fact that ethnic bonds could survive after the main ethnic enclave had disappeared and without an evident racial factor is an important finding for understanding contemporary ethnicity. The author also acknowledges that his research and conclusions do not represent all Italian Americans in these cities and carefully indicates that there was diversity within the ethnic community in regard to class, immigration period, and gender that led to varied results.

Religious connections also indicated separate directions for St. Agnes/St. Francis of Assisi Roman Catholic Church in Toronto and Philadelphia’s Annunciation of the

Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Thomas Aquinas parishes. The south Philadelphia parishes were, as is usual, territorially bounded, but in Toronto's parish the church drew from across the city particularly during special events such as processions. Parish boundaries were defined in dissimilar ways in the two cities. As the author notes, Toronto's ethnicity was elastic in regard to parish and place; it was not an indication of a particular residential boundary.

Courtship and marriage patterns are an interesting aspect of ethnic life that the author considers. As one might expect, these patterns in south Philadelphia were related to proximity. Living in the Italian neighborhood resulted in courtship and marriage with other neighborhood Italians. But in Toronto a dispersed Italian community still saw endogamy as an important part of ethnic life. The break-up of the old neighborhood did not result in more out-marriage; ethnic bonds remained strong. In regard to work and employment niches, south Philadelphia's local attachments, which were so strong in regard to marriage and church programs, did not function well for jobs. Work choices did not depend on local social/ethnic networks. The neighborhood focus that was evident in other aspects of Italian life in Philadelphia did not function in relation to work. South Philadelphia Italians found work throughout the metro area and ethnic niches in employment faded. In Toronto, ethnic attachments were important for finding employment and in maintaining ethnic niches even with their dispersed community.

The author observes that "local contexts shape ethnic experience" (137). The two cities' Italian Americans had different lives, but both had strong communities and social networks. The ethnicity that was lived was not the same, and it is this diversity that Stanger-Ross explores. Ethnicity persisted whether it drew from local neighborhood ties or from metrowide bonds. As a historian, the author has done the field a great service by bringing his study into a time when most urban white ethnic neighborhoods have disappeared or are disappearing. While other historians can speak of symbolic ethnicity and the fading of ethnic consciousness, Stanger-Ross brings hard evidence to a better explanation of what has occurred. A close examination of Italian-American life shows that ethnic identity survived well into the twentieth century. As the book concludes, ethnicity did not disappear; it continued "to shape lives" (141). But locale is a significant element in understanding how ethnicity can mold communities. Italian ethnic life was formulated in different ways in south Philadelphia and Toronto. If more cities were to be considered, similar findings surely would emerge. Hopefully, other historians will research this issue for various ethnic groups so that the field can move beyond facile interpretations of America's assimilatory process. More comparative work is needed to understand how ethnicity remains an important aspect of urban life and how locale determines the particular ethnic lifestyle.

—RONALD H. BAYOR
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Dances with Spiders: Crisis, Celebrity and Celebration in Southern Italy.

By Karen Lüdtke.

New York: Berghahn Books, 2009.

224 pages.

For years, few critical texts on Apulian tarantism and *tarantella* have been available to Anglophone readers. Most of the studies were in Italian and, sometimes, French, German, and Latin. In 2005, Ernesto De Martino's seminal book, *La terra del rimorso*, originally published in Italian in 1961, was translated into English by Dorothy Louise Zinn as *The Land of Remorse*. *Dances with Spiders* complements the translation of De Martino's study by offering Lüdtke's accounts of her personal experience and lengthy stays in the Salento, a cultural region of Apulia in southern Italy. Lüdtke's extensive academic research and her personal involvement with the cultural life of the Salento make this study an excellent text on tarantism and *pizzica*, a local form of *tarantella* music and dance. Comprised of a preface, an introduction, four parts, nine chapters, and an epilogue, *Dances with Spiders* is a wonderful blend of the theoretical and the personal, an optimal balance to attempt to describe, contextualize, and critically frame the ritual of *tarantismo* and its contemporary forms of revitalization.

In the introduction, Lüdtke explains what tarantism is, how its symbolism has acquired strength and meaning over the centuries, why it is documented in the Salento, and how she came to travel to this area where she began her research in 1996. More than ten years later, the author's theoretical writings, personal accounts, and mixed media are available here for readers interested in the fields of social studies, medical anthropology, anthropology of performance, performance studies, history, music and dance, psychology, and psychoanalysis.

The author's subtle tone is present throughout the study, weaving with the voices of other scholars, local artists, healers, and *tarantati*. Of special interest is Lüdtke's personal experience with Evelina, a *tarantata* (a woman bitten by a tarantula). The author witnesses Evelina's struggles to cope with the affliction caused by the bite and the physical, emotional, and spiritual consequences of being different. Lüdtke conveys Evelina's spiritual relationship with St. Paul, the protector of the *tarantati*, throughout the process of requesting a "grace," a miraculous healing. Lüdtke's reflexive preface and epilogue are a poetic account of the author's departure from Evelina's home and Evelina's receiving of a grace. Ultimately, the narrative of Evelina's healing ritual and eventual grace frame the more theoretical and historical analysis and descriptions, allowing the reader to understand a complex cultural system otherwise difficult to access. Across chapters, Lüdtke constantly translates Salentine dialect and Italian into English, one culture into another culture, physical and acoustic gestures into words; this is no small enterprise.

In the two chapters of Part I, "Past and Present Spider Webs," Lüdtke introduces the *taranta*, the local spider at the center of the ritual system of tarantism, and gives a historical perspective on how discourse on this ritual has changed over time and in different political and social contexts. Chapter 1 starts with the author's personal experience in Galatina, a small town in the Salento. Lüdtke's choice to start her book with a personal experience sets the tone for the entire study in which personal experience and academic analysis intertwine. Her description of the ritual performed in the church of

St. Paul in Galatina in 2001 is of great value for it is only through the author's commitment to the local culture, the hours and months dedicated to slowly building trust, that she is allowed to enter the chapel during the festivities of St. Paul on June 29. Chapter 1 ends with key questions that will return throughout the book: As the ritual is changing and disappearing, how is the local population today dealing with these changes? What are the ways in which the potential of the *pizzica* to heal is preserved and used? The author sets forth the example of Ada, a dancer and osteopath, who has used *pizzica* to restore her sense of well-being after a series of life crises. Chapter 2 moves from the modern and the personal to a historical perspective of the ritual, its origins in legends as well as in historical documents, and the role of Ernesto De Martino's 1961 book in widening the awareness of this ritual on a national and European scale. It also highlights the role of other writers, including doctors and philosophers, in framing tarantism throughout the centuries. The two key points inherent in the socioeconomic, medical, and anthropological discussions of tarantism and the spider's bite that are at the heart of this system are underlined: the musical (the effects of music on the body) and the medical (focusing on curing the bite's symptoms).

The three chapters of Part II, "The Spider's Cult Today," provide the reader with ethnographic details on the evolution and changes of the healing ritual and how in the Salento today tarantism and its contemporary revitalization of neotarantism intertwine. The author is very careful in analyzing various ritual performances—both staged and spontaneous—in which the healing effects of the spider's music and dance are evoked and sought. Chapter 3 includes two interviews with members of the local population, both of whom address the questions of belief and faith in popular healing systems of which tarantism is an example. In the following chapter, Lüdtke analyses *pizzica* mega-concerts, comparing and contrasting them with the more private ritual forms or with smaller festivals. The obvious differences in both form and intent support the author's awareness that the revitalization of *pizzica* in show business could cause a loss of its social power. Yet, at the same time, the author carefully insists on the performance arts' potential to heal, even in more modern contexts. Chapter 4 continues and broadens this discussion through the analysis of local festivals varying in size, popularity, and intent. The final chapter of Part II contains local artists' narratives on "personal motivations and experiences" when using *pizzica* to recover well-being.

Part III, "From Ritual to Limelight," comprises three chapters all centered on the definition of *tarantata* in both a historical and contemporary context. Who are those bitten by the tarantula? What is the worldview that supports such a system of affliction and healing? How is this system of folk healing framed in Western medical discourse? The four key aspects of ritual—place, time, props, and techniques—are analyzed in historical narratives and compared to their contemporary counterparts in the modern-day Salento.

The conclusion, Chapter 9, "Dancing Beyond Spiders," draws together the various theoretical threads present in the book. Among those, two are of particular importance: (1) Performance arts, of which *tarantella* music and dance are a form, have a transformative potential that can be used to heal, restore, and support; and (2) despite the disappearance of the "traditional" tarantism ritual today (as described, e.g., by De Martino in the 1960s), many of the afflictions that were at its base still persist today under different names. *Pizzica* music and dance can be of help—and are—to those

seeking a tool to regain well-being. Lüdtke ends the book with an intimate tone, sharing her personal account of Evelina's participation in a healing ritual in the chapel of St. Paul in Galatina.

Overall, this book is very well researched and beautifully written. It is a great resource for all—scholars and laypeople—interested in Italian culture and folklore, medical anthropology, and the relationship between the performing arts and healing.

—LAURA BIAGI
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Religious Festive Practices in Boston's North End.

By Augusto Ferraiuolo.

Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009.

291 pages.

In this well-researched but sometimes frustrating book, Augusto Ferraiuolo explores the complex and vibrant community life of Italian Americans living in Boston's North End. Although he focuses on the cycle of religious festivals that spans every weekend of the summer, Ferraiuolo persuasively demonstrates the far-reaching effects of these performances beyond the periods of their enactment. Each *fiesta* represents the collective labor and long-term planning of a voluntary association originally based on regional and even village ties to Italy. Ferraiuolo shows how these groups are fundamentally social and political institutions that have different, and at times overlapping, constituencies shaping the day-to-day lives of Italian Americans in the North End. This includes who drinks coffee together at which bar, who attends which church and supports which political candidate, and who helps whom with donations of money and labor when times get rough.

Ferraiuolo opens with two largely historical chapters: The first explores the cultural and political geography of the North End going back to the seventeenth century, whereas the second focuses on the successive waves of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century immigration that shaped the neighborhood's ethnic character. Both of these chapters are data rich but also include information that does not seem directly relevant to the book's overall project, such as a lengthy discussion of topographical changes in the eighteenth century or tables of transportation and housing costs from the 1840s. Ferraiuolo then moves in a more interesting and appropriate direction in the third and fourth chapters, both of which were based to some degree on ethnographic research. In these chapters, he explores the community's concern for orthopraxy, or correct historical behavior and action, which requires that each religious festival maintain practices that are rooted in the Italian past while accommodating the Italian-American present. For example, the statue of a saint must be carried on the shoulders of the faithful rather than pulled through the streets in a cart because to do otherwise would break with local tradition in the North End. Practice is key in Ferraiuolo's analysis, for there seems to be little concern for

religious orthodoxy in the community that he studies—somewhat to his surprise, he finds that the traditional religious ideologies that once underpinned and explained these performances are absent.

What readers may find most interesting are the concrete details of how Italian-American identities are negotiated and enacted in the North End. The book is liveliest in the two ethnographic chapters where Ferraiuolo provides the bulk of his descriptive data on the festivals and where he positions himself as a fieldworker. Knowing what language he used during interviews, for instance, or how the community responded to him as a native Italian helps the reader to better contextualize his findings. In these chapters, the author provides some rich ethnographic data about the space of the religious performances and celebrations and, through them, how the neighborhood comes to fully express the complexity of Italian-American identity. For example, during the festivals, Italian, Sicilian, and American flags are paraded through the streets, while people enjoy *arancini* (rice balls), fried calamari, and chicken fingers with equal relish. Village dialects mingle with standard Italian and English as people negotiate their various connections to one another. All of these multistranded expressions of Italian-American identity are on the move, as people negotiate, shift, mingle, strategize, and simply live in the complexity of the moment.

This focus on movement and flux is what allows for one of Ferraiuolo's central arguments—that Italian-American identities in the North End are *ephemeral*, by which he does not mean that they cease to exist outside of festival time but that their form and expression change from day to day, moment to moment. In "Ephemeral Identities," the final chapter of the book, Ferraiuolo makes his most important contribution to debates about Italian-American identity and festive practices. In this chapter, he weds Italian anthropological concerns with subalterity, hegemony, and power dynamics—stemming largely from Gramsci's influence on the field—with North American anthropological perspectives on poststructural and postmodern subjectivity. What Ferraiuolo provides is a theoretically rich framework for understanding Italian-American experience and identity, one that extends the classic literature on religion and ritual in new directions.

Though the arguments in this final chapter are compelling, I would have liked to see at least some of the theoretical discussion appear earlier in the book so that the theory remained not so abstract but instead was enlivened through the ethnographic description itself. As is, the last chapter seems somewhat unmoored, and I found myself second-guessing the analysis to see if it made sense in terms of the data he had presented in earlier chapters of the book. One of the places where we can see a disconnect between his theory and data is in his overall characterization of Italian-American identity. For instance, is it fair to characterize Italian identity in this American setting as something that is disappearing and becoming merely a tourist commodity, as Ferraiuolo does on pages 73–74 and 81, when many of his interviews with Italian Americans are conducted in Italian or dialect? This model of loss also predisposes Ferraiuolo to focus on the "strategic essentialism" of North End festive practices—suggesting that North Enders must work to preserve what is disappearing because their livelihood depends on maintaining the appearance of ethnic distinctiveness. But what are we to make of those aspects of Italian-American culture and identity that endure in these performances or those affective dimensions that bind ethnic groups together outside of the realm of strategy, including things like the comfort of familiarity that works at

an almost precognitive level? Neither of these aspects can be accounted for within the narrow frame of the “ephemeral” or the “strategic.”

Beyond having to tease out how the analysis fits the data, the reader will have an additional challenge related to the extremely poor editing of the book. Here the fault lies not so much with the author as with the press. Particularly because Ferraiuolo is not a native English speaker, the press should have given the copy editor a firm mandate to tighten up the manuscript. Instead, the book is riddled with errors, such as word omissions, sentence omissions within English translations, and numerous misspellings, including three in a single sentence. The text is also wordy, with long block quotations—some from field notes and interviews, others from historical documents—that should have been reduced in length and used more selectively. This sloppiness is frustrating for the reader and makes it less likely that the book can be assigned in the classroom.

Despite these shortcomings, the book is a contribution to the anthropological literature on ethnic identity and festive practices. In particular, scholars of Italian-American life will be interested in Ferraiuolo’s findings and the novel ways he proposes of thinking about the relationship between lived experience and ethnic subjectivity.

—CIRCE STURM

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The Imagined Immigrant: Images of Italian Emigration to the United States between 1890 and 1924.

By Ilaria Serra.

Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2009.

313 pages.

In *The Imagined Immigrant*, Ilaria Serra undertakes the ambitious task of exploring the turn-of-the-century Italian *imago migrationis*, what she calls that “complex knot of collective representations, how the immigrant is seen, and self-representations, how the immigrant sees himself” (9). Serra contends quite rightly that the imagined immigrant, though invisible and impalpable, is absolutely real and “walks alongside the real immigrant in flesh and rags” (9). Her goal is to trace a “history of mentality” and to “listen to these protagonists of history to discover their full humanity” (10). In large measure, this worthwhile book succeeds in that endeavor.

The protagonists of this history are the first- and second-generation Italian immigrants of the Great Migration. Serra tells their stories through diverse sources, including newspapers, films, letters, autobiographies, and interviews. These materials, Serra argues, trace an arc in the Italian immigrant story. The *New York Times* concentrates on the assimilationist trends in American reactions to immigration, while the first films start developing the stereotypes that define the immigrants for years. The interviews speak of life in Italy, the departure, and American experiences that lead to eventual integration, even as the letters “linger on the pain of distance and the more or

less pungent memories of home." Finally, as Serra says, "the autobiographies dive into the realm of self-representation after the facts" (32).

Serra begins with a comparative analysis of representations of Italian immigrants in the *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* from 1890 to 1910. She also refers to *La stella degli emigranti*, a magazine for Italian immigrants founded in Calabria in 1904. Not surprisingly, the differences between the two newspapers' treatment of Italian immigrants "could not be more different, almost proportional with their distance on the map" (38). In 1910, New York City had the largest concentration of Italians in the country, with nearly a quarter of a million, while San Francisco's Italian colony, although the fifth largest in the country, numbered only 17,000. Clearly, those numbers might significantly impact the two newspapers' coverage of the Italian community. Yet, Serra pays little attention to that possibility and to other potentially important influences on the coverage, including the demographics of the two cities and their Italian communities and any political/ideological slant the newspapers might have had. Serra makes the case that the *New York Times* pushed a predominantly "Anglo-conformity" assimilationist point of view, while the *Chronicle* placed less stress on assimilation and in one article even expressed regret that Americanization tended to separate immigrant children from their parents. Looked at more closely, however, the differences in the two newspapers' response to Italian immigrants appear less pronounced. Ultimately, Serra finds in each newspaper what one might expect to find in most decent-sized American journals of this period, a hodgepodge of conflicting images of Italians as ignorant, dirty, violent, and criminal, but also as hardworking, family-oriented, and picturesque.

Turning to cinema, Serra continues to find disparate representations of Italians. The author rightly notes that film is a particularly rich field of inquiry because the Age of Migration ran concurrently with the development of the motion picture and the movie camera's search for new subjects. Chapter 2, "Cinema Casts the Immigrant," effectively examines five early films, four of which were produced by Thomas Edison's company and filmed by the talented cameraman Edwin Porter. Beginning with *The Black Hand* (1906) and ending with *The Italian* (1914), the latter by Thomas Ince and Reginald Barker, Serra finds a dramatic representational change over that short period: "The spotlight moves from the three criminals who seem to represent the entire Italian community to an honest Italian who can be blinded by wrath but remains innocent" (109). Serra also includes a rather cursory discussion of D.W. Griffith's films that dealt very dramatically with Italian characters during this same period, a topic that appears to be worth more attention.

It is in the letters, autobiographies, and interviews that the first- and second-generation Italian immigrants speak for and represent themselves. And it is here, Serra points out, that these subjective selves reveal "the spiritual baggage of the immigrant, the so-called *bagaglio di ritorno*" (133), those ties that bind even as the myth of America beckons.

Serra found a limited but interesting sample of letters, written between 1919 and 1933, that express extreme versions of the Italian immigrant experience. Giuseppe Piombo's three letters speak of a good life in California, while the seventeen letters of Enrico Bartolotti attest to bitter times in Chicago. "Piombo and Bartolotti are united only in this *hope*, glorious for Piombo, strained for Bartolotti," Serra writes. "It increases day by day for Giuseppe Piombo, whose life in America is generous, and it is held

tight by Enrico Bartolotti, who swallows bitter tears" (155). One short letter written by a woman, Carmela Cascone of Brooklyn, to her sister in Italy in 1930 testifies to the enduring myth of the American Dream so central to the immigrant mentality.

Serra finds a fuller and more nuanced representation of the immigrant experience in the four autobiographies she examines. However, despite their diverse experiences, the protagonists—a farmer, laborer, communist miner, and stonemason—are united by their sense of double foreignness, of being foreigners both in their chosen land and in the land they left behind. As Serra shows, all four write not only to rescue their lives from oblivion but also in an effort to synthesize their experiences and their fragmented identities into a somewhat coherent whole.

This process also manifests itself in the twenty-eight interviews of second-generation immigrants culled from a collection at the Ellis Island Museum. Conducted in the mid-1980s, the interviews admittedly show a "curious homogenization of memory" and are marked by other problems typical of after-the-fact oral history. So, despite the disillusionment and hardships that often marked these journeys, there is a sense that the fabled land of America had indeed rewarded these immigrants with an American Dream. However, the conflicted self is still vividly expressed, and for many of these second-generation immigrants, loyalty remains divided between America and Italy, what one man calls the "two mothers" between whom he cannot choose, but must love equally (247).

Ilaria Serra has pulled together a fascinating array of sources and begun the task of examining in some detail what she calls the "reality" of the imagined immigrant during the Great Migration. Although Serra's analysis might have gone further in places, *The Imagined Immigrant* does valuable work in revealing the complexity and diversity of the immigrant experience. Building on this productive, interdisciplinary approach, Serra and other researchers can further explore these rich materials to more fully recreate the immigrants' mental world.

Unfortunately, Serra's otherwise fine work is compromised by lax editing and proofreading. The text is marred by grammatical and mechanical problems and sloppy errors such as referring to the copper-and-steel Statue of Liberty as a "cold marble effigy" (215). However, readers who persevere will be rewarded with a detailed picture of the conflicting ways in which the immigrants imagined themselves and in turn were imagined by others.

—JOSEPH P. COSCO
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The Sopranos.

By Dana Polan.

Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

232 pages.

Dana Polan's *The Sopranos* is a considered study of the television series as a screen and marketing phenomenon. To this end, Polan aims to "describe and analyze those specific and even unique features of the series that both fostered intense audience involvement in its original unfolding . . . and . . . contributed to the series' extended role in a vaster media landscape" (1). The author invokes, among other things, critical theory, semiotics, new media and media economy scholarship, and postmodernism. As a case study of the modern media environment, with its focus on synergy and the extension of media product across the expanse of the controlling conglomerate's subsidiaries, as well as into the popular culture of its audience(s), *The Sopranos* is a thoughtful and intensive tour de force. Polan, professor of Cinema Studies at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, in addition to numerous contributions to various media study volumes, has in the past focused on American cinema and its cultural and economic moorings. Particularly effective was his analysis of Hollywood's role in the generation of meaning (and patriotism) during World War II, *Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950* (Columbia University Press, 1990). Until the establishment of television as the medium of choice for Americans in the 1950s, film was unrivaled as a window on, and reflection of, American culture; in fact, as Polan demonstrated, it was a potent generator of culture. With *The Sopranos*, Polan transposes his obvious erudition to the "new" dominant medium of television, specifically cable, with the series serving as a case study for discussion of the modern, conglomerate-dominated environment.

The book is presented in two parts. Part I focuses upon the evolution of the Home Box Office (HBO) series, from conception through the final episode. Particularly informative and valuable is the discussion of creator David Chase's efforts to play with and often foil audience expectations. The program consistently manifested his awareness of not only the filmic gangster genre at its source but also his proclivity for assimilating European modes of narrative in contrast to the Hollywood paradigm of storytelling. This was on display in the final nonending of the series, wherein menace permeates but is never resolved. Taking place in a diner, where the show's main characters, Tony, Carmela, and family, meet to enjoy a meal, much of the audience undoubtedly was reminded of *The Godfather*, wherein Michael Corleone "does in" the corrupt police captain and the interloping mobster, "The Turk" Sollozzo, over a meal at a "safe" restaurant. In *The Sopranos* the end seems to be coming from every direction as various patrons appear to pose a threat—but if the end ever comes, it is in the mind of the viewer for Chase abruptly ends the series. Of course, those familiar with the series know that it abounds with images and storylines that are reminiscent of Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather* film. Coppola, in fact, has stated publicly that the series was essentially nothing more than an updating of the universe he created. This is an area that might have been explored in greater depth by the author. This omission, perhaps, is logically excusable based on Polan's focus on the production and marketing aspects of the series.

Students of media will benefit from Polan's discussion of Theodor Adorno's (and Edward Said's) notion of "late style" in relation to the evolution of the series. He provides a concise and clear application of the concept that should benefit media scholars and students alike. Readers will also benefit from chapters detailing the narrative strategies for the program and their reception by the audience(s). The primary contribution of this volume is, in fact, its detailed analysis of the program's reception and the context for it. Of course, the show is one of the most successful series in television history, and in the modern environment a central issue is how this context and reception play into the marketing of the series. To that end, Part II details the dissemination of *The Sopranos* product across the wide expanse of parent company Time-Warner's holdings. Polan clearly demonstrates the extent to which *The Sopranos*, through its content and broad dissemination, has become a marker of American culture, serving as a metaphor for greed, corruption, and avarice in American life—whether at the individual level or as the bedrock for corporate culture.

If there is one criticism to register, it would be that the author spends so little time discussing the stereotypes presented by the series. After all, in its depiction of Italian Americans, the series is firmly entrenched in the dominant trope: The experience (and attendant stereotypes) of the New Jersey–New York Italian American is front and center, complete with its thick-tongued and ham-fisted address of American WASP culture. It is difficult to imagine a treatise on a work based so singularly on any other ethnic group spending so little time describing and deciphering the images of ethnicity. For many Italian Americans, myself included, viewing the program is a pleasure, but a guilty pleasure nonetheless. Like *The Godfather* before it, the series manages to simultaneously generate varying degrees of pride and disgust, depending on the sensibilities of the viewer. The author does briefly address the issue of ethnic identity and stereotypes, but primarily in terms of the issue as played out in the lives of the characters. While the show's navigation of the issue often made for entertaining television, it also raised the hackles of various citizen organizations concerned over the show's depiction of Italian Americans. In a time when "synergy" continues to dominate the corporate climate, the one-hour program was translated into a variety of formats, all of which trafficked to some degree in depictions of the stereotypically thick-tongued, inelegant, and violent Italian American. Still, in the end, the book is more about the business of programming and product exploitation than about the "Italianness" of the program's content, and to this end the author accomplishes his goal of describing the show's uniqueness and market success. The book is suited to graduate students and advanced undergraduates.

—MICHAEL R. FRONTANI
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Oral History, Oral Culture, and Italian Americans.

Edited by Luisa Del Giudice.

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

269 pages.

This volume brings together a set of papers delivered at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Italian Historical Association, "Speaking Memory: Oral History, Oral Culture and Italians in America." It comprises eleven presentations, an insightful introduction by Luisa Del Giudice, and transcriptions of the keynote address to the conference delivered by Alessandro Portelli and an interview Del Giudice conducted with Alessandra Belloni, a widely acclaimed Italian folk percussionist.

It is important to note at the outset the interesting case of shifting identifiers: Italian Americans and Italians in America. Although used at times as if they are coterminous, they are, obviously, not homologous. This shift is symbolic of the "tension" outlined by Del Giudice as inherent in the "paradox" of the relations between Italian Americans and Italians. Del Giudice makes this tension the problematic of the essays and the theme of the volume: namely, how the differing histories of Italians in the United States and Italians in Italy have resulted in "Italian immigrants abroad (the Italian diasporic 'periphery') continuing many cultural practices long discarded in Italy ('the center')" (4). This accounts for what she sees as the "double vision" of Italian Americans looking back to discover through oral history and oral culture their "heritage" and Italians seeking to discover what happened to Italian emigrants: the double meaning of "hidden histories." While an interesting proposition, the essays do not always buttress the argument.

Most of the articles seek to discover through oral history or folklore, especially folk music, the Italian heritage of Italian Americans in a range of locations. Each responds to the challenge inherent in the theme of "Oral History and Oral Culture" but in widely differing ways. The most traditional use of oral history is by Stefano Luconi in his discussion of Italian-American voting practices during the New Deal era. Despite noting recommendations from other scholars that we seek a broad cultural vision of politics, Luconi's analysis is limited to voting patterns, while interviews are used simply to footnote other sources or to provide "impressionistic accounts" rather than to explore Italian-American political culture (36). In his study of the Gruppo Lonatese of San Rafael, California, and their contacts with present-day citizens of Lonate Pozzolo, Ernesto R. Milani points out the difficulty inherent in the uphill struggle to keep these affinities alive and how oral history is being used to assist in forging ties. The artist B. Amore uses oral histories archived at Ellis Island and the Lower East Side Tenement Museum as a base for her visual works and exhibitions mounted to keep "memories of ancestral roots alive" (77), in particular stories of daily life and struggle.

Two essays interweaving folklore and oral history – Augusto Ferraiuolo's study of heterogeneous festive practices in the North End Italian-American community in Boston and Michael Di Virgilio's examination of the alms-seeking tradition of Sant'Antonio Abate in the 1920s in Western Pennsylvania through a close reading of one *canto di questua* – raise interesting questions about the survival of Italian-American folk traditions. Working with the concept of "imagined communities," Ferraiuolo notes the commercial success of an Italian identity for the North End and speculates

that the area will preserve its ethnic identity even when the Italians are all gone—a phenomena that New Yorkers will immediately recognize. While he notes that the festivals that most concern him reflect a village sense of community, it is curious that no mention is made of, and no reference given to, classic studies of the same neighborhood by William Foote Whyte and Herbert Gans. Di Virgilio, too, is acutely aware of the ways in which historical change alters the meaning of traditions, noting that the performance of the alms-seeking song he analyzes has been so transformed in its meaning and practice by an American context as to contribute to the demise of the tradition it once represented.

The search for heritage is more radically explored through an examination of oral traditions rather than oral history in Sabina Magliocco's observations on the heritage of *stregheria* and Joanna Clapps Herman's essay, "My Homer." The first looks at vernacular religion and experience from a "new age" or "new pagan" "enchanted world view" (170–1) in order to highlight a non-Roman Catholic heritage for southern Italians. The second finds in the classical Greece of Homer's *Odyssey* a "psychogeography" (184) that explains the daily life, stories, and codes of Herman's Italian-American family. Magliocco's attempt at a "reclamation" that will revive and revalue stigmatized religious practices is complicated and nuanced. Whether or not it succeeds, it certainly provokes thought. In the case of Herman's claims, I think the essay points more to the reasons why *The Odyssey* remains a classic than to the documentation of a classical Greek heritage for Sicilians and Italian Americans.

What all of the essays show is how complicated and varied issues of heritage are, once we begin to deconstruct the term, and the fruitfulness of the methods available for that exploration.

The Italian in America side of Del Giudice's equation is explored for the most part through a set of memoirs of the southern Italian traditional music revival in Italy and its reception in the United States. John T. La Barbera, an Italian American, recounts his musical journey from New York to Italy and back again. It's quite a story that illuminates a number of tensions and traditions in both the United States and Italy in the 1970s and 1980s that spawned a rich cultural awareness of and a variety of venues for this music. Roberto Catalano and Enzo Fina, one a UCLA ethnomusicologist, the other a performer, who have joined together to spur the "transmission and translation of Italian oral traditions in America" (x), recount a somewhat similar trajectory but seek to place their experiences within a more theoretical context. Their essay is probably the most theoretically sophisticated in the volume, exploring the ideas of Mediterranean and metaphoric sounds. Both articles, however, paint a rather bleak picture of the ways in which the actual performance of traditional southern Italian music has been received in various Italian-American communities. The last third of the article by Catalano and Fina serves as a warning to anyone who would simplify a very complicated history.

The long interview with Alessandra Belloni, seemingly conducted in one sitting, is also a memoir of the Italian traditional music revival. It is in form a transcription. In substance, it is replete with interesting stories and descriptions of the vibrant personalities with whom she has worked over the past twenty years. The interview has much to tell us about the events of her life and her work but does little to set any broader cultural context for the stories or the ways in which they are structured.

In his keynote address, Portelli, in his usual elegant and insightful manner, using his work on the Nazi massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine as a springboard, sets forth a number of problematics for oral history work. Most importantly, the view of the oral history as grounded in relationships: those between past and present, between public and private memories, and those between interviewer and interviewee. Two of our authors respond to this last challenge. Christine F. Zinni faces the issue of how to present a variety of oral expressions in visual productions while remaining honest to the aural qualities that are so significant in the transmission of the paralinguistic levels of speech. Borrowing concepts from dialogical anthropology and the work of Dennis Tedlock, she documents the ways in which historians and anthropologists are always participants in the narrative process and what responsibilities follow from that insight.

Although probably not meant to be used as such, the reflections of Marie Saccomando Coppola on her experiences interviewing her own Italian aunt for her dissertation and her Italian family's reaction to that publication when it was read in Italy are poignant examples of what can go wrong with the oral history process, even with the best of intentions and contacts, indeed, even love. It is on the one hand a personal story, but, because of her ability to place herself and her family in their respective histories, the essay exemplifies the deep undercurrent in the whole volume, sometimes explicit, often implicit, of the gulf between how Italians view Italian Americans and how Italian Americans view their Italian heritage. "In Italy," Catalano and Fina tell us, "oral culture was largely denied a place in history, while in the United States it has been substituted by a nontraditional genre that is instead erroneously considered *traditional*. These have been historical decisions that bear no face or heart to which we can attribute direct blame, but they have cost . . . Italians—everywhere—dearly" (131). When viewed collectively, the essays in this volume explore those complexities.

—RONALD GRELE

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Film Reviews

And They Came to Chicago: The Italian American Legacy.

By Gia M. Amella.

Modio Media, 2007.

76 minutes. DVD Format, color.

And They Came to Chicago: The Italian American Legacy is a meticulously researched, visually compelling, and for the most part inspiring and uplifting portrait of Italian life in Chicago from the late nineteenth century to the present. Featuring extraordinary film clips and photographs—many of them clearly drawn from family archives—that bring to life scenes in southern Italian villages, American factories, and Chicago ethnic neighborhoods in the industrial era, the documentary sears into the viewer's imagination how long and hard and convoluted was the journey of Chicago's Italian migrants toward economic security and a place in the American middle class. I found myself deeply moved by the film's depiction of this journey, narrated with eloquence and humor by a carefully selected group of notables and ordinary citizens ranging from actor Dennis Farina to historian Rudolph Vecoli.

From a historical standpoint, the film is remarkably thorough, covering labor conditions, religion, the impact of regionalism and localism, neighborhood formation, and anti-immigrant racism when dealing with early generations of migrants and suburbanization, urban renewal, and the weakening of ethnic identity when dealing with the post-World War II era when the majority of Chicago's Italians were American born. Nor is the film mere celebration. The film treats controversial issues such as the rise of the Black Hand Society, the growth of the Capone organization, and the enormous appeal of Mussolini to Italian Americans, an embarrassment only erased by the disproportionate enlistment of Italian Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces during World War II. Because of the power of its visual images, the charisma of its narrators, and its generally uplifting message, it is easy to imagine this film becoming a staple on PBS stations and gaining widespread use in ethnic studies courses at American universities.

However, there are flaws in this film that should give scholars pause. Most important of these is its reinforcement of the narrative that Chicago's Italian Americans climbed into the middle class almost entirely by dint of their own efforts, without significant help from the government or alliances with other groups that were part of Chicago's working class. As Lisabeth Cohen points out in her great book on the Chicago working class in the Depression, *Making a New Deal*, the network of banks and savings-and-loan organizations among Chicago's Italian Americans all collapsed during the Depression, leaving many residents impoverished and in danger of losing their homes. Without the relief programs of the New Deal, ranging from work programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration to mortgage support from the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, Chicago's Italian Americans would have suffered far more grievously from the Depression than they already did. It was the federal government that stepped into the breach to prevent permanent impoverishment when Italian American workers lost their jobs and the community's financial structure collapsed. You would never know this from the film.

Neither would you know how much Chicago Italian Americans benefited from the expansion of the city's labor movement in the late 1930s and 1940s. It was only in those years that Chicago's largest industries (steel and meatpacking) became fully unionized, lifting many of its workers into near middle-class status. How much of a role did the labor movement, which Italian Americans helped build with workers of many other nationalities, play in their ethnic group's rapid economic ascent during the postwar years? There is much more in the film about the contribution of Italian-American businessmen and religious leaders to the group's progress than a hard-edged analysis of how Italian Americans benefited from New Deal programs and the multiethnic social movement connected to the New Deal.

But the most disturbing omission in the film, at least to me, is its utter failure to analyze conflict and cooperation between Italian Americans and blacks. At no point does the film explore, or even mention, black-Italian relations in Chicago, not in factories, not in neighborhoods, and not in local politics—nor does it show groups or individual portraits of African Americans in any of its extraordinary visuals. Given that Chicago has one of the largest and most cohesive black communities in the United States, was the scene of major riots in the post-World War II period and the 1960s, and featured civil rights marches through white neighborhoods that were met with violence, the absence of any discussion of black-Italian relations is most unfortunate. Did the groups ever intermarry? Did they ever live in the same neighborhoods? Did Italians participate in the mob attacks on blacks during the 1919 race riots? Did they use violence to keep blacks out of their neighborhoods during the 1950s and 1960s? And, on the other side, did Italian-American youngsters, whether during the jazz age or the heyday of rock and roll, adopt African-American music and dance styles as symbols of their Americanization? Do Italian Americans, even today, live their “whiteness” in ways that differ from other European ethnic groups? What is the process through which Italian Americans, often stigmatized for their racial identity, became “white”? There are great potential insights on these issues in sources ranging from Spike Lee's films (*Do the Right Thing*, *Jungle Fever*, etc.), the essays in *Are Italians White?*, and numerous books and articles on Italian Americans in “doo wop,” the urban harmonic music of the postwar era, but the filmmakers draw on none of these. Rather, by ignoring the issue entirely, it seems they have decided that “race” in all its complexities is a subject that is best kept private lest it disturb the film's portrait of the Italian-American odyssey in Chicago as the triumph of a hard pressed, oft-beleaguered ethnic group guided by a reverence for hard work and ethnic solidarity.

When all is said and done, *And They Came to Chicago* will do nothing to disturb the common perception among Italian Americans that they “did it alone” without significant government help and that African Americans and recent immigrants should follow their example. For all its strengths, it ends up doing the community whose triumph it portrays a disservice by sanitizing its history and failing to account accurately for the reasons for its economic success.

—MARK NAISON
Fordham University

Chippers.

By Nino Tropicano.

Fall Films, Ltd., 2009.

52 minutes. DVD format, color.

Who first brought to Ireland the quintessential British street food, fish 'n chips, and made it the fast food of choice for three generations of Dubliners, long before McDonald's and Burger King even appeared on the horizon of the Emerald Isle? Italians, of course.

The documentary movie *Chippers* narrates this seemingly odd, but I would say absolutely typical, tale from the Italian diaspora, mostly by way of interviews with its protagonists. In the 1920s, a few young men from the small town of Casalattico, in the Ciociaria area (halfway between Rome and Naples), emigrated to northern England to peddle ice cream. After a few years, they moved to Dublin, sent for their families, and reconstituted the tiny community around the Savoia Restaurant, where they started to serve the staple dish of the English working class. The economic situation in Casalattico after World War II prompted men to immigrate to Dublin, following networks established by earlier immigrants. Some of these men opened small fish 'n chips shops. They took a risky chance at entering virtually the only independent occupation open to them given the very limited capital they had. All of them "had never seen a fish before," as one of the immigrants interviewed for *Chippers* confesses, which of course speaks volumes about how ethnic traditions are made. There is a general agreement among the first-generation witnesses that the role of women was decisive. As soon as immigrants established their tiny restaurants, they sent for their wives, arranged proxy marriages, or rushed to Casalattico to marry and return to Ireland. These young wives and mothers worked incredibly long shifts, provided the family business with free skilled labor, and, last but not least, ran these Spartan fish 'n chips places with the air of a family-like environment.

Whether the postcolonial Irish snubbed the idea of cooking the food of the imperialist British, or they simply thought that the fish 'n chips business was too much work for too little money (as one of the older Italian witnesses suggests in the movie), Italians developed a near monopoly over the trade. Moreover, as the narrative that "if you want good fish 'n chips you gotta go to Italian places" spread, Irish fish 'n chips became culturally entrenched with its Italian makers. Now in their second or third generation, these businesses are still highly profitable, if very labor intensive, but many of the founders chose to return to Italy as retired, well-to-do, successful migrant entrepreneurs, and many of the younger Italian Irish seem to prefer a university degree and a professional career rather than the oily atmosphere of the fish 'n chips restaurant.

Chippers is a meta-narrative in that it follows the efforts of a second-generation member of the Italian-Irish community who compiles a comprehensive collection of photographs and newspaper clippings and organizes an exhibit and event in which this community history is presented. The film follows Barbato Borza's travels between Dublin and Casalattico, as he meets and interviews people from whom he collects photographs and information. This footage material is interspersed with many interviews with other first- and later-generation men and women in Ireland and Italy. As a result, a significant variety of points of view is provided, and the notion of the intensely transnational lives most of the people portrayed and interviewed have lived fully emerges. For example,

the fact that young people were discouraged from pursuing an education because they were expected to help in the fish 'n chips restaurant with both their manual work and their familiarity with English is candidly revealed. In addition, the film shows how a kind of "Italian identity" was maintained even with the near absence of leisure time for socialization outside of the group and the fact that girls were generally prohibited to date non-Italians. In the same perspective, young people regularly visiting Casalattico today for summer vacations (sometimes, it seems, against their will) candidly confess that they would never even consider "moving back" there. Rare Irish TV newsreels from the 1950s and 1960s documenting the popularity of Italian fish 'n chips among Irish consumers complete the material the director and producer Nino Tropiano was able to assemble.

Tropiano, who was born in Monopoli (Apulia) and immigrated to Dublin as a young film student, is not part of the Casalattico community but obviously looks at it with a sympathetic, knowledgeable, and participating eye. Documentaries by or about immigrant communities that are meant to represent and perhaps celebrate local culture are at high risk of romanticizing the immigrant saga at best, suggesting its exceptionalism and even transforming it in a chauvinist discourse at its very worst. The sensibilities of the people behind and in front of the camera will determine the outcome. *Chippers* emerges from the challenge remarkably well. The direction is honest; the filming is good given the evident technical and assumed budget limitations that add a sense of authenticity rather than thwart the narrative flow; the editing has a fast-paced rhythm that is not easy to find in similar documentaries; and the soundtrack mostly steers clear of obnoxious stereotypes. Immigrants are open and straightforward in their recollections, demonstrating a significant reflexivity in interpreting the meaning of their own lives as mobile people, representing the identity and experiences of the others they have met in the process, and pondering on the future and the past. While not strikingly original, *Chippers* is a more than decent, interesting, informative, and totally viewable documentary, besides being an obvious act of love for a community.

—SIMONE CINOTTO
University of Turin

Our Story: Italian-Americans in Utah.

By Sam Prigg (Editing and Post Production Director), Joanne R. Milner (Executive Producer), and Alan Lucchetti (Editor).

Our Story/Your Story Documentary Productions, 2008.

65 minutes. DVD format, color.

Famiglia Italiana in Corning, NY.

By Richard La Vere (Production and Editing) and Constance R. Sullivan-Blum (Script Writer).

Painted Post Historical Society, Corning, New York, and Arts Council of the Southern Finger Lakes Region, 2008.

36 minutes. DVD format, color.

The emergence of digital technologies has provided the means as well as the space for media productions that tell the story of the Italian diaspora in the United States. The passing of elders and dissolution of once vibrant Italian-American communities across the nation have made this work of recovery all the more timely and necessary. Sponsored by a panoply of organizations, foundations, as well as individual donations, the productions are often distinguished by different points of view effected through a range of oral history segments, historic documents, live footage, editing techniques, and sound effects.

Our Story: Italian-Americans in Utah is one such effort. It opens with the reenactment of a scene recounting the grand gesture of Giuseppe Taranto. Placing a money belt with gold coins containing his life savings of \$2,500 on the table of the noted religious leader Brigham Young, the immigrant from Palermo provided enough money for the completion of the first Mormon temple in the United States. Returning to Italy to proselytize about the Mormon faith and the joys of the newly established farming communities in Utah, Taranto had recruited seventy-four Italian converts by 1870 and helped shape one of the first settlements of Italian Americans in the United States in Carbon County, Utah.

The first half of the documentary chronicles how the decades after the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 brought waves of immigrant Italian Catholics from northern as well as southern Italy to Utah. Sophisticated editing techniques by Sam Prigg and Alan Lucchetti, rivaling those found in any big-budget PBS documentary production, weave together primary documents and an original score with dozens of interview segments with Italian Americans from all walks of life. Good use is made of early Edison footage and Carbon County promotional films from the 1920s to underscore how great numbers of immigrants arriving at Ellis Island were ushered into boxcars with tow tags marked Carbon County to work in Utah's mines and railroads. Philip Notarianni (current director of Utah State's History Department), Frank Pignanelli (former Minority Leader in the Utah State Legislature), and the producer, Joanne Milner, among other narrators, give collective voice to the ways in which their ancestors sought solidarity amidst dangerous working and harsh living conditions.

To its credit, the first part of the documentary also provides insights into the organizing efforts of the labor leader, Ben Bonacci, as well as Italian-American immigrants'

involvement in the United Mine Workers strikes of 1903 and 1922 in which the National Guard was called out. Walter Borla, current secretary of Stella D'America, explains how miners in the early part of the twentieth century formed the fraternal organization to provide mutual aid and insurance.

Highlighting another dimension of Italian-American labor history, Tony Tonic stresses the contributions Italian-American stonemasons made to the region's built environment and emphasizes their connections with men who worked the "tough jobs" in the mines and railroads. Maintaining that nationality did not matter, he recalls "if one of them got hurt, they all helped one another." The theme of solidarity is further driven home by the story of a union man who discourages his son from taking a job as a supervisor. "You treat those men fairly [. . .] get a good days work out of them [. . .] but be more concerned about those men than the chunk of coal you are working on," he admonishes.

The ways in which Italian Americans shaped beloved communities amidst adversity and beyond regional differences is similarly accentuated in succeeding sections that focus on farmers in Weber County. Family members recall how Italian Americans shared the work of planting and harvesting and taught one another how to hitch horses to plows and raise alfalfa and cattle. Along a similar vein, Italian shop owners and merchants in Salt Lake County stress how their ancestors contributed to the good of the whole community by writing off the debts of their compatriots.

Rare archival photos of hospital tents set up to treat patients afflicted by the influenza epidemics of 1910 and 1918 remind us how sickness and poverty struck down the early immigrants and their newborn children. Eighty-four-year-old Alma Colleni Parisi testifies she weighed only a pound and a half at birth. "They wrapped me in cotton, put me in a shoebox and laid me on the oven door [. . .] The doctor said to my dad, 'Well, if you are not rich, let her die.' My father insisted, 'I am not rich and I am not letting her die.'"

The second part of *Our Story* takes us to the present day by focusing on the cultural legacy of Italian Americans in Utah, including contemporary expressions of ethnicity, lifestyles, and a tendency to search for roots back in Italy. Sam Siciliano, emeritus board member of the Utah Opera Company, and musician John Tibola discuss the long-standing importance of opera and accordion music. Providing a broad view and setting the stage for a section that references Utah's noted resources in the field of genealogy, Giovanni Maschero informs us that the number of people of Italian-American descent in the state has grown from 15,000 to 70,000 since he became Italian Vice Consul in 1989.

While there is a nod to the important role Italian-American woman played maintaining households, the film leaves the viewer with questions about women's work histories. The Utah Historical Society archives houses enough oral history material to create several noteworthy productions that could shed light not only on Italian-American women's work but also on other significant absences in the film, such as interactions between Italian immigrants and Native Americans. Of similar importance would be stories about Italian immigrants' responses to the nativist activities of the Ku Klux Klan.

One hopes that *Our Story* is the first of many productions about the Italian-American experience in Utah. All in all, the documentary makes a significant contribution to

understanding Italian Americans' input on the development of the American West and furthers dialogue about the larger history and legacy of Italian-American immigration, labor history, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

Famiglia Italiana in Corning, NY, a grassroots effort issuing from the Corning-Painted Post Historical Society and the Arts Council of the Southern Finger Lakes in New York State, seeks to address the lacunae of women's histories by foregrounding Italian lace as a metaphor for the Italian-American experience. A common practice in many Italian immigrant households, Italian-American women's needlework holds particular relevance for Italian Americans in Corning who saw their carefully tended homes, gardens, and storefronts destroyed by floodwaters generated by Hurricane Agnes in 1972.

Narration based on a sensitive script written by Constance R. Sullivan-Blum, who organized a 2008 exhibit on Italian needlework entitled *Lace: The Space Between* in conjunction with the documentary, provides the occasion for six Italian-American women to tell their stories about growing up in the neighborhood around Water Street. Recounting how they participated in one another's lives, they commend their ancestors' virtues of frugality and resourcefulness. They reminisce about "gardens as long as the backyards would allow them to be without going into the river," growing and eating anything "from dandelions to cucumbers and beets," and "trading coal found along the railroad tracks for food." Particularly noteworthy are stories of inventive child's play, born out of necessity, inspiring doll furniture made from burdock, sleds from barrel boards, and footballs from strips of rags tied together.

A segment that focuses on men's work on the railroads and movement from shanty town to shanty town reveals that not all was idyllic before the storm. The specter of occupational lung disease that killed mine, factory, and quarry workers across the United States also hung over the men who breathed in silica dust in the "pot and clay" division of Corning's Glass Works.

Set against a segment that features images of women's lacework while highlighting their creativity and the role of memory in maintaining cultural ties, interviewees also bear witness to enforced assimilation through English language classes. Two narrators—a woman recalling the stigma of looking "ethnic" and a man recounting when his car was vandalized by his girlfriend's father, angered by their dating—underscore the fact that racist views about Italians extended into the 1960s.

And then came the flood—occurring at a time when most Italian Americans in Corning were enjoying economic prosperity. Tales of evacuating buildings because water was streaming up stairways and the palpable sense of loss experienced by Richard Negri as he tries to "feel the vibes" of his home while standing in what is now the parking lot of a supermarket makes the preceding section on Italian women's lace all the more poignant.

Smaller than *Our Story* in scope and budget but just as equal in heart, the strength of *Famiglia Italiana* is the space it provides for individual narrators to talk in depth about their life histories. The documentary would be enhanced by the inclusion of more information about the hometown origins of the Italians who settled in Corning and by the depiction of additional archival documents. Speaking to the film's production, the documentary would have benefited from re-positioning the camera to capture two narrators' direct gazes or by including the interviewer in some shots.

By presenting the collective memories of Italian Americans in visual and aural forms, both *Our Story* and *Famiglia Italiana* constitute important interventions in the dominant historical record. In so doing, these media productions also engage the general public, provide a needed counterbalance to fictional and nonfictional accounts in books and cinema, and have the potential to inspire how Italian Americans recount their histories.

—CHRISTINE F. ZINNI

State University of New York at Brockport

Monongah Remembered.

By Peter Argentine.

Argentine Productions, 2007.

25 minutes. DVD format, color.

An explosion at the Monongah coal mines in Fairmont, West Virginia, on December 6, 1907, was the worst mining disaster in American history. As a result of the explosion, 362 mine workers, both men and boys, working in mine numbers 6 and 8 of the Fairmont Coal Company were killed. Among those who perished, 178 were Italian immigrants, mainly from the regions of Molise and Calabria. It is estimated that the blast left approximately 1,000 widows and orphans in both the United States and in Italy. In December 2007, in remembrance of the hundredth anniversary of the Monongah mine explosion, Argentine Productions, in collaboration with the Heinz History Center and the American Italian Cultural Institute (AMICI), produced the documentary *Monongah Remembered*. The film, although only 25 minutes long, provides a fresh take on the world of work through the eyes of Italian immigrant workers and their families, both in the United States and in their hometowns in Italy.

The force of the explosion reverberated throughout Fairmount County, destroying buildings and houses in proximity to the mines, but the explosion also rocked many towns and villages in Italy, where news of the tragedy and the deaths of the workers quickly spread among family members and town residents who anxiously sought information. With massive working-class immigration to the United States at the onset of the twentieth century as the story's backdrop, Peter Argentine's documentary goes beyond recounting the journey of immigrant Italian workers. The film examines the transition from the misery of life in the rural regions of Italy to the precarious and perilous existence in the industrial United States by exploring the impact that the explosion would leave on the lives of workers and their families in both countries.

The film draws on interviews of surviving family members and Italian political authorities responsible for collecting support for the construction of a memorial to honor the victims of the explosion. The series of interviews realized in Italy and the United States provide an important perspective of how influential such far-reaching events continue to be over time and that the world of work is in many ways

impervious to national boundaries and continental distances. Argentine's film is illustrative of how working-class life moves across borders seamlessly and, more importantly, that the early experience of mass immigration to the United States continues to hold an important role in shaping the future of current Italian society. In this sense *Monongah Remembered* draws strong parallels between the past and present and the significance of not only remembering the past but learning from it as well.

In the aftermath of the disaster, even more telling than the fact that many of the bodies of the missing mineworkers were never recovered, was the chilling silence among the explosion's survivors. For years after the explosion, workers and their families refused to speak of the disaster. Some of those who survived even returned to the mines, only to die years later in subsequent accidents in the mines. The multiple ways in which workers and their families sought to deal with the loss of co-workers, family members, and neighbors on both continents makes a strong argument for a renewed approach to exploring the experience of working-class life in the United States in a global perspective.

Released in the United States in December 2007 and later in Italy under the title *Monongah Cent'Anni di Oblio*, the documentary leaves the viewer wanting more; it is too short for such a complex topic. *Monongah Remembered* is not only a reminder of the human cost of economic growth in the United States but that the brutality of industrial development experienced in America was likewise felt by workers and their families in continents across the globe.

—WILLIAM MELLO
Indiana University

Watch the Pallino.

By Stephanie Foerster.

StepFilms, 2007.

43 minutes. DVD format, color.

Watch the Pallino, directed by Stephanie Foerster, documents the annual bocce tournament that takes place during the Labor Day celebration in Toluca, Illinois. Mixed in is just a bit of Italian-American history, ably narrated by Dominic Candeloro. A notable aspect of this film is the way in which Italian bocce has been adopted and adapted by Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike to the American context. The game becomes—despite its origins in a small-town immigrant milieu—fully integrated into an American Labor Day celebration, and it attracts a large number of players and teams and serves as a kind of homecoming for the entire region.

Although a powerful film at times, the viewer's attention is divided in three directions that never really seem to fold into one another as seamlessly as one might hope: a brief history of Toluca, a documentation of the annual bocce tournament (the decided bulk of the film), and some discussion of Italian immigrant history in the Toluca area and beyond. It makes sense that the film would offer an overview of the history of

Toluca given that it was sponsored in part by the Marshall County Historic Society, the county in which Toluca is situated. However, it seems peculiar—though probably unavoidably so—to hear the history of Toluca and the Bocce Tournament from the viewpoint of various townspeople and the Labor Day Bocce Tournament organizers Chuck “Coach” Rolinski and Aldo “Cap” Capponi while the discussion of local Italian immigrant history is offered by scholars of the subject. Perhaps the immigrant history of Toluca is too distant to be extensively narrated by the locals, whereas bocce and its communal significance is situated firmly within the lore of the community itself. And thus the bifurcated narrative is necessary. In addition, the camera work—mostly handheld, shaking from scene to scene, and concentrating on the expressions of the bocce players to the occasional exclusion of their form or style of play—is at moments distracting.

The film, even with minor deficits, successfully evokes a palpable sense of longing for a bygone way of community life. In fact, one of the film’s notable strengths is the way in which it depicts the characters and the immediacy of the activities in which they are involved, rendering them strikingly recognizable to those familiar with life in “small-town” America. The landscape is radiant and speckled with images of working-class occupations based in railroad, mining, and small-scale factories including one—proudly displayed—manufacturer of ravioli, notably pronounced *raviola* by one of the film’s narrators. (Indeed, the variable pronunciation of Italian words in Toluca, like the bocce tournament itself, seems to aptly reflect the process of adoption and adaptation of Italian culture to the American landscape that so characterizes this film.) These scenes serve to remind us of how easily a community can grow together when everyone living there shares a common goal or, in this case, a hobby—although we are almost hesitant to use the term hobby here because the participants in this tournament see bocce as a serious and, in fact, crucial part of their community, so much so that bocce is included in Toluca schools’ gym classes.

Although the film shifts abruptly at times from the region’s Italian immigrant history to the community bocce tournament in Toluca, the long-term presence of numerous bocce courts and bocce playing connected to local taverns, family reunions, and holiday parties point to the ways in which the game, a ludic practice, cuts through many layers of Italian-American history. While the film is evocative of an Italian-American past, it successfully avoids a syrupy nostalgia for the “old days”—bringing instead an immediacy to the game of bocce, its place in the construction of Italian identity, and its role in the cultural life of Italian Americans and non-Italian Americans alike in Toluca and its surroundings.

In the vignettes of the various players, the film’s decided strength, the director does not shy away from slightly racy material: When Shirley Hartley (clearly one of the most colorful narrators and players in the film) is being teased for being a *prima donna* at the office, she deadpans: “Yes, and if bull shit was music you’d be a brass band.” Another player—unnamed—describes bocce as a metaphor for life. Everything is going fine, then someone hits the *pallino*, knocking it to another position, and everything is suddenly changed. The game is up for grabs: “Everything’s going good in your life,” he analogizes, “you know; you get a letter; someone’s had a car crash or your kid gets arrested. Suddenly it’s all changed!” Here, perhaps, what initially seems like loose ends are tied up nicely as the director offers a reason for the persistence of bocce in

what might have initially seemed the most unlikely of places: the significance that the people of Toluca attach to the game.

The film could be profitably included in a number of courses: First, a course on the Italian-American experience would benefit from a film on bocce—especially inasmuch as many students might know of the game but not understand the rules of play, how scores are calculated, or the contextualization of the game within a network of community social relations, all lessons the film ably offers. Second, it would make sense in a course on American folklore and folklife where games are often discussed but not regularly enough illustrated ethnographically. Finally, courses in American or Cultural Studies could profit by its depiction of community celebrations. In each case, the course would benefit from how the film showcases not only Italian-American but also small-town American life in the often neglected arena of play, an arena that not only offers us a pleasant pastime but also serves the powerful function of social integration especially when it occurs, as it does in Toluca, in the context of communal celebrations.

—MICHAEL BUONANNO AND COURTNEY RUFFNER

State College of Florida, Manatee–Sarasota

Digital Media Reviews

Triangle Factory Fire Online Exhibit.

<http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire>

(accessed November 7 and November 10, 2009)

March 25, 2011, is the hundredth anniversary of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the tragic disaster in a New York City sweatshop that claimed the lives of 146 people, mostly young Italian and Jewish immigrant women. Interest in the fire is likely to increase as the anniversary approaches, but the events of that fateful day in 1911 already comprise one of the most well-known episodes of American labor history. Without any embellishment, the story has all the elements of drama: Young women working for paltry wages are locked inside a factory building by profit-hungry owners who prohibited unionization and resisted efforts to implement safety measures. A fire breaks out. Many of the women, unable to get out because of the locked doors and lack of fire escapes, plunge to their death on the sidewalk below. Newspapers trumpet the horrible details while grief-stricken families quietly mourn their loved ones. Factory owners are acquitted of any wrongdoing, but reforms to industrial safety and fire codes are enacted at the behest of outraged members of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the Socialist Party, and other workers' and fraternal organizations, as well as citizens with no prior connection to the labor movement. The high degree of interest in this story that continues today, especially among middle and high school students, prompted the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives at Cornell University to establish a web-based exhibit on the Triangle fire.

The online exhibit (accessed on November 7 and November 10, 2009), located at <http://www.ilr.cornell.edu/trianglefire>, uses a narrative frame to tell the story of the Triangle fire within the larger context of American labor history, specifically, the exploitation of garment workers and the unionization drive within that industry. A combination of words and visual images on the home page invites visitors into the site. Sitting on a black background is a black-and-white photo of firefighters attempting to put out the flames in the ten-story Asch building that housed the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. The contrast between the black background and the photo, edited to look as if it is charred around the edges, is striking. Text on top of the photo announces "Near closing time on Saturday afternoon, March 25, 1911, a fire broke out . . ." The red typeface for the text provides added contrast and suggests the heat of fire. Ellipses at the end of the phrase lead readers' eyes to links that are grouped under three headings—*Story of the Fire*, *Sources*, and *Other Resources*—each of which appears in a glowing orange font with a red background. The only other photo on the page is that of one of the heroes of the fire, the elevator boy, Joseph Zito, who made multiple trips to the ninth floor, carrying twenty-five to thirty people down each time. Oddly, Zito's photo appears above the *Criminal Trial Transcripts* link.

Visitors to the site can follow the various links in any order, but those under *The Story of the Fire* offer a chronological account. It begins with a brief introduction that highlights the historical and contemporary significance of the Triangle tragedy: "One of the worst disasters since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution," the fire

remains important to this day, “because it highlights the inhumane working conditions to which industrial workers can be subjected.” The next link, *Sweatshops and Strikes*, provides a description of working conditions and labor activism before 1911, including the famous Uprising of the Twenty Thousand in 1909, and a primer on sweatshops in the contemporary United States by UNITE! (Union of Needle Trades, Industrial, and Textile Employees). Subsequent links—*Fire!*, *Mourning and Protest*, *Relief Work*, and *Investigation, Trial, and Reform*—vividly recount the events of March 25 and afterwards. Peppered throughout are additional links to a rich variety of primary sources held by the Cornell University Library. Verbal documents, including letters, poems, newspaper articles, and the criminal trial transcripts give a sense of the lives of garment workers, the dangers of the factory, and the politics of union organizing. Photos show poverty, harsh working conditions, and the performance of class and ethnic solidarity. Cartoons are particularly memorable, with striking images that range from the poignant to the macabre. Audio recordings of interviews with three survivors, one of whom, Pauline Pepe, was an Italian American, convey the most deeply personal views of the fire. Links to the list of victims and that of witnesses reinforce the personal aspect of the tragedy.

Students, educators, and others who want access to additional information and resources about the fire can follow links to a selected bibliography with juvenile, primary, secondary, and audiovisual sources, as well as instructional materials for educators. Young researchers may also wish to consult a helpful set of “Tips for Student Projects” that explains the difference between primary and secondary sources and offers instructions for proper citation.

As conveyed by the web text and primary sources, the story of the Triangle fire is a story about the effects of industrialization on people. If the comments in the Visitor’s Book for the site are any indication, almost a hundred years later, the deaths of so many young female workers in a factory fire still has a powerful effect on those who come into contact with it.

—MARY ANNE TRASCIATTI
Hofstra University

A Blog from WWII. Diary of an Italian Deportee.

<http://anitaliandeportee.org>

(accessed April 23, 2009–November 12, 2009)

The title of this online narrative, *A Blog from WWII. Diary of an Italian Deportee*, evokes the jarring image of soldiers and prisoners with laptops in their hands, as opposed to the pen and paper of letters or old notebooks. Building on such a paradox, this website joins possibility and impossibility, past and present, under the sign of computer science. The website offers a digitized version (in both the original Italian and an English translation) of the entire diary of Oreste Maina, who was deported from Italy to Germany in 1943. This review covers the diary from its first

posted entry (Maina's deportation on September 23, 1943) until November 12, 1944. The authors of this original idea are Rosanna Del Buono, Oreste's granddaughter, a first-generation Italian-American translator and film subtitler who works and lives in Rome, and Nicola "DeeMo" Peressoni, a designer and a communication consultant, who lives in Bologna.

The first thing that strikes a reader about this endeavor is that it overcomes the secrecy or jealousy—sometimes even the indifference—that covers much original historical material in Italy. The average Italian often does not see the value in old relics from the past or recognizes only their affective value. It is not uncommon that he/she does not want to make personal or family stories public and prefers to keep them hidden away in a drawer. Indeed Del Buono admits, on the site's *Our Project* page, that she "felt apprehensive about sharing such a personal relic with the entire world," and thus she withholds many details from the general public, promising to give them, perhaps, at the end of the diary. She does not explain who Oreste was exactly: We do not learn his job, his age, his family, his position in his hometown, or even how he fared after his return from Germany (if he ever came back), nor when or how he died. We do not even know when the diary will end.

This uncertainty is part of the whole experience of deportation. The project is kept "in progress"—a way to keep the duration of the diary "in time," as if the diary were being written again today. Each entry appears on the same day it was penned, only sixty-six years later. A great idea—even if some readers might be left wanting for more. In our e-mail exchange (November 9, 2009), the authors explained it as an attempt to make readers enter the mind of Oreste Maina, who lived in total uncertainty about his future. On the other hand, reading it as a whole, from the beginning to (temporary) end, retains the great power of a novel, and readers cannot help but be engrossed with Maina's adventures in the concentration camp, in the fields where he loads vegetables, in the factory and in the barracks, in the hospital where he plays Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow* on the guitar, enchanting the nuns, and in the terrifying desolation of the bombing of Munich.

Take the first sentence of the diary: "German soldiers with machine guns are positioned on all the streets of Casale": It was September 23, 1943, in Casale di Carinola in the southern province of Caserta. In that round-up, Oreste and several other men were "asked" to follow the German soldiers, who brought them to work camps in Germany. Oreste was able to keep a diary of those days, written in a secure style and with very few mistakes. We gather he was a strong man, brave enough to barter in the black market, and clever enough to fool the German nuns by artificially raising his body temperature during a hospital stay. His writing becomes heartfelt with the length of his deportation: "I am fed up with this miserable existence. 13 months away from my loved ones in a wretched land where all that exists is work and slavery!" (October 25, 1944). The nostalgia he feels comes across so strongly, especially when he thinks of the warm water in Casale, of the figs he used to gather in October, and especially of his little daughter Marinella: "when I left she was 5 months old, now she is 15 months old and must be running in the streets with her brother, I imagine she already says 'papa,' her mother must have taught her! But she doesn't know me!" (July 25, 1944).

The dual-language version, English and Italian, is particularly valuable because it pierces through the silence wrapping this part of Italian history and because it

reconnects a family broken by immigration. The website claims that 1,500 subscribers receive the almost-weekly blog, and several of them have already commented on the entries. Relatives of Oreste Maina, both in the United States and in Italy, rejoice at the possibility of sharing his personal diary. Entering this blog is, therefore, like entering the family parlor, and overhearing the comments of his descendents, ranging from pride (for example, he never sold himself to the Fascists, suggest some commentators) to gratitude. Thus the immigrant side of the family gains virtual access to the family legacy.

The uses of this website are innumerable. Schools and teachers should use it as a firsthand source for their students, who are already familiar with blogging techniques. Moreover, this source is a blessing for researchers who know how difficult it is to read archival material. Here, they find it already deciphered (handwritten documents can be illegible) and typed.

Therefore, although it's not necessary to critique what is "lost in translation," it is interesting to consider what seems to be gone, or lost, because of it. The "aura" is lost. The smell of old paper. Gone, in the transmigration of media: from page to web page, from ink to bytes, from handwriting to font. Even clicking and scrolling through the blog are contrary to leafing through a bound document. Keeping this in mind, this love for yellowed pages and tilted handwritings of the past, I cannot but enthusiastically welcome this original and most useful electronic diary from World War II.

—ILARIA SERRA

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Contributors

MARIA C. LIZZI is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Albany, SUNY. She is currently working on the final stages of her dissertation, "Fighting for Lawn Madonnas and Fig Trees: When the Italian Americans of New York Became New Ethnic." Her work has been previously published in the *Journal of American Ethnic Studies*.

STEFANO LUCONI teaches U.S. history at the University of Padua and specializes in Italian immigration to the United States with specific emphasis on Italian Americans' political experience and transformation of ethnic identity. His publications include *From Paesani to White Ethnics: The Italian Experience in Philadelphia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); *The Italian-American Vote in Providence, Rhode Island, 1916–1948* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004); and *La questione razziale negli Stati Uniti dalla Ricostruzione a Barack Obama* (Padua: Cleup, 2008). He also co-edited, with Dennis Barone, *Small Towns, Big Cities: The Urban Experience of Italian Americans* (New York: American Italian Historical Association, 2010).

ANNA L. WOOD, whose training was in cultural anthropology, has done extensive research on folk music and other oral traditions among Italian American immigrants of the 1950s and 1960s. For the past eleven years she has served as director of the Association for Cultural Equity, a not-for-profit organization in New York City, which curates the archival collections and legacy of her father, musicologist Alan Lomax.



Italicità e identità glocal

Premessa

Piero Bassetti

Dalla decostruzione dello Stato-nazione alla concettualizzazione dell'identità glocal attraverso «lo sguardo Italico»

Riccardo Giumelli

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il caso delle colonie e degli insediamenti in Europa orientale e sul Mar Nero

Giuseppe Cossuto

L'identità italica in Svizzera

Remigio Ratti

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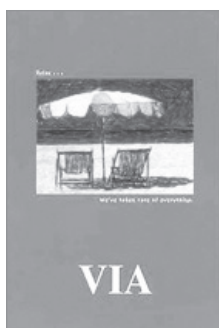
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